

Stephen F. Austin State University

**SFA ScholarWorks**

---

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

---

8-2019

## Reputation versus Reality: An Oral History of Vidor, Texas

Amanda Michel Saylor

Stephen F Austin State University, [amanda.saylor7890@yahoo.com](mailto:amanda.saylor7890@yahoo.com)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/etds>



Part of the [Oral History Commons](#)

[Tell us](#) how this article helped you.

---

### Repository Citation

Saylor, Amanda Michel, "Reputation versus Reality: An Oral History of Vidor, Texas" (2019). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 241.

<https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/etds/241>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by SFA ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of SFA ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [cdsscholarworks@sfasu.edu](mailto:cdsscholarworks@sfasu.edu).

---

## Reputation versus Reality: An Oral History of Vidor, Texas

### Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Reputation versus Reality:  
An Oral History of Vidor, Texas

By

Amanda Michel Saylor, Bachelor of Arts

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

Stephen F. Austin State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Arts in History

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY  
August 2019

REPUTATION VERSUS REALITY:  
AN ORAL HISTORY OF VIDOR, TEXAS

BY

AMANDA MICHEL SAYLOR, Bachelor of Arts

APPROVED:

---

Paul J. P. Sandul, Ph.D., Thesis Director

---

Perky Beisel, D.A., Committee Member

---

M. Scott Sosebee, Ph.D., Committee Member

---

Dianne Dentice, Ph.D., Committee Member

---

Pauline M. Sampson, Ph.D.  
Dean of Research and Graduate Studies

## ABSTRACT

Vidor, Texas is a town learning to manage its past with the Ku Klux Klan and the subsequent legacy of racial intolerance it now carries into the twenty-first century. By utilizing oral history, interviews with the residents (current and former) clarify how Vidorians see their past and form a collective memory. This memory study oral history project chronicles the historical narrative of Vidor and Vidorians based on oral histories of the interviewee's point of view. It then highlights my mastery of relevant public history and oral history literature while reviewing the best practices of oral history as both a methodology and technique in the professional field of oral history. The goal of this project was not to prove or disprove Vidorians historical truthfulness or pass ethical judgement of their perceptions, but to better understand the historical narrative and collective memory of Vidor and its people.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“Everything not saved will be lost” — Nintendo ‘Quit Screen’ Message

I want to thank many people for their help and support. First, I would like to thank my grandmother, Ann. Spending summers taking me to museums and historical sites inspired me to study history—I will never forget your love and guidance. Secondly, I would like to thank Dr. Paul J. P. Sandul for dealing with my thousands of “question” emails, along with Dr. Perky Beisel, Dr. Scott Sosebee, and Dr. Dianne Dentice for having patience. I would also like to thank my family and friends for their encouragement throughout this adventure. Last, I thank my wonderful husband, Douglas, who encouraged me to continue my education. He has supported me through this and has the tolerances of a saint to deal with my attitude. That is love right there.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER ONE	
A Historical Narrative of Vidor, Texas —	
Collective Memory and A Town’s Struggle with a Racial Legacy .....	16
CHAPTER TWO	
Oral History — a Tradition with a Modern Twist .....	54
CONCLUSION	
A Narrative with Selective Memory .....	90
APPENDIX A .....	93
APPENDIX B .....	103
APPENDIX C .....	106
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	115
VITA.....	135

## INTRODUCTION

This is a memory study, which centers on the oral histories and collective memory of white Vidorians and their attempt to make sense of Vidor's troublesome racist past. As such, this study is not one grounded in nor interpretative of larger regional (East Texas and Southern) or national histories. In addition to an original historical narrative based on oral histories I conducted (chapter one), this project also includes an appendix featuring materials related to the oral history project, including release forms and images (note the recordings and transcriptions are housed at the East Texas Research Center [ETRC] at Stephen F. Austin State University [SFA]), as well as another chapter (chapter two) describing the practices, procedures, and complications that occurred while undertaking this project. Concerning this last point, conducting an oral history project from start to finish, which of course is meant to demonstrate my mastery of a public history related field, has been a process of both patience and a welcomed challenge to hear the stories of Vidorians and their history.

“We’ve been trying to live down something for forty to fifty years,” said Orange County, Texas Commissioner Beamon Minton. He continued, “Once convicted, you’re a



convicted felon. You can't ever put that aside."<sup>1</sup> Vidor, Texas, located in Orange County, is about six miles east of Beaumont and nineteen miles west of Orange, the county seat, and carries with it a dark past; from images of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) burning crosses in pastures, on the one hand, to the quiet, racist mutterings of yet another Southern sundown town on the other.<sup>2</sup> Both media and memory play into this image of Vidor. From arguments across grocery store aisles to disputes on social media, Vidorians maintain that they are not the same today (at the least) or that the stories of their dark past are biased and exaggerated (at the most). An oral history project of Vidorians thus seeks to delve deeper into the local understandings of Vidorians themselves—to gain a fuller picture of their collective memory (discussed more below) and shared past experiences.

Very few have thought to listen to Vidorians and their personal stories, not just as it concerns the KKK, but also as it concerns the broader context of their city's growth and development. The Vidor story from the perspectives of those who have lived it, in other words, too often, does not garner much attention. Perhaps with a clouded view, people outside of Vidor do not seem to believe that Vidorians can offer a clear context on the

---

<sup>1</sup> Keith Oppenheim, "Texas City Haunted by 'no Blacks after Dark' Past," *CNN: Behind the Scenes*, December 13, 2006, <http://www.cnn.com/2006/US/12/08/oppenheim.sundown.town/>.

<sup>2</sup> Sundown towns are all-white municipalities or neighborhoods in the United States that practice a form of segregation by enforcing restrictions excluding people of non-white races via some combination of discriminatory local laws, intimidation, and violence. See James W. Loewen, *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism* (New York: New Press, 2018).

relationship Vidor has within the context of their own narrative. This oral history project seeks to correct that, if only in a small way (i.e., these are, admittedly, only a handful of interviews). With that said, this project seeks to give Vidorians a platform to tell their story; “to follow,” as theorist Bruno Latour once pleaded, “the actors themselves, that try to catch up with their often wild innovations in order to learn from them what the collective existence has become in their hands.”<sup>3</sup>

The city of Vidor itself dates to the broader growth of timber industries and railroad construction throughout East Texas at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> The city, in fact, received its name from a lumberman who established the Miller-Vidor Logging Camp in 1907: Charles Shelton Vidor. Yet, when the lumber company moved away (to Lakeview in North Texas) in 1924, as local timber had been depleted, a small number of people remained.

---

<sup>3</sup> Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 12.

<sup>4</sup> Howard C. Williams, *Gateway to Texas: The History of Orange and Orange County* (Orange, TX: Heritage House Museum of Orange), 214.

**Table 1 - Population of Vidor Estimates According to U. S. Census**

Years	Population	Growth Rate Percentage
<b>1920</b>	50	—
<b>1950</b>	2,136	↑ 4,172%
<b>1960 (Incorporated)</b>	4,938	↑ 307.78%
<b>1970</b>	9,738	↑ 97%
<b>1980</b>	12,117	↑ 145%
<b>2010</b>	10,701	↓ -11.69%
<b>2017 (Estimated)</b>	10,522	↓ -1.7%

The dramatic shift in the population correlates with white flight to rural regions during the 1960s and 1970s (i.e., the classical phase of the civil rights movements, 1950s-1970s) likely feeds the perception of Vidor as being a less than friendly town to outsiders, especially nonwhites.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Relevant Literature Review: Collective Memory and the KKK***

#### **Collective Memory**

This perception of Vidor as a racist town underscores the further role of oral history as it concerns collective memory. To be clear, memory studies and the idea of memory actually encompasses many phenomena, from Maurice Halbwachs's

---

<sup>5</sup> White flight is a term that originated in the United States, starting in the 1950s and 1960s (though the phenomena dates to the turn of the twentieth century), and applies to the large-scale migration of whites away from racially mixed urban regions to more racially homogeneous (i.e., white) suburban or exurban regions. See Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

foundational conception of *collective* memory to others about *cultural*, *historical*, and *political* memory, *invented tradition*, and *national*, *public*, and *social* memory, among other terms and concepts about how the past functions in society.<sup>6</sup> Still, perhaps simply, Halbwachs, in *La Memoire Collective* (The Collective Memory), defined that societies have a collective, shared memory of the past (i.e., a collective remembrance of the past).<sup>7</sup> Further, an individual's personal understanding of the past is strongly linked to this collective memory, meaning individual memory (or personal understanding of the past) is not independent and autonomous; rather, individuals must always interpret historical meaning and past experience within the boundaries and remembrances of the group in which they belong.

Far from shucking any meaningful review of terms and concepts, those who are familiar with such know that precise meanings are hotly contested and complicated by a sizeable literature on the philosophical nature of memory. Therefore, I simply want to

---

<sup>6</sup> For quality reviews, see Sven Bernecker and Kourken Michaelian, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory* (London: Routledge, 2017); Paul Boyer and James Wertsch, eds., *Memory in Mind and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, eds., *Companion to Cultural Memory Studies* (New York: De Gruyter, 2010), 1-15; Jeffery Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy, eds., *Collective Memory Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3-62; James Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 30-66.

<sup>7</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 21.

make clear how I define and use the term collective memory so as to advance my argument and analysis quickly. Collective memory, as a collective story about the past, can be shared, passed on, and constructed by large and small social groups and institutions; e.g., social classes, families, associations, corporations, armies, and trade unions would all have distinctive collective memories whose members help construct and interact with.<sup>8</sup> Collective memory, Halbwachs contends, also filters personal memories, which further influences how people view and understand the world as much as themselves, whether by race, family, or culture. It is these individuals (located in a specific group and context), therefore, who draw on that collective memory to shape a sense of self and to remember or recreate the past, what one developmental psychologist calls *narrative identity*: “the internalized and changing story of your life.”<sup>9</sup> This evolving story includes the engagement, consumption, reproduction, and reassembling of representations of the past such as those comprising collective memory.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 22.

<sup>9</sup> Dan P. MacAdams, *The Redemptive Self: Stories American Live By* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 82.

<sup>10</sup> For similar views, see Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 15; Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 21; Ron Eyerman, “The Past in the Present: Culture and the Transmission of Memory,” *Acta Sociologica* 47, no. 2 (2004): 159-69; David Lowenthal, “Identity, Heritage, and History,” in John Gillis, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton:

Oral histories are some of the best ways to grasp and analyze collective memory. On the one hand, oral history can unearth stories about shared experiences within a group that help form a collective vision of the past and its meaning (i.e., collective memory). On the other hand, it helps unearth common dominant stories about the past regardless of whether individuals experienced them or not—the key here is whether and how they interact with stories of the past to shape their own personal understanding of the past and, by implication, the present and future.<sup>11</sup> The group chosen for the memory study project included generational differences, business owners, and politicians. Oral histories collected from individuals from Vidor thus help reveal a collective memory of Vidor. Moreover, by utilizing oral history, instead of relying on just documents (that may be incomplete or reflect purposeful distortions of the past, not to say oral history does not have its issues), we can see the so-called life and influence of collective memory. Indeed, oral history provides us with this potentially new information. But it does much more than chronicle new information. In the case of Vidor and its past, for example, the use of oral history also provides a look into a darker past that, on the one hand, no one has sought to hear outside of a specific angle, and on the other, no one has thought to ask.

---

Princeton University Press, 1994), 41-60; Alan Megill, *Historical Knowledge, Historical Error: A Contemporary Guide to Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 42-62; and Jurgen Straub, *Narration, Identity and Historical Consciousness* (New York: Berghahn, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> Donald Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 17.

“Oral history derives its value not from resisting the unexpected, but from relishing it,” writes Donald A. Ritchie in *Doing Oral History*. He continues, “By adding an ever wider range of voices to the story, oral history does not simplify the historical narrative but makes it more complex.”<sup>12</sup>

### **The Ku Klux Klan**

Within the Victorian story and collective memory is the history and historiography of the KKK, precisely because Vidor’s history is so intimately connected to the Klan and, relatedly, because the Klan has indeed had an influence in Vidor that still affects the historical narrative and collective memory of the community to this day. The Ku Klux Klan, commonly referred to as the KKK or Klan, is an American white supremacist hate group that originated in 1865 at the end of the Civil War and the beginning of Reconstruction. It existed in three distinct eras at different points in American history, but each was simply as a reactionary response and social movement that provoked white nationalism, xenophobia, and terrorism.<sup>13</sup> Tracking the history of the Klan’s growth, decline, rebirth, and adaption from 1865 to the twenty-first century reveals an overall racist socio-political movement that gained strength in eras of great social upheaval, especially at times in which the white citizens in America felt threatened in some form or

---

<sup>12</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 13.

<sup>13</sup> The three different eras that the Klan was active in American history were the Reconstruction Era, from 1915-1930 while large immigration from other non-white, non-protestant countries arrived in the United States, and from 1950-1970 with the civil rights era and movement.

fashion (e.g., by newly freed slaves in the South following the Civil War to the increase of immigrants [especially Catholic and Jewish] and African American in urban centers north and south [and east and west] following a Great Migration in the first decades of the twentieth century and the classical phase of the civil rights movements in the 1950s through 1970s).<sup>14</sup>

The Klan started almost as a lark, with the extravagant robes and ghoulish masks; it was not until they realized their costumed riders scared African Americans did the group turn to true vigilantism.<sup>15</sup> “Taken in conjunction with the speeches and writings of their leaders [the Klan], they swore an oath to bring about ‘white supremacy,’” writes Ezra A. Cook in *Ku Klux Klan Secrets Exposed* (1922).<sup>16</sup> Ezra continued that the Klan caused great strife for African Americans, belittling them and their families, churches, and businesses; to put the African American out of the United States and to drive them

---

<sup>14</sup> See Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

<sup>15</sup> “The History of the KKK in American Politics,” by Tara McAndrew, published on January 25, 2017, last visited on December 11, 2017, <https://daily.jstor.org/history-kkk-american-politics/>. Also see Elaine Frantz Parsons, *Ku-Klux: The Birth of the Klan during Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 57, 84-85.

<sup>16</sup> Ezra A. Cook, *Ku Klux Klan Secrets Exposed: Attitude Toward Jews, Catholics, Foreigners, and Masons: Fraudulent Methods Used, Atrocities Committed in Name of Order* (Chicago: Ezra A. Cook, 1922), 58.



back to Africa.<sup>17</sup> The Klan flourished in the South by 1865 as a way to intimidate newly freed slaves and maintain the social order, but the group declined around 1871 due to a wave of federal laws (i.e. the Enforcement Acts) that suppressed their influence, not to mention the slow rise of Jim Crow to the job of institutionalizing white supremacy for the Klan.<sup>18</sup>

The second wave of the Klan began on Thanksgiving 1915 at the top of Stone Mountain in Georgia, growing to several million by the mid-1920s thanks to the effect of mass immigration to cities (i.e., Jews and Catholics), the Great Migration of African Americans to urban centers throughout the country, and even popular culture like D. W. Griffith's 1915 silent film *The Birth of a Nation*, which mythologized the founding of the first Klan.<sup>19</sup> This Klan was led by Colonel William Joseph Simmons, the Grand Wizard, who decided to rebuild the Klan after seeing Griffith's silence film. He obtained a copy of the Reconstruction Klan's "Prescript", and used it to write his own prospectus for the reincarnation of the organization. This revived Klan promised fraternal and refuge for white, Protestant Americans. To be clear, while the first so-called Invisible Empire raced fast horses over deserted Southern roads and terrorized rural folks in the late 1860s, the second Klan sputtered in second-hand cars across paved highways and clattered into

---

<sup>17</sup> Cook, *Ku Klux Klan Secrets*, 58.

<sup>18</sup> Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 181-214.

<sup>19</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 235.

northern American cities where they were met with open arms.<sup>20</sup> This second wave made its way into politics as well, in both the South, West, and North, and had an estimated four million members as it also may have carried itself into Vidor at this time (though the exact date, as discussed below, is not truly known). What is known about Klan in the regions around Vidor at the time show a foothold and close-knitted relationships that spanned in politics.

In 1922, Hiram Westley Evans headed the Klan in Dallas as the Imperial Wizard, and recognizing the threat to the Klan's growth, sought to reform the organization and its image, such as stricter policies on wearing Klan regalia in public. This Klan was trying to sell itself to the public and gain their votes into political office. The Klan also grew exponentially in other city it is in Texas, including Ft. Worth and Wichita Falls; thus creating connected network for the Klan across the state. This tactic was so successful that it created a united voting bloc to elect legislators, sheriffs, judges, and other officials. Indeed, they enjoyed huge success in the North and West, mostly in large cities, such as Detroit, Indianapolis, Philadelphia, Seattle, Portland, and Denver. Chicago, in fact, is credited with having the largest amount of Klan members at its peak in the 1920s with 50,000. Klan members were also elected to the city councils of such varied places as Chicago, Indianapolis, Denver, and Dallas. The Klan also captured six governorships in

---

<sup>20</sup> William Loren Katz, *Invisible Empire: The Ku Klux Impact on History* (Greensboro, NC: Open Hand Publishing, LLC, 1994), 89.

the 1920s: Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi, perhaps unsurprisingly, but also Colorado, Indiana, and Oregon!<sup>21</sup> The official records have never been found, and in all probability no longer exist, so the exact size and distribution of the membership of the Klan cannot be determine.<sup>22</sup> However, any comparison of rural, small-town, and urban Klan strength must begin with the evaluation of total membership, which is thought to be between an estimated one and nine million.<sup>23</sup>

The Great Depression depleted the ranks of the KKK, along with dissection inside the organization, growing anti-Klan sentiment, internal corruption and in 1925 David Curtiss Stephenson, a Grand Dragon in Indiana, raped and murdered of the young, white female, Madge Oberholtzer.<sup>24</sup> These issues, along with bankruptcy due to mishandling of funds by leaders because to unravel and lead to a temporary disbandment by 1944. The national civil rights movements of the 1950s through the 1970s, however, prompted a

---

<sup>21</sup> For more on the Klan of the 1920s, see Felix Harcourt, *Ku Klux Kulture: America and the Klan in the 1920s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017); Rory McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan: Right-Wing Movements and National Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); and Thomas R. Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American: The Rebirth and Decline of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan*, 235.

<sup>23</sup> Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan*, 235.

<sup>24</sup> See M. William Lutholtz, *Grand Dragon: D.C. Stephenson and the Ku Klux Klan* (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1993) for the rise and fall of D. C. Stephenson and the effect on the Klan.

resurgence of activity across the nation, especially the South, as schools and public housing desegregated and African Americans sought equality under the law. This resurgence in the 1950s was due to *Brown v. Board of Education*. This third movement helped to bomb and murder African Americans and other people of color amid the civil rights era. Most notably is the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Church bombing in Birmingham in 1963 that left four young, African American girls dead, the murder of Violet Liuzzo in 1965, and the assassination attempts and ultimate success of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968. Indeed, racism, Nathan Rutstein writes in *Healing Racism in America*, has to do with power, it is an institutionalized racial prejudice that grows out of a multicultural society and is based on fear and ignorance.<sup>25</sup> “And,” Rutstein states, “the Ku Klux Klan is only an extreme extension of the real problem, a problem most Americans refuse to recognize in modern society.”<sup>26</sup>

As we get further away from the KKK that comprised the first three waves, we lose the stories of those involved (however repulsive or not). In fact, the 1980s and 1990s saw a small Klan movement in Vidor, spurred from both inside and outside the community, in response to the forced desegregation of local public housing. Of course, central questions arise, such as: “How did the Klan actually become involved in Vidor as

---

<sup>25</sup> Nathan Rutstein, *Healing Racism in America: A Prescription for the Disease* (Springfield, MA: Whitcomb Publishing, 1993), 35.

<sup>26</sup> Rutstein, *Healing Racism in America*, 151.

a growing community in the 1950s to today?” This is not to say oral histories of the Klan (and like organizations) have not been done. Interviews done by Kathleen M. Blee, Patsy Sims, and Dianne Dentice, for example, try to grasp the inner workings of such a racist organization.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, I am not so much researching the Klan in Vidor as I am researching its effect on the collective memory of white Vidorians.

### ***Roadmap for the Rest of this Project***

This memory studies project, with its emphasis on public history methodology, is comprised of three parts. Part one consists of chapter one, which is the historical narrative of Vidor and Vidorians based on the oral histories organized and related to research while also pertaining to the collective memory of Vidorians as it concerns their Klan legacy. With the use of oral histories helps to fill in some of the so-called empty spaces of history and identity the harshness of the past that hangs over Vidor can become less dense. By using the oral testimony of Vidor residents, I expand the context of how a Vidor narrative and collective memory retains its power.

---

<sup>27</sup> Kathleen M. Blee, *Women of the Klan Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Dianne Dentice, *American Nationalism: Myth, Innuendo, and Imagination* (Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2008); Dianne Dentice, “Valley Girl Interrupted: Meth, Race, and the Ku Klux Klan,” *Studies in Sociology of Science* 5, no. 3 (2014): 1-4; Dianne E. Dentice, “Pseudo-Religion White Spaces, and the Knights Party: A Case Study,” *Geographies of Religion and Belief Systems* 4, no. 1 (2014), online at <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/sca/9/>; and Patsy Sims, *The Klan*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996).

