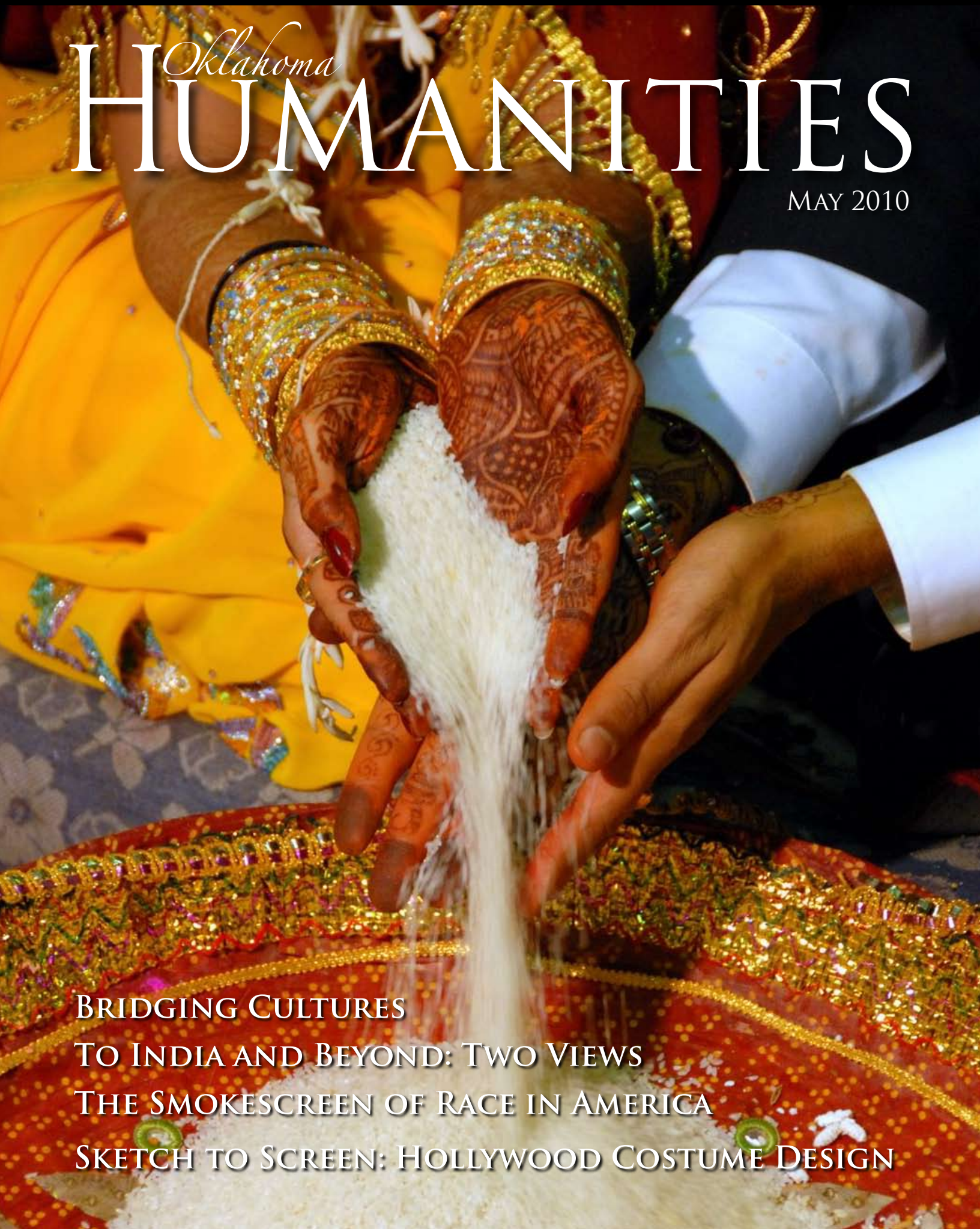
THE MAGAZINE OF THE OKLAHOMA HUMANITIES COUNCIL

Oklahoma HUMANITIES

MAY 2010



BRIDGING CULTURES

TO INDIA AND BEYOND: TWO VIEWS

THE SMOKESCREEN OF RACE IN AMERICA

SKETCH TO SCREEN: HOLLYWOOD COSTUME DESIGN

Oklahoma HUMANITIES

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Oklahoma Humanities is published biannually by the Oklahoma Humanities Council (OHC), 428 W. California Ave., Ste. 270, Oklahoma City, OK 73102. OHC is an independent, nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote meaningful public engagement with the humanities—disciplines such as history, literature, philosophy, and archaeology. As the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), OHC provides funding and resources that support humanities education and a vibrant cultural life for all Oklahomans.

Reader letters are welcome and may be directed to the Editor at: carla@okhumanitiescouncil.org or by mailing to the above address. Include "Letter to the Editor" in the subject line of your message. Letters are published subject to editorial discretion and may be edited for clarity or space.

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ON THE COVER

Photo by Randy Alvarado. Randy's documentary photography focuses on the work of non-profit organizations and NGOs. As a photographer, author, and entrepreneur, he has traveled to 23 countries on five continents. His latest venture is Kalida Art. www.randyalvarado.com

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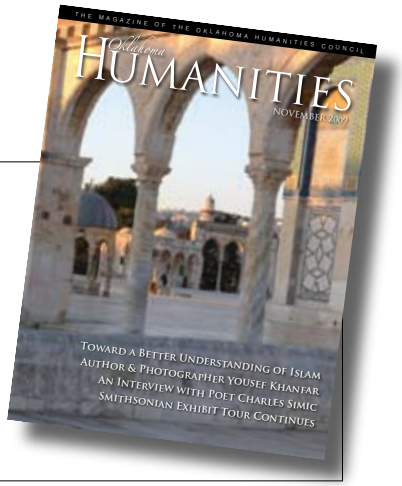

From the Executive Director
ANN THOMPSON

It's funny how things align to form unexpected results. This issue brings together several theme-related articles that were unplanned but serendipitously appeared, beginning with a piece by Jim Leach, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, on his "Bridging Cultures" initiative. He expresses his hopes for a greater understanding of ourselves and others, and the need for civil discourse.

In keeping with this theme, author Rilla Askew eloquently shares her evolving thoughts on race relations while coming of age in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. Understanding ourselves and others in our own communities is the first step toward bridging cultures.

We continue the theme on an international level with Gene Rainbolt, Chairman of the Board of BancFirst Corporation and the 2010 recipient of the Oklahoma Humanities Award (*see related story on page 6*), who shares impressions from a trip to India, Bhutan, and Nepal. His musings on the people and customs he experienced evoke just the kind of thoughtful, open-minded approach to different cultures that Chairman Leach encourages. Mr. Rainbolt's travel journal is juxtaposed with the words of his travel companion, Sunita Sitara. Ms. Sitara lived as a child in India and her journal reveals insights on returning as an adult to her natal culture. As readers, we are able to form an understanding of this part of the world through two distinct narrators.

Striving for understanding and empathy is the first step toward creating and maintaining a civil society. All too often we are unable or unwilling to hear different viewpoints, but learning about other cultures helps us in this endeavor. This issue offers compelling stories of individuals who have opened themselves to the meaning and possibilities that come from critical thought and understanding.

OHC OKLAHOMA HUMANITIES COUNCIL

News

Got Poem?

Catherine Horton of Lawton High School is the 2010 Oklahoma state winner of *Poetry Out Loud* (POL), a national poetry recitation contest sponsored by OHC in partnership with the Oklahoma Arts Council, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Poetry Foundation.

Teacher Deanna Compton of Ada High School wrote to us about her school's competition: "We knew we had to get every student on board," said Compton. "Our English department set up a coffee and hot chocolate bar on the day of competitions and encouraged students to dress in black. The students loved it. The English Department had t-shirts made that read 'Got Poem?' and teachers wore them every Friday leading up to the competitions.

"For our school-wide competition, our principal let us hold a school-wide assembly. The student body was respectful for an entire hour of recitations: we had 20 students competing. One of our coaches commented how amazed he was that we managed to get high school guys, even the jocks, to memorize and recite a poem. We were thrilled when our school winner, Amber Ransom, was selected to compete at the state finals. We are thankful for this program. Long live *Poetry Out Loud*!"

Ten regional finalists competed in this year's state finals. Names, schools, and prizes are posted on the OHC website: www.okhumanitiescouncil.org/poetry-out-loud. For information on how your school can participate, contact Dr. Jennifer Kidney: jennifer@okhumanitiescouncil.org.

Steve Sisney

Catherine Horton of Lawton High School [center], state finals winner for the 2010 *Poetry Out Loud* competition, is congratulated by judges [left to right] OHC Marketing and Development Director Traci Jinkens; OHC Board Member Beverly Davis; Oklahoma State Poet Laureate Jim Barnes; and poet and publisher Dorothy Alexander.

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OKLAHOMA HUMANITIES COUNCIL

Teresa Miller Joins OHC Board

The OHC Board of Trustees welcomes new member Teresa Miller, founder of the Oklahoma Center for Poets and Writers. Through the Center, she maintains the Oklahoma Writers Hall of Fame and sponsors the Celebration of Books, which has hosted leading authors from across the country. The Center is based at Oklahoma State University-Tulsa, where Teresa teaches advanced fiction and regional literature. She was recently featured on NPR's *The Diane Rehm Show* to discuss her memoir, *Means of Transit*. Her novels include *Remnants of Glory* and *Family Correspondence*. She is host and executive producer of the television series *Writing Out Loud,* now entering its 12th season on OETA, and was recently honored with the distinguished service award from the Oklahoma Center for the Book.

2010 Celebration of Books • September 24-25
www.poetsandwriters.okstate.edu

In Memoriam

We extend our deepest sympathies to the family, friends, and colleagues of Wilma Mankiller, who made history as the first woman to be elected Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. She was an outspoken champion of tribal social programs, including Cherokee language and literacy projects, economic development, and safeguarding the environment. Chief Mankiller was the recipient of the 2007 Oklahoma Humanities Award, the highest honor bestowed by the Oklahoma Humanities Council. We honor her achievements and dedicated service.

Chief Wilma Mankiller

Send Us Your Feedback

Send your letters and opinions to the Editor at:
carla@okhumanitiescouncil.org. Include "Letter to the Editor"
in the subject line of your message. We look forward to hearing from you.

From the OHC Board of Trustees
ED BARTH, CHAIR

The Board of Trustees made an extraordinary decision at its March meeting. It set aside more than $87,000 to assist state agencies with humanities programming during this difficult economic time. Recognition that budget cuts and limited private donations might threaten educational opportunities in our state spurred Board members to adopt this initiative conceived by our capable Executive Director, Ann Thompson.

These funds represent the increase in the general support grant that the Oklahoma Humanities Council received this fiscal year from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Rather than incorporate the increase into our general operating budget, the funds will be available through contracts to agencies that have a statewide audience and substantive programming. Already funds have been awarded to the state historical society and public television authority to sustain valuable programs.

Our ability to implement this initiative is a direct result of the foresight demonstrated by the United States Congress through its appropriation to the National Endowment for the Humanities. Each year representatives from our council visit Oklahoma's congressional delegation to advocate on behalf of the NEH. During these visits we stress the importance of NEH support grants to state humanities councils and the essential role that programming in humanities disciplines plays in the lives of all Oklahomans. Our message explains how federal support provides leverage for private donations. Every dollar that NEH grants to the Oklahoma Humanities Council is matched by local community grant recipients.

To enhance and expand cultural opportunities in our state has been our council's mission for thirty-nine years. We appreciate the valuable partnerships we enjoy with other organizations as they carry out their own critical missions. We're proud to be able to help, even in a small way, as we all endeavor to enrich the quality of life for our citizens through vital educational programming.