Part two is chapter two, which is meant to highlight my mastery of relevant public history and oral history literature; reviewing the best practices of oral history—including a review of both the decisions I made and why in regards to my own oral histories. I follow this with my conclusion of how Vidor and its residents seem to remain in a constant struggle with what they perceived happened, what actually happened, and how they are moving forward.

Finally, I conclude with appendices that includes relevant documents that relate to the oral histories themselves. Indeed, part three signals the broader *doing* of history that both this project and public history generally represent. Doing history is the entire reason I enrolled in public history at SFA to begin with. It is also what underscores the rationale for doing a memory study oral history project, with an emphasis on the methodology of public history, as the culminating experience and requirement for an MA in (pubic) history at SFA. Said differently, the driving thrust of this project, in all its parts, was to conduct an oral history project, including interviews, their transcription, and their use in historical research and writing. As such, I conducted eleven interviews, transcribed them, and donated them all to the ETRC at SFA.

## CHAPTER ONE

### A Historical Narrative of Vidor, Texas —

#### Collective Memory and A Town's Struggle with a Racial Legacy

“The lack of historical memory is a serious shortcoming in our society. A mentality that can only say, ‘Then was then, now is now,’ is ultimately immature. Knowing and judging past events is the only way to build a meaningful future. Memory is necessary for growth.”—Pope Francis

A current white collective memory of Vidor concerning its dark racist past is one that mitigates the harshness, influence, and power of the Klan locally. This is not to say there are no competing narratives detectable in the oral histories, this memory study only included the interviews of eleven people. Specifically, the white collective memory of Vidor of the eleven interviews seems to extenuates the racial violence of their past is one of several currents—of either selective amnesia (forgetting), denial, or downplaying its viciousness (all discussed more below). Whatever the case, the result is the same and is how I have come to define white collective memory in general as it concerns Vidor's past and its Klan activity: the lessening of its reality and/or power. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that some segments of the local white population still revel in the past racial

violence.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, in listening to conversations about town and in the oral histories I conducted, some in Vidor look upon their racist past and the Klan with pride. Nevertheless, the broader, more dominant memory of white Vidorians, in the interviews, seems to be one of mitigation that works to diminish the violence of the past. White Vidorians' collective memory is an example of how collective memory, as Halbwachs first argued, is a social construct.<sup>2</sup> First, humans have terrible memories, to say the least, for they remember what they choose to remember, and biases, previously written histories or local narratives, and forgetfulness cloud what we remember about the past over time. On the one hand, we simply do not have the mental capacity to choose what to remember. On the other hand, what we remember is often provided to us (via history books, television, political speeches, religious sermons, etc.) or filtered, again, through personal biases, ideologies, beliefs, or points of view. This is what is meant by calling

---

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Sherman and Bonnie White, interviewed by Amanda Saylor, March 2, 2019, ETRC.

<sup>2</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 25-30, 38-39, 182-83; Jeffery K. Olick, ed. *States of Memory: Continuities, Conflicts, and Transformations in National Retrospection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 6, 25.



collective memory a social construct. It is something that is shaped and framed, molded by both inside and outside influences.<sup>3</sup>

Historians, of course, can use primary source documents to test many of the historical remembrances comprising a collective memory. Yet, a person's individual memory of an event cannot be so easily tested. This makes determining the exact origins of a collective memory complicated. Harvard professor Jonathan Hansen, for example, states the differences between history and memory are that there are concrete connections between history, memory, and advocacy but that tensions exist between all three. Specifically, memory is an absolute necessity for the existence of history (i.e., if we choose to forget about history it ceases to exist), but memory is insufficient and limited. History, however, as said, can be biased, propagandist, and/or elitist. Whatever the case, history does have one distinct advantage over memory according to Hansen: "History advances through hypothesis; memory evolves, but never really advances."<sup>4</sup> Even though they can inform individual memory, collective memories exist independently of individual biography in the form of commemorations, archives, rituals,

---

<sup>3</sup> Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*, 15; Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 21; Eyerman, "The Past in the Present," 159-69; Lowenthal, "Identity, Heritage, and History," 41-60; Megill, *Historical Knowledge, Historical Error*, 42-62; and Straub, *Narration, Identity and Historical Consciousness*.

<sup>4</sup> Nick Sacco, "Understanding the Differences between History and Memory," *Exploring the Past*, WordPress, published January 12, 2013, accessed May 10, 2019, <https://pastexplore.wordpress.com/2013/01/12/understanding-the-differences-between-history-and-memory/>.

and other mnemonic practices.<sup>5</sup> In this sense, collective memory is a social construction that embodies a group's identity.

Antonio Gramsci, a Marxist philosopher who wrote about ideology and culture, argues, "Man is above all else mind, consciousness, i.e., he is a product of history, not of nature."<sup>6</sup> The interviews conducted in Vidor echo the arguments of both Hanson and Gramsci. Specifically, biases, ideologies, and forgetfulness seem to cloud the past and memories of Vidor and its residents. In short, Vidor's memory is a mix of the famed "lost cause" narrative that perpetuates Southern ideology (i.e., one that glories in a proud Southern heritage) along with a need to separate one's self from past events now deemed societally offensive and repugnant.<sup>7</sup> The *why* and *how* of this are crucial, of course, but this project focuses on the memory study of Vidor itself, less on the narratives that caused it. Developing a social and community identity involves evaluating the past to prevent past patterns of conflict and errors. However, other studies suggest that information forgotten and/or is otherwise excluded during group recall can promote the forgetting of

---

<sup>5</sup> Jeff Stephnisky, "Collective Memory," abstract, *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Globalization* (February 2012), <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/9780470670590.wbeog079>; and Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy, *The Collective Memory Reader*, 3-62.

<sup>6</sup> Antonio Gramsci, quoted in Tony Bennett, ed. *Culture, Ideology, and Social Process* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1981).

<sup>7</sup> W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005).

related information.<sup>8</sup> Ultimately, influence from past historical narratives, especially popular memory in the South, in hand with more local narratives that have formed rigid dogmas about race relations in Southeast Texas, are the social frameworks that shape and generate Vidor's, specifically white Vidorians' collective memory.

The context of remembering is also crucial in shaping collective memory. In group situations such as memorial services, parades, commemorative events, and more reflect public representations of the past that are likely to exercise much more influence on the shaping of collective memory than in more private reflections at home, precisely because of their public, collective group nature.<sup>9</sup> An example in Vidor is the Homecoming Parade. It has been done yearly since the 1960s and shuts down Main Street for the event—the entire town closes shop for the day and lines Main Street to watch the students and marching band walk in procession down the street. It has affected/effectuated public representations of the past. It is deeply ingrained in Vidor and its collective memory. The name itself is suggestive, as it references the homecoming tradition in the United States whereby people, towns, high schools, and colleges come together to welcome back and celebrate alumni, alumnae, and former residents. In other

---

<sup>8</sup> For a good review of these studies, see Alin Coman and William Hirst, "Social Identity and Socially Shared Retrieval-Induced Forgetting: The Effects of Group Membership," *Journal of Experimental Psychology* Vol 144, 4 (August 2015): 717-22.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 133.

words, Vidor represents itself as a welcoming “home” for all. In fact, parade members have included a large amount of variety, including representatives from local clubs, emergency services, schools, sports clubs, and children. While the parade features many notable older clubs, organizations, and services, the celebration is the result of collective memory and a cultural performance of how the community of Vidor has narrated its past, what it imagines itself to be in the present, and what it fantasizes about being in the future. Specifically, through the Homecoming Parade, Vidor projects a self-image of an archetypal American small town that is semirural and values community cohesion (real or imagined), neighborliness, and, seemingly, an aura of “traditional” simplicity. “It is the small town,” said Yale professor and editor of *Saturday Review of Literature*, Henry S. Canby, “that is our heritage.”<sup>10</sup> Nowhere is the racist past or homogenous reality of the nearly all-white community highlighted.

Key here is that, according to Gramsci, dominant social groups not only exert power through physical force, such as through the racial violence, but also through ideological hegemony (i.e., their ideas are the leading ideas) and structural hegemony

---

<sup>10</sup> Henry S. Canby, *The Age of Confidence* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1934), 1. For a great bibliography on small towns and their historiography, see Kathleen Underwood, *Town Building on the Colorado Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 133, endnote no. 3.

(e.g., dominating political or economic structures).<sup>11</sup> Vidor, in other words, can serve as an example of this by looking at the dominant white social class who controls local history and narrative, such as through the parade, as much as it dominates local government and businesses. This white social class consists of families who helped settle the community and surrounding areas such as Williamson Settlement. This class holds both a social and economic dominance on Vidor, less now today, but the platform still remains. Said differently, the collective memory of the past dominates the public historical remembrances that subsequently reinforce and entrench the collective memory as indeed dominant and, seemingly, immovable.

### **The History of the Klan and Vidor's Collective Memory**

The Klan movement that arose in the South during the civil rights movements of the 1950s through 1970s did so to fight school desegregation and any action involving the civil rights of African Americans and other oppressed groups. This Klan movement was much smaller than its previous iterations, peaking at only between 35,000 or 50,000 members (though one should never confuse membership numbers with numbers of white supremacists generally), but it was extremely violent in regards to African Americans.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> For a fuller discussion of this, see Paul J. P. Sandul, "Of Sharing Authority and Historic Blocs: Toward New Historiographies of Counter-Hegemony and Community in Nacogdoches, East Texas," *The Public Historian* 43, no. 3 (Summer 2019): 91-112.

<sup>12</sup> David Mark Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1981), 24-47; David Cunningham, *Klansville, U.S.A.: The Rise and Fall of the Civil Rights-Era Ku Klux Klan* (New York:

This third wave of the KKK was the most notorious in Vidor's past and collective memory. "In towns like Vidor, Texas," writes journalist Patsy Sims, "African Americans had not been welcome when the town was settled at the turn of the century and as recently as the sixties had had a road sign which warned: Nigger, don't let the sun set on you here."<sup>13</sup> Indeed, while the sign is notoriously known and often spoken of, no photographs of it have been found. With that said, though the sign disappeared by the late 1960s or early 1970s, such racist sentiments it evokes seem alive and well in Vidor today.

It is not known when the KKK settled into the community. Some may argue that Vidor and Klan have always coexisted side-by-side since, at least, the 1920s. Later, in 1943 for example, a race riot erupted for three days in nearby Beaumont (relating to wartime tension in the overcrowded city). White workers were the catalyst and, perhaps, that helped feed the Klan's movement into neighboring Vidor (or revealed it). From oral history interviews with residents and images of Klan marches down Main Street one can reasonably assume that settled in about the time the third wave of the Klan made a home in most of the South—the 1950 through 1960s.<sup>14</sup> Vidor did not incorporate in Orange

---

Oxford University Press, 2012); and Wyn Craig Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 257-396.

<sup>13</sup> Sims, *The Klan*, 147.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Tamera L. Clark, interviewed by Amanda Saylor, March 2, 2019, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University (hereafter referred to as ETRC); Interview with Interviewee A [name redacted], interviewed by Amanda Saylor, October 6, 2018, ETRC.

County until 1960, so population numbers and any tracking of non-white residents is done mostly by word of mouth, as they did not appear on the census until after the incorporation. An estimated 13,000 or more people lived in and around Vidor by 1960, with 4,938 living of that population in the unincorporated areas such as Pine Forest and Rose City. The census does list that of the unincorporated areas, 0.1% were non-white.<sup>15</sup> By 1970, the city of Vidor shows a .3% African American or other races with a population of 9,738.<sup>16</sup>

**Table 2 - Vidor Racial Statistics 2017 Estimates<sup>17</sup>**

<b>White, Non-Hispanic</b>	90.5%
<b>African American</b>	0.2%
<b>Hispanic/Latino</b>	6.8%
<b>American Indian/Alaskan Native</b>	0.5%
<b>Two or More Races</b>	2.0%

These demographics portend not only a dominant white collective memory, but one that will go unchallenged by others. Little will provoke meaningful change in other

---

<sup>15</sup> U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1960, Census of Population and Housing – General Population Characteristics, Texas, 1960. <https://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html> (accessed June 17, 2019).

<sup>16</sup> U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1970, Census of Population and Housing – General Population Characteristics, Texas, Section 1, 1970. <https://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html> (accessed June 17, 2019).

<sup>17</sup> U. S. Bureau of the Census, 2018, QuickFacts, Vidor city, Texas. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/vidorcitytexas/PST120218> (accessed June 17, 2019).

words. Simply put, the collective memory of Vidor is a white collective memory of Vidor. Always has, always will; or so it seems. The changes that are detectable are subtle. To be fair, it is less and less of a reality to find an embrace of the Klan and violence, so that is a big change, but the changes are more about mitigation and the ways in which local white Vidorians lessen the history and impact of the Klan in the city's past. Sometimes clinging to one's own environment and local niches, like that of sundown towns and their narratives, looks like obstinacy and ignorance—yet it is an extremely salutary ignorance, as the theorist Friedrich Nietzsche might say, and one more calculated to further the interest of the community.<sup>18</sup> Admittedly, a separate project to analyze any African American collective memory (or any minority's collective memory for that matter) would help explain more and paint a fuller picture. This was a limited memory study, both on time and ability to reach out to the community and seek interviews, so there was no ability to grab the African American collective memory of Vidor. Collective memory allows for a study of history from a perspective outside of our own, yet within our own. It relates to cultural, public, even national memory as a whole that creates a collective American narrative, consciousness, and identity. By including those of others, in Vidor's respect those that are non-white, perspective is gained about the environment of the community and if the city's work at reassessing itself is working.

---

<sup>18</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," in *The Collective Memory Reader*, 76.



According to Walter L. Buenger, memory itself (i.e., collective and popular stories about the Klan past) actually served as a trigger for people in the 1920s to join the Klan and helped both members articulate and act on racism and xenophobia once in the Klan.<sup>19</sup> Today, Victorians seem to live in a world with competing memories and competing identities. Further, within collective memory, a dichotomy exists between the willfully recalled and deliberately forgotten, bequeathing us with the various strands of Vidor's collective memory generally.<sup>20</sup> Acknowledging that, future researchers of Vidor should seek a mediation between memory and history by writing carefully worded accounts that have the intention of modifying popular remembrance of the past. This is to keep clear both the memory of Vidor according to its residents and acknowledge that collective memory is also about selective memory. Above all, they should take fully into account the power of collective memory and make such a means for understanding Texas and Vidor's past.<sup>21</sup>

The Klan indeed found a home in Vidor, but pinpointing exactly when the organization settled into the city is difficult, what is known from interviews and speaking

---

<sup>19</sup> Walter L. Buenger, "Memory and the 1920s Ku Klux Klan in Texas," in *Lone Star Pasts: Memory and History in Texas*, ed. Gregg Cantrell and Elizabeth Hayes Turner (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 120.

<sup>20</sup> Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 5.

<sup>21</sup> Randolph B. Campbell, "History and Collective Memory in Texas: The Entangled Stores of the Lone Star State," in *Lone Star Pasts*, 280.

to locals is that Vidor began experiences Klan encounters in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>22</sup> Cross burnings, torn-down storefronts affiliated with the Klan, and tight lips have hidden what little information exists about the Klan's activities in Vidor. "I do not know if this is true or not," spoke interviewee Delores Cordova on the topic of the Klan in Vidor in the early 1950s, "I heard that the reason that blacks would not come into Vidor is that a black had raped a white woman and they hung him. But now whether that is true or not, I do not know."<sup>23</sup> Could the Klan have had much to do with African Americans refusing the move to the community before it was incorporated in the 1960s? It could have been the cause, but what it seems the interviewee is remembering is the race riots in 1943 that happened in Beaumont near Vidor. Both of these reasons could justify the fear that African Americans have to move into this community. This possible hanging of an African American reflects the unsaid words but done deeds of a white community that tells African Americans that "you are not welcome here" (and we will kill you). What is known, at the national level, is that between 1975 and 1979 Klan membership jumped from 6,500 to 10,000 with an estimated 75,000 active sympathizers who read Klan literature or attended rallies but were not card-carrying members; much of this is to the credit of the infamous and media-savvy Klan-leader David Duke for helping "improve"

---

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Delores Cordova, interviewed by Amanda Saylor, March 15, 2018, ETRC.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Delores Cordova, interviewed by Amanda Saylor, March 15, 2018, ETRC.

the Klan's public image.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the Klan only held together so long nationally as factional disagreements concerning public relations, the use of militant tactics, and internal squabbles over money and power split the Klan generally.

The Klan it seemed would do the only thing it could: try to adapt to the post-civil rights, Vietnam era, and rising New Right politics that, among other things, railed against the perceived immorality of the 1960s and 1970s, including rampant drug use (which they racialized as emblematic of blackness), open displays of sexuality (especially black women and homosexuals), rising crimes rates (again something they racialized as a sign and symptom of blackness), and protests against the Vietnam War (aided by a New Left who sympathized with civil rights on the one hand, but abandoned patriotism and love of country on the other). Vidor only experienced a scaled down version of this, as the community remained heavily white and the fear that the Klan perpetuated fed unease to any African Americans that sought to move there. The Klan marched often down Main Street in Vidor, as well as linger around gas stations and grocery stores handing out fliers and materials that promoted their "new" ideology. Said differently, they blamed an interventionist, Orwellian big government for contributing to the mismanagement and corruption of American society in the name of social engineering.<sup>25</sup> Unlike the past,

---

<sup>24</sup> Tyler Bridges, *The Rise of David Duke* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994), 84-89.

<sup>25</sup> McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan*, 87-91. For more on the New Right, see Sean Cunningham, *Cowboy Conservatism: Texas and the Rise of the Modern Right* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2010); Matthew D. Lassiter, *Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South*

modern extremist groups such as the Klan attempted to balance their racist agenda and rhetoric (meant to retain hardcore members) with a New Right rhetoric that sought to soften their public image and appeal to a wider base of support. For the Klan this meant maintaining many of its traditional pro-white beliefs, such as white supremacy and warped “100% American” nationalism, while also incorporating more conservative and traditional values of anti-statism and general patriotism within its ideology and rhetoric.<sup>26</sup> This meant embracing a religious standpoint as well, trying to incorporate Christian values while repackaging the post-Vietnam era dogma with a modern twist—liberals are bad for America, they hate America, or as recent as the 2018 elections for the U.S. Senate race in Texas that featured a slogan of “Don’t California my Texas.”<sup>27</sup> The rhetoric that began in the terms of anti-left propaganda has now fed into the efforts by the Klan to help

---

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); and Robert O. Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012).

<sup>26</sup> Dentice, *American Nationalism*; Dianne Dentice and David Bugg, “American White Nationalism: The Ongoing Significance of Group Position and Race,” *The Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 40 (2013): 193-215; and Andrew Selepak and John Sutherland, “The Ku Klux Klan, Conservative Politics and Religion: Taking Extremism to the Political Mainstream,” *Politics, Religion & Ideology* Vol. 13; No. 1 (March 2012): 83. See also, Dianne Dentice, “The Nationalist Party of America: Right Wing Activism and Billy Roper’s White Revolution,” *Social Movement Studies* 10, no. 1 (2011): 107-127.

<sup>27</sup> Juan O. Sanchez, *Religion and the Ku Klux Klan: Biblical Appropriation in their Literature and Songs* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2016), 13-33.

move people who do not agree with their aggression originally, but now hear the hyperbole of the KKK as a means to be used on the conservative right. Nevertheless, the Klan's efforts did not stop militant white youths from abandoning it in droves as Neo-Nazi organizations such as the Aryan Nation and the National Alliance rose to prominence in the 1990s.<sup>28</sup> The Klan faltered as it came to be seen as out-of-touch and outdated in the 1980s and 1990s. This too is obvious in even the small city of Vidor; as it is now home to not only what was a Klan operation, but also two Neo-Nazi compounds that attract wayward youths to their doorsteps. Nevertheless, history suggests a continued role for the Klan, as the Klan has always appeared on the stage whenever white Americans felt threatened by people different from themselves. Even in decline and disarray, the Klan's message of hatred endures, supported by a record of violence and terror unmatched in the history of American terrorist groups.