2010 Oklahoma Humanities Awards

Chief Judge Robert Henry (left), emcee, and awardee H.E. "Gene" Rainbolt

Curator Alison Amick and President/CEO Glen Gentele, OKCMOA

OHC honored six awardees at the annual Oklahoma Humanities Awards in March at the Oklahoma History Center in Oklahoma City. Their achievements are inspirational and demonstrate how the humanities are enriching the cultural life of our state. Awardees included:

H.E. "Gene" Rainbolt received OHC's highest honor, the Oklahoma Humanities Award, for his lifetime commitment to Oklahoma and support of humanities education.

Harlem Renaissance, an exhibition at the Oklahoma City Museum of Art, was recognized as Outstanding OHC Project, which honors a project made possible by an OHC program or grant.

The Cherokee Nation Education Program was honored with the Humanities in Education Award for its achievements in preserving the Cherokee language through the Cherokee Nation Immersion School and the Cherokee National Youth Choir.

Jamie Sullenger and Mel Chatman [not present] were honored jointly with the Community Leadership Award for their contributions to the Lena Sawner Exhibit at the Lincoln County Historical Society and Pioneer Museum in Chandler.

Devon Energy Corporation received the Community Support Award, which honors critical financial support to humanities programming.

Joe Grayson, Jr., Deputy Principal Chief, Cherokee Nation

Jamie Sullenger, Museum Administrator, Museum of Pioneer History

Larry Nichols, Chairman/CEO, Devon Energy Corporation

Call For Nominations

Nomination forms and guidelines for the 2011 Oklahoma Humanities Awards are posted on the OHC website: www.okhumanitiescouncil.org. Deadline for nominations is September 1, 2010.

The Wounds of War: A Tale of Two Americas
2010 Oklahoma Chautauqua

June 1-5, Altus • June 8-12, Tulsa • June 15-19, Enid • June 22-26, Lawton

Oklahoma Chautauqua is historical tourism at its finest. It's your chance to experience history "firsthand" by exploring characters and events from our shared past. This year's theme explores the aftermath of the Civil War and the wounds left on a divided nation and its people. Characters are a cross section of citizens who were deeply affected—both personally and professionally.

Evening performances include first-person presentations and time for audience questions—to the historical figure "in character" and to the scholar portraying the character. Daytime workshops give added insight on the cultural nuances of the era. Programs are free and open to the public. For information on specific events, contact the Arts & Humanities Council of Tulsa at: www.ahct.org. Oklahoma Chautauqua is a partnership of OHC and the Arts and Humanities Council of Tulsa.

Characters include:

- William Seward (1801-1872): Abolitionist, negotiator for the end of Atlantic slave trade.
- Clarissa Harlowe Barton (1821-1912): Battlefield nurse, founder of American Red Cross.
- Major Martin Delany (1812-1885): African American abolitionist, author, and politician.
- Robert Edward Lee (1807-1870): Confederate General, supporter of Reconstruction.
- Stonewall Jackson (1824-1863): Confederate General, brilliant military strategist.

Scholars portraying 2010 Chautauqua characters include [left to right]: Doug Mishler as Stonewall Jackson; Joseph Bundy as Major Martin Delany; Karen Vuranch as Clara Barton; Bill Worley as William Seward; and Ted Kachel as Robert E. Lee.

SKETCH TO SCREEN

THE ART OF HOLLYWOOD COSTUME DESIGN

By Brian Hearn

Consider the garments you're wearing right now. What comes to mind? Where you got them? The occasions when you've worn them? Clothing tells a story. When a motion picture costume designer reads a screenplay, they begin to visualize how the characters' clothing will help tell the story of a film. As Academy Award® nominated costume designer Deborah Nadoolman Landis puts it, "Costume design is storytelling."

In motion pictures' silent era, from approximately 1893 to 1929, the visual vocabulary of filmmaking was still being invented by controversial visionaries like D.W. Griffith. His incendiary racist blockbuster *The Birth of Nation* (1915) and historical epic *Intolerance* (1916) established a new feature-length format that is still the standard today. In the former, film star Lillian Gish acted as her own designer, conducting research to recreate an authentic Civil War era look for her character. Many up-and-coming actors brought their own clothing to film auditions, often enhancing their chances of being cast if they came dressed for the part.

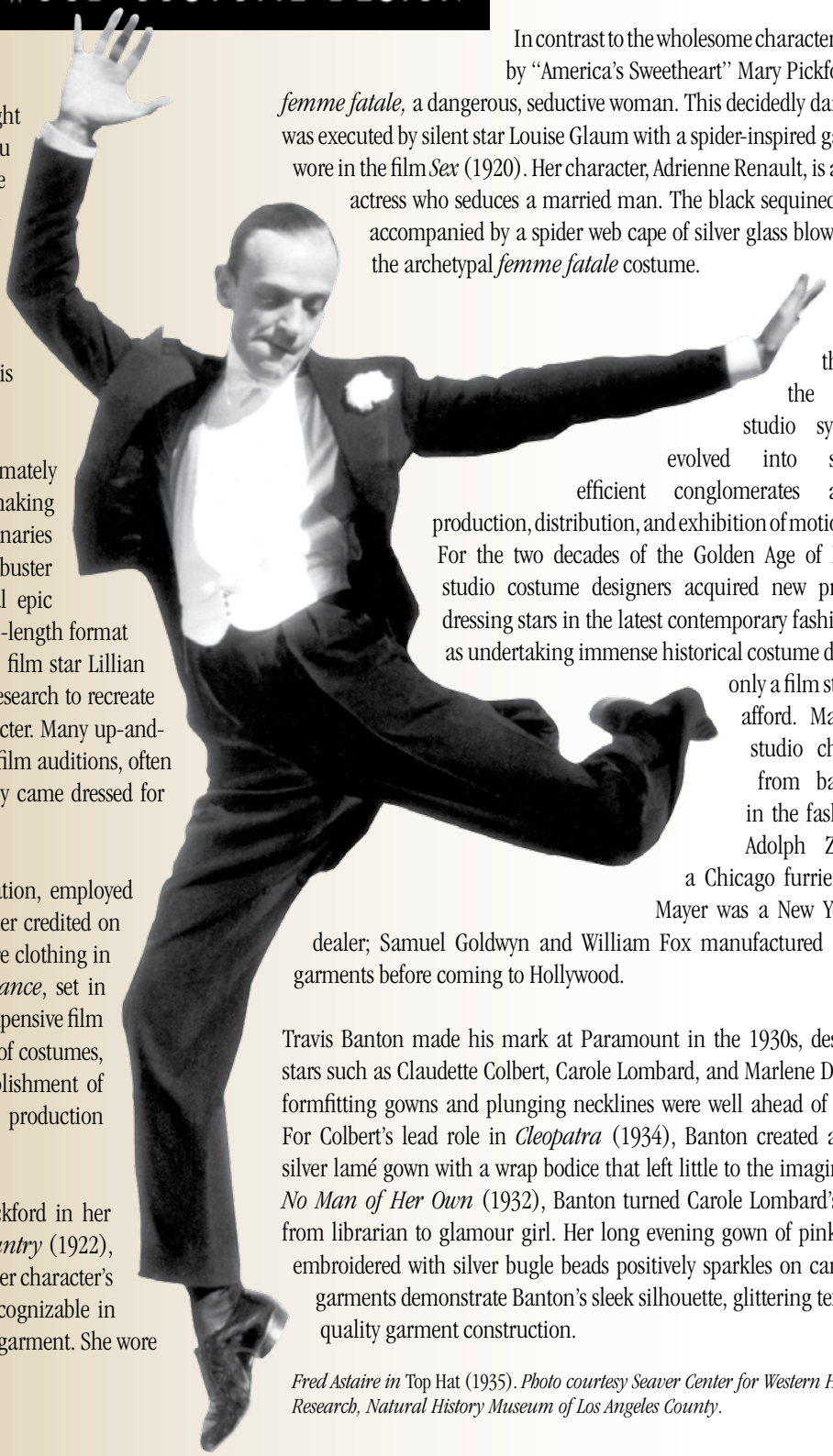
Griffith's film studio, Triangle Film Corporation, employed Clare West as the first full time studio designer credited on both of his epic films. She had studied couture clothing in Paris after graduating from college. *Intolerance*, set in four distinct historical periods, was the most expensive film ever made to that date. The film's thousands of costumes, two years in the making, required the establishment of a distinct wardrobe department within the production hierarchy.

The simple tattered frock worn by Mary Pickford in her most beloved film role, *Tess of the Storm Country* (1922), was hand picked by the star. Pickford wanted her character's humble mountain origins to be instantly recognizable in the ragged hemline and patchy texture of the garment. She wore the same garment throughout the film, helping cement the illusion of the feisty, barefoot, pre-teen Tess.

In contrast to the wholesome characters portrayed by "America's Sweetheart" Mary Pickford was the *femme fatale,* a dangerous, seductive woman. This decidedly daring design was executed by silent star Louise Glaum with a spider-inspired garment she wore in the film *Sex* (1920). Her character, Adrienne Renault, is a Broadway actress who seduces a married man. The black sequined body suit, accompanied by a spider web cape of silver glass blown pearls, is the archetypal *femme fatale* costume.

By the 1930s, the Hollywood studio system had evolved into specialized, efficient conglomerates aimed at production, distribution, and exhibition of motion pictures. For the two decades of the Golden Age of Hollywood, studio costume designers acquired new prominence, dressing stars in the latest contemporary fashions as well as undertaking immense historical costume dramas that only a film studio could afford. Many of the studio chiefs came from backgrounds in the fashion trade: Adolph Zukor was a Chicago furrier; Louis B. Mayer was a New York button dealer; Samuel Goldwyn and William Fox manufactured gloves and garments before coming to Hollywood.

Travis Banton made his mark at Paramount in the 1930s, designing for stars such as Claudette Colbert, Carole Lombard, and Marlene Dietrich. His formfitting gowns and plunging necklines were well ahead of their time. For Colbert's lead role in *Cleopatra* (1934), Banton created a two-piece silver lamé gown with a wrap bodice that left little to the imagination. For *No Man of Her Own* (1932), Banton turned Carole Lombard's character from librarian to glamour girl. Her long evening gown of pink silk crepe embroidered with silver bugle beads positively sparkles on camera. Both garments demonstrate Banton's sleek silhouette, glittering textures, and quality garment construction.



Fred Astaire in Top Hat (1935). *Photo courtesy Seaver Center for Western History Research, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.*

Adrian Adolph Greenberg, who came to be known simply as Adrian, was hired as Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's chief costume designer in 1928. One of the highlights of Adrian's tenure at MGM was the opulent production of *Marie Antoinette* (1938), which involved thousands of costumes and ballooned the film's budget to a then unheard of $3 million. It was Adrian's versatility for the differing goals of both fashion and costume that enabled him to start his own fashion house in 1941. Undoubtedly, Adrian is best remembered for his iconic ruby sequined slippers, clicked into history by Judy Garland in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), as well as the broad shoulder pads created for Joan Crawford that became a significant fashion trend in the 1940s.

Walter Plunkett came to Hollywood hoping to be an actor, but found work in the late 1920s at the RKO studio where he set up the costume department. It was here that producer David O. Selznick discovered him for the important task of clothing the hundreds of characters in *Gone with the Wind* (1939), one of the most important "costume pictures" ever made.

Of all the costume designers of Hollywood's Golden Age, Edith Head is surely the best known, most prolific, and most decorated, having won more Oscars® than any other woman—eight. She borrowed a fellow student's sketches, which she passed off as her own to get her foot in the door as a costume sketch artist at Paramount. She apprenticed under Travis Banton, eventually replacing him as chief costume designer in 1938, a position she held for 30 years. Her combination of work ethic, economical management, studio diplomacy, and wily careerism brought the work of the costume designer into the spotlight.

Two of Edith Head's Academy Awards® were for Audrey Hepburn's first two starring roles in *Roman Holiday* (1953) and *Sabrina* (1954). Head's position as costume designer was complicated by Hepburn's rapport with the young Parisian fashion designer Hubert de Givenchy. Hepburn's impeccable taste and Givenchy's designs for her contemporary characters quickly made her an instant style icon, even though Givenchy did not receive screen credit until *Funny Face* (1957). Of her long time collaborator, Hepburn commented, "Givenchy's creations always gave me a sense of security and confidence, and my work went more easily in the knowledge that I looked absolutely right . . . In a certain way one can say that Hubert de Givenchy has 'created' me over the years."