The Klan is not alone in its framing of Vidor's collective memory. Again, the purpose of this project focuses on the memory study of Vidor itself, less on the narratives that caused it, but sundown towns and archetypical Southern violence from Jim Crow also shapes Vidor's collective memory and identity. Sundown towns (such as Vidor) were nearly all-white towns or suburbs that maintained segregation by enforcing apartheid-like restrictions that discriminated against non-whites through various local

---

<sup>28</sup> James Ridgeway, *Blood in the Face: The Ku Klux Klan, Aryan Nations, Nazi Skinheads, and The Rise of the New White Culture* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1995).

laws, intimidation, and violence. “Between 1890 and 1960, thousands of towns across the United States drove out their black populations or took steps to forbid African Americans from living in them,” writes James W. Loewen, a leading researcher on sundown towns, “so named because many marked their city limits with signs reading, ‘Nigger, Don’t Let The Sun Go Down On You In [town name].’”<sup>29</sup> “My cousin that lived there [Vidor]—I do not know why I was at their house—but my cousin came home and he is all excited because he just found out that on the southern borders [of Vidor] on [highway] 105,” Interviewee A commented, “when you hit the Vidor City Limits sign there used to be a black doll hanging by its neck from a tree.”<sup>30</sup> This doll was mentioned by one other interviewee, Tamera L. Clark, but not within the taped interview, Interviewee A continued, “He was going to go put that black doll back in that tree with another ‘be out of Vidor before sundown’ [sign], that is the legend.”<sup>31</sup> Moreover, local historical societies (i.e., practicing public historians, whether professionally trained as such or not) helped to suppress the truth. Loewen claims that “the usual response I got when I asked local libraries, historical societies, and museums if they saved the sundown sign from their community or a photo of it was ‘why would we do that?’”<sup>32</sup> Selective forgetting and

---

<sup>29</sup> James W. Loewen, “Sundown Towns and Counties: Racial Exclusion in the South,” *Southern Cultures* 15, no. 1 (April 1, 2009): 23.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Interviewee A [name redacted], interviewed by Saylor, October 6, 2018, ETRC.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Interviewee A [name redacted], interviewed by Saylor, October 6, 2018, ETRC.

<sup>32</sup> Loewen, *Sundown Towns*, 206.

repressive erasure is something that happens often in places of repression. Forgetting is easier than acknowledging wrongdoing, especially in communities who still have limited interactions with people from outside their communities. Having yet to find photographs of the infamous Vidor sign, along with denials from the local government, the brick wall of silence becomes evident; only in the memory study of the small group of Vidorians oral histories verify the existence of the sign. Out of the ten interviewees that were residents or former residents, three remembered the sign distinctly and the family photographs taken either in front of or near, three others mentions the sign but only by word of mouth is it in their memories.

The original sundown rule dating to the era of slavery placed a strict curfew at dusk to control the movement and by implication the ability to both runaway and mobilize resistance, of slaves. Following emancipation, other brutal forms of white oppression and racial violence aimed at African Americans emerged to help maintain white supremacy, such as the horrifying rise of both lynching in larger numbers and race riots that sought nothing short of wiping African American communities from existence. This is not to say African Americans failed to challenge both these realities at the time and memory/history of such afterwards, but rather that they were usually unable to inspire any overt and explicit white responses or apologies both then and today. Many whites simply refused to acknowledge both the reality of the past and the various forms and expressions of African American dissent since then as doing so might signal they are admitting it is all true and that African Americans do indeed feel deeply the need to

oppose their (white) memory as much as their (white) power.<sup>33</sup> To be clear, despite segregation, they never surrendered their claims to accessing and using public spaces, be it in daily life or for memorialization.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, the dominant memory and public history, especially before the New Social History movement of the 1960s that sought to look at history from the bottom up, was originally white memory and history (and in Vidor, it still is). Public history being a training in specialized study such as historic preservation, oral history, and archives while popular history is defined in a broad stroke which emphasizes narrative, personality, and details over scholarly analysis like public history. The lasting legacy of popular history in the South is unmistakable as a result: the black past had and has little to no relevance for public life and historical remembrance; only white memory and history are deemed fundamental and needed to, as Nietzsche might say, “service life.”<sup>35</sup>

Vidor experienced issues urban renewal in the early 1990s when the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) sought to help African American families move into a local housing project/complex.<sup>36</sup> That is to say,

---

<sup>33</sup> Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 10.

<sup>34</sup> Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 70-71.

<sup>35</sup> Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 137; and Nietzsche, “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” 14, 21.

<sup>36</sup> HUD stands for the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, which is a Cabinet department in the Executive branch of the United States federal government.



desegregate it. Reported Sam Howe Verhovek in *The New York Times*, “Federal housing officials early today moved four black households into an all-white housing project in this East Texas town, which has not had a permanent black resident in more than 60 years.” He continued, “It was the first time since the mid-1960s that the Federal Government had enforced the integration of a housing project with such an *armed escort*.”<sup>37</sup> With forced integration under armed escort in mind, several white residents of Vidor have said that they are tired of media portrayals of Vidor as a bigoted town.<sup>38</sup> In fact, many blamed outside Klan agitators for any previous frictions at the complex.<sup>39</sup> Said Darla O’Neill, “We had outside folks coming into my town, trying to tell me who should or should not live there based on the color of their skin and they would be just literally—you would stop to get gas and they were trying to shove stuff in your face.” She

---

<sup>37</sup> Sam Howe Verhovek, “Blacks Moved to Texas Housing Project,” *The New York Times*, January 14, 1994, <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/01/14/us/blacks-moved-to-texas-housing-project.html>. Accessed April 25, 2019.

<sup>38</sup> See: Interview with Melissa Watkins, interviewed by Amanda Saylor, October 7, 2018, ETRC; Interview with Robert Viator, interviewed by Amanda Saylor, October 7, 2018, ETRC; Interview with Andarina Smith, interviewed by Amanda Saylor, October 6, 2018, ETRC; Interview with Carolyn Bickham, interviewed by Amanda Saylor, October 5, 2018, ETRC; Interview with Cody and Jennifer Cleveland, interviewed by Amanda Saylor, March 2, 2019, ETRC.

<sup>39</sup> Verhovek, “Blacks Moved to Texas Housing Project.”; Interview with Robert Viator, interviewed by Amanda Saylor, October 7, 2018; Interview with Darla O’Neill, interviewed by Amanda Saylor, May 21, 2019.

continues, “My response to them always was, ‘this is my town, I live here, who are you to come in and tell me who can live in this town’ because I do not care, I do not have a problem with it.”<sup>40</sup> In addition, interviewee Robert Viator, former mayor of Vidor, stated, “The majority of the citizens did not really protest that, in fact, a lot of people refer to the Ku Klux Klan that came into town at that time and they were not from Vidor.”<sup>41</sup> He goes on to clarify that the Klan that came into town was from Cleveland, Texas and various other places—not Vidor.

According to Verhovek, with the brief exception of four African American people (two men and two women, who left in 1993), “Vidor has not had a documented African American resident since the 1920s.”<sup>42</sup> This is not true. The oral histories I conducted contradicted such a statement as well as the U. S. Census from the 1930s to the 1980s.<sup>43</sup> Interviewee Delores Cordova commented, “I think one of your mother’s good friends married a black man and I think that her mother that lived in Vidor was raising one of

---

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Darla O’Neill, interviewed by Amanda Saylor, May, 19, 2019, ETRC.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Robert Viator, interviewed by Amanda Saylor, October 7, 2018, ETRC.

<sup>42</sup> “Verhovek, “Blacks Moved to Texas Housing Project.” This is also unconfirmed—I have oral histories that state that a young child was raised in Vidor that was of mixed decent in the late 1980s.

<sup>43</sup> U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1930-1980, Census of Population and Housing – General Population Characteristics, Texas, 1930-1980, <https://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html> (accessed June 17, 2019).

their children [in Vidor].”<sup>44</sup> While not on tape, a discussion with another interviewee, Melissa Watkins, confirms that she did go to school with an African American during the 1990s and 2000s (this is possibly this child). When the residents in 1993 left the city due to abuse from outsiders such as the white Nationalist Movement from Mississippi (headquartered in Georgia), the Klan led a “Victory in Vidor” parade, sparsely attended, down the city’s main streets. One interviewee, in fact, remembers walking out of church and seeing the Klan marching in full attire down the main street in Vidor at this time. “When me and [my spouse] ran out of the church as newlyweds,” states Interviewee A, “the end of the [Klan] parade was going down and everybody on our guest list who was black, who we had invited in our wedding—[it was awkward].”<sup>45</sup> This Klan, of course, had marched Vidor’s streets before as a photo taken in 1985 on Main Street shows them marching with shields and batons.<sup>46</sup> “At one point early last year there were 1,300 blacks on the housing waiting lists in Beaumont, Orange and Port Arthur, three nearby, largely black cities” wrote Verhovek, “but not one had volunteered to come to Vidor.”<sup>47</sup> Hardly surprising considering the hostility they received during segregation, the image of Vidor

---

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Delores Cordova, interviewed by Amanda Saylor, March 15, 2018, ETRC.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Interviewee A [name redacted], interviewed by Amanda Saylor, October 6, 2018, ETRC.

<sup>46</sup> Michael Corcoran, *The Klan Marches on Main Street Vidor, 1985*, published in “Vidor, Texas 1988,” on June 3, 2012, <http://www.michaelcorcoran.net/archives/1688>. For image, see Appendix A.

<sup>47</sup> Verhovek, “Blacks Moved to Texas Housing Project”;

being a sundown community, and then experiencing the Klan whether they were outsiders or locals in full white-dress robes.

**Table 3 – Racial Statistics of Regional Cities, 2010**

<b>Cities</b>	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>White/Non-Hispanic</b>	<b>African Americans</b>	<b>Hispanic/Latino</b>	<b>Other Races or Two or More</b>
<b>Beaumont</b>	117,278	33.0%	48.2%	14.8%	4.9%
<b>Orange</b>	18,608	57.3%	29.6%	6.9%	6.9%
<b>Port Arthur</b>	54,376	21.3%	39.0%	31.4%	7.9%

Town leadership in Vidor has taken steps to discourage Klan activity and evidence seems to indicate that though it no longer acts as a hotbed of Klan organizing, nearby towns certainly harbor Klan populations.<sup>48</sup> “I have read where lots of times when they [the Klan] were out in the open [in Vidor]; it was people coming in from other places,” says interviewee Delores Cordova. She added, “Although I do know for a fact that the grand—whatever they call it [Grandmaster]—the grand one, he was—he did live in Vidor.”<sup>49</sup> To combat the Klan in Vidor, the mayor Virginia Ruth Woods in the 1990s, denied a parade permit to an outside "nationalist group" that wanted to protest the desegregation order. It was the first time in the City’s history. The former Mayor from

---

<sup>48</sup> Dave Anderson, *Rough Beauty* (England: Dewi Lewis Publishing, 2006), 115.

<sup>49</sup> Cordova, interviewed by Saylor, March 15, 2018, ETRC.

before Woods, Larry Hunter, agreed with her decision. "It was good money spent, saying no," Hunter said. "We were tired of being the stomping grounds for such malarkey."<sup>50</sup>

A way to recover and counter the lost history of Vidor is through oral history. Written documents are clearly important, no doubt, but given the widespread suppression of materials relating to sundown towns, such as Vidor, many historians and others are left to conclude that a town did not have sundown policies when, in fact, it likely did.<sup>51</sup> Vidor offers only a limited view of the city's ordinances, available online from 2011 to present on their city website, which promotes the city's official motto as "Pride & Progress." The city's charter has also been updated digitally, with no information on how to find the original document from 1967 when it was established. Oral history, therefore, is a way to unearth the history and reality of many forgotten sundown towns. Yet, at the heart of oral history is the admitted selectivity of memory; the relationship between history and myth, and the role and reality of potential bias subjectivity. Acknowledging this also helps us to understand the collective memory and history of sundown towns in modern America.<sup>52</sup> In

---

<sup>50</sup> Dan Wallach, "Ruth Woods, former Vidor mayor who opposed Klan, dies," *Midland Reporter-Telegram*, July 12, 2016, <https://www.mrt.com/news/article/Ruth-Woods-former-Vidor-mayor-who-opposed-klan-8352186.php>.

<sup>51</sup> Loewen, *Sundown Towns*, 216.

<sup>52</sup> Riki Van Boeschoten, "Public Memory as Arena of Contested Meanings: A Student Project on Migration," in *Oral History and Public Memories*, edited by Paula Hamilton and Linda Shopes (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 216-17.

short, sundown towns are more-often-than-not intentionally forgotten and erased from community memory; often countered only by oral histories or those local museums who explore their pasts openly and honestly. Memory, broadly conceived (i.e. public/private historical understandings about the past), is often shaped by political discussions and motivations that involve not so much specific economic or moral problems (though those are very real too), but rather fundamental issues about the very existence of society: its organization; structures of power; and the very meaning of its past and present.<sup>53</sup> Though many Southern towns today have to grapple with their past, some retain sundown town features.

Vidor is not the only Southeast Texas town that needs to confront its dark past. North of Vidor sits the city of Jasper. Former mayor Helen Larsh of Silsbee wrote an article concerning what she saw while attending a CNN (Cable News Network) Town Hall in 2006, in Beaumont, Texas, called “Out in the Open: Racism in America” which spoke about racism across the nation but focused on Vidor, its racist past, and relationship with the Klan.<sup>54</sup> Larsh argued that the Town Hall failed to adequately address racism in Southeast Texas. She wrote, “Yes, a portion of the racism here—and in any of America's regions, states, cities or hamlets—is, as the show noted, skin deep. The

---

<sup>53</sup> John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 17.

<sup>54</sup> “Out in the Open: Racism in American,” *Paula Zahn Now*, interview by Paula Zhan, CNN.com, December 27, 2006, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0612/27/pzn.01.html>, transcript.

prejudice that we confront is often a factor of education, economics and social condition. People who have limited education generally do not have the broadening experiences that will allow them to see beyond skin color.”<sup>55</sup> She stated that insiders see prejudice as an expression of hopelessness and resistance to change and that perhaps the focus of the Town Hall show also narrowed too heavily on Vidor. “I realize through my years in this part of the country that Vidor has a history of racism,” she wrote. “Yes, the Klan did march there. Yes, crosses were burned there. But I also think that the community as a whole is trying to move past its history.” She continued, “There are other communities in southeast Texas that remain almost completely segregated. Still, many of these communities are as complex and troubled, as conflicted and confused, as desirous to break out of the past and into the present as Vidor.”<sup>56</sup> Perhaps Larsh is touching on the nuanced idea that hopelessness and poor education feed the lasting racist and whitewashed history and memory of Vidor (to which I agree), but her argument restricted itself to only the central manifest and vile era of bigotry, such as cross burnings, Klan marches, and the selling of Klan memorabilia locally. Of course, these things had a devastating impact on African Americans who many have thought to move to Vidor at the time, but the bigger effect has been to brand Vidor as indeed racist—yesterday as

---

<sup>55</sup> Helen Larsh, “Commentary: Racism in Texas More Than Skin Deep,” CNN.com, published January 17, 2007 (accessed May 12, 2018), <http://www.cnn.com/2006/US/12/21/racism.guestcommentary/index.html>.

<sup>56</sup> Larsh, “Commentary.”

much as today. In other words, these events are not even past, they live on in the national consciousness and image of Vidor.

As for the city of Jasper, it is known by many for the June 7, 1998 murder of an African American man named James Byrd Jr. Specifically, three white men lured Byrd, well known to his community, in their pickup truck for a ride. His murderers Shawn Berry, Lawrence Brewer, and John King were radicalized in prison as part of the Aryan Brotherhood prison gang. On a remote road, they then proceeded to beat him, spray-paint his face, urinate and defecate on him, and then chain his ankles to their truck before dragging him for about three miles. Byrd died about halfway along the drive during which his right arm and head were severed from his body. The murderers then dumped Byrd's mutilated body in front of an African American church and drove away (to a Texas barbecue). Radio host Mike Lout later commented that not even the so-called Southern politeness and charm of the white community could erase the stigma of hate and violence that Jasper came to acquire after this murder. "Jasper will be known forever as the place where a black man was dragged to death," Lout lamented. "We're the proof that prejudice is just as bad here, now, as it was in the 1950s; the fact that that's an exaggeration, and that this really was an isolated incident, won't change what people think of us."<sup>57</sup> Likewise, as Dina Temple-Raston also writes about Jasper in *A Death in*

---

<sup>57</sup> Mike Lout, quoted in Dina Temple-Raston, *A Death in Texas: A Story of Race, Murder, and a Small Town's Struggle for Redemption*, (New York: H. Holt, 2002), 164-65.



*Texas*, “They knew that the outside world was watching and judging them, that those outsiders, for the most part, had already found them guilty.”<sup>58</sup> Jasper was thus stained with a vicious brand of racism that could forever make the word “Jasper” as American shorthand for hate. “I went and googled some things,” commented interviewee Dewayne Brooks, an African American who helped Vidorians stuck in floodwaters after Hurricane Harvey in 2017, “that is when I really found out about Vidor—[Jasper] is the only Southeast Texas racism that I have ever remembered, the Vidor thing is new.”<sup>59</sup> Regardless of the truth or not of Lout’s claim (as it perhaps ignores the local context in which bred three racist murderers), not to mention Temple-Raston’s focus on whites being judged and not on an African American being murdered, this echo how many white Vidorians regard the existence and legacy of the Klan in their sundown town.

Vidor too has become synonymous with the Klan, racism, and hatred.<sup>60</sup> Residents lament, for instance, that African Americans from neighboring cities will not stop in Vidor for gas at night. Interviewees Cody and Jennifer Cleveland noted that “people look at me strange whenever I am working with them and I tell them I am from Vidor—and it is always the black people and they are like, ‘from Vidor? I do not *ever* stop in that

---

<sup>58</sup> Temple-Raston, *A Death in Texas*, 115.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Dewayne Brooks,” interviewed by Amanda Saylor, May 21, 2019, ETRC.

<sup>60</sup> Temple-Raston, *A Death in Texas*, 115.

town.”<sup>61</sup> An African American Temple-Raston spoke to said, “People just ain’t right there, they may have taken down the sign they had that said, ‘Nigger, don’t let the sun set on you in Vidor,’ but that doesn’t mean their attitudes have changed. They’ve just become harder to track.”<sup>62</sup>

A memory study thus needed to shed light on how both outsiders view Vidor and how white Vidorians view themselves, the ten residents and one outsider for my interview only offer a glimpse into Vidor and its collective memory. For its part, Vidor seems to be trying to handle its reputation. It is attempting to wrestle the dominate public memory and narrative away from so-called strangers or outsiders. As seen, they even blame faceless outsiders for either misrepresenting them, or, in fact, being the ones who did any wrong in the first place (i.e., Klan activity came from outsiders). Said differently, if you are Vidorian, misrepresentative historical narratives or any actual racial violence is everyone else’s fault and not your own.

A key struggle in dealing with collective memory in which entire social groups create and identify specific narratives about themselves is how Vidor itself struggles with it. Several responses from the oral history interviews I conducted state that the Klan never had a foothold in Vidor, while other local residents recount cross burnings as early

---

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Cody and Jennifer Cleveland, interviewed by Amanda Saylor, March 2, 2019, ETRC [emphasis added].

<sup>62</sup> Temple-Raston, *A Death in Texas*, 143.

as the 1970s. “I was probably, best calculation, say nine—we lived in a house out North [highway] 105—it was a two-story house—headed out toward Evadale,” stated interviewee Tamera Clark. “It was after dark but the ruckus woke us all up—Mommy told us to stay in our room, daddy went to check it out the front door—they were burning a cross across the street—and for me as a nine year old, that is kind of scary.”<sup>63</sup> The city’s official narrative holds that neither Vidor nor its people were the issue. Rather, mirroring the New Right rhetoric following the civil rights era, only a few mentally ill locals or, really, nearby outsiders are to blame. Moreover, if there were locals, they do not, Vidorians claim, represent the entire town nor its institutions or structures of power. Yet, video evidence from a November 1992 cross burning in north Vidor depicts more than just Klansmen in full dress and chanting, it shows a large crowd of people in everyday clothing watching and cheering them on.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, between September 15 and December 1 of that year, the Klan staged three public rallies, including the aforementioned cross lighting on private land north of town.<sup>65</sup> Some Vidorians, however and must be noted, did hold a counter prayer rally in the Wal-Mart parking lot on

---

<sup>63</sup> Clark, interviewed by Saylor, March 2, 2019, ETRC. Clark was born September 5, 1967—estimating her age at nine, it would have been around 1976 at the time of this cross burning north of Vidor.

<sup>64</sup> “Ku Klux Klan Rally,” copyright owned by jstgr8t, filmed November 14, 1992, <https://youtu.be/G7B58AHkJto>.

<sup>65</sup> Helen Thompson, “Race Wrangling,” *Texas Monthly* Vol 21, Issue 3 (March 1993): 70-72.

November 19 that attracted over 1,000 people.<sup>66</sup> Ultimately, the Klan march and cross burning is believed to have been a reaction to the first African American resident moving into the previously mentioned HUD-sponsored housing project. “I never thought about being a pioneer,” John DecQuir, the African American man who moved first into the housing unit said, “I just needed a place to live.”<sup>67</sup> Moreover, although 1,300 African Americans were on the waiting list for public housing in a three-county area during 1992, and 45,000 African Americans live in the nearby city of Beaumont, DecQuir was the only one who volunteered to come to Vidor.<sup>68</sup>

This move, as well as the desegregation of Vidor housing, triggered three Klan rallies in the area during this time, specifically north Vidor. This led the city of Vidor to claim that outsiders influenced the Klan to respond and that they did not practice their hate inside city limits (whatever that says about locals doing it outside city limits notwithstanding). Nevertheless, a storefront did exist within the city during the 1970s—a self-proclaimed bookstore that sold KKK memorabilia and literature. Michael Corcoran, a museum turned writer, investigated the storefront in 1988 for *Texas Monthly*, in fact, to

---

<sup>66</sup> Thompson, “Race Wrangling.”

<sup>67</sup> “First Black Moves into Vidor Housing Project,” *Associated Press*, February 17, 1993, <https://www.apnews.com/f4ef07e083daf402474243d676bac9a3>.

<sup>68</sup> Sam Howe Verhovek, “One Man's Arrival in Town Exposes a Racial Fault Line,” *The New York Times*, February 27, 1993, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/02/27/us/one-man-s-arrival-in-town-exposes-a-racial-fault-line.html>.

which he commented, “I find out where the KKK bookstore used to be, on Main between Golden Triangle Auto Parts and a vacant brick building, and soon I’m standing next to a forsaken lot overrun with nappy greenery.”<sup>69</sup> Corcoran continues, “All that remains of the structure that marketed racism from 1974-76 are three red, white and blue steps that front the sidewalk.”<sup>70</sup> The site remains an empty and vacant lot in 2019.

The suppression of Klan history and memory in Vidor (and elsewhere) again relates to the theories of Antonio Gramsci, specifically to what he referred to as “cultural hegemony.” That the dominant ideology of any society—the beliefs, explanations, perceptions, values, and morals—reflect that of the dominant ideology and, as such, justifies the social, political, and economic status quo as natural, inevitable, perpetual, and even beneficial for everyone rather than as artificial social constructs that benefit only the ruling class.<sup>71</sup> Vidorians have over time made choices to remove themselves

---

<sup>69</sup> Michael Corcoran, “Vidor, Texas 1988,” published on June 3, 2012, <http://www.michaelcorcoran.net/archives/1688>.

<sup>70</sup> For image, see Appendix A.

<sup>71</sup> See selections of Gramsci’s writings in Bennett, *Culture, Ideology, and Social Process*. For a view of the hegemonic, political use of history, see, among others, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983); David Glassberg, *Sense of History: The Places of the Past in American Life* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001); Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, eds., *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1996); Martha

from their past instead of allowing for the acceptance and healing that could lead to growth. By denying the very nature of what created their environment, Vidor residents fail to evolve culturally and diversely. This is not to say that the city of Vidor is so villainously and consciously manipulating history and memory locally, but that by shaping the historical narrative of Vidor, it has shaped the beliefs, explanations, perceptions, values, and morals of Vidor's past so that their narrative becomes the dominant way of thinking about Vidor, further defined by Michel Foucault simply as "dominant memory."<sup>72</sup> Dominant memory and hegemony thus work to suppress any oppositional memories. Yet, such oppositional "counter memories" may also gain popularity and thus transform both collective and dominant memory.

Oral histories are excellent examples of counter memory at work.<sup>73</sup> Historians, therefore, need to concern themselves with memory from various points of view. They need to study memory and remembrances of the past as historical sources like any other,

---

K. Norkunas, *The Politics of Public Memory: Tourism, History, and Ethnicity in Monterey, California* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993); and Cathy Stanton, *The Lowell Experiment: Public History in a Postindustrial City* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006).

<sup>72</sup> Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in D. Bouchard, ed., *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Select Essays and Interviews with Michel Foucault* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 144-50.

<sup>73</sup> Yael Zerubavel, "Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition," in *The Collective Memory Reader*, 241.

no doubt, but they also need to produce a critique of the reliability of memory, especially dominant memory, along the lines of the traditional critique of historical documents, as well as to seek out (and critique) both collective and counter memories. This review of memory broadly has, in fact, been under way since the 1960s when historians came to realize the importance of oral history and looking at history from the bottom-up.

### **Oral History and Collective Memory in Vidor**

The oral histories I delved into concerning Vidor and its racial legacy and memory were to understand how Vidorians, then and now, view themselves as a community, to better understand how they handled the past with the Klan, and how these tie with collective memory and came to effect the town. In delving into the collective memory of Vidor, and the historical memory of the oral history interviewees, the views of the community became clearer. If we are what we remember, the relative and subjective truth of memory lies in the identity that it shapes as with those I interviewed in Vidor. This truth is subject to time, no doubt, so it changes with every new transformation or effect upon identity and memory. It lies in the story, not as it happened, but as it lives on and unfolds in collective memory and the passage of time.

The reminiscences of the interviewees peel back the silence on past racism in Vidor you experience today and how the town has crafted its own historical narrative to remember the past (i.e., the collective memory). The memories of racism that developed over time through, and representative of, collective memory and identity building gives us the Vidor of the twenty-first century. To be clear, I tried to develop a relationship with

my interviewees, however, to help them understand that I was not seeking to sabotage or over-criticize the Vidor that we know today, but rather to understand how some Vidorians developed a relationship with memories and association or disassociation with the Klan and racial violence.

**Table 4 – List of Interviewees from this Project**

<b>Interviewees</b>	<b>OH#</b>	<b>D. O. B.</b>	<b>Lived in Vidor (YR)</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
<b>Delores Cordova</b>	2149	02/05/1943	1949-1982(?)	Science Teacher
<b>Robert Viator</b>	2150	01/03/1962	1965-present	Mayor/County Commissioner
<b>Melissa Watkins</b>	2151	07/30/1990	2001-present	Business Owner
<b>Interviewee A</b>	2152	05/11/1966	1966-2019	Former City Employee
<b>Andarina Smith</b>	2153	12/22/1966	1966-later 1980s	Business Owner
<b>Carolyn Bickham</b>	2154	08/31/1988	1944-present	School District Bus Driver
<b>Tamera Clark</b>	2155	09/6/1967	1972-present	Nursing Home Employee
<b>Sherman White</b>	2156	08/17/1946	1957(6)-present	Retired
<b>Bonnie White</b>	2156	01/3/1945	1970s-present	Retired
<b>Cody Cleveland</b>	2157	09/13/1983	1983-present	N/A
<b>Jennifer</b>	2157	03/13/1985	1985-present	N/A
<b>Darla O'Neill</b>	2158	06/10/1966	1966-1996	Public Relations
<b>Dewayne Brooks</b>	2159	01/05/1991	N/A	Gas Line Worker

As said, developing social identity and appraising past events to prevent patterns of conflict and errors are proposed functions of why groups form social representations of history like the one Vidorians have formed. Thus, the oral history interviewees and their understanding of Vidor's memory help shape and broaden its placement in history and memory. This memory is at the core of oral history. Memory plays a key part, providing connectedness, and (through storytelling and narration) a way of communicating



experience and the life of the individual.<sup>74</sup> These social identities that Vidorians have formed over time can be extracted and preserved with oral history.

Trying to get at each aspect and strand of the white collective memory and experience in Vidor provides a better context for how and why Vidor is the way it is today. These experiences also affected responses I received. Most described the community in childhood as very welcoming, open, and comfortable place in which to grow up. Racially, many interviewees did not notice that Vidor was clearly a white majority until either high school or adulthood. I also wanted to clarify with my interviewees whether they felt Vidor was once a sundown town. This question received mixed responses. No one wanted to outright claim that Vidor was a sundown town, but statistics and history within the South show us that, labeled or not, Vidor was a community that restricted the movement of African Americans.

Because of photographic and video evidence, I did ask each interviewee about the Klan in the community, as well as the marching and cross lightings.<sup>75</sup> Many of those born in the 1960s spoke about the abhorrence of the Klan, whether local groups or not, within their community. Two older interviewees both born in the 1940s spoke in a respectful sense of dealing with the Klan, seeming to hold them high esteem and regard. Calling them “nutters,” on the one hand, yet turning around and claiming friendship on the

---

<sup>74</sup> Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 239.

<sup>75</sup> For image, see Appendix A.

other.<sup>76</sup> Whatever the case, more generally, Vidor has been stigmatized and branded as a result of the Klan being in and around Vidor. Because of such, Vidor remains less racially diversified and thus its growth and even regression (i.e., decline in population recently) has been effected. Almost every interviewee agrees that the history of Vidor and its racist legacy created the situation of today, its stigmatization, its memory in society, and agreed that the town was trying to change its image, however effective it may seem.

Receiving these answers clarified different things for this overall project: (1) that Vidorians understood they had a tainted past and still struggled with it; (2) that each had experienced the Klan or other supremacist groups in Vidor from the 1940s to today; and (3) that Vidor's community was both aware of the past and yet in denial. The interviewees and their words both clarified and clouded the image of Vidor's racist legacy and history.

As stated, it must be reemphasized that the collective and dominant memories that evolved in Vidor did not take place within a vacuum. They also evolved along with the rest of the United States and broader social realities. The collective memory of Vidor has been affected by both choice and opinion as societal realities changed across the South and the United State as a whole. Historical accounts can be biased too, we all know that now, even while memory, as memory scholars remind us *ad naseum*, is necessary for the

---

<sup>76</sup> Interview with Sherman and Bonnie White, interviewed by Amanda Saylor, March 2, 2019, ETRC.

existence of humanity. Influence from remembrance and popular dominant memory in the South helped frame Vidor as much as it framed its own, specifically white Vidorians collective memory. A way to counter the dominant memory or better unearth more of the historical truth is by conducting oral histories. While, as said, not a cure-all free of problems (discussed more in the next chapter), at the heart of oral history there is indeed the selectivity of memory; the relationship between history and myth and the role of subjectivity. Vidorians should consider recognizing the affects/effects of both racialized dogma and the local Klan through oral histories to provide a clear and concise history of their community as a way to move forward and close doors.<sup>77</sup>

My conclusion is that Vidor is a town with a selective collective memory. It struggles with the racist legacy of its past, the handlings of having been a homebased of operations for the Ku Klux Klan, and with the stigma that those whom travel Interstate 10 between Houston and New Orleans need not to stop for gas. “It is getting better, more people from the outside are starting to see that we have changed as a community—I think that for the most part we are no different from any other community now,” commented interviewee and former mayor Robert Viator. “As people from outside come in and experience that we are no different from any other community—it is slowly overtime changing.”<sup>78</sup> He continued, “We are not complete yet; we still have a long ways to go and

---

<sup>77</sup> Boeschoten, “Public Memory as Area of Contested Meanings,” 216-17.

<sup>78</sup> Viator, interviewed by Saylor, October 7, 2018, ETRC.

need to continue to work—our younger generation needs to keep promoting what we really are; our reputation from past was well deserved, I do not deny it, it is there, [but] it's not who we are now.”<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> Viator, interviewed by Saylor, October 7, 2018, ETRC.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Oral History — a Tradition with a Modern Twist

“If the essence of history is the memory of things said and done, then it is obvious that every normal person, Mr. Everyman, knows some history.”—Carl L. Becker<sup>1</sup>

#### ***Introduction***

Oral history, at its most basic, is the collection and study of historical information about individuals, families, important events, or everyday life using audio recordings, video recordings, or transcriptions of planned interviews.<sup>2</sup> Oral history is thus more than just doing interviews. It is a field of study and an historical methodology concerning gathering, preserving, and interpreting the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants of past events. Many might define oral history as simply spoken stories about the past, but characteristics emerge when we examine the definition of oral history as a field of study and methodology. Knowledge gained by oral history, for example, is unique because it represents the tacit perspectives, thoughts, opinions, and understandings of specific interviewees. Oral history interviews seek an in-depth account

---

<sup>1</sup> Carl L. Becker, “Everyman his Own Historian,” *American Historical Review* 37, no. 2 (December 1931): 221-36.

<sup>2</sup> “Oral History: Defined,” Oral History Association, accessed June 18, 2019. <https://www.oralhistory.org/about/do-oral-history/>.

of personal experience and reflection, with sufficient time also allowed for the narrators to give their story the fullness they desire.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Rise of Oral History**

Oral histories were highly valued and regarded as a more reliable path to truth than documents alone by almost every major historian up to the eighteenth century: from Herodotus to the famous English historian Bede in the seventh century CE, the renowned Italian historian and statesman Francesco Guicciardini in the sixteenth century, to even the eminent French skeptic and historian Voltaire in the eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup> This long and rich tradition in the United States developed a more modern oral history practice, and rich tradition in the United States developed a more modern oral history practice, which

---

<sup>3</sup> Barbara W. Sommer and Mary Kay Quinlan, *The Oral History Manual* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2009), 1. The literature here is vast, but for critical developments concerning oral history, see, among many others, Ronald J. Grele, *Envelopes of Sound: The Art of Oral History* (Chicago: Precedent Publishing, 1985), 127–54; Barbara Haight and J. D. Webster, eds., *The Art and Science of Reminiscence: Theory, Research, Methods, and Applications* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Taylor & Francis, 1995), 3-21; and Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories* (New York: SUNY Press, 1991). See also “Principles for Oral History and Best Practices for Oral History,” Principles and Best Practices, Oral History Association (accessed June 18, 2019), <https://www.oralhistory.org/about/principles-and-practices-revised-2009/>. Also see Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds., “Introduction,” *The Oral History Reader* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003), ix-xiii; Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, xiv-1; Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 4-7.

<sup>4</sup> Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 28-31.

arose in the twentieth century. From 1936 to 1938, for example, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal commissioned the Federal Writer's Project to collect first person oral histories from more than 2,300 former enslaved persons, they did other projects as well but this project was an emphasis on the methodology and development of modernized oral history. New York publisher Joe Gould collected interviews during the 1940s while historian Allan Nevins formed an oral history group at Columbia University. Nevins's group usually receives praise as the beginning of a modern oral history movement in America. The establishment of the Oral History Association (OHA) was in 1967 and the *Journal of Oral History* began publication in 1971. Today, hundreds of local, county, and statewide oral history organizations, not to mention other national groups exist and collect, preserve, study, and present oral history.<sup>5</sup>

Oral history has also emerged as an international movement in historical research and methodology. It is booming! This is partly attributed to the development of new technologies, such as affordable digital recorders, and this allows the method rooted in orality to contribute evermore to historical research, particularly the utilization of personal testimonies made in a wide variety of public settings.<sup>6</sup> Too, the New Social

---

<sup>5</sup> Rebecca Sharpless, "The History of Oral History," in Thomas L. Charlton, Lois Myers, and Rebecca Sharpless, eds., *History of Oral History* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira, 2007), 9-32.

<sup>6</sup> For the benefits of modern technology see, Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 57-60; Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 222-35; Jean-Pierre Wallot and Normand Fortier, "Archival Science and Oral Sources," *The Oral History Reader*, 372-75; Dan Sipe, "The Future of Oral History and Moving Images," *The Oral*

History movement that began in the 1960s also contributed to the rise of oral history as it demanded historians and others look more closely at local histories and communities from the proverbial “bottom-up.”<sup>7</sup> For example, through oral history interviews, blue-collar workers, indigenous peoples, or members of marginalized or otherwise ignored subcultures, have inscribed their experiences onto the historical record and offered their own interpretations of the past.<sup>8</sup> Such oral histories have documented historical experiences that are too often missing from other sources, from personal stories to tales of working class laborers, African Americans, and other often oppressed groups.<sup>9</sup> Many

---

*History Reader*, 379-88; and Valerie Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 84-88.

<sup>7</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 2-7; Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 23; and Perks and Thomson, “Part I: Critical Developments—Introduction,” *The Oral History Reader*, 4-5.

<sup>8</sup> Perks and Thomson, “Introduction,” ix.

<sup>9</sup> For more recent, exciting approaches the literature is vast, but the following have greatly influenced me: Teresa Barnett and Chon Noriega, eds, *Oral History and Communities of Color* (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2013); Nan Alamilla Boyd and Horacio N. Roque Ramírez, *Bodies of Evidence: The Practice of Queer Oral History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Fosl and K’Meyer, *Freedom on the Border*; Kathryn Nasstrom, “Pushing the Boundaries in Oral History-Based Biographies: A Commentary,” *The Oral History Review* 32, no. 2 (2005): 77-81; Karen Olson and Linda Shopes, “Crossing Boundaries, Building Bridges: Doing Oral History Among Working-Class Women and Men” in Gluck and Peki, *Women’s Words*, 189-204; Abigail Perkiss, “Reclaiming the Past: Oral History and the Legacy of Integration in West Mount Airy, Philadelphia,” *The Oral History*



oral historians associated with the New Social History movement also cut their teeth and drew inspiration from the civil rights, antiwar, and feminist movements of the time, eager to write the history of those groups left out of the standard history texts. Yet, they lacked the abundant manuscript/document resources too often available for only just the elites of society. So they turned instead to oral history.<sup>10</sup> Producing oral histories of marginalized communities is also a strategy to humanize them in the eyes (or ears) of the receivers, precisely to motivate change and help democratize society.<sup>11</sup> It seeks to do this by

---

*Review* 41, no. 1, (Winter-Spring 2014): 77-107; Linda Shopes, *History from Below: How to Uncover and Tell the Story of Your Community, Association, or Union* (New Haven: Commonwork Pamphlets and Advocate Press, 1986); and Alistair Thomson, "Anzac Memories Revisited: Trauma, Memory and Oral History," *The Oral History Review* 42, no. 1 (2015): 1-29.

<sup>10</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 7; Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 4-17; Perks and Thomson, "Part I: Critical Developments—Introduction," 2-5.

<sup>11</sup> Sherna Berger Gluck, "Advocacy Oral History: Palestinian Women in Resistance," in *Women's Words*, 201-19; and Daniel Kerr, "Countering Corporate Narratives from the Streets: The Cleveland Homeless Oral History Project," in *Oral History and Public Memories*, 231-52. See also, among others, Rose T. Diaz and Andrew B. Russell, "Oral Historians: Community Oral History and the Cooperative Ideal," in *Public History: Essays from the Field*, edited by James B. Gardner and Peter S. LaPaglia, Revised Edition (Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company, 2004), 203-16; Francesca Polletta, *It Was Like a Fever: Storytelling in Protest and Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Alessandro Portelli, *Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997); Michael Riordon, *An Unauthorized Biography of the World: Oral History on the Front Lines* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2004); and Rickie Solinger, Madeline Fox, and Kayhan

presenting personal, but relatable, stories to break stereotypes and prejudices, such as those involving family, work, or leisure. Oral history does this by sharing personal stories about harsher realities, such as racial discrimination or violence.<sup>12</sup>

This is the purpose of the oral history project on Vidor—both dealing with its racist legacy and the handling of its historical identity. Very few have traveled to Vidor to ask the residents about their feelings of their history; fewer still take the words of the community at face value. Media organizations have traveled to Vidor to ask them questions concerning their past, but by missing these historical experiences that oral history can provide, one fails to understand Vidorians as they see their past.

The relationship of memory and history can benefit with oral history as “a powerful tool for discovering, exploring, and evaluating the nature of the process of historical memory—how people make sense of their past, how they connect individual experience and its social context, how the past becomes part of the present, and how people use it to interpret their lives and the world around them.”<sup>13</sup> With collective memory signaling an awareness of a social group’s past and the possible values, narratives and biases specific to that group—in this case Vidor—oral history a means

---

Irani, *Telling Stories to Change the World: Global Voices on the Power of Narrative to Build Community and Make Social Justice Claims* (New York: Routledge, 2008). See also, Charles Taylor et al, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

<sup>12</sup> For a good review of this, see Sandul, “Of Sharing Authority.”

<sup>13</sup> Perks and Thomson, “Part I: Critical Developments: Introduction,” 2-3.

though which you can interpret the complex relationship Vidor residents have with their past.

### ***Best Practices***

Oral history has its own history, development, and unique issues. It represents a unique historical source that is both similar to and different from other more traditional historical sources, such as written documents. Needless to say, as oral history has evolved, a host of scholars have attempted to not only define—sometimes even defend—oral history, but also to define goals, aims, and guidelines. In fact, trends toward inclusiveness in oral history practice have also been paralleled by efforts to professionalize the craft. In efforts to recognize that oral historians face some very challenging issues, particularly questions of objectivity and memory, oral historians have tried to improve interview strategies and standardize guidelines to establish best practices. In short, oral history is a method of historical documentation that uses interviews with living survivors of the time/episode being investigated. Oral history is a history that has been recorded, made available to others, and preserved in a repository. In part to address issues of objectivity and memory, oral historians have thus worked hard to establish common goals and guidelines and articulate the basic responsibilities of practitioners.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the OHA encourages individuals and institutions doing oral

---

<sup>14</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 92-4, 102-6, & 116-22; Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 184-192; Perks and Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, 38-52; Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 8-16.

history to uphold certain principles, professional and technical standards, and obligations. These include commitments to the narrators, to standards of scholarship for history and related disciplines, and to the preservation of the interviews and related materials for current and future users.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Ethical Issues and Responsibilities***

As oral history has evolved, its practice has led to the establishment of a generally accepted canon of ethics. OHA, for example, has adopted several statements of ethical principles and urged their application. The OHA's 1968 "Goals and Guidelines" encourages oral historians to think through some unavoidable ethical concerns like striving for intellectual honesty and the best application of the skills of the discipline, while avoiding stereotypes, misrepresentations, or manipulations of the narrators' words.<sup>16</sup> Revisions were made in 1979, 1989, 2000, and more recently in 2009, but ultimately lay out ways for both judging existing oral history projects while also speaking to some of oral history's potential ethical problems.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> OHA, "Principles for Oral History and Best Practices for Oral History."