It is worth noting that in 1967 the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences made the decision to merge what were previously two categories for costume design: black and white, primarily given to contemporary films, and color, the given choice for musicals, epics, and fantasy films. Since that time, only a couple of designers have won the top prize for contemporary costume design, despite the fact that contemporary costumes represent the majority of film work today. Audiences expect to see everyday clothing which is often mistaken for a lack of design; on the contrary, just as much thought and research is required to create a convincing contemporary character. Ellen Mirojnick, veteran costume designer, said about her craft:

Travis Banton fitting Claudette Colbert as Carole Lombard looks on at Paramount Studios, 1937. Photo courtesy George Eastman House Motion Picture Department Collection.

Vivian Leigh as Scarlett O'Hara in Gone with the Wind *(1939). Photo courtesy George Eastman House Motion Picture Department Collection.*

Mary Pickford in Tess of the Storm Country *(1922). Photo courtesy George Eastman House Motion Picture Department Collection.*

SKETCH TO SCREEN

THE ART OF HOLLYWOOD COSTUME DESIGN

MAY 6 - AUGUST 15, 2010

Oklahoma City Museum of Art
Information:
(405) 236-3100
www.okcmoa.com

Funded in part
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Oklahoma Humanities Council

Sketch to Screen, an exclusive exhibition organized by the Oklahoma City Museum of Art, celebrates the contributions of film costume designers. It features garments and accessories worn by Hollywood's brightest stars, design sketches, photographs, and audio/visual media spanning nearly a century of American motion picture production. A 14-week film series in the Museum's Noble Theater will showcase the exhibition's garments from films such as G*one with the Wind, Funny Face, Dick Tracy, Atonement, Public Enemies*, and *Mamma Mia!*. Don't miss this rare opportunity to experience the designers and garments that brought to life our favorite movie characters.

Cary Grant and Deborah Kerr in An Affair to Remember (1957). *Photo courtesy George Eastman House Motion Picture Department Collection*.

Fred Astaire in Top Hat (1935). *Photo courtesy Seaver Center for Western History Research, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County*.

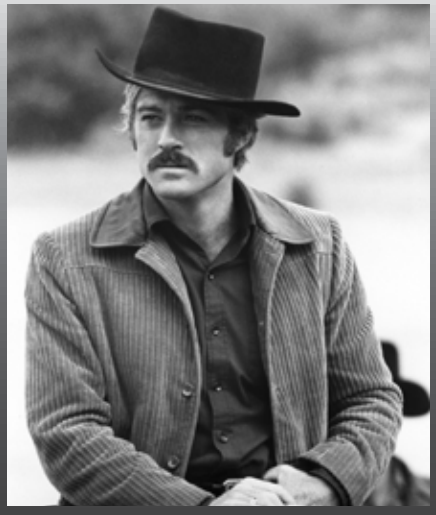
You gotta know what's in the character's closet before you're ready to dress the character for the role. What's in their mind, and what's in their past? In love, what are they willing to give up? What's their chemistry with other people? It makes me furious [that] the work that goes into these contemporary films isn't publicly appreciated by the academy. Designing the film, thinking through who that character is and how to create him visually, is an art—whether it's off a piece of paper pattern I have fabricated in the work room or off a rack at Bloomingdale's. If I dress them in something from the real world, it's because it's 100 percent appropriate.

Male film costumes often portray professions: an astronaut from *Apollo 13* (1995), a firefighter from *Backdraft* (1991), and bookmaker "Ace" Rothstein in *Casino* (1995). Some come from the imaginary worlds of comic books and animation, including Christopher Reeve's iconic *Superman* costume, Dick Tracy's yellow fedora and trench coat worn by Warren Beatty in the 1990 film, and the leather jacket and bladed gloves worn by Hugh Jackman as Wolverine in the recent *X-Men* films. The American cowboy, an early fixture of the Western film genre, was represented by garments and accessories worn by silent stars William S. Hart and Tom Mix. The evolution of Western films can be seen in garments worn by John Wayne, Robert Redford, Tom Selleck, and Heath Ledger.

In Audrey Hepburn's presentation of the Oscar® for Best Costume Design in 1986, she stated, "The costume designer is not only essential but is vital, for it is they who create the look of the character without which no performance can succeed. Theirs is a monumental job, for they must be not only artists, but technicians, researchers, and historians!"

Hollywood costumes provide a fascinating walkabout through the history of American film and shed light on the unique contributions of costume designers. The unheralded creativity and craftsmanship of those designers helped make motion pictures the dominant art form of the 20th century. Their efforts trace our shared cultural heritage of clothing the human form. ■

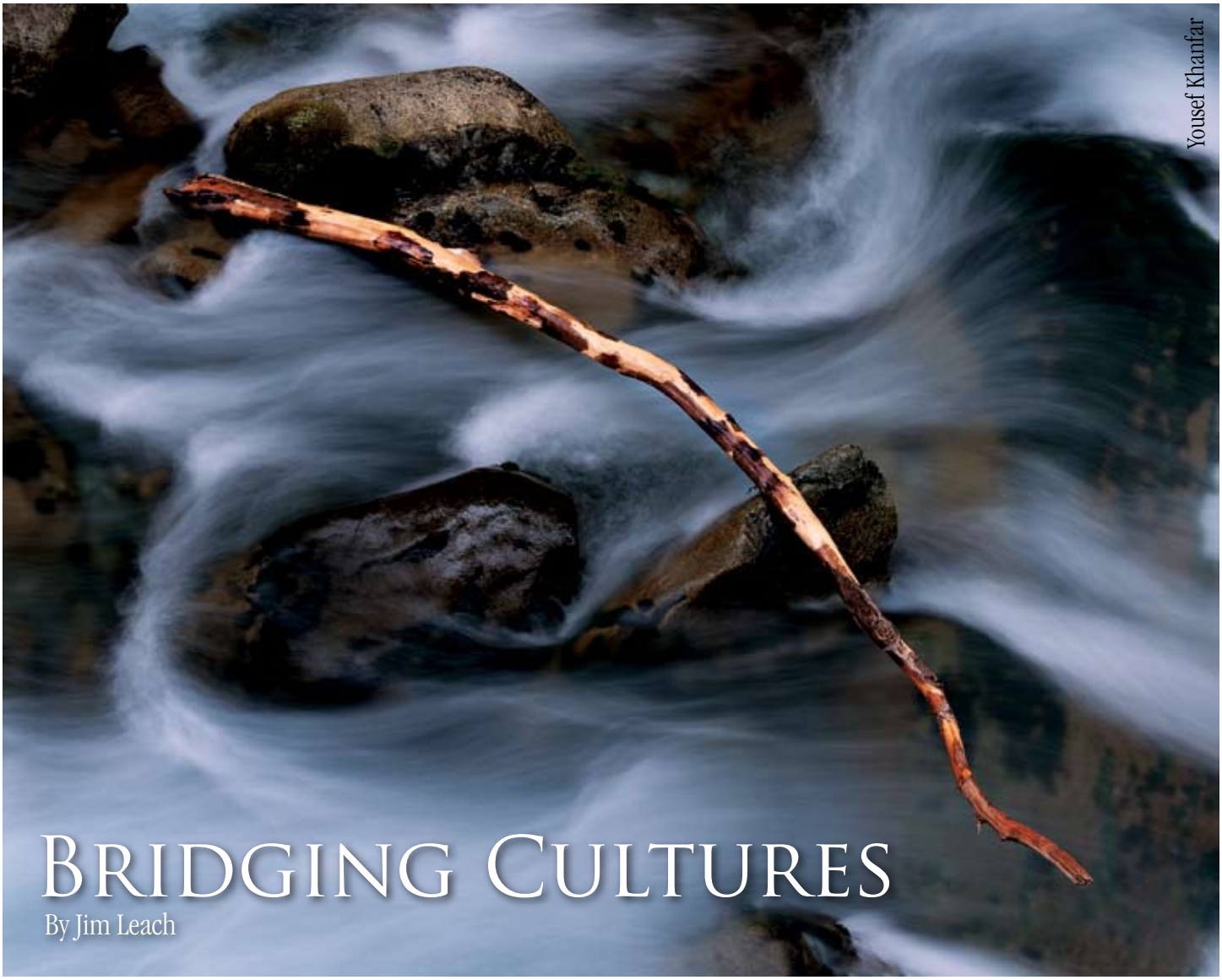
Brian Hearn is Film Curator at the Oklahoma City Museum of Art.



Robert Redford in Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (1969). *Photo courtesy George Eastman House Motion Picture Department Collection.*

Louise Glaum with costume design sketch for Sex (1920). *Photo courtesy George Eastman House Motion Picture Department Collection.*

Warren Beatty in Dick Tracy (1990). *Photo courtesy George Eastman House Motion Picture Department Collection.*



Bridging Cultures

By Jim Leach

Nominated by President Barack Obama, Jim Leach began his four-year term as Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities in July 2009. Leach served 30 years in the U.S. House of Representatives, where he chaired the Banking and Financial Services Committee, the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, and founded and co-chaired the Congressional Humanities Caucus. In 2007, Leach joined the faculty at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School as the John L. Weinberg Visiting Professor of Public and International Affairs. In September 2007, he took a year's leave of absence to serve as lecturer and interim director of the John F. Kennedy School of Government at the Harvard University Institute of Politics. Leach graduated from Princeton University, received a Master of Arts degree in Soviet politics from the School of Advanced International Studies at The John Hopkins University, and did additional graduate studies at the London School of Economics. He holds eight honorary degrees and has received numerous awards for distinguished public service. An interesting Oklahoma side note: as a three-sport college athlete Leach was elected to the Wrestling Hall of Fame in Stillwater, Oklahoma, and the International Wrestling Hall of Fame in Waterloo, Iowa.

At a time when the world is in flux and the judgment of its leading democracy is in question, studies in the humanities have never been more important.

The United States is currently intertwined in two civil wars more than a third of the way around the world. In making assumptions about the wisdom and manner of intervening in the affairs of other countries, would it be helpful for policy-makers to review the history of the French colonial experience in Algeria, the British and Russian experience in Afghanistan, the French and U.S. experience in Vietnam—before rather than after—a decision to go to war? Would it be useful to study the differences between and within the world's great religions? And would any aspects of our own colonial history be relevant to decision making?

At issue today is a world struggling with globalist forces on the one hand and localist instincts on the other. Divisions are magnified at home as well as abroad. In this context, I have proposed that the

NEH, in concert with state humanities councils, initiate a "Bridging Cultures" program aimed at enlarging our understanding of America's diverse cultural heritage and history, and that of other societies. Developing a sense for a common humanity is a moral and social imperative.

Military Strategy and Cultural Ramifications

Military strategy in the last generation has become increasingly sophisticated. But frequently left out of in-depth consideration have been cultural ramifications: the unintended consequences, particularly the aftereffects of intervention from the perspective of the society most affected and those in the world that share similar cultural traditions. At issue is not simply whether democracy is better than other methodologies of social organization and whether it can be readily imposed from the outside, but also the sobering question of whether good intentions can be counter-productive and lead to greater conflict, social disruption, and radicalization, and whether progressive transformation of any society is more likely to be achieved through means other than military intervention.

Strategic thinking that lacks a cultural component is inadequate for the times. Culture is more powerful than politics and surprisingly capable of withstanding change wrought disproportionately by force of arms.

In a set of four books called *The Alexandria Quartet*, British author Lawrence Durrell describes urban life in the ancient Egyptian city of Alexandria between the first and second World Wars. In the first book, Durrell spins a story from the singular perspective of one individual. In each subsequent book, he describes the same events from the perspective of others. While the events are the same, the stories are profoundly different, informed by each narrator's life and circumstances. The moral is that reality requires us to see things from more than one set of eyes—in a community, in a court room, or in international relations. What America does may seem reasonable from our perspective but look very different from the perspective of a European or African, a Middle Easterner or Asian. Adding the eyes and ears of others illuminates rather than narrows judgment.

Globalism vs. Localism

Albert Einstein suggested that splitting the atom had changed everything except our way of thinking. But the events of 9/11 have taught that thinking must change not simply because of the destructive power of the big bomb, but because of the implosive nature of small acts. Violence and social division are rooted in hate. Since such thought begins in the hearts and minds of individuals, it is in each of our hearts and minds that hate must be checked and our way of thinking changed.

There is a lot written today about globalism, but this century is also about localism. To adapt to a fast-changing world, one must understand both of these phenomena—the fact, as Tip O'Neill repeatedly noted, that all politics are local and, a corollary, that all local decisions are affected by international events. Caution must be taken in assuming that advocacy of a compassionate cause can trump the desires of small states to make decisions about their own futures, even seemingly irrational ones.

The Merits of Civility

The poet Walt Whitman once described America as an "athletic democracy." What he meant was that our politics in the 19th century was rugged and vigorous and spirited. Nativism—such as anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic sentiments and, of course, toleration of human degradation implicit in slavery and indentured servitude—"hallmarked" much of American thought and many of our social structures. So, uncivil behavior is nothing new. But in the context of American history, where change was wrought in the crucible of debate about the nature as well as the rights of man, little is more important for the world's leading democracy than recommitting to an ethos of thoughtfulness in the public square. The times require a new social compact rooted in mutual respect and citizen trust.

Civilization requires civility.

The concept of civility implies politeness, but civil discourse is about more than good manners. At its core, civility requires respectful engagement: to consider other views and place them in the context of history and life experiences.

Comments on the House floor several months back involving advocates on both sides of the health care debate have gathered much attention, but vastly more rancorous, socially divisive assertions are being made across the land. Public officials are being labeled "fascist" or "communist." And more bizarrely—a hint of history-blind radicalism—the notion of "secession" is creeping into the public dialogue.

One might ask: *What is the problem with a bit of hyperbole*? To paraphrase Marshall McLuhan's observation about the media, the logic is the message. Certain frameworks of thought define rival ideas. Other frameworks describe enemies. Stirring anger and playing on the irrational fears of citizens inflames hate.

Words matter. They reflect emotion as well as meaning. They clarify—or cloud—thought and energize action, sometimes bringing out the better angels of our nature, sometimes baser instincts.

Unlike natural physics, where Sir Isaac Newton pointed out that action equals reaction, in social chemistry, reaction can be greater than action. To label someone a "communist" may spark unspeakable acts; to call a country "evil" may cause a surprisingly dangerous counter-reaction. Polarizing rhetoric can exacerbate intolerance and perhaps impel violence. Conversely, healing language such as Lincoln's plea in his second inaugural address for "malice toward none" can uplift and help bring society closer together.

In politics as in family, vigilance must be maintained to insure that everyone understands each other.

Vigorous advocacy should never be considered a thing to be avoided. Argumentation is a social good. Indeed, it is a prerequisite to blocking tyranny and avoiding dogmatism. The goal

NEH Chairman Jim Leach

Bridging Cultures *(Continued from page 13)*

should be to uplift the tenor and tone of debate and infuse it with historical and philosophical perspective. How we lead or fail to lead will be directly related to how we comprehend our own history, values, and diversity of experiences—and how deeply we come to understand and respect other peoples and societies. At issue is whether we perceive ourselves as belonging to a single American community with all its variety, and whether we look at people in other neighborhoods and other parts of the world as members of families seeking security and opportunity for their kin just as we do.

Citizenship is hard. It takes a commitment to listen, watch, read, and think in ways that allow the imagination to put one person in the shoes of another. Civilization requires civility. ■

These excerpts are taken from speeches given by Chairman Leach as he crisscrosses the country on a newly-launched "civility tour." He will visit every state in the union to help initiate discussions about the state of American civility.

Teachers Praise Essay Contest

Winners of the 2010 Lincoln Essay Contest were honored at a reception at the Oklahoma History Center in April. State Representative Tad Jones was present and spoke on this year's contest topic: the impact of the Civil War and Abraham Lincoln's legacy in Oklahoma. The contest is sponsored by OHC with support from BancFirst and Sonic. A complete list of this year's winners and schools is posted on the OHC website: www.okhumanitiescouncil.org/lincoln-essay-contest.

What teachers say about the program:
Wow! I am so proud of my students. We learned and studied about Abraham Lincoln for over two weeks to prepare for this contest. I feel like my students gained so much from this experience. Thank you very much.
—*Diana Goodwin, Eufaula Elementary*

We had a young man at our school named Seth (sixth grade) who suddenly passed away from a rare illness. It was heartbreaking for all of us. Morgan Jones [1st place winner, 4-6 grade essay] has decided to use the $250 prize money to purchase books for the school library that Seth would have enjoyed, all nonfiction historical books. Thank you for giving students such an outstanding opportunity. I will definitely have students enter again next year.
—*Cindy Parks, Duncan Middle School*

Student winners of the 2010 Lincoln Essay Contest: [front row, from left] Zach Pratt, Seth Willis, Nathan Hopkins, Layna Solorzano, Curtis Taron, Brighton Potter; [middle] Henry Taverner; [back row] Emily Wilkie, Claire Thompson, Morgan Jones, Aaron White, Amy Hembree, Desiree Phipps, Ruth Toledo

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Annual Report
Fiscal Year 2009

The Oklahoma Humanities Council is an independent, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide meaningful public engagement with the humanities—disciplines such as history, literature, film studies, art criticism, and philosophy. As the state partner for the National Endowment for the Humanities, OHC provides teacher institutes, Smithsonian exhibits, reading groups, and other cultural opportunities for Oklahomans of all ages. With a focus on K-12 education and community building, OHC engages people in their own communities, stimulating discussion and helping them explore the wider world of human experience.

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Inasmuch foundation

Born in 1916 to Inez and E.K. Gaylord, Edith Kinney Gaylord grew up in the newspaper business. She began her career after attending Colorado College and graduating from Wells College by becoming a reporter for her father's Oklahoma City newspapers. In 1943, she joined the Associated Press in Washington, D.C., where she was the only woman on the general news staff. While there, she covered Eleanor Roosevelt's news conferences and acted as liaison between the First Lady and members of the press. Edith was elected to serve as the first president of the Women's National Press Club.

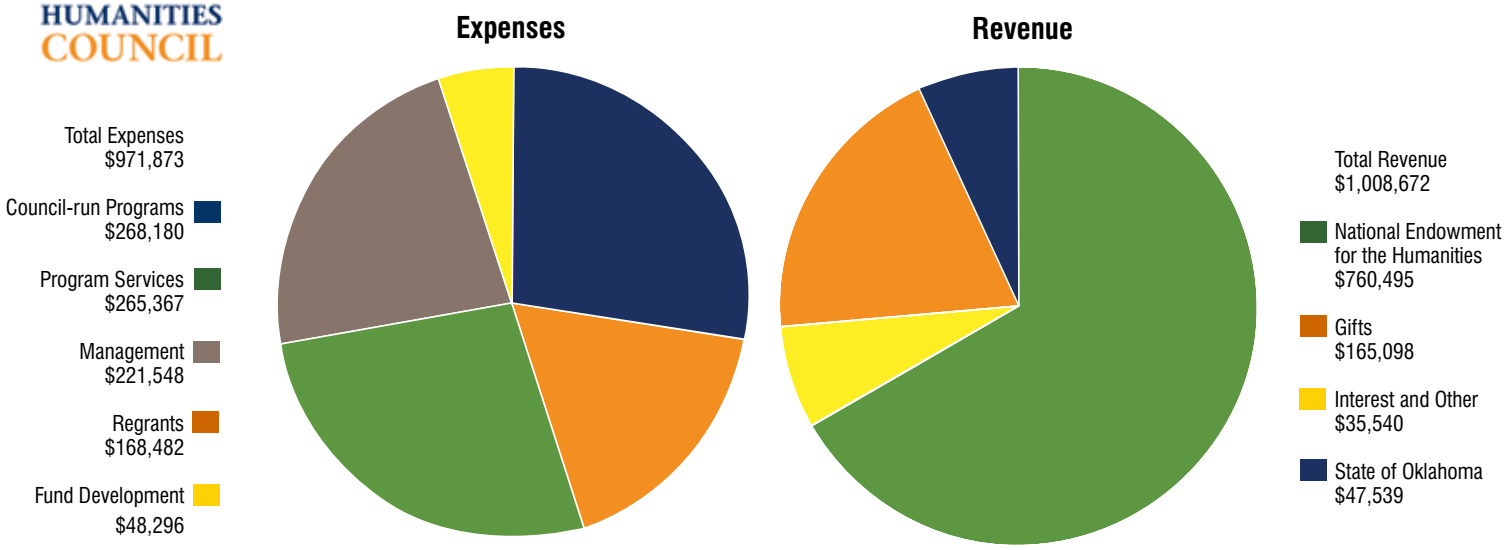
Edith returned to Oklahoma City in 1963 to rejoin the family business. At this time, she began supporting numerous community organizations and projects. In 1982, Edith founded Inasmuch Foundation to support education, arts, health and human services, historic preservation, and the environment. She also created the Ethics and Excellence in Journalism Foundation, reflecting a lifelong devotion to journalistic excellence.

Edith was a gifted journalist and writer, an active philanthropist who supported a wide variety of causes. Since inception, her foundations have collectively awarded over $106 million in grants to nonprofit organizations nationwide; $76 million of those awards have been made to nonprofits in Oklahoma.

"Funding organizations like the Oklahoma Humanities Council advances our mission," says Inasmuch President and CEO Bob Ross. "Improving the quality of life in Oklahoma through education and cultural opportunities builds a stronger, more informed citizenry."

Bob Ross
Inasmuch Foundation

Summary of Activities for the Year Ending October 31, 2009



Note: These figures are from the audited financial statements for the time period of November 1, 2008 through October 31, 2009.

Summary of Grants Awarded

Major Grants $157,099.00
Let's Talk About It, Oklahoma $27,305.59
Opportunity Grants $25,002.10
Chautauqua Grants $17,000.00
Museum on Main Street $15,000.00
Research Grants $5,500.00
Oklahoma Connections $3,932.58
Total Grants Awarded $250,839.27

In fiscal year 2009, the Oklahoma Humanities Council funded 797 programs across the state. These programs served 486,277 Oklahomans who participated in cultural events, lectures, reading and discussion groups, exhibits, teacher training, classroom competitions, and more.

For a complete listing of grants awarded, visit www.okhumanitiescouncil.org/grants

What our audiences have to say:

Teacher Institutes

It was a great experience to take part in this historical event. I would definitely recommend every teacher to attend in 2010.
—*Teacher Participant, Culture and Diversity in Curriculum at Oral Roberts University*

Oklahoma Connections

[I learned] how to understand the story through illustrations and how to read a book.
—*Participant, Purcell Public Library*

I'm interested in books and want to read more.
—*Participant, Cleveland County Literacy Program*

Oklahoma Chautauqua

I've never attended a Chautauqua before and it has been thoroughly enjoyable with quality workshops and actors. [I] can tell a great deal of work has been done by local organizations. Thank you!
—*Participant, Enid*

Let's Talk about It, Oklahoma!

Enjoyed the discussion and the thoughts it evoked.
—*Participant, Oklahoma City University*

Excellent series. The favorite of many discussions.
—*Participant, Alva Public Library*

The Smokescreen of

RACE IN AMERICA

By Rilla Askew

that that don't kill me can only make me stronger — *Romy Owens*

Stay in School. —James Brown

My godson Travis was born on a cold February morning the same week Nelson Mandela walked out of a South African prison. My niece Olivia was born a few weeks later. Travis is black. Olivia's white. They grew up watching the Disney Channel with its one black kid, one white kid, one Hispanic kid, one Asian kid entertainment ratio. Each cast their first votes ever for America's first biracial president. They're pretty much uninterested in my Boomer-age obsessions.