<sup>16</sup> OHA, "Principles for Oral History and Best Practices for Oral History."

<sup>17</sup> To see the latest guidelines, see <https://www.oralhistory.org/about/principles-and-practices-revised-2009/oral-history-evaluation-guidelines-revised-in-2000/>. For more on ethics and oral history, see Dan Bar-On, "Ethical Issues in Biographical Interviews and Analysis," in Ruthellen Josselson and Amia Lieblich, eds, *The Narrative Study of Lives* (Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications, 1993), 9-21; John N. Neuenschwander, *A Guide to Oral History and the Law* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2009); and

Perhaps needless to say, the ethical guidelines listed by OHA are numerous. The eminent oral historian Linda Shopes, however, once wrote that they were not only contingent on the society and culture in which they developed, but also, at their core, reflective of nothing more than just good judgment calls and common sense.<sup>18</sup> That said, while not an exhaustive retelling of all the guidelines here, OHA greatly encourages practitioners to keep the interviewee's best interests in mind. This includes ensuring interviewees are made aware of/that:

- the goals and objectives of the interview or project;
- the various stages involved (e.g., interviewing, transcription, editing, preservation, exhibition/publication/public programming);
- a friendly interview environment will be provided; and
- their full legal and ethical rights (in an easily comprehensible way and before being asked to sign a contract or deed of gift transferring rights, title, and interest in the recording[s] and transcript[s] to an administering authority or individual).

Clearly, a key ethical concern for oral history is a commitment to interviewees as much as to Clio, the patron muse of history. OHA thus crafted guidelines and procedures

---

Daphne Patai, "Ethical Problems of Personal Narratives, or, Who Should Eat the Last Piece of Cake," *International Journal of Oral History*, 8, no. 1 (1987): 5-27.

<sup>18</sup> Linda Shopes, "Legal and Ethical Issues in Oral History," in *History of Oral History*, 126.

detailing exact ways in which interviewers/programs recognize and honor their responsibilities to the historical profession as much as to interviewees, are aware of their mutual responsibilities and obligations, and recognize and honor their responsibilities to the community/public. While most of these are discussed more fully later, especially as they concern following historical standards and transcriptions, the focus on interviewees and the interview process itself animates exactly what is both so exciting and challenging about oral history generally—namely, interviewing people to get their personal stories.

“Regardless of the project’s worthy objectives, a good oral history will always leave room for interviewees to speak their minds, and will not try to shoehorn their responses into a prepared questionnaire or mindset,” writes Donald Ritchie.<sup>19</sup> And more often than not, people’s most vivid memories are of the earliest days of their careers or lives, when events were fresh and invigorating. This was in mind while designing potential questions for the interviewees for Vidor and its history.<sup>20</sup> By being able to help the interviewee focus on their community during their childhood, or when they first came into a career (e.g., the mayor of Vidor), clarity in the interview can be reached. Developing open-ended questions is important to empowering the interviewee as well.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 16.

<sup>20</sup> For list of questions asked to interviewees, see Appendix C.

<sup>21</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 86-88; Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 196-200; Charles T. Morrissey, “On Oral History Interviewing,” *The Oral History Reader*, 107-113; and Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 68-79.

Instead of creating short one-word answers, you are opening a door to their memories by asking things like, with Vidor, for them to describe their community, how the community felt growing up, memories of Klan marches in town, the feelings of having this group in and around their community. You not only empower interviewees and make them feel more comfortable, but as a strategy it is to entice them to share more information and, as such, from their point of view. These open-ended questions got many different responses in the oral histories of Vidor. While most residents spoke of the community of their youth with warmth, most also remember the Klan during the 1970s to 1990s. Having open-ended questions started with memories of childhood, interviewees felt more comfortable speaking to me about the distressed feelings of having an active Klan within their community. “It was odd seeing them from a kid’s point of view,” stated interviewee Tamera L. Clark, “Kind of scary—I mean it was well known they were here.”<sup>22</sup>

Oral history is an active process in which interviewers seek out, record, and preserve memories. Knowing that with age most people find it difficult to recall names and dates, oral historians conduct preparatory research to assist interviewees, give some context and structure to the dialogue through their questions, and mutually address any seeming misstatements and contradictions in the testimony.<sup>23</sup> Keeping in mind that

---

<sup>22</sup> Clark, interviewed by Saylor, March 2, 2019, ETRC.

<sup>23</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 16; Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 150-52, 159-60; Katherine Borland, “‘That’s Not What I Said’: Interpretive Conflict in Oral Narrative Research, *The Oral History Reader*, 320-32; and Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 38-56.

memories start with the initial perception of interviewees and that no two interviewees will tell a story exactly alike, not everyone had a clear picture of what happened, or understood what it meant.<sup>24</sup> This is obvious when I asked those old enough to remember the Klan store that resided on Main Street from the late 1960s to the 1980s.<sup>25</sup> Each person I asked, even those who were barely of an age to know, have different memories. Some remember the store, or in the case of Cody and Jennifer Cleveland, Jennifer remembers the store but Cody distinctly remembered a bus that sold merchandise. “Yeah, it is not there anymore [the store],” said Cody. “They used to have their little Klan bus that they would do rallies [in] and drive up and down the streets with.”<sup>26</sup> Doing an oral history is a shared responsibility between the interviewer and the interviewee. The interviewer participates in the give-and-take of an interview by questioning and following up on the interviewee’s responses and by providing names, dates, and other commonly forgotten information, but interviewers—especially when doing life histories—should never forget whose story is being told.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 26-30; Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 156-159; and Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 108-114.

<sup>25</sup> The Klan store was located at 132 N. Main Street in Vidor.

<sup>26</sup> Cody and Jennifer Cleveland, interviewed by Saylor, March 2, 2019, ETRC.

<sup>27</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 93-100; Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 209-13; Alessandro Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” *The Oral History Reader*, 63-74; Joanna Bornat, “Oral



## ***Method***

Oral history, as hinted at already, is about asking questions. An oral history interview generally consists of a well-prepared interviewer questioning an interviewee and recording the exchange in audio or video format.<sup>28</sup> However, there is a debate about audio versus video formatting of interview, though some argue both instead of one or the other. The argument stands that, on one hand, audio is less costly, more flexible in the interview setting, and can be inclusive which allows for a stronger interviewer-interviewee bonding.<sup>29</sup> However, on the other hand, video can provide access to visual materials, and document nonverbal communication, such as gestures, facial expressions, and body language.<sup>30</sup> These recordings are transcribed, summarized, or indexed and placed in a library or archive or excerpted in a publication, museum exhibition, dramatization, or other form of public presentation.<sup>31</sup> Fundamental rules and principles apply to all types of

---

History as a Social Movement: Reminiscence and Older People, “*The Oral History Reader*, 189-205; and Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 95-100.

<sup>28</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 19; Morrissey, “On Oral History Interviewing,” 109-11; and Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 84-86.

<sup>29</sup> Sommer and Quinlan, *The Oral History Manual*, 33.

<sup>30</sup> Sommer and Quinlan, *The Oral History Manual*, 34.

<sup>31</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 19; Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 217-24; Alistair Ross, “Children Becoming Historians: An Oral History Project in a Primary School,” *The Oral History Reader*, 455-56; and Shaun Nethercott and Neil Leighton, “Out of the Archives and Onto the Stage,” 462-63.

oral history interviewing, however: do your homework; be prepared; construct meaningful but open-ended questions; do not interrupt responses; follow up on what you have heard; know your equipment thoroughly; promptly process your recordings; and always keep in mind the practice and ethics of interviewing.<sup>32</sup>

How do you plan for an oral history project however? To begin, you must have a firm idea of what you are seeking to know or document—in this instance, the knowledge of Vidor’s racist legacy and the local understandings of that history. This step is crucial for the oral historian because it tightens and channels the focus, aims, and scope of the project. That is, the overall purpose of the project needs a clear and cut definition and, with such, all related research and interviews must proceed accordingly. In other words, as my focus is on white Vidorian’s collective memory and understandings of the past, my research, interviewees, and interview questions narrowed on such. While other areas arose and deserve attention—such as African American memory, the historicity of supposed Klan activities, and the longer history of racial violence in Vidor prior to the contemporary era—they typically fell outside my focus, aims, and scope, even if related or worthy of further exploration by future researchers.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 84; Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 196-99; Morrissey, “On Oral History Interviewing,” 107-13; and Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 71-79.

<sup>33</sup> Ronald J. Grele, “Movement Without Aim: Methodological and Theoretical Problems in Oral History,” *The Oral History Reader*, 47.

Also, think of the equipment you wish to use for the interview. Thoroughly know how the equipment works to be able to explain it to your interviewees. I originally did not have a digital recorder, so my first interview with Delores Cordova was done on my iPhone 8. While this worked in this instance, it is best to use equipment meant for interviewing people. For the rest of my interviews I used an Olympus VN-8100C Digital Voice Recorder (<https://www.amazon.com/Olympus-VN-8100PC-Digital-Recorder-142600/dp/B000NPKO4E>) that records in MP3 and WAV. These software formats are specific because they will allow for easier sharing, preservation, quality overall, and availability for the public.

For my interviewees, as I am from Vidor, I chose from a large selection of family, friends, and acquaintances of friends that I felt would provide a wide context for the collective memory of Vidor, however small this memory studies project is. I tried to interview both men and women, business owners, the mayor of Vidor to understand politics, the middle class to lower-middle class, and homeowners and renters.<sup>34</sup> Generationally, I interviewed four people born in the 1940s that would have seen, heard, and experienced both the civil rights movements as adults but also witnessed the violence of the Klan during this period: Carolyn Bickham, Delores Cordova, Bonnie White, and

---

<sup>34</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 88-89; Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 180; Eliot Wigginton, "Reaching Across the Generations: The Foxfire Experience," *The Oral History Reader*, 206-13; and Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 83-83. For list of interviewees, see Table 4 on page 49 or Bibliography.

Sherman White. They provided me with an understanding of the community of Vidor and thus different experiences of the Klan in Vidor and of how African Americans were seen during the time. I also interviewed those born in the 1960s who would have been adults when the Klan store operated and marches were a common spectacle on Main Street: Robert Viator, Darla O'Neill, Tamera Clark, and Interviewee A. They provided me with a better understanding of how the (white) community felt with African American residents moving into the city in the HUD-units as well as having Klan members burn crosses north of town.

Two of my interviewees, Cody and Jennifer Cleveland, were born in the 1980s, coming into adulthood during a time when the Klan in Vidor fell out of practice. Rather, for them the Aryan Brotherhood and the various white supremacist compounds found in Vidor today dominate their experiences. Cody and Jennifer both stated they hardly remember the Klan ever being active in their childhood to today, only remembering the problems of the Aryan Brotherhood from personal experience.<sup>35</sup> The youngest local interviewee I spoke to was born in 1990 and moved to Vidor as a child from Mississippi, Melissa Watkins. Her experience as a business owner in Vidor, a homeowner, and as a transplant from a racially mixed community highlighted a variety of opinions concerning

---

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Cody and Jennifer Cleveland, interviewed by Amanda Saylor, March 2, 2019, ETRC. Before the interview, Jennifer Cleveland talked to me about her younger brother becoming involved in the Aryan Brotherhood compound located up the street.

Vidor's racial makeup and recent economic woes. The youngest interviewee I spoke to was Dewayne Brooks, an African American man who is not from Vidor, but during Hurricane Harvey did volunteer to help people evacuate. His words of experiencing nothing racist in 2017, but remembering the Byrd murder in nearby Jasper while knowing little about Vidor until he looked it up, show that perhaps there is some shift in the broader public narrative concerning Vidor. Or simply, no events to make one aware of Vidor in his childhood.

Oral historians are historians (though, admittedly, not all who do oral history are professional historians). As historians first and foremost, however, oral historians serve Clio, the muse of history. As such, they must conduct background and historical research according to the highest professional standards of scholarly integrity and take care to fully document sources, especially as providing such documentation, as with any type of historical research, makes it possible for future users to put the sources, including the interviews, in context and understand the background against which the interviews took place.<sup>36</sup> I started my research not only with the oral interviews, but delving into Vidor's public library which houses a homemade biography of Vidor and its residents. It is filled with photographs and biographical information dating back to 1890.<sup>37</sup> I also researched history of Southeast Texas, specifically Orange County, through text found both online and within the East Texas Research Center. I utilized information from the Handbook of

---

<sup>36</sup> Sommer and Quinlan, *The Oral History Manual*, 24.

<sup>37</sup> See Appendix A for select photos.

Texas Online, as well as websites such as reddit.com to collect information about how outsiders today feel about Vidor.

Oral history interviews are generally done best when one-on-one. This is so that the interviewer can focus on one person without interruption. Yet, sometimes it is impossible to avoid having another person in the room, perhaps the interviewee's spouse or (grown) child, who may interrupt to contradict, correct, or supplement the interviewee's testimony.<sup>38</sup> With that said, group interviews often help trigger memories and can serve as a way to fact check what an interviewee is saying, while particular views can be challenged and the burning issues of the past can be discussed and argued about again in the shining light of the present.<sup>39</sup> This happened while interviewing residents of Vidor, for instance, when spouses sat in on the interviews. Such interruptions can derail the interview, however, but again they can also help by introducing either forgotten information or otherwise support an uncertain interviewee. This is exactly what occurred in my interview with Bonnie and Sherman White, who were both older, as they played off each other and provided richer context for the interview. When Bonnie was speaking of a time when the Klan burned a cross, Sherman clarified the possible place by asking Bonnie if it was at a particular address of someone they knew. "I had no idea what

---

<sup>38</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 49; Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 196-97; and Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 14-17.

<sup>39</sup> Hugo Slim, Paul Thompson, Olivia Bennett, and Nigel Cross, "Ways of Listening," *The Oral History Reader*, 118.

it was but I can vaguely remember one time way out [on Highway] 105 they had went out there and burned a cross out in a field,” said Bonnie White.<sup>40</sup> Sherman then asked, “[Was] that out there by Peggy’s place, was it not?” Bonnie replied, “I think it was out right there past their place.”<sup>41</sup> This ability to play off each other’s memories of events allowed not only for another name to appear, but also gave a clearer direction as to where the cross burnings happened in Vidor.

Another issue is to pay attention to not just what interviewees say (so you can both ask better/follow-up questions and avoid asking a question the interviewee already answered), but how they are saying it. For example, interviewers need to watch for short answers as they may be a sign and symptom that an interviewer is asking too many specific questions and not enough open-ended “how” and “why” questions.<sup>42</sup> Interviewees are not usually sure of how much detail interviewers want, which is why it is customary to be clear in both asking questions and patient enough to get responses that are more concise. They may give answers that are to the point, but short, unrevealing, and unreflective; never be satisfied with these brief answers, however, and follow up with

---

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Sherman and Bonnie White, interviewed by Amanda Saylor, March 2, 2019, ETRC.

<sup>41</sup> Sherman and Bonnie White, interviewed by Saylor, March 2, 2019, ETRC.

<sup>42</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 83; Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 200-2; Morrissey, “On Oral History Interviewing,” 109-11; and Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 102-08.

more detailed questions to draw out the interviewee.<sup>43</sup> A good example of this is in my interview with Andarina Smith. I asked her if she felt Vidor had been stigmatized as a racist place, to which she replied, “Absolutely.” I knew I needed more of a response, so I took the question and added, “That they [the ambiguous “public”] stigmatize it as more racist than it actually is perceived like to be here?”<sup>44</sup> Smith then more fully replied,

“I think so. I definitely think so. You know, I am [laughs], I moved from Vidor to Lumberton—Lumberton had a reputation too. It was not all there in your face like Vidor but still—theirs was the paper plan, you know? Vidor people showed up, Lumberton—they were too chicken shit. On paper and back then, and there are still people—I mean, Hardin County politics, the good-ole-boys stuff. I mean there is still back room stuff. It may not be the Klan per say, it is politics, and stuff like that, but it is—how funny.”<sup>45</sup>

Smith even goes on for longer, but by taking the question and restating it a slightly different way, I was able to get a fuller response from her about the relationship of public perception and the Klan to Vidor.

Perhaps the interviewer is pressing with confrontational or leading questions as well—and it does not always pay to do so. “If you start an interview with Henry

---

<sup>43</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 83; and Yow, *Recording Oral History*: 102-05.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Andarina Smith, interviewed by Amanda Saylor, October 6, 2018, ETRC.

<sup>45</sup> Smith, interviewed by Saylor, October 6, 2018, ETRC.



Kissinger by saying, ‘Are you a war criminal?’ all you do is make him close up,” said the radio interviewer Leonard Lopate. “I think it’s more important to find out what that person is all about—and almost all the time, if you ask the right questions, you will get the answer.”<sup>46</sup> With that in mind, I avoided leading/confrontational questions that may signal I believed Vidor or even the interviewee was racist (e.g., “So, because Vidor is so racist, do you feel responsible for its past?”).

I tried to settle down my interviewees and calm them so they would feel comfortable in confining in me their experiences in Vidor, with both the city’s racist legacy and the Klan. This did not always work however. The interview with Bonnie and Sherman White, for example, had Sherman originally telling me a story about him and a group picking up an African American who was hitchhiking through. “We picked one up one night hitchhiking and carried him off down there on an old dirt road—and that black fellow knew he was in the wrong place.” He said the man got away, but quite suddenly Sherman seemed to stop leading down the path of stories he was telling me, quickly finishing that statement and those that followed about the Klan with, “There was [a] bunch of nuts running around” or “they was a bunch of nuts.”<sup>47</sup>

Oral historians also often interview someone with whom they profoundly disagree. Yet, the New Social History emphasis on interviewing “from the bottom up”

---

<sup>46</sup> Leonard Lopate, quoted in Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 84.

<sup>47</sup> Sherman White, in Sherman and Bonnie White, interviewed by Saylor, March 2, 2019, ETRC.

has presumed that interviewers understand the importance of their interviewees words and memories—even when they do not agree with them. Yet, some researchers record the lives of people whose politics and ideologies they find “unsavory, dangerous, or deliberately deceptive.”<sup>48</sup> This is the case in trying to understand the white collective memory of Vidor, the Klan, and local racism. The purpose of oral history, though, is to seek out information that is important to the research project and, therefore, an oral historian must set aside passing public judgements. As mentioned above, my interview with Bonnie and Sherman White was a testament to patience and soliciting information. After Sherman shut down with what I feel would have been enlightening information on not necessarily Klan activity, but information of racial violence in Vidor, I could not get him to begin again. I clearly do not agree with him on things that he did in his past, but I wanted the information to better understand Vidor.

Whether an oral history is transcribed, in fact, is often dependent on the practice of the organization, library, or archive in which the oral histories are donated. For this oral history project, it had to include the work of transcribing. Sometimes recordings can be sent out to professional transcribers, who are paid by the page/word count or by the number of minutes/hours of recording. Some oral historians simply choose to abstract

---

<sup>48</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 117. As it directly concerns the Klan, also see Kathleen Blee, “Evidence, Empathy and Ethics: Lessons from Oral Histories of the Klan,” *Oral History Reader*, 333-43.

and index rather than transcribe because of the time and cost of transcribing.<sup>49</sup> Smaller institutions (such as local historical societies) or groups of interviewers may simply find it easier and more cost effective to simply have their recordings done and held/preserved rather than to try transcribing them or pay for someone else to do so. Ultimately, both the recording and, if there is one, the transcription are considered primary sources. Both can exist without the other and still be a reliable source. However, be careful when transferring the transcriptions, as different programs can delete data suddenly and thus create a lost document. If transcribing is not possible, a project should abstract and index the recordings and include summaries of the main individuals and subjects discussed, with notations of where they can be found chronologically in the recording to help researchers find the material they seek and facilitate web-based browsing of online collections.<sup>50</sup>

Transcribing may be elusive for some but it need not mean that the oral history projects are of less value than others, as the primary work of the oral historian is getting the memories of interviewees on the proverbial tape. So, with all that said, I decided to transcribe the interviews because: (1) my project chair Dr. Paul J. P. Sandul mandated that I do so for the successful completion of this project; (2) it follows the ethical guidelines of the OHA; and (3) it better aids researchers and preservation. Concerning

---

<sup>49</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 38.

<sup>50</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 52; and Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 315-16.

this last point, transcriptions allow potential researches to both comb through large amounts of oral history data and do it more quickly (as opposed to listening to hours of oral history recordings). This moves into preservation. First, if the recording is somehow lost or damaged, then a transcript at least exists to help mitigate such a horrible loss. Second, the more researchers use an oral history (thanks to transcription), then the easier it is for archivists and/or the like to justify its continued preservation.