My niece doesn't get why people make such a big deal about race. Or she gets it, but thinks we should get over it. She graduated from one of Tulsa, Oklahoma's most racially mixed high schools. She knows about slavery, segregation, the Civil Rights Movement, but it's not part of her day-to-day story.

Travis told me he thinks racism will always be around: "Whether in big ways or small ways, once you're mixing in the world, you got to face it." He's been stopped by enough cops, followed around in stores by enough security guards to earn his skepticism. Like Olivia, though, he believes that for the most part his generation has escaped. "People don't really care about that sort of thing in our generation," he says. His girlfriend is white and they get stared at plenty, but not by their peers. "By older people. Like, maybe in their fifties."

Well, that would be me. That would be my generation. I tell myself it's great that today's kids don't have to carry the racial baggage some of us who grew up in the sixties are still lugging around. But the change feels too easy, too sanguine, and I want to say, *Watch out, kids. This is America. History will sneak up and bite y'all when you're not looking. Know your past, okay? Keep up your guard*.

In 1963, James Baldwin wrote an open letter to his fourteen-year-old nephew describing America as he saw and lived it. He told his nephew how life would be for him as a young black man, the soul-killing injustices and daily devastations:

> And this is the crime of which I accuse my country, and for which neither I nor history will ever forgive them, that they have destroyed and are destroying hundreds of thousands of lives and do not know it and do not want to know it.

The America Baldwin was writing about is the one I grew up in, a young white girl with all the privileges and presumptions of whiteness, and nobody telling me what that America really was, or why it was that way. Nobody but James Baldwin, and we weren't reading him.

The state I grew up in is one of the most segregated places in the country. I know people don't generally think of Oklahoma that way, but it's no accident that it's the only state in the union where Barack Obama did not carry a single county. Consider this: Jim Crow laws were the first laws passed by Oklahoma's legislature. From the Trail of Tears to the all-black towns to the rush of white settlement in the land runs, Oklahoma's history created the racial caldron that boiled over into the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921—a conflagration of such scale and violence it forged the separation and silent suspicion that exist to this day.

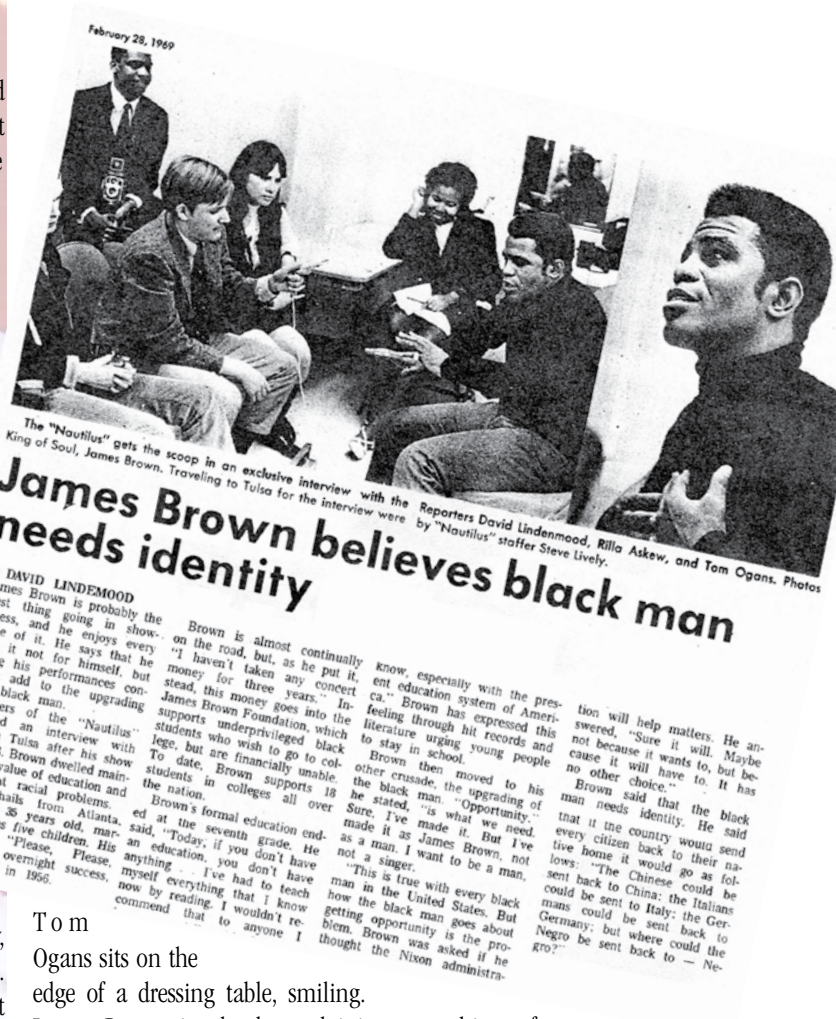
People call what happened in Tulsa a riot, but it began as a race war and turned into a pogrom as thousands of armed whites swept into Tulsa's wealthy black district and burned it to the ground. Some three hundred people, most of them black, were killed. Over a thousand black-owned businesses and homes were looted and destroyed. I knew nothing of that history growing up in Oklahoma. Hardly any white people did. But here's the thing: black people knew about it. The facts of the riot were handed down orally in black communities—not just in Oklahoma but all over the country—in direct proportion to the silence in the white communities. So when I ponder the notion of an America that's moved beyond race, I remember that for decades blacks and whites have lived and worked in close proximity, with most black people knowing what happened in Tulsa in 1921 and most white people entirely ignorant of it.

The town I grew up in, Bartlesville, is fifty miles north of Tulsa, an oil company town with good schools, clean streets, and, in the years I lived there, one of the highest per capita incomes in the nation. We also had an ugly race-and-class-based poverty kept strictly relegated to certain pockets of town. After I started seventh grade I rode a school bus through the section that politer white folks called "colored town," past ragged streets and flimsy houses even more dilapidated than the worst of the houses belonging to poor whites. For six years, twice a day, nine months of the year, I rode through this area of oppressive poverty where no white person lived, though no black person in our town lived anywhere else, and not once did I question why this was so.

This is not to say that I was unaware of race. The Civil Rights Movement was part of current events, what we talked about in social studies. It's to say that I suffered a peculiar mind-split. Our favorite music was soul music—Aretha Franklin, Sam & Dave, Otis Redding—but we wouldn't have been caught dead hanging out with black kids, any more than we would have been

caught dead hanging out with poor whites. The social stratification seemed as much about class as it was about race. Never once did it dawn on me that there was no such thing as a black middle class in our town, or anywhere else I'd ever been. If anyone had challenged me to think about it, I might have said that I thought black people were just naturally poor.

In 1969, James Brown came to Tulsa. I was a senior in high school, working on the school newspaper, and got assigned with three other students to go to the Tulsa Civic Center to interview Brown after the concert. David Lindemood, a smart, hip white kid who was cool enough that we all called him by his last name, had lobbied our journalism teacher for the chance to interview his idol, the Hardest Working Man in Show Business, the King of Funk, the famously infamous Godfather of Soul. How he'd wrangled access to Mr. Brown I didn't know, but drive to Tulsa we did, one winter-dark evening in Lindemood's car, with me riding shotgun and two other staffers in the backseat: Tom Ogans, a quiet, well-liked black kid, and Steve Lively, an aptly named red-headed livewire and the school paper's primary photographer. We weren't scheduled to go to the concert itself, only backstage afterwards for the interview. I wondered why we weren't seeing James Brown's performance so we could write about that too, but I didn't ask.


February 28, 1969

The "Nautilus" gets the scoop in an exclusive interview with the Reporters David Lindenmood, Rilla Askew, and Tom Ogans. Photos King of Soul, James Brown. Traveling to Tulsa for the interview were by "Nautilus" staffer Steve Lively.

James Brown believes black man needs identity

DAVID LINDEMOOD

James Brown is probably the hottest thing going in show-business, and he enjoys every minute of it. He says that he enjoys it not for himself, but because his performances continually add to the upgrading of the black man.

Members of the "Nautilus" staff had an interview with Brown in Tulsa after his show on Jan. 28. Brown dwelled mainly on the value of education and the current racial problems.

Brown hails from Atlanta, Ga. He is 35 years old, married and has five children. His first hit, "Please, Please, Please," an overnight success, was released in 1956.

Brown is almost continually on the road, but, as he put it, "I haven't taken any money for three years." Instead, this money goes into the James Brown Foundation, which supports underprivileged black students who wish to go to college, but are financially unable to do so. To date, Brown supports 18 students in colleges all over the nation.

Brown's formal education ended at the seventh grade. He said, "Today, if you don't have an education, you don't have anything . . . I've had to teach myself everything that I know now by reading. I wouldn't recommend that to anyone I know, especially with the present education system of America." Brown has expressed this feeling through hit records and literature urging young people to stay in school.

Brown then moved to his other crusade, the upgrading of the black man. "Opportunity," he stated, "is what we need. Sure, I've made it. But I've made it as James Brown, not as a man. I want to be a man, not a singer.

"This is true with every black man in the United States. But how the black man goes about getting opportunity is the problem. Brown was asked if he thought the Nixon administration will help matters. He answered, "Sure it will. Maybe not because it wants to, but because it will have to. It has no other choice."

Brown said that the black man needs identity. He said that if the country would send every citizen back to their native home it would go as follows: "The Chinese could be sent back to China; the Italians could be sent back to Italy; the Germans could be sent back to Germany; but where could the Negro be sent back to — Negro?"

We arrived at the Tulsa Civic Center just as the show was letting out. The audience pouring from the concert hall was huge, loud, celebratory, and black. In those moments my world turned around. Gravity vanished. I could have been in another universe for how disoriented I felt. It wasn't just that I'd never been in the minority, it was that my adolescent mind was incapable of grasping such a thing even as I was in the middle of it. I felt like a flimsy white leaf tossed about on a sea of blackness.

It occurred to me that Lindemood had understood very well that ours would be three of very few white faces in that huge arena, and that was why he hadn't lobbied for us to go to the concert. I shrank down inside myself, baffled and timid, trying not to lose sight of his blond head as we made our way against the streaming crowd into the bowels of the Civic Center.

This was January 28, 1969. The assassination of Martin Luther King had taken place ten months before. U.S. athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos had just rocked white America's sensibilities with their Black Power salute at the 1968 Olympics. James Brown's anthem "Say It Loud – I'm Black and I'm Proud" had been at the top of the charts for five months.

I remember how bright the dressing room seemed, all those lighted mirrors. Mr. Brown had just finished one of his stunningly athletic shows but he was cool and relaxed as we filed in. We weren't the only students in the room; there were kids from other area schools, maybe seven or eight of us in all. James Brown's campaign to encourage young people to stay in school was well established; he'd set up a foundation to send black kids to college, he gave readily of his time to young people. For years I kept tucked away in my billfold the small scrap of notebook paper he signed for me that night: *Stay in school. James Brown.*

The picture that appeared later in our school newspaper shows Lindemood and me sitting in metal folding chairs directly across from Brown. Behind us, Tom Ogans sits on the edge of a dressing table, smiling. James Brown is clearly explaining something of significance. I wish I knew what was being said at that moment when Steve Lively snapped the picture, but I don't remember. What I remember, with great chagrin, is this: I argued with James Brown.

I mean *argued*—disagreeing with him, contradicting him, jumping in with my own youthful opinions for what seems now, in memory, like an excruciatingly long time. I couldn't understand why the singer couldn't understand what I was trying to explain to him. "But we've got to have integration!" I kept saying. "How else are we going to get to know each other?"

And James Brown answered, "No, that's not it."

Many times I've returned to that image of me insisting to James Brown—who'd grown up under the terrorism of the American South: lynchings, burnings, social and economic subjugation—that all that was needed to solve our country's race problems was for white kids and black kids to go to school together. That's what the term "integration" meant to me. We were fifteen years past *Brown v. Board of Education*, but the nation's schools were still de facto segregated. In Bartlesville, every black child went to Douglass Elementary. No white child ever went there. I'd never sat next to or even spoken to a black kid before I started junior high.

The national firestorm over school busing was just over the horizon, racial tensions were simmering, and I pressed upon Mr. Brown my absolute confidence that integration was the fix for our problems. "How are we going to get over our prejudices if we don't know each other?" The recognition never glimmered that if we weren't so segregated in terms of jobs and housing, if

blacks and whites lived in the same neighborhoods and worshipped in the same churches and worked together in the same offices, the issue of school desegregation would be moot.

I thought James Brown was simply disagreeing with me, that he was saying we didn't need integration at all. What he was actually saying I can only glean in retrospect from the article that appeared in our school paper: "Opportunity is what we need. Sure I've made it. But I've made it as James Brown, not as a man. I want to be a man, not a singer. This is true with every black man in the United States."

I also recall grainy television images of African American men in suits and dark fedoras carrying signs in the streets of Memphis: I Am A Man. Martin Luther King was in Memphis to support the garbage workers' strike for economic justice when he was killed. *I am a man*.

I think that James Brown was trying to tell us that integration was a necessary beginning, yes, but a lie unless accompanied by the whole change because there can be no social equality without economic equality. I look now at the line of progression from Abraham Lincoln's question before emancipation, 'Is the Negro A Man?' to King's assassination when black men were marching in Memphis declaring 'I Am A Man!' to James Brown's black power anthem, "Say it Loud–I'm Black and I'm Proud." Back then I heard only the gritty shout of racial pride in Brown's anthem, but the call for economic justice is right there in his lyrics:

> All the work I did was for the other man,
> and now we demand to do things for ourselves.

I think that James Brown was trying to tell us that integration was a necessary beginning, yes, but a lie unless accompanied by the whole change because there can be no social equality without economic equality.

Racial tensions in this country don't run solely along a black/white fault line, of course. Increasingly they run between both these races and brown-skinned immigrants, because the trouble is, and always has been, about economics as well as race. I don't mean to say that race isn't the source of America's most painful and enduring turmoil, but race has also been a type of smokescreen. Why did the most destructive assault by whites on blacks in our history take place in Tulsa? Because Tulsa's Greenwood District was wealthy. "America's Black Wall Street." W.E.B. Dubois described it three months before the riot as "the finest example of Negro self-sufficiency in the nation." Why did I grow up believing that black people were just naturally poor? Because the obliteration of wealth and self-sufficiency in North Tulsa was absolute—the effects of the riot's terror and devastation rolled north to Bartlesville, rippling out in waves to black communities all over Oklahoma, and beyond.

From the nation's earliest days, skin color has been the marker that allowed one part of us to hate and fear another part—and the harder the economic times, the more freedom we've given ourselves to use that marker. But we're finished with that old story, we think. We admire entertainers, athletes, celebrities of all races. Today, maybe it's only black youths in groups we fear—their coded signs, loud voices, how they dress. Or maybe it's illegal Mexicans flooding over the borders to take our jobs. Maybe it's Arabs, or Pakistanis, Cambodians, some kind of other-skinned people who could rob us of what we have or keep us from getting what we want.

Or maybe it's people who look like us but don't talk or work like us; maybe it's men who've done time in prison, out-of-work truckers, overweight young mothers collecting food stamps. Class prejudice is an old American story too, one of our slyest.

I'd like to warn that naïve young me arguing with James Brown. I see now that in her well-meaning ignorance, she's dangerous. She thinks the divisions are about skin color mostly, and that if we just get to know each other a little better, we'll all get along. She doesn't know the truth of her history.

There's a parallel between that girl and who we are now. When I hear middle-class, middle-aged whites speaking with such remorse about America's racial past, I also hear hidden in that regret a powerful, unconscious class prejudice. We explain how there wasn't any racial bigotry in our own families, that we had black friends growing up, our kids have friends of all colors. We go on to describe how fine and "normal" these black friends are: "She took ballet lessons with the same teacher I did." "Her father was a doctor." "He attends the same private school as my son."

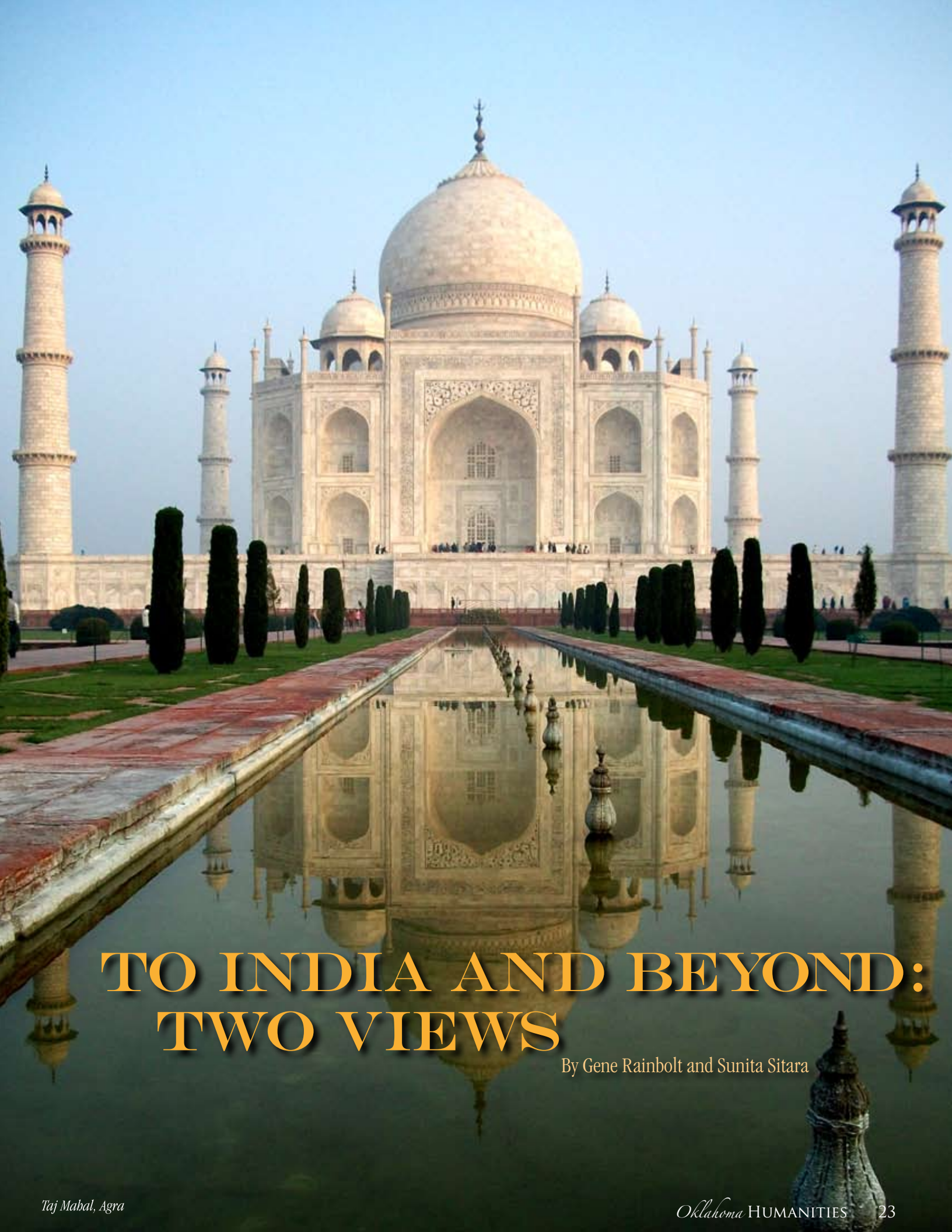
We feel sure that as a country we're getting past all the old biases, and we're relieved to think so. We have a black family in the White House, we're a post-racial country, and that's good, that is good, we are very happy to know it.

It's just that I keep hearing James Brown talking truth to a bunch of kids in a brightly lit dressing room in Tulsa: *Stay in school*.

This is America, kids. Educate yourselves. Learn the truth of your country. Watch out for smokescreens. ■

Rilla Askew's first novel, *The Mercy Seat*, received the Oklahoma Book Award and the Western Heritage Award in 1998. *Fire in Beulah*, her novel about the Tulsa Race Riot, received the American Book Award and the Myers Book Award. In 2008 her novel *Harpsong* received the Oklahoma Book Award, the Western Heritage Award, and the WILLA Award.

Image pg. 19: Romy Owens, a contemporary artist living in Oklahoma City, spends most of her time taking photos and sewing them together. The dualistic nature to her work showcases chaos and control. www.romyowens.com.



TO INDIA AND BEYOND: TWO VIEWS

By Gene Rainbolt and Sunita Sitara

Taj Mahal, Agra

Gene and Sunita, Bhutan

Gene Rainbolt, Chairman of BancFirst Corporation and recipient of the 2010 Oklahoma Humanities Award, has an eye for business and a quest for knowledge. He particularly enjoys novels that are culturally and historically accurate. "I have read many Indian authors as well as novels with India as a subject," says Rainbolt, "including English author M.M. Kaye's *The Far Pavilions*. I've had a number of Indian friends over the years, some from the time of my military service in Korea, and have long wanted to travel to India."

One of those friends is Sunita Sitara, whose grandparents left India at the turn of the last century. Sitara was born in Nairobi, Kenya, and is second-generation East African. She says that her Indian heritage is "one hundred percent," but her travel and life experience—living in disparate places such as Delhi, London, and Oklahoma City—have influenced her perspective. "I don't feel completely Indian, nor do I feel African," she explains. "Long ago I came to the conclusion I am a hybrid."

The two have been friends for decades, so when Rainbolt began considering a trip to India and the need for a knowledgeable guide, Sitara was the logical choice. "I wanted someone that could speak Hindi," Rainbolt said, "someone who is Hindu that could interpret for me as well as debate with me." As you will see in the travel entries featured here, their conversations were indeed spirited.

Following are excerpts from their travel journals, in which they amassed more than 23,000 words collectively during a 30-day exploration of India, Nepal, and Bhutan. The contrast in their perspectives is striking: two people, two genders, two different ethnic backgrounds. For them, "bridging cultures" begins with curiosity and an open mind.

February 16 – Countdown to India!

Sunita: In twelve days I will be boarding a plane to India, land of my heritage, a place that pulls at my heartstrings and frustrates me as well. I marvel at the way Indian people have carved their lives with limited resources. I see Indians as a resilient people who have overcome and integrated many cultures of the world. No doubt, as this journey progresses, I will receive numerous insights.

March 3 – Delhi

Gene: Beginning with a walking tour of Old Delhi, I discovered the India I had expected. The streets were covered with garbage, litter, and people lying about. Poverty was beyond imagination, with people sleeping on the streets, on walks, on roads—simply anywhere. The density of the population may be the highest in the world. Alleyways and streets were filled with little shops selling everything imaginable.

New Delhi and Old Delhi are part of the same city, but very different. New Delhi is modern with broad streets, beautiful landscaping, and relative cleanliness, although the population appears indifferent about trash, readily throwing it on the street. Old Delhi shows no sign of development, compounded by people moving to the city, trying to sustain their families. Old Delhi will be a tremendous challenge for solving the crisis of horrible poverty.

In the afternoon we visited the cremation site of Mahatma Gandhi. The attitude of those present reflected the respect that Gandhi held. It was a day of immense contrast, which reflects India as I have thus far seen it.

Sunita: Gone are the shacks by the road that I remember from the brief time I lived in Delhi. The people and the government have worked very hard at improving this city and, to their credit, have achieved success. Old Delhi is another story; it has the chaos and squalor most people identify with India. I don't understand how one part of the city can be so organized; the other side, mayhem. Perhaps the lifestyle is too ingrained and the problem too large.

March 4 – Train trip to Haridwar

Gene: The trip was about five hours across the central plains of India. The countryside was lovely, verdant, productive. Haridwar is in the foothills of the Himalayas, situated on the upper reaches of the Ganges River, referred to as "River Ganga."