Following best practice, transcripts may be edited, after the transcript is finished the first time, but the original recording should be left exactly as spoken.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, aside from the obvious financial considerations, transcribing is at best an attempt to reduce to paper what has been said into a recorder at another time and place; there are ways but at times even the most experienced transcriber can struggle to show (in typewritten words on paper) precisely what has been spoken during the interview (hence, transcription is often called an “art” as people do not typically speak in full sentences, paragraphs, and with punctuation).<sup>52</sup> For this project I followed the transcription guidelines of the Institute for Oral History at Baylor University, to me the present the best practices on

---

<sup>51</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 57; and Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 125-28, 133-35.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas L. Charlton, *Oral History for Texans* (Austin: Texas Historical Commission, 1981), 51; Perks and Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, 389-92; Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 68-73; Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 325-8.

transcriptions and handling of the interviews.<sup>53</sup> The guidelines vary widely by topic and concern, from capitalization rules to spacing preferences, how to footnote and cite information, when and how to insert supplemental information within the interview text, and follows the *Chicago Manual of Style* for all intents and purposes. That said, Baylor and others advise that if you transcribe, then change as little as possible. The narrator's word choice, including grammar and speech patterns, should be accurately represented.<sup>54</sup> Transcribers must attempt to reproduce as closely as possible what they hear on the recordings.<sup>55</sup>

Some words can be dropped from the oral history, however, usually so-called leading sounds that people make before starting a sentence (e.g., uh, um, huh) but, in some instances, these sounds should be left in (such as in the middle of a thought, precisely because the context and sound are likely related to the very thought process of the interviewee). Leaving the leading sound signals some type of emotion or meaning that cannot be understood otherwise or even without listening to the oral history recording itself. In my own interviews I did not leave many of the thought sounds, as

---

<sup>53</sup> "Resources," Baylor University Institute of Oral History (accessed July 14, 2019), <https://www.baylor.edu/oralhistory/index.php?id=931324>.

<sup>54</sup> "Transcribing Oral Histories," Introduction to Oral History Manual, Baylor University Institute of Oral History, accessed June 10, 2019, <https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/66438.pdf>.

<sup>55</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 58; Raphael Samuel, "The Perils of the Transcript," *The Oral History Reader*, 389-92; and Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 325-28.

people tended to say them in excess. Yet I did leave in phrases such as, “you know,” which Vidorians seem to repeat constantly in their stories. Melissa Watkins’s interview is a great example of this. Said Watkins, “You know, I even have friends that make Vidor jokes and I kind of get mad at them and say something because I—you know, so many people told me, ‘You should move away—you should get away from that place.’”<sup>56</sup> “But yeah,” she continued, “I feel like you know, even during Hurricane Harvey, everyone was like, ‘Oh pray for Houston! Pray for Houston!’—And it is not that Houston did not get affected—of course it got affected—it was a tragedy for a lot of people—but Vidor received that most amount of rainfall—it received the most damage and it almost felt like nobody noticed or did not care to because *it is just Vidor* [aka. not Houston], you know.”<sup>57</sup> Verbatim renderings of slang and regional pronunciations are typically the prerogative of each individual oral history project, but, if used, should be consistent.<sup>58</sup> Keeping this in mind, choosing to drop some slang and pronunciation from the Vidor interviews, leaving slang with clarification of what the interviewee meant within a footnote. It allows for a better reading within the transcript, but in the end, it is a stylistic choice.

---

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Melissa Watkins, interviewed by Amanda Saylor, October 7, 2018, ETRC.

<sup>57</sup> Watkins, interviewed by Saylor, October 7, 2018, ETRC.

<sup>58</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 58; Samuel, “The Perils of the Transcript,” 389-92; and Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 325-28.

Finally, proofread your transcript! The interview processing and attention to planning for curatorial care of the recordings, while time-consuming is a part of the oral history process. It helps ensure ongoing access to the interview information.<sup>59</sup> I had other graduate assistants with knowledge of transcription editing, along with Dr. Paul J. P. Sandul, assisting me in editing and correcting errors in the written interviews. Indeed, when the oral history interview is finished, with or without a polished transcript, it needs to be donated to an appropriate repository for preservation and access. Moreover, do not forget to send copies of the transcripts to the interviewees following the best practices for oral history. People have a right to their own words, and sending the final interviews is appropriate to the methodology. If the oral history project is not part of a library, archive, historical society, or other institutions that deals with researchers, for example, then its recordings and transcripts should be deposited somewhere that is capable of preserving the interviews and of making them available for general use.<sup>60</sup> With that said, I decided to place my recordings and transcripts at the East Texas Research Center because, first, it makes sense as I am a student at SFA and, second, it is an archive that is a central research institution in and about East Texas.

As for the recordings themselves, digital recordings need to be clear and free from distortion. Each copy should sound as clear and sharp as the previous one, suggesting that

---

<sup>59</sup> Sommer and Quinlan, *The Oral History Manual*, 79.

<sup>60</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 69.

the original sound on digital recordings could theoretically last forever as long as it was routinely copied.<sup>61</sup> This means two things. First, the copied digitized interview must be presented clearly, and second, the original must possess clarity of sound. Sound is critically important to the interview. Indeed, problems of background noise can happen, especially if the interview is done in a public place like a library. “Background noises may obliterate the speaker’s words,” writes Ritchie in *Doing Oral History*. This is important to remember as the speaker’s words are their histories and obliterating them with noise makes for poor conditions.<sup>62</sup>

Two different types of sound interference occurred in my interviews with Victorians. In one interview, a dog can be heard barking through the entire recording, in the other, the recording was done in a friend’s house who was home with the interviewee and myself during the time. She is heard moving around and doing housework while the interview took place. While neither of these proved too distracting for the interviewees or myself, it will perhaps be distracting for some while they listen to the interview later. Most of my recordings happened in private homes, however, which is an ideal space for interviewing one-on-one. Still, one of my interviews was done at a restaurant, but because of quick planning, it was early lunch on a Sunday and thus less crowded (i.e., most East Texans are at church at this time). Indeed, you must always keep in mind

---

<sup>61</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 169; and Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 85-87.

<sup>62</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 51.



where and when you need to record and conduct your interviews, as some spaces are not always ideal.

### **Problems, Concerns, and Collective Memory**

Oral history should be about collecting information, observations, and opinions unavailable elsewhere, not what we already know per se (though oral history as a source of corroboration is useful, no doubt). Yet, we must again recognize the crucial role played by ideology and dominant myth/memory in modern society and their ability to potentially affect oral history interviews. Said differently, as theorists such as Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, and Noam Chomsky have argued, among many others, ideology and myth—as a set and system of ideas and ideals—are often fashioned and shaped by dominant classes and interests. With that said, the issue here is not necessarily the veracity of any system or set of ideology and myth, but the influence in modern society and the ways in which it can frame an individual or group’s interpretation of the past, themselves, and others.<sup>63</sup> In other words, oral historians must remain aware

---

<sup>63</sup> Noam Chomsky, “Scholarship and Ideology: American Historians as ‘Experts in Legitimation,’” *Social Scientist* 1, no. 7 (1973): 20-37; Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-77*, edited by Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 131-33; Antonio Gramsci, in *Culture, Ideology, and Social Process*; and Karl Marx, “The German Ideology,” 1845/46, available online at Mark/Engels Internet Archive, [https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx\\_The\\_German\\_Ideology.pdf](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_The_German_Ideology.pdf). For examples of this in the United States, see, among a vast

that the stories and tales they hear from individuals or groups of interviewees are not always *sui generis*, but affected by dominant/popular ideologies and myths.<sup>64</sup> This does not mean that what interviewees have to say is neither valuable nor unique to themselves, however, but that they can and are influenced by broader society nonetheless. This last point is a discussion of collective memory and the value of oral history for uncovering and analyzing it, but before doing so, issues related to accuracy and subjectivity must be addressed first.

A major concern for oral history is indeed the degree of accuracy in interviewee's recall of the past. It is at times considers that interviewees cannot be entirely accurate. The difficulty lies in the fact that memories of the past do not typically constitute pure, unmitigated recall. Indeed, as said, the memory of the past is often refracted through layer upon layer of subsequent experience and through the potential influence of a dominant and/or specific ideology or way of viewing the past.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, critics of oral history often strive to undermine the oral historian by striking at the most vulnerable aspect: by claiming that oral history evidence cannot be reliable because memory is notoriously unreliable.<sup>66</sup> Ultimately, oral evidence is sometimes criticized on grounds that

---

literature, David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Brundage, *The Southern Past*; and Loewen, *Sundown Towns*.

<sup>64</sup> Grele, "Movement Without Aim," 47; and Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*.

<sup>65</sup> Trevor Lummis, "Structure and Validity in Oral Evidence," *The Oral History Reader*, 273.

<sup>66</sup> Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 79-80.

people cannot, or do not, distinguish with sufficient care between their current ideas and those that they held at an earlier period.<sup>67</sup> Vidor, both inside and out, features this problem of distinguishing what is true of the community and what accurately happened within the city's past. Some of my interviewees feel that Vidor was never in the wrong, for example, and that nothing violent happened there or that it was just crazy behavior from a few crazy people (outsiders or not). Others speak in hushed tones of fear, while other interviewees spoke clearly that, yes, Vidor has a racist legacy that it must deal with and move forward. There are no simple answers to this issue. Nevertheless, there is some value in planning interview questions to assess the care with which information has been given. In other words, careful planning on part of the interviewer can help lead to a more honest interview and interpretation.

Regardless of whether interviewees are entirely accurate, what they still share has value. On the one hand, they are valuable in perhaps describing a general prevalent mood or atmosphere surrounding an historical event. On the other hand, the passage of time enables people to make sense out of earlier events in their lives, as actions take on new significance depending on their later consequences.<sup>68</sup> This is both a good thing and a bad thing. Allowing people to come to their own understanding of their past allows for a better interview, but it can also lead to silence or distortion. For instance, people and

---

<sup>67</sup> Lummis, "Structure and Validity in Oral Evidence," 280.

<sup>68</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 18.

society change over time and, often, choices made in youth become harder to speak about—such as my experience with interviewing a resident of Vidor whom is believed to have or have had ties to the KKK. Recognizing that his past choices do not bode well today, he grew uncomfortable with being recorded about his past involvement. He eventually shifted the interview to other topics, only referring to the Klan as “a bunch of nuts.”<sup>69</sup> Yet, if oral histories can reveal the depth of such unspoken, unacknowledged, everyday hatred and bigotry, such interviews can also be puzzling.<sup>70</sup> Sociologist Kathleen Blee, for example, having spent years studying the Klan and its movements across the United States, comments that “its former members struggle in interviews to justify their involvement against history’s condemnation, to construct—retrospectively and consciously—a narrative of life in the Klan that will exonerate them in the eyes of their children and grandchildren.”<sup>71</sup> Oral historians must be sensitive to the meaning of silences in narratives and thus understand the barriers of communication.

Oral sources are oral sources. That said, the historical interpretation always requires attention to the partiality, bias, subjectivity, and distortions of any particular historical account and oral history is no different.<sup>72</sup> This is not to say that one should not

---

<sup>69</sup> Sherman White, in Sherman and Bonnie White, interviewed by Saylor, March 2, 2019, ETRC.

<sup>70</sup> Kathleen Blee, “Evidence, Empathy and Ethics: Lessons from Oral Histories of the Klan,” in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003), 338.

<sup>71</sup> Blee, “Evidence,” 338.

<sup>72</sup> Blee, “Evidence,” 335.

treat oral evidence as cautiously as any other form of evidence. Documents written at whatever historical period have an immediacy about them and are not typically influenced by subsequent events. Yet, those documents can be incomplete, in error, or created to mislead.<sup>73</sup> Paul Thompson argued that where opposition to oral history succeeds, the main damage is to professional historians themselves—not to mention the historical record.<sup>74</sup> As Thompson put it, “History, in short, is not always about events, or structures, or patterns of behavior, but also about how these are experienced and remembered in the imagination. And one part of history, what people imagined happened, and also what they believed might have happened—their imagination of an alternative past, and so an alternative present—may be as crucial as what did happen.”<sup>75</sup> And that is still a valid inquiry for historians and researchers alike. This is what one historian has called “subjective liberation,” whereby instead of being constrained or distraught about oral history’s innate subjectivity or its failure to reveal concrete historical facts (whatever that means) we can now appreciate its subjectivity and still important value for historical understanding.<sup>76</sup>

---

<sup>73</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 110.

<sup>74</sup> Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 67.

<sup>75</sup> Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 67.

<sup>76</sup> Alistair Thomson, “Making the Most of Memories: The Empirical and Subjective Value of Oral History,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 9 (1999): 291-301.

We can learn what a specific community or group of people collectively believed and thought about an issue, point of view, event, or person. For example, how did Japanese Americans feel about the Internment during World War II? How did women of the KKK feel about gender roles during the 1920s? How do white Victorians feel about their city's Klan history?

While truth is not necessarily unattainable in oral history interviews, and, no, the frailty of human memory does not always distort or misrepresent reality, the wider psychological and ideological world of a particular group member's society or collectivity can better be understood as a result of what the informant does or does not say, regardless of intent or truthfulness. Put differently, we can come to better understand, through interviews of groups, a particular group's beliefs, mindset, taboos, mythology, culture, language, and much more.

For all the concern about accuracy, interviewees provided picture windows into personal and collective memory. Community members who share a common experience, for example, such as the trauma of a flood or tornado, will often talk about it among themselves for years, reinforcing and shaping their own memories as much as the collective memory.<sup>77</sup> The significance of memory cannot be understated here. As argued already, memory is key to our identity. Without our memory, we have no social existence. We also, as the historian Carl Becker once famously argued, depend on our

---

<sup>77</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 18.

memory in order to conduct our daily lives.<sup>78</sup> Memory, in short, is a way in which people interpret their lives and the conditions that account for what they once were, what they have since become, and what they still hope to be. In an important discussion of oral history methodology, the eminent oral historian Alessandro Portelli noted that “memory is not a passive depository of facts, but an active creation of meanings”; meanings that are created in social and political contexts. Said differently, memory is not a solitary act.<sup>79</sup> Oral histories are one of the best ways to grasp at and analyze collective memory. Those collected from individuals from Vidor, in other words, help reveal the collective memory of Vidor. So, in this way, oral history provides us with potentially new information.

The OHA states that oral history interviews must seek an in-depth account of personal experience and reflection, with sufficient time allowed for the narrators to give their story the fullness they desire.<sup>80</sup> Oral history recordings help listeners better understand how individuals from various viewpoints and different stations in society encountered the full range of life in their day, from everyday routines to catastrophic

---

<sup>78</sup> Becker, “Everyman His Own Historian,” 221-36. See also, Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 82.

<sup>79</sup> Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, 52.

<sup>80</sup> OHA, “OHA Principles,” 3.

events.<sup>81</sup> By using the oral histories of Vidorians, future researchers will begin to understand the community and narrative of white Vidor residents and perhaps be able to define local history better through these oral histories. The interviews, however, failed to reach the small African American community within Vidor (0.1%), but the future is open to the possibility of speaking to this small group to understand their collective memory of Vidor.

---

<sup>81</sup> Baylor University Institute for Oral History, "Discovering Oral History: What is It?," 2012, available online at the Institute's website, <https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/66419.pdf>.



## CONCLUSION

### A Narrative with Selective Memory

“Faced with the collective forgetting, we must strive to remember.”-Reni Eddo-Lodge<sup>1</sup>

The oral histories and memory study of this project is about the collective memory of white Vidorians, the ten that were interviewed, and their attempt to make sense of Vidor’s troublesome racist past emphasizes communities as a whole who often grapple with selective memory and collective forgetting. Few have heard Vidorians in their own words, however, not just as it concerns the Klan, but also within the broader context of their city’s growth and development. The Vidor story from the perspectives of those who have lived it has not reaped much attention. This project sought to change that, or at the very least, give a platform to Vidorians and understanding how Vidorians view themselves.

In speaking with current residents, former residents of the community of Vidor, a clear narrative emerged—one with selective memory. Vidorians remember what they want to remember about their past, some have chosen to embrace the racist legacy and move forward, others cling to denial. Halbwachs argued that collective memory filters personal memories, which influence how people view and understand the world as much

---

<sup>1</sup> Reni Eddo-Lodge, *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017).

as themselves, and to shape a sense of self and to remember or recreate the past, he could have had Vidor in mind.<sup>2</sup> The oral histories I collected were some of the best ways to analyze Vidor's collective memory, limited as they were. Studies show that information forgotten and excluded during group recall can promote the forgetting of related information.<sup>3</sup> As oral history can unearth stories about shared experiences that help form a collective vision of the past and its meaning, it is easy to state that Vidor's narrative and collective memory is wrong! But it was right too. Specifically, it is correct to themselves.

Within this local collective memory, the problem of the history of the Klan in Vidor's past stands out. The Klan has indeed had an influence in Vidor, its narrative, and collective memory. They still effect the community to this day! Yet, I researched not so much the Klan and the events in Vidor as I did probing its effects on the collective memory of white Vidorians and the perceptions. What was once a hotbed of Klan activity has cooled to perhaps being a home to previous Klan members, but yet also two Aryan Brotherhood compounds. This drives the lack of African American influence in the community as well. Therefore, the collective memory of Vidor is a white collective memory of Vidor. Only a possible separate project to analyze any African American collective memory or minority's collective memory in the city and community would help fill the vacuum, or that of regional outsiders. With those of mixed race,

---

<sup>2</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 25-35.

<sup>3</sup> Coman and Hirst, "Social Identity and Socially Shared Retrieval-Induced Forgetting, 717-22.

Hispanic/Latino, and African American making up less than 10% of Vidor's already limited population, however, and of that, African Americans make up less than 0.2%. Said bluntly, such a study would be hard as Vidor is still what its past residents wanted it to be: white! Nevertheless, seeking out an in-depth account of personal experience and reflections with oral history interviews of African Americans and other non-whites is one of the few ways, but in Vidor's case perhaps the best way, to grasp both (white and minority) sides of Vidor's collective memory and history.

Vidor struggles with the racist legacy of its past, and with it the stigma of being the epitome of a Southern racist town to this day. Whether through collective forgetting, selective remembering, or by never being able (at this current time) to produce an impartial composite of oral histories, Vidor and its residents seem to remain in a constant struggle with what they perceived happened in their past and how best to deal with this history. Perhaps the best way is to embrace that their past did happen, though they do not have to like it or agree with it, but they must accept it as their legacy. Only then can they move past it; or, as stated by their former mayor, Robert Viator, "Our reputation from past was well deserved, [but] let us move forward—it is not who we are, so all our efforts are generally moving forwards."<sup>4</sup> It just takes time.

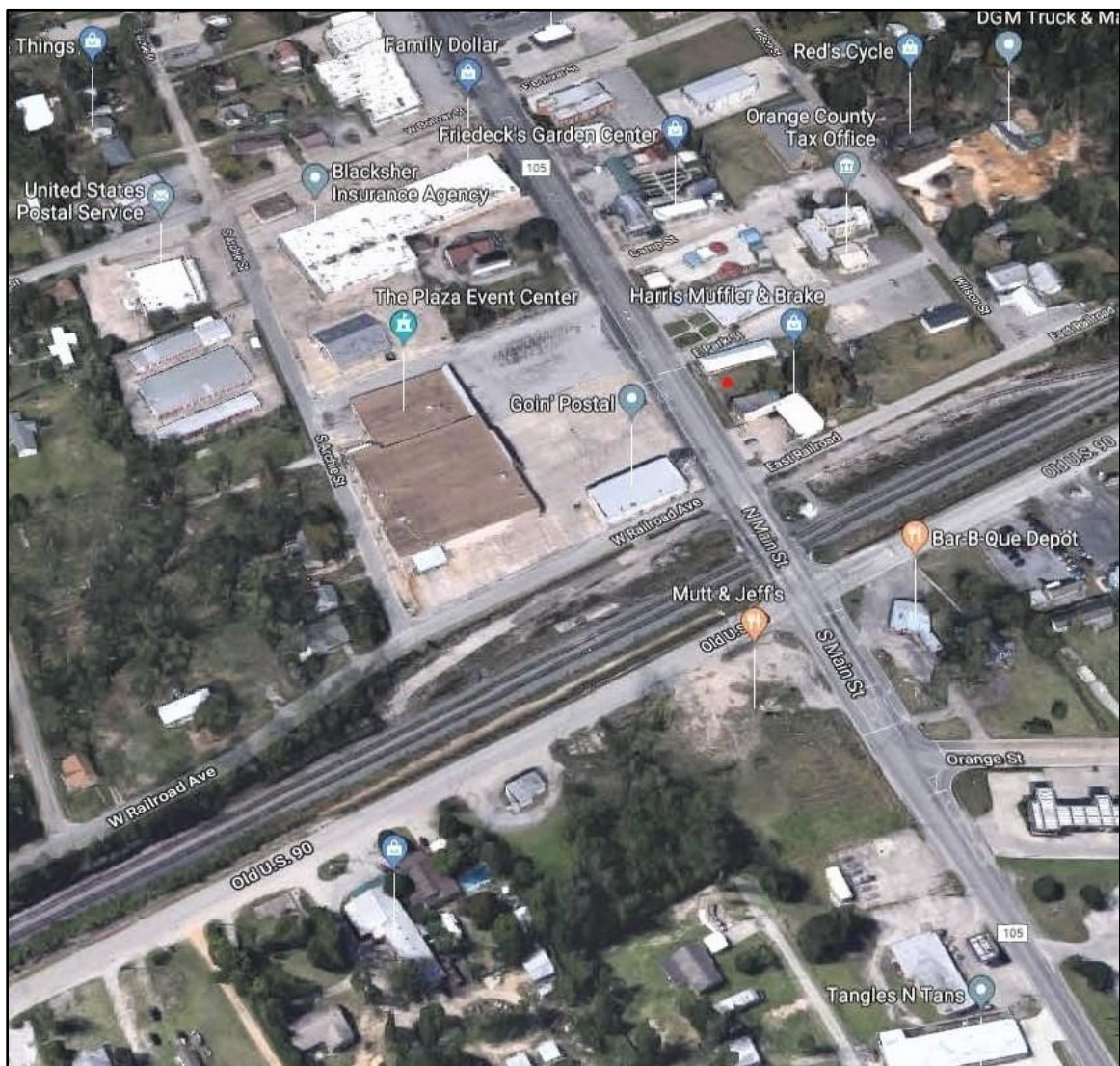
---

<sup>4</sup> Viator, interviewed by Saylor, October 7, 2018, ETRC.