In Haridwar, the big event is Aarti, a ceremony held every evening at sunset. Throngs gathered about one hour before sunset, many bathing in the Ganges, which cleanses the soul and brings protection. I bathed my feet in the river! It is also a very commercial event: trinkets are sold; religious absolutions and blessings are sold; floating containers of flowers, mostly marigolds, are sold; and beggars are everywhere. Children begging were so pervasive you could not respond—a heart-rending experience.

Aarti means "prayer." Sunita said prayers for her deceased parents and two brothers. For her, it was a very emotional experience and being at "Aarti on the Ganga" is apparently a desire held by all of Indian background, but few can afford. In a way, it is Mecca to a Muslim, or Jerusalem for Christians.

A question: With the Hindu inclination against violence (gentleness toward all creatures) has this made the country less able to develop and more accepting of poverty—or has poverty been so endemic that acceptance is a necessity?

March 5 – Haridwar

Sunita: Haridwar is where Hindus come to witness the awesome beauty of the River Ganga. Hindus want their ashes to flow in the waters of the river because she is the river of life, she will carry our soul to the creator.

When I was ten, my parents went to Haridwar. Yesterday, I could not but help think of them. I wondered: Am I standing on the same spot that my parents stood? *I have always wanted to do a ceremony on behalf of my parents and two brothers, lost to us a long time ago. I cried as the priest bestowed the blessings on the flowers and lighted the wick. As I watched the beautiful blossom boat float away from me, my heart ached. I was so grateful that my dear friend Gene was with me to give support. I had the opportunity to fill a bottle with water from the River Ganga. The water from this river is my prized possession, like liquid gold. I intend to share this holy water with all my family members!*

Gene: Now I have seen the essence of India! In the morning we visited a cremation site on the banks of the Ganges, where three bodies were being cremated. Wood and ghee (butter) are sold to provide the pyre. Apparently, women are not allowed to participate as they stood some distance away while the men tended and stoked the fire. We proceeded to Rishikesh. En route we passed orchards of mango trees and incredible amounts of intolerable poverty. Traffic continues chaotic and the rule of the road is the biggest vehicle goes first (by force), with horns warning continuously. We boarded a ferry on the river, where Sunita filled her container with river water. For her, and all around, it was a sacred event.

March 7 – Kathmandu, Nepal

Sunita: People from the West constantly apply their values on other cultures. All the people on board the flight were from European countries and the U.S. I heard no end of complaints about the way these countries are run. Some people were remarking that they will be going to India next and "only heaven knows" what awaits them there. Here are my thoughts: Go with an open mind. Don't go if you are going to impose your values on a people you really don't understand.

Gene: The most impressive visit was to a stupa—a monument to a former ruler, which was surrounded by temples and a large Buddhist monastery. The monks wore red as opposed to saffron in other areas. Dogs, monkeys, and people were everywhere, with people making offerings, burning incense, turning prayer wheels, once again reflecting the pervasiveness and influence of religion.

March 8 – Kathmandu, Nepal

Gene: I awakened very early, asking myself if I want to spend another three weeks seeing millions of desperate people, more shrines, and more despair. I am very uncertain! Dust, dirt, debris, dogs, people, and filth—that is Nepal. Amongst the squalor, the trees are flowering. It is spring.

We went in a cybershop where you can use a computer or make telephone calls. It is a connected world. With the long drought, there is discussion of global warming. The locals are quite familiar with the concept. This afternoon we visited a cremation site

Sunita's ceremonial offering

where two pyres were burning. As I understand, a body is attempted to be cremated within four hours and is wrapped in white in preparation. The fire burns for two hours, after which the ashes are swept into the most polluted stream imaginable. Cremation presumably releases the soul from the dead body, allowing the soul to migrate to the next stage of being. No grief apparent, the guide observed. Grief is to be expressed at home. Perhaps the belief in reincarnation and Nirvana ameliorate the grief. The guide said it best: "Death is a reality."

Sunita: Our stay in Kathmandu is now over. This country has so many challenges. The people of Nepal are very endearing, gentle spirited. My heart does ache wondering how they will dig themselves out of the hole. We went to a cremation site on a holy river. The stark contrast between what we witnessed on the Ganga and here was heartbreaking. The river is stagnant, polluted. Gene loves to debate the consequences of how religion affects a community: Does it hinder or help? I am still pondering that question!

March 9-10 – Bhutan

Gene: What a welcome respite! Bhutan has a population of about 700,000 people, so it is not crowded. It is Buddhist, founded by a Tibetan monk about 450 years ago. Last year the reigning King abdicated in favor of his son, who is highly educated and progressive. The new King initiated a democracy, about which the people seem happy. With 50 percent literacy, life span of 65 years, Bhutan is attractive. The goal of the government is happiness, apparently defined as having education, electricity, health care, housing, and food. The younger generation who all have cell phones and computer access are going to change traditions! It will be interesting to observe if happiness can be maintained in a country well aware of what they do not have.

Young musicians, Nepal

Sunita: Bhutan is so different than any other place we have visited. It seems Bhutan has a government that cares about its people. This country believes in the gross national happiness of its people. People lead simple lives, bartering with their neighbors. The Bhutanese people are kind and generous. They are amazed I can speak Hindi. We have had long discussions about religion and just being still, being one with nature.

March 11 – Kolkata

Gene: We are back in the land of incredible population, unbelievable poverty, but on a festival day: Holi, the Festival of Colors, celebrated by throwing bright colors on each other. Along our route, young people were doused with purple, pink, and green. For me the most interesting visit was to the Headquarters of the Sisters of Mary, Mother Teresa's organization. Mother Teresa is entombed here. There are 13 locations in Kolkata where children are cared for by the organization. What an impressive commitment.

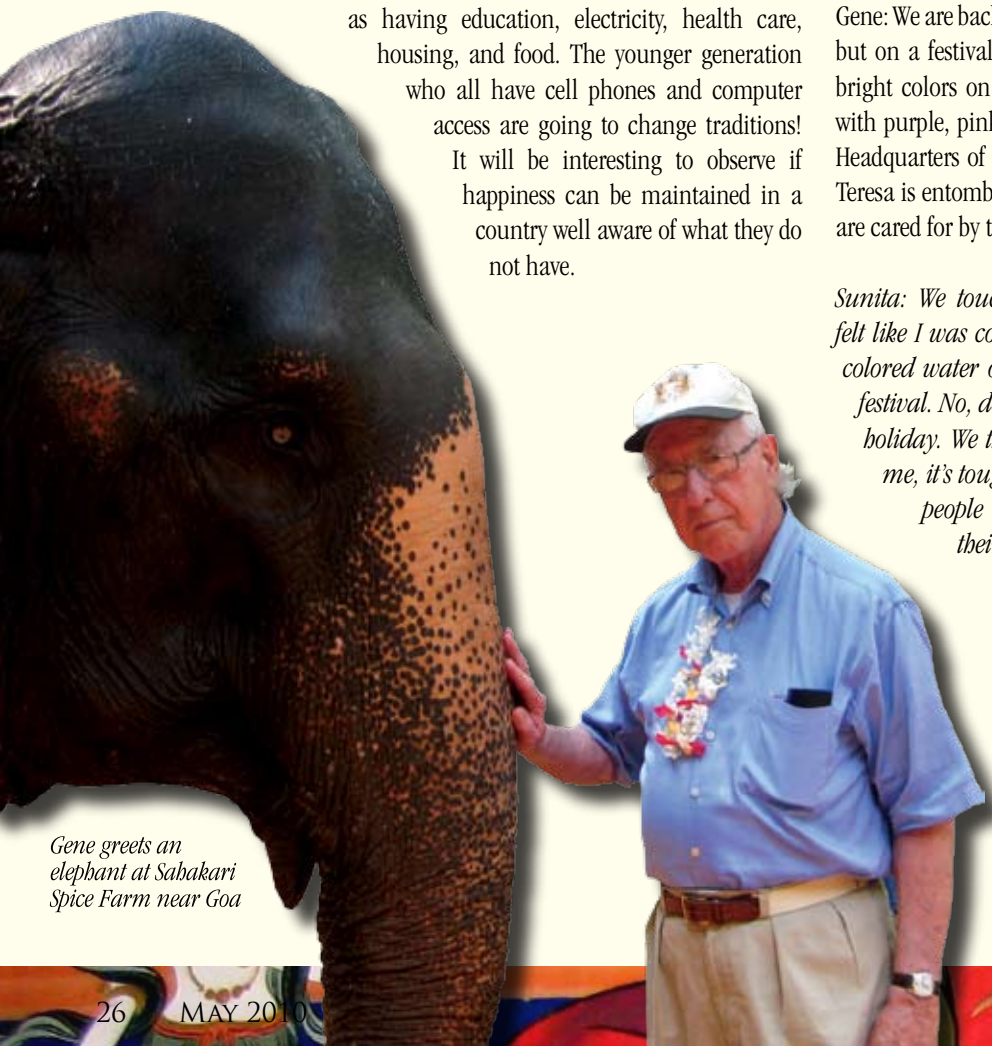
Sunita: We touched down this morning in Kolkata. From the air I felt like I was coming home. Today is the festival of Holi. People throw colored water or powder at each other. As a child it was my favorite festival. No, doubt it began as a harvest festival. Today, it's a national holiday. We then went to see the mission run by Mother Teresa. For me, it's tough to see Hindus converting to a different religion. I feel people can help their own kind without having to abandon their entire belief system.

March 12 – Kolkata

Gene: I think my senses are sufficiently numbed that whatever else I see will seem routine. For an affluent American, the density, poverty, smell, and hopelessness is simply beyond imagination.

March 15 – Mahabalipuram

Sunita: We went to Mahabalipuram, a beach town on the eastern coast of India. I remember this town



Gene greets an elephant at Sahakari Spice Farm near Goa

from my earlier travels. I have seen families spending time together, laughing and enjoying each other's company—positive images. The guide and I both agreed more people need to see a balanced picture of this incredible country.

March 17-18 – Goa

Gene: Another view of India! We are on the west coast where the Arabian Sea is our view, a comfortable respite before the assault of Mumbai. Wading in the ocean was soothing and connecting. I stayed until sunset, which was not spectacular by Oklahoma standards. Goa is a lovely place and makes every effort, including language, to differentiate itself from India. Tomorrow, the real India: Mumbai.

Sunita: After my sunset stroll, we ate outside, listening to the waves and the palm trees swaying in the breeze. Gene and I spent our usual time contemplating our different views on humanity. Tomorrow we leave for Mumbai. I am not sure if my state of being is ready to see what lies ahead.

March 19-20 – Mumbai

Gene: Mumbai is a cosmopolitan city. There are numerous high rise offices and plush apartment buildings. Traffic is horrendous and will be more so when the Nano (a $2,000 car produced by Tata) is introduced. The waters surrounding the island are terribly polluted and smog was heavy on the horizon. The population of Mumbai is reported to be 18 million, more or less.

Indigenous things we saw were Dhobi Ghat, where washermen were pounding clothes in a concrete vat. The wet clothes are hung to dry in every conceivable location over acres and acres of deplorable shacks. But, it is India!

We visited a home where Mahatma Gandhi worked and lived when he was in Bombay. Depictions of Gandhi's life and struggle for freedom were extremely impressive. Freedom, equality, and justice for every man were amongst his quests, and pursuing justice without violence. In the end, violence ended his life when he was assassinated in 1948 by a fundamentalist who disagreed with Gandhi's reluctant agreement to separate India and Pakistan. Gandhi's philosophy was so gentle, so simple: equality for all. He could have been, may have been, a prophet. Sadly, his dreams have been slow to blossom.

Sunita: Tomorrow Gene is determined to see the slums of Mumbai. Needless to say, I am not going.

March 21 – Mumbai

Gene: Today I attempted to see the life of the slum Indians. The driver and I drove to Dharavi, the largest slum in Mumbai. My entry point was a public school where I toured several classrooms of primary students. The children performed for me their English skills. Each student was selected and, without exception, recited properly. The children were beautiful, bright, enthusiastic, and *very* responsive. The children all live in the slums, but were dressed reasonably well.

As to the slums, the crowding, the number of people, the incredible number of children, and the cacophony was overwhelming. That said, to my surprise the atmosphere was not nearly so overwhelming as Old Delhi or as garbage-strewn as Kolkata. But, hope to escape? Probably not much.

My driver asked if I would like to visit his home in the slums. Of course I said yes and we drove to his area. Immediately, we were in a warren of cubicles where the walkway required me to walk sideways. The individual spaces, stacked on top of each other, were tiny and families were living in 8 x 10 rooms. The driver, Tara, had typical space, about 8 x 10. After winding around we came to a vertical ladder to his space. The only way I could climb the ladder was to lean against the wall of the building behind me.

The entry was about three feet high and four feet wide and we had to crawl through. Inside, he has a cot, a hot plate, a tiled floor where he can pour water on himself and bathe, an overhead fan, a few shelves, and buckets of drinking and bathing water. He gets his water from a tap that is on from 5:30 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. and must transport it in buckets through the crawl space. I asked about a toilet and we went out behind the slum on the edge of the harbor. He pointed to the left and said, "That's for the men," and then to some rocks on the right and said, "That's for the women." Apparently, high tide flushes the waste. We drove by other slums and they had public toilets which dumped directly into an unbelievably polluted, slow-flowing canal covered with garbage. How do people survive? Or do they?

On return to the hotel, I went to the rooftop restaurant where I ate the buffet, had dessert, drank Turkish coffee, and gazed out over the Arabian Sea. My tab was 2,500 rupees. My driver pays 1,000 rupees for a month in his miserable abode.

Bikers sporting the festival colors of Holi, Kolkata

March 24 – Agra, The Taj Mahal

Gene: We visited the Taj Mahal at sunset. It is of marble on the exterior, absolutely symmetrical, enormous, serene, and lovely. The Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore wrote of the Taj Mahal, "Let the splendor of the diamond, pearl and ruby vanish like the magic shimmer of the rainbow. Only let this one teardrop, the Taj Mahal, glisten spotlessly bright on the cheek of time." Dramatic, but descriptive.

Sunita: Yesterday, while Gene and I were coming back to our hotel in the evening, I remarked that no city in India sleeps at night. He very quietly quipped, "They have no room. They all have to take turns sleeping!" It was so funny, I am still laughing about it.

March 25 – Agra, The Taj Mahal

Sunita: We have seen so many faces of India, it's hard to pick a favorite city or experience. I am not ready to leave India. The people, sounds, and aromas of this place will haunt me until I return.

Gene: And the end approaches! We were at the Taj Mahal shortly after 6 a.m. The changing light put emphasis on color, pattern, size, and location. To say the structure is awe inspiring is a gross understatement! Majestic, serene, lovely—all words fit inadequately. Seeing the monument from the inside emphasized the incredible amount of intricate carving and inlay. How such a structure was built in the 17th century is miraculous.

Excepting our journey to Delhi tomorrow for the purpose of flying home, our trip is complete. I will continue to process my thoughts for a long time.

April 3 – Life Back to Normal?

Sunita: It's been eight days since I have been home from India. My surroundings are so quiet. No throngs of people in perpetual motion. I would like to go back with my children, show them their heritage. Will they love this country as much as I do?

April 8, 2010 – One Year Later

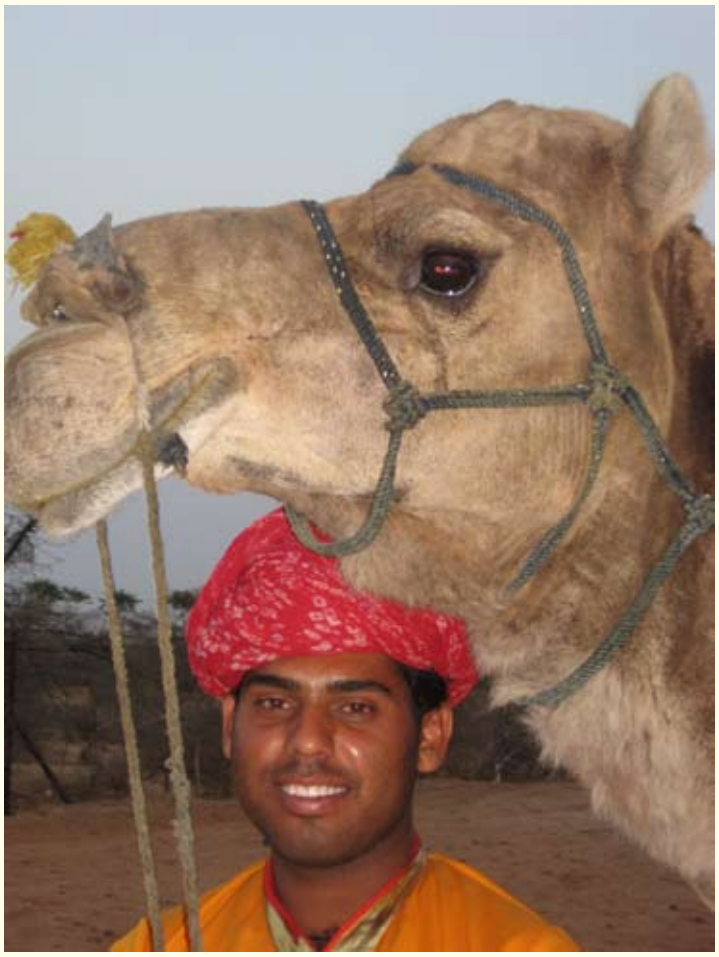
Gene: I continue to think about the problems of India, like sanitation, that could be solved with very little money and resources. Maybe that's a Western point of view, but I wonder: *Why wouldn't you make your existence as comfortable as you can*? I have had to come to accept that there's an Eastern mentality, which focuses on the spiritual, and a Western one, which focuses on the material, and each is a consequence of time and circumstance. Maybe it's inevitable that we are who we are, and they are who they are. ■

A walk along the Arabian Sea, Goa

Bright powders used to celebrate Holi, the festival of colors, Nepal

Dhobi Ghat area where washermen pound clothes in concrete vats, Mumbai

Street scene in Agra



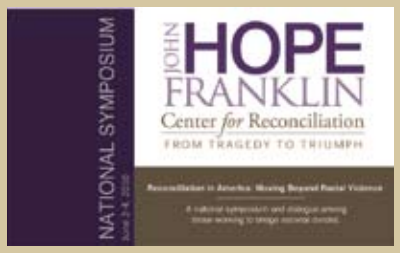
Camel and cart driver at a farm outside Jaipur

Amber Fort in city of Amber, the ancient capital of the Rajput Empire

Calendar

Don't miss these outstanding events supported by OHC grants. You can find hundreds of cultural activities and free public events on our website: www.okhumanitiescouncil.org/calendar.

SYMPOSIUM



Reconciliation in America: Moving Beyond Racial Violence
June 2-4, Tulsa
Information: 918/295-5009
www.jhfcenter.org

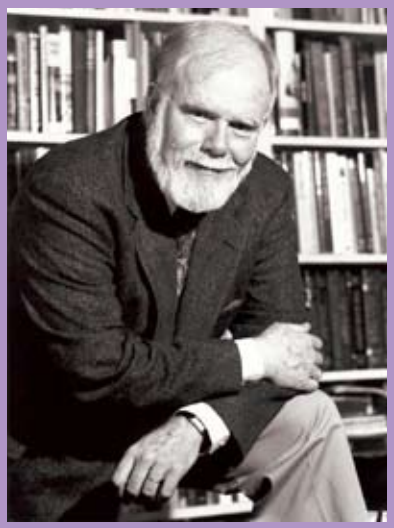
National symposium, sponsored by the John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation in Tulsa, will explore current research on race relations and reconciliation in the U.S. and internationally. The keynote address and Town Hall sessions are open to the public and will encourage dialogue among scholars, practitioners, and citizens on advancing the work of reconciliation locally and nationally. Contact the JHF Center for information and location of events.

LECTURE

Why History Museums Matter
September 23, 10 a.m.
Cox Convention Center
Robinson & Sheridan Ave.
Oklahoma City
Information: 405/424-7757
www.okmuseums.org

Susan Stamberg, journalist and correspondent for National Public Radio, will be a keynote speaker at the annual meeting of the American Association for State and Local History and the Oklahoma Museums Association. Stamberg will address the topic "Why History Museums Matter." The event is free and open to the public. *Photo: ©2006 NPR, by Antony Nagelmann.*

LECTURE



Entrepreneurship in the Old West
November 18, 7 p.m.
Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center
507 South 4th St., Enid
Information: 580/237-1907
www.regionalheritagecenter.org

Historian and journalist David Dary will be the first speaker in a lecture series at the newly-opened Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center. Dary has authored many books on western history, cowboy culture, the Santa Fe Trail, entrepreneurs of the Old West, western journalism, and others. Includes reception and book signing.

FILM

Sketch to Screen: The Art of Hollywood Costume Design
Film Festival & Exhibit
Oklahoma City Museum of Art
Information: 405/236-3100
www.okcmoa.com

Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers in Top Hat (1935). *Photo courtesy George Eastman House Motion Picture Department Collection.*

- *Hollywood Dressed and Undressed*
  June 2, 6:30 p.m.
  Lecture by Sandy Schreier, fashion historian/collector of 20th-century couture and Hollywood costuming.

- *Tess of the Storm Country*
  May 20, 7:30 p.m., NR
  Exhibit Feature: Tess's (Mary Pickford) tattered blue dress.

- *Atonement*
  May 27, 7:30 p.m., R
  Exhibit Feature: Cecilia Tallis' (Keira Knightley) green gown and costume design sketch.

- *Desire*
  June 3, 7:30 p.m., NR
  Exhibit Feature: Madeleine de Beaupre's (Marlene Dietrich) silk dress and cape with fur trim.

- *Public Enemies*
  June 17, 7:30 p.m., R
  Exhibit Feature: John Dillinger's (Johnny Depp) suit and bullet-proof vest.

- *Death on the Nile*
  June 24, 7:30 p.m., PG
  Exhibit Feature: Pink beaded gown and accessories worn by Bette Davis.

[*See pages 8-11 for exhibit information*]

Randy Alvarado

End Notes from the Editor ~ Carla Walker

Putting together our feature on India led to some wonderful conversations with people who have traveled to that region. They were eager to relate their experiences (the food, the people, the palaces, the yaks) and to show off their photos—hundreds of them. Without exception, everyone I talked to has images of hands bearing the rust-colored designs of *mehndi*.

This ancient ceremonial art form uses henna paste to draw intricate patterns on the skin and is often a part of the rituals observed in Indian weddings. The fascination is contagious and travelers often indulge in a bit of the art themselves. For a few weeks they have only to glance at their hands to be reminded of the culture they witnessed before the temporary souvenir fades away—except in the case of fingernails.

"What they don't tell you," one traveler explained, "is that the dye bonds with your fingernails and the color is there until it grows off." The henna faded from her skin within days, but she carried the stain on her nails for months. It was a daily reminder of her trip and a point of conversation for everyone who noticed the physical postcard from India on her hands: *What did you see? Who did you meet? What did you learn?*

We writers love metaphor. For me, that one is apt for the humanities—those areas of study like history, literature, film studies, and comparative religion that give us perspective on the human experience. When we expose ourselves to other cultures or different ideas, our worldview can't help but be colored by them; perhaps our attitudes and opinions remain unchanged, but at least temporarily our minds are infused with a fresh perspective. One small step toward tolerance.

What if? What if we were physically marked each time we read a book, discussed a film with friends, or attended a public discussion? What if we were tattooed with that perspective and were reminded of it every time we looked in the mirror? Or every time we met each other on the street: *I see that you read the article on race in* Oklahoma Humanities *magazine. What did you think*?

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