APPENDIX A  
Photographs and Maps of Vidor and the Surrounding Community

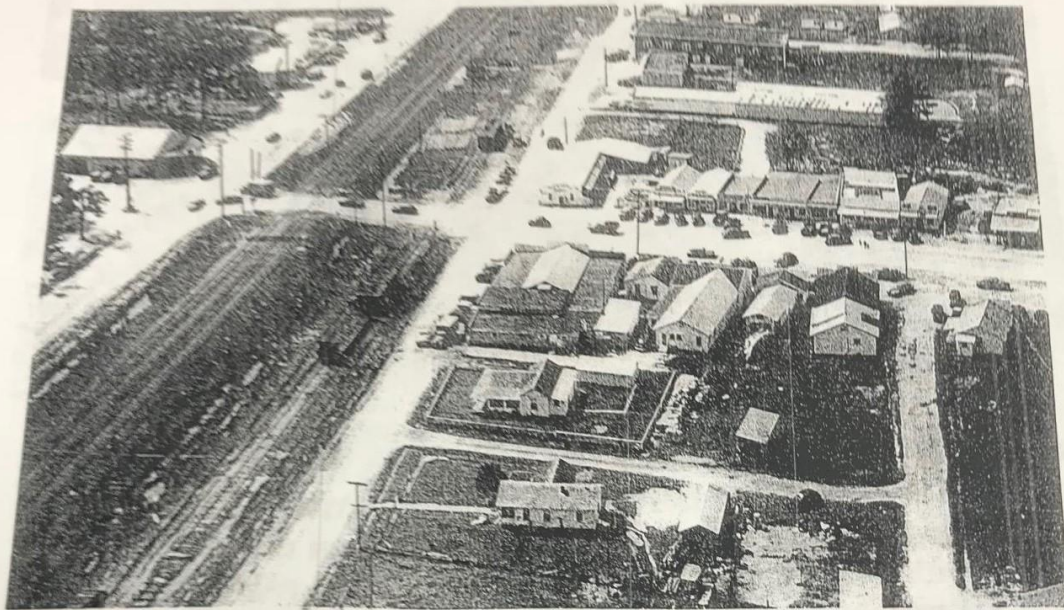


This Sanborn map of Vidor is from 1966, it is labeled as “Vidor E.” The red dot is to signify where the Klan store was located. Source: Texas Digital Archive at [https://tsl.access.preservica.com/uncategorized/digitalFile\\_c33bad23-53a3-419a-b0e9-7b98b373b67d/](https://tsl.access.preservica.com/uncategorized/digitalFile_c33bad23-53a3-419a-b0e9-7b98b373b67d/).



This Google image shows the same area as the photo on the before page from 2018. The red dot now signifies the empty lot that where the Klan store once stood. Google (n.d.). [Google Maps Vidor, Texas]. Retrieved July 10, 2019, from <https://www.google.com/maps/@30.1206555,-94.0138407,460a,35y,39.35t/data=!3m1!1e3>.





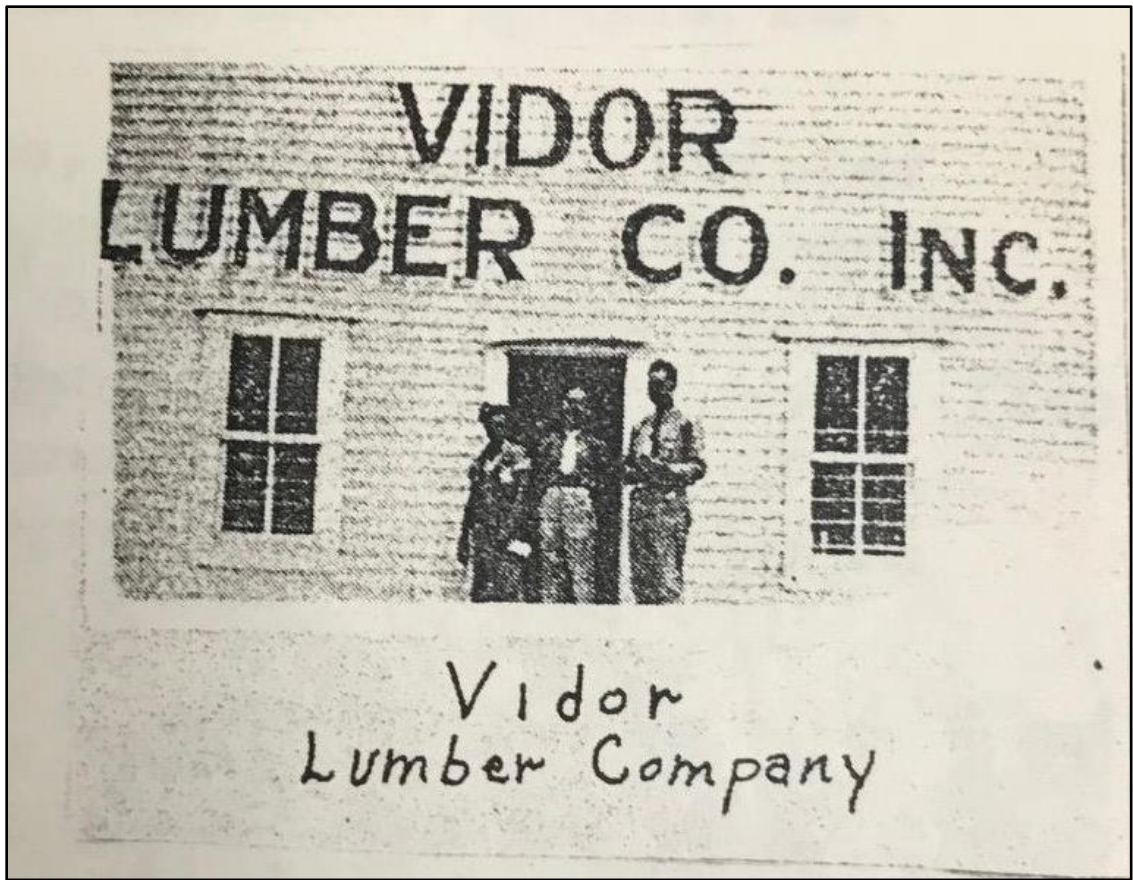
*Aerial view of Vidor, around 1949*

*This picture shows the 100 block of Main Street, at the intersection with Railroad, as well as the crossing of the tracks and intersection with Highway 90. The only landmarks that can be seen are the building that housed the Vidor Variety store and the one that housed Hanchey's Hardware store.*

This is a page from a local biography for the city of Vidor; residents created it and is located at the Vidor Public Library. See Friends of the Library, *A Portrait of Vidor: Vol. I-VI* (self-published, Vidor Public Library, 1990).



This Google image shows the empty lot in 2018 where the Klan store stood. Notice the red, white, and blue stairs—something that Michael Corcoran speaks of in his unpublished article “Vidor, Texas 1988.” Google (n.d.). [Google Maps Vidor, Texas]. Retrieved August 5, 2019, from <https://www.google.com/maps/@30.1254183,-94.0130008,3a,75y,82.96h,84.33t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1spplvweyCFQPeCzN8jYjSDw!2e0!7i13312!8i6656>.



The Vidor Lumber Company was owned by Grady Grigsby and James H. Payne and was open from 1946 to 1957. This is located in the local biography for the city of Vidor; residents created it and is located at the Vidor Public Library. See Friends of the Library, *A Portrait of Vidor: Vol. I-VI*.





This is from the front page of the *Nacogdoches Daily Sentinel* on June 18, 1943 during the Beaumont race riots that began in the shipyards.

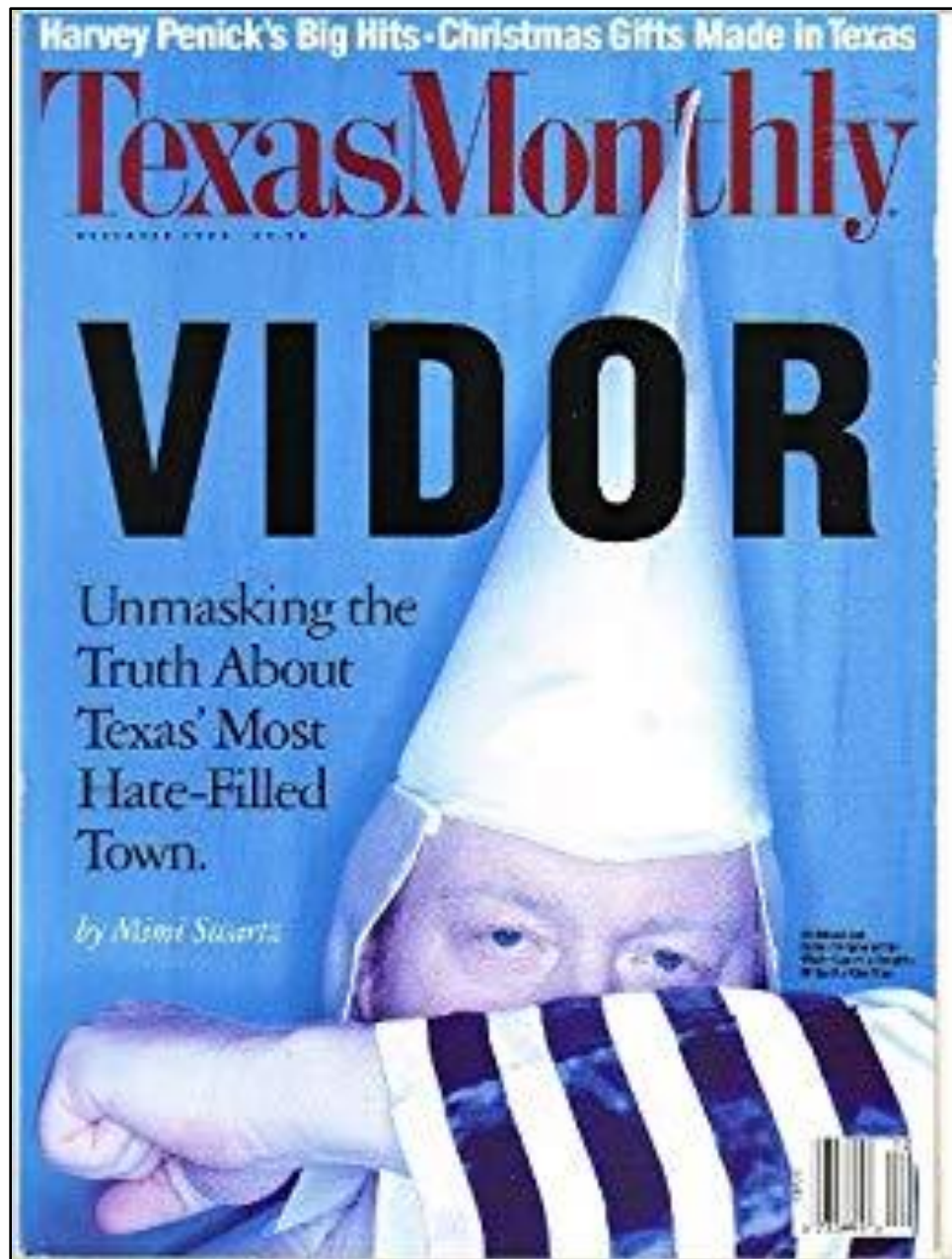


This photograph features two Klansmen and was believed to be taken in Vidor in 1975.

This image is for sale on a website for \$1,000. Notice the banner in the background, “For God & Country.” Found online at <http://www.vintageworks.net/common/detail.php/4096/16/10/150/16/0/11720>.



This photograph is from Michael Corcoran, he features it in his article “Vidor, Texas, 1988” and has it labeled as “The Klan marches on Main Street Vidor, 1985.” The church in the background is the First Methodist Church in Vidor.



This is the cover of the December 1993 *Texas Monthly* which ran the story of the desegregation of the HUD-housing complex in Vidor.





This photograph is from the photographer Dave Anderson and his book *Rough Beauty* that features photographs of Vidor, Texas. It was published in 2003. This image is unnamed or labeled in his work.

APPENDIX B  
Interview Questions to Establish Interviewee's Background and Relationships in  
Community

1. Full Name?
2. Date of Birth?
3. Born in Vidor?
4. What was it like growing up in Vidor? Describe the community for me.
5. Racial wise, did you feel the difference between Vidor and other communities? Can you describe any instances that you remember?
6. Did you ever personally witness racial issues? What about racial disparity? Describe them for me.
7. Do you think Vidor was stigmatized by the public (not local/regional)? How did/does that feel?
8. By the media? If so, how? Why?
9. Do you feel it was a sundown town? Can you remember a time were this may have come into play?
10. Do you know of anything about the Ku Klux Klan businesses that were in town? Can you describe the feelings of having them in the community? Do you have a memory of sometime that involved them?

11. Do you remember any marches or cross burnings by the Ku Klux Klan in or around Vidor?
12. Do you feel Vidor being less racially homogenized has affected it in any way? What feelings does the community get today on its flow of growth and then regression?

### Interview Questions for Dewayne Brooks

1. Full Name?
2. Date of Birth?
3. Birth place?
4. Things you heard about Southeast Texas growing up? Vidor? How does it make you feel?
5. Went to help with Hurricane Harvey relief when?
6. Where were you located? In Vidor?
7. How long were you there?
8. While you were there what did you experience?
9. Did you have any problems with residents?
10. What are your feelings now on Vidor and that part of Texas?



## APPENDIX C

### Forms and Documents Used for Oral History Project

Note: actual full transcriptions and oral history recordings are housed at the ETRC at SFA.

#### INTERVIEWEE RELEASE FORM:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, consent to the recording of my statements and do hereby irrevocably grant to Stephen F. Austin State University ("University") the right to copy, reproduce, and use all or a portion of the recorded interviews (the "Interview") conducted by \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_. I understand that the Interview will be deposited in the East Texas Research Center (ETRC) for the use of future scholars and may be used for any lawful purpose in all forms and media including but not limited to public presentations, audio or video documentaries, CD-ROMs, internet publications, slide-tape presentations, exhibits, and advertising and related promotion through the world in perpetuity, and expressly permit such use. This gift does not preclude any use that I myself may want to make of my words in these recordings to the extent it does not conflict with this agreement.

I release University and its assigns, licensees and successors from any claims that may arise regarding the use of the Interview including any claims of defamation, invasion of privacy, or infringement of moral rights, rights of publicity, or copyright. I acknowledge that I have no ownership rights in any work developed as a result of the Interview.

I certify that I am over the age of eighteen (18), have read and fully understand the terms of this agreement.

Signature of Interviewee & Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information of Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

### Oral History Biographical Sketch

*Filling out this form before the interview may help the interviewer ask more appropriate and interesting questions. The interviewee should not feel compelled to complete the entire form, but only those parts that are applicable, relevant, or suitable. Again, interviewees should only fill out what they would like to.*

Interviewee's Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact information: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### ***Family History***

Birthday & birth place: \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Father's birthday and birth place: \_\_\_\_\_

Father's occupations: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's birthday and birth place: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's occupations: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's birthday and place of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Date and place of marriage: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's occupations: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Previous Marriages (Names, birthdays, marriage dates): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Children's names and birthdays: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Other Relevant Information Concerning Family History: \_\_\_\_\_

***Education, Career, and Activities***

Elementary School(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

Junior High School(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

High School(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

Higher Education (Trade School, College, etc): \_\_\_\_\_

Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

Major/Specialty: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupations, Locations, and Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

***If Applicable***

Government Offices Held (city, county, state, national, and dates): \_\_\_\_\_

Political Background (political orientation, party affiliation, positions held, and dates): \_\_\_\_\_

Military Service (branch, rank, awards and honors, dates): \_\_\_\_\_

Community Services and Civic Activities (organization/activity, offices held: \_\_\_\_\_

Religious Affiliation and Activities: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Information: \_\_\_\_\_

Prepared By & Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### INTERVIEWER RELEASE FORM

I, \_\_\_\_\_, do hereby irrevocably release, assign, give and convey to Stephen F. Austin State University ("University") any and all right, title, and interest, including any copyright or intellectual property interest, in the interviews conducted by me as listed below (the "Interviews"). I understand that the Interviews will be deposited in the East Texas Research Center (ETRC) for the use of future scholars and may be used for any lawful purpose in all forms and media including but not limited to public presentations, audio or video documentaries, CD-ROMs, internet publications, slide-tape presentations, exhibits, and advertising and related promotion through the world in perpetuity. I expressly authorize disclosure of the Interviews to meet these purposes to the extent that the Interviews would be considered an education record under federal law.

List of all interviewees: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I release University and its assigns, licensees and successors from any claims that may arise regarding the use of the Interview including any claims under federal privacy laws including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), defamation, invasion of privacy, or infringement of moral rights, rights of publicity, or copyright. I acknowledge that I have no ownership rights in any work developed as a result of the Interview.

I certify that I am over the age of eighteen (18), have read and fully understand the terms of this agreement.

Signature of Interviewer & Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information of Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_



## STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY

---

East Texas Research Center

R. W. Steen Library

P.O. Box 13055, SFA Station • Nacogdoches, TX 75962-3055

Office – (936) 468-4100 • Fax (936) 468-7610 • <http://library.sfasu.edu/etrc>

The Deed of Gift is designed to transfer ownership of and legal rights in personal property donated to the East Texas Research Center (ETRC) to be administered in accordance with established University policies. The Deed of Gift constitutes the transfer of title and serves to define the terms of the transfer.

Description of the Gift: This section shall be completed by an ETRC representative with the assistance of the Donor. The Description of the donation will describe the property being conveyed to the ETRC and the date it was received.

Copyright Interests: Copyright in writings and original creations contained in the donated property is controlled by the individuals or organizations that created them unless the copyright has been conveyed legally to the Donor or other party.

If the Donor controls the copyright in all or some of the property being donated, the first box in this section of the Deed of Gift should be checked and an explanation of the extent of their copyright control shall be given.

If the Donor does not control copyright in any of the donated property, the second box should be checked.

If the Donor has any information about the holder of the copyright, the third box should be checked and as much of the requested information as possible should be provided.

Copyright Conveyance: The ETRC encourages Donors to transfer any copyright they may control whenever possible. Copyright ownership by the ETRC facilitates use by scholars. If the Donor wishes to do so, they should initial the first paragraph in the Copyright Conveyance section of the Deed of Gift.

Assignment of copyright may be conditional. For example, the Donor may wish to stipulate Copyright retained during their lifetime or something similar in the Limitations space provided on the Deed of Gift.

Appraised Value: The responsibility of appraising the property donated to the ETRC remains with the Donor. The ETRC is not authorized to provide appraisals for tax purposes. The Donor shall be advised that if a tax deduction on a gift is to be taken, the Internal Revenue Service has regulations for filing tax-deductible contributions valued at \$250 or more. If the value of the donation is greater than \$5000, an independent professional appraisal is required and a copy



## STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY

---

East Texas Research Center

R. W. Steen Library

P.O. Box 13055, SFA Station • Nacogdoches, TX 75962-3055

Office – (936) 468-4100 • Fax (936) 468-7610 • <http://library.sfasu.edu/etrc>

of the appraisal should be attached to the Deed of Gift. Additionally, other IRS restrictions may apply such as filing Form 8283. The Donor is advised to consult with their professional tax advisors for further guidance.

Disposition of Property: In order to make the most effective use of resources, the ETRC reserves the right to determine the disposition of donated property.

Delivery Required: The gift must be “delivered” to be complete. Delivery means an actual transfer of possession.

Acknowledgment of Receipt of Gift: This section of the Deed of Gift serves to formally acknowledge the receipt of a donation under the terms mutually agreed to by the East Texas Research Center. The Donor will receive a copy of the Deed of Gift signed by the ETRC Director.

Change in Provisions: If the Donor feels that any terms in the Deed of Gift should be modified or deleted, the Donor should discuss the matter with the ETRC Director to verify that the desired change in terms is allowable and feasible. Modifications or deletions must be approved before the Donor executes the Deed of Gift.



## STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY

East Texas Research Center

R. W. Steen Library

P.O. Box 13055, SFA Station • Nacogdoches, TX 75962-3055

Office – (936) 468-4100 • Fax (936) 468-7610 • <http://library.sfasu.edu/etrc>

### DEED OF GIFT

I, the undersigned Donor, hereby donate and convey to the East Texas Research Center, all rights, title, and interest that I possess in the following:

Description of Gift: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Collection Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Material Received on Site: \_\_\_\_\_

### Copyright Interests

☐ I represent and warrant that I control the copyright in some or all of the donated property. (Please indicate below the property for which you control the copyright and the nature of your copyright control, e.g., sole/joint owner, heir, literary executor, trustee.)

☐ I do not control copyright in any of the donated property.

☐ To the best of my knowledge, the copyright is controlled by:

Name:

Address:

Phone Number:

E-mail address:

### Copyright Conveyance

If you wish to transfer, convey, and assign to the East Texas Research Center, any copyright which you control in the above-named property, subject to the limitations, if any, stated below, please initial here: \_\_\_\_\_

If you do not wish to transfer copyright, but give permission for the East Texas Research Center to make copies for users of the property, please initial here: \_\_\_\_\_



## STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY

East Texas Research Center

R. W. Steen Library

P.O. Box 13055, SFA Station • Nacogdoches, TX 75962-3055

Office – (936) 468-4100 • Fax (936) 468-7610 • <http://library.sfasu.edu/etrc>

Appraised Value (if Donor has had gift appraised):  \*

*Please attach copy of independent appraisal if available.*

\* **Terms and Conditions for Use of Gift:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Must be reviewed and approved before the Donor executes the Deed of Gift.*

I understand that the location, retention, cataloging, and preservation of the property, or other considerations relating to the use or disposition are at the discretion of the East Texas Research Center in accordance with institutional policy.

The terms of this Deed of Gift shall apply to all items as further described in an Appendix to be completed subsequent to the effective date of this Deed of Gift and subsequently attached.

I represent and warrant that I am the sole owner of the property described above and that I have full right, power, and authority to give the property to the East Texas Research Center. I have received an Explanation of all terms and conditions of this Deed of Gift and agree to them as indicated by my signature below.

If applicable, I understand the sections on Copyright Interests and Copyright Conveyance and acknowledge that the information I have provided is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Donor's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Donor's Name (PLEASE PRINT)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address





## STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY

---

**East Texas Research Center**

**R. W. Steen Library**

P.O. Box 13055, SFA Station • Nacogdoches, TX 75962-3055

Office – (936) 468-4100 • Fax (936) 468-7610 • <http://library.sfasu.edu/etrc>

The gift herein above described is accepted on behalf of the East Texas Research Center, subject to the terms, conditions, and restrictions herein set forth.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Director, East Texas Research Center

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
R.W. Steen Library Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
SFASU President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### PRIMARY SOURCES

#### Government Documents and Publications:

U. S. Bureau of the Census. *Estimates of the Intercensal Population of Counties 1970-1979*, last modified December 6, 2016, accessed October 5, 2018, URL:

<https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/pre-1980-county.html>.

U. S. Bureau of the Census. *Census of Population and Housing – General Population Characteristics, Texas, 1960*. URL: <https://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html> (accessed June 17, 2019).

U. S. Bureau of the Census. *Census of Population and Housing – General Population Characteristics, Texas, Section 1, 1970*. URL: <https://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html> (accessed June 17, 2019).

U. S. Bureau of the Census. *QuickFacts, Vidor city, Texas*. URL: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/vidorcacitytexas/PST120218> (accessed June 17, 2019).

Sanborn Map Company. Vidor, Orange County, Texas, 1966. New York: Sanborn Map & Publishing Co, 1966. "Texas Department of Insurance State Fire Marshal Fire Insurance Maps." URL: [https://tsl.access.preservica.com/uncategorized/digitalFile\\_c33bad23-53a3-419a-b0e9-7b98b373b67d/](https://tsl.access.preservica.com/uncategorized/digitalFile_c33bad23-53a3-419a-b0e9-7b98b373b67d/)

Media:

"Ku Klux Klan Rally." Copyright owned by jstgr8t. Filmed November 14, 1992.

URL: <https://youtu.be/G7B58AHkJto>.

Kordelski, Matthew, dir. *The Least of My Brothers: A Documentary on Vidor, Texas*.

1999; URL: <https://mattkprovideo.com/2015/07/18/the-least-of-my-brothers/>.

Oral Histories:

<b>Interviewees</b>	<b>OH#</b>	<b>Date of Interview</b>	<b>Location for Listening</b>
<b>Carolyn Bickham</b>	OH#-2154	10/05/2018	Stephen F. Austin State University. Ralph Steen Library, East Texas Research Center, Nacogdoches, Texas
<b>Dewayne Brooks</b>	2159	05/21/2019	Stephen F. Austin State University. Ralph Steen Library, East Texas Research Center, Nacogdoches, Texas
<b>Tamera Clark</b>	OH#-2155	03/02/2019	Stephen F. Austin State University. Ralph Steen Library, East Texas Research Center, Nacogdoches, Texas
<b>Cody Cleveland</b>	OH#-2157	03/02/2019	Stephen F. Austin State University. Ralph Steen Library, East Texas Research Center, Nacogdoches, Texas
<b>Jennifer Cleveland</b>	OH#-2157	03/02/2019	Stephen F. Austin State University. Ralph Steen Library, East Texas Research Center, Nacogdoches, Texas
<b>Delores Cordova</b>	OH#-2149	03/15/2018	Stephen F. Austin State University. Ralph Steen Library, East Texas Research Center, Nacogdoches, Texas
<b>Interviewee A</b>	OH#-2152	10/06/2018	Stephen F. Austin State University. Ralph Steen Library, East Texas Research Center, Nacogdoches, Texas
<b>Darla O'Neill</b>	OH#-2158	05/19/2019	Stephen F. Austin State University. Ralph Steen Library, East Texas Research Center, Nacogdoches, Texas
<b>Andarina Smith</b>	OH#-2153	10/06/2018	Stephen F. Austin State University. Ralph Steen Library, East Texas Research Center, Nacogdoches, Texas
<b>Robert Viator</b>	OH#-2150	10/07/2018	Stephen F. Austin State University. Ralph Steen Library, East Texas Research Center, Nacogdoches, Texas
<b>Melissa Watkins</b>	OH#-2151	10/07/2018	Stephen F. Austin State University. Ralph Steen Library, East Texas Research Center, Nacogdoches, Texas
<b>Sherman White</b>	OH#-2156	03/02/2019	Stephen F. Austin State University. Ralph Steen Library, East Texas Research Center, Nacogdoches, Texas
<b>Bonnie White</b>	OH#-2156	03/02/2019	Stephen F. Austin State University. Ralph Steen Library, East Texas Research Center, Nacogdoches, Texas

Photographs:

“For God & Country.” URL: <http://www.vintageworks.net/common/detail.php/4096/16/10/150/16/0/11720>.

Google (n.d.). [Google Maps Vidor, Texas]. Retrieved July 10, 2019, from <https://www.google.com/maps/@30.1206555,-94.0138407,460a,35y,39.35t/data=!3m1!1e3>.

Google (n.d.). [Google Maps Vidor, Texas]. Retrieved July 10, 2019, from <https://www.google.com/maps/@30.1254183,-4.0130008,3a,75y,82.96h,84.33t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1spplvweyCFQPeCzN8jYjSDw!2e0!7i13312!8i6656>.

“The Klan marches on Main Street Vidor, 1985.” URL: <http://www.michaelcorcoran.net/archives/1688>.

*Nacogdoches Daily Sentinel*. June 18, 1943.

*A Portrait of Vidor: Vol. I-VI*. Friends of the Library. Self-published, 1990.

“Vidor: Unmarking the Truth about Texas’ Most Hate-Filled Town.” *Texas Monthly*. 1993.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Articles:

Baylor University Institute of Oral History. “Resources.” Accessed July 14, 2019. <https://www.baylor.edu/oralhistory/index.php?id=931324>.

Baylor University Institute of Oral History. "Transcribing Oral Histories." *Introduction to Oral History Manual*. Accessed June 10, 2019. URL: <https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/66438.pdf>.

"Blacks Move into Four Units in All-White Public Housing in Vidor, Texas." *Jet Magazine*, January 31, 1994.

Blight, David. "The Civil War Lies on Us like a Sleeping Dragon." *The Guardian*, August 20, 2017. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/aug/20/civil-war-american-history-trump>.

Brundage, W. Fitzhugh. "I've Studied the History of Confederate Memorials. Here's what to do about them." *Vox*, August 18, 2017. URL: <https://www.vox.com/the-big-idea/2017/8/18/16165160/confederate-monuments-history-charlottesville-white-supremacy>.

Corcoran, Michael. "Vidor, Texas 1988." Published on June 3, 2012. URL: <http://www.michaelcorcoran.net/archives/1688>.

"First Black Moves into Vidor Housing Project." *Associated Press*, February 17, 1993. URL: <https://www.apnews.com/f4ef07e083daf402474243d676bac9a3>.

Larsh, Helen. "Commentary: Racism in Texas More than Skin Deep." CNN.com. Published January 17, 2007. Accessed May 12, 2018. URL: <http://www.cnn.com/2006/US/12/21/racism.guestcommentary/index.html>.

Loewen, James W. "Why do People Believe Myths About the Confederacy? Because our Textbooks and Monuments are wrong." *The Washington Post*, July 1, 2015. URL: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/07/01/why-do-people-believe-myths-about-the-confederacy-because-our-textbooks-and-monuments-are-wrong/?utm\\_term=.3676d3f7e932](https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/07/01/why-do-people-believe-myths-about-the-confederacy-because-our-textbooks-and-monuments-are-wrong/?utm_term=.3676d3f7e932).

McAndrew, Tara. "The History of the KKK in American Politics." *JSTOR Daily*. Accessed November 1, 2018. URL: <https://daily.jstor.org/history-kkk-american-politics/>.

Oppenheim, Keith. "Texas City Haunted by 'No Blacks after Dark' Past." *CNN: Behind the Scene*, December 13, 2006. URL: <http://www.cnn.com/2006/US/12/08/oppenheim.sundown.town/>.

"Oral History: Defined." Oral History Association. Accessed June 18, 2019. URL: <https://www.oralhistory.org/about/do-oral-history/>.

"Principles for Oral History and Best Practices for Oral History." Principles and Best Practices. Oral History Association. Accessed June 18, 2019. URL: <https://www.oralhistory.org/about/principles-and-practices-revised-2009/>.

Southern Poverty Law Center. "A Klan for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?" *Ku Klux Klan: A History of Racism*. Published March 1, 2011. Accessed June 28, 2019. URL: <https://www.splcenter.org/20110228/ku-klux-klan-history-racism#appendix>.

Southern Poverty Law Center. "Ku Klux Klan: A History of Racism." Published February 28, 2011. Accessed June 21, 2019. URL: <https://www.splcenter.org/20110228/ku-klux-klan-history-racism>.

Swartz, Mimi. "Vidor in Black and White." *Texas Monthly* 21, Issue 12 (December 1993): 130-141.

Thompson, Helen. "Race Wrangling." *Texas Monthly* 21, Issue 3 (March 1993): 70-72.

Verhovek, Sam Howe. "Blacks Moved to Texas Housing Project." *The New York Times*, January 14, 1994. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/01/14/us/blacks-moved-to-texas-housing-project.html>. Last accessed July 8, 2019.

Verhovek, Sam Howe. "One Man's Arrival in Town Exposes a Racial Fault Line." *The New York Times*, February 27, 1993. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/02/27/us/one-man-s-arrival-in-town-exposes-a-racial-fault-line.html>. Last accessed July 8, 2019.

Wallach, Dan. "Ruth Woods, former Vidor mayor who opposed Klan, dies." *Midland Reporter-Telegram*, July 12, 2016. <https://www.mrt.com/news/article/Ruth-Woods-former-Vidor-mayor-who-opposed-klan-8352186.php>.

Wooster, Robert. *Handbook of Texas Online*. "VIDOR, TX." accessed November 01, 2018. <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hev02>.

#### Journal Articles:

Becker, Carl L. "Everyman His Own Historian." *American Historical Review* 37, no. 2 (December 1931): 221-36.



Blee, Kathleen M. "Becoming A Racist: Women in Contemporary Ku Klux Klan and Neo-Nazi Groups." *Gender and Society* 10, No. 6 (December 1996): 680-702.

Blee, Kathleen M. and Amy McDowell, "The Duality of Spectacle and Secrecy: A Case Study of Fraternalism in the 1920s Ku Klux Klan." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, No. 2 (May 2012): 249-265.

Blee, Kathleen. M. "Women in the 1920s Ku Klux Klan Movement," *Feminist Studies* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1991) 57-77.

Chomsky, Noam. "Scholarship and Ideology: American Historians as 'Experts in Legitimation.'" *Social Scientist* 1, no. 7 (1973): 20-37.

Chun, Ai Lin. "The Shifting Roles of Museums," *Nature Nanotechnology* Vol. 9 (September 2014): 724.

Conlin, Erin L. "Organizing and Executing Meaningful and Manageable Community-Based Oral History Projects." *The Public Historian* 38, No. 3 (August 2016): 50-77.

Coman, Alin, William Hirst. "Social Identity and Socially Shared Retrieval-Induced Forgetting: The Effects of Group Membership." *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 144, no. 4 (August 2015): 717-22.

Dentice, Dianne, "The Nationalist Party of America: Right Wing Activism and Billy Roper's White Revolution." *Social Movement Studies* 10, no. 1 (2011): 107-127.

- Dentice, Dianne. "Pseudo-Religion White Spaces, and the Knights Party: A Case Study." *Geographies of Religion and Belief Systems* Vol. 4, Issue 1 (2014), online at <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/sca/9/>.
- Dentice, Dianne. "Valley Girl Interrupted: Meth, Race, and the Ku Klux Klan." *Studies in Sociology of Science* 5, no. 3 (2014): 1-4.
- Dentice, Dianne and David Bugg. "American White Nationalism: The Ongoing Significance of Group Position and Race." *The Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 40 (2013): 193-215.
- Eyerman, Ron. "The Past in the Present: Culture and the Transmission of Memory." *Acta Sociologica* 47, no. 2 (2004): 159-69.
- Fryer, Roland and Steven Levin, "Hatred and Profits: Under the Hood of the Ku Klux Klan," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 127; no. 4 (November 2012): 1883-1925.
- Gibney, Mark and Erik Roxstrom, "The Status of State Apologies." *Human Rights Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (2001): 911-39.
- Giorgio, Grace A. "Whitewashing the Past: A KKK Display in a Small Rural Midwestern Town." *Qualitative Inquiry* 23, no. 2 (February 2017): 134-136.
- Loewen, James W. "Exhibiting Sundown Towns." *Museums & Social Issues* 2, no. 1 (2007): 57-76.
- Loewen, James W. "Sundown Towns and Counties: Racial Exclusion in the South." *Southern Cultures* 15, no. 1 (2009): 22-47.

- Kubal, Timothy and Rene Becerra. "Social Movements and Collective Memory Movements and Memory." *Sociology Compass* 8, no. 6 (June 2014): 865-875.
- McDowell, Amy and Kathleen M. Blee. "The Duality of Spectacle and Secrecy: A Case Study of Fraternalism in the 1920s US Ku Klux Klan." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 2 (2013): 249-65.
- Nasstrom, Kathryn. "Pushing the Boundaries in Oral History-Based Biographies: A Commentary." *The Oral History Review* 32, no. 2 (2005): 77-81.
- Patai, Daphne. "Ethical Problems of Personal Narratives, or, Who Should Eat the Last Piece of Cake." *International Journal of Oral History*, 8, no. 1 (1987): 5-27.
- Perkiss, Abigail. "Reclaiming the Past: Oral History and the Legacy of Integration in West Mount Airy, Philadelphia." *The Oral History Review* 41, no. 1 (Winter-Spring 2014): 77-107.
- Poyner, Fred IV. "Copyright Issues, Rights Management, and Licensing Programs for Digital Collections by Historical Institutions." Technical Leaflet #251. *History News* 65, no. 3 (Summer 2010).
- Richard, Mark Paul. "'Why Don't You Be A Klansmen?' Anglo-Canadian Support for the Ku Klux Klan Movement in 1920s New England," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 40, no. 4 (December 2010): 508-516.
- Russell, Nicolas. "Collective Memory Before and After Halbwachs." *The French Review* 79, no. 4 (March 2006): 792-804.

Sacco, Nick. "Understanding the Differences between History and Memory." *Exploring the Past*, WordPress. Published January 12, 2013. Accessed May 10, 2019. URL: <https://pastexplore.wordpress.com/2013/01/12/understanding-the-differences-between-history-and-memory/>.

Sandul, Paul J. P. "Of Sharing Authority and Historic Blocs: Toward New Historiographies of Counter-Hegemony and Community in Nacogdoches, East Texas." *The Public Historian* 43, no. 3 (Summer 2019): 91-112.

Selepak, Andrew and John Sutherland. "The Ku Klux Klan, Conservative Politics and Religion: Taking Extremism to the Political Mainstream." *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 13, no. 1 (March 2012): 75-98.

Shepard, Elizabeth. "A Digital Collection Collaboration in an Academic Repository: A Case Study." *Journal of Archival Organization* 14 (September 2014): 205-220.

Stephnisky, Jeff. "Collective Memory." Abstract, *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Globalization* (February 2012). URL: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/9780470670590.wbeog079>.

"The Nation's Hot Spots of White Supremacy." *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 64 (Summer 2009): 49-50.

Thomson, Alistair. "Anzac Memories Revisited: Trauma, Memory and Oral History." *The Oral History Review* 42, no. 1 (2015): 1-29.

Thomson, Alistair. "Making the Most of Memories: The Empirical and Subjective Value of Oral History." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 9 (1999): 291-301.

Weyeneth, Robert R. "The Power of Apology and the Process of Historical Reconciliation." *The Public Historian* 23, no. 3 (2001): 9-38.

Monographs:

Abrams, Lynn. *Oral History Theory*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2016.

Alexander, Charles C. *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York, New York: Verso, 1983.

Anderson, Dave. *Rough Beauty*. London, England: Dewi Lewis Publishing, 2006.

Assmann, Jan. *Moses the Egyptian*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Avila, Eric. *The Folklore of the Freeway: Race and Revolt in the Modernist City*. Minneapolis, MN: University Of Minnesota Press, 2014.

Bar-On, Dan. "Ethical Issues in Biographical Interviews and Analysis." In Ruthellen Josselson and Amia Lieblich, eds. *The Narrative Study of Lives*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications, 1993.

Barkan, Elazar and Alexander Karn. *Taking Wrongs Seriously: Apologies and Reconciliation*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006.

Barnett, Teresa and Chon Noriega, eds. *Oral History and Communities of Color*. Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2013.

Bennett, Tony. Ed. *Culture, Ideology, and Social Process*. London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1981.

Bernecker, Sven and Kourken Michaelian. *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory*. New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017.

Blee, Kathleen M. *Women of the Klan Racism and Gender in the 1920s*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.

Bridges, Tyler. *The Rise of David Duke*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994.

Brundage, W. Fitzhugh. *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005.

Bodnar, John. *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992.

Boyd, Nan Alamilla and Horacio N. Roque Ramírez, eds. *Bodies of Evidence: The Practice of Queer Oral History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Boyer, Pascal and James V. Wertsch, eds. *Memory in Mind and Culture*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Canby, Henry S. *The Age of Confidence*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1934.

Cantrell, Gregg and Turner, Elizabeth Hayes, eds. *Lone Star Pasts: Memory and History in Texas*. College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 2007.

Cauvin, Thomas. *Public History: A Textbook of Practice*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2016.

- Chalmers, David M. *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1987.
- Charlton, Thomas L., Lois Myers, and Rebecca Sharpless. Eds. *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira, 2007.
- Connerton, Paul. *How Societies Remember*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Cook, Ezra A. *Ku Klux Klan Secrets Exposed: Attitude Toward Jews, Catholics, Foreigners, and Masons: Fraudulent Methods Used, Atrocities Committed in Name of Order*. Chicago: Ezra A. Cook, 1922.
- Cunningham, Sean. *Cowboy Conservatism*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2010.
- Cunningham, Sean. *Klansville, U.S.A.: The Rise and Fall of the Civil Rights-Era Ku Klux Klan*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Dentice, Dianne. *American Nationalism: Myth, Innuendo, and ImagiNation*. Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2008.
- Erll, Astrid and Ansgar Nünning, eds. *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*. New York: De Gruyter, 2010.
- Fosl, Catherine and Tracy Elaine K'Meyer. *Freedom on the Border: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement in Kentucky*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009.

Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-77*.

Edited by Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon, 1980.

Gardner, James B. and Peter S. LaPaglia, eds. *Public History: Essays from the Field*.

Revised Edition. Malabar, Florida: Krieger Publishing Company, 2004.

Gillis, John, ed. *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*. Princeton, NJ:

Princeton University Press, 1994.

Glassberg, David. *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life*. Amherst:

University of Massachusetts Press, 2001.

Gluck, Sherna Berger and Daphne Peki, eds. *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of*

*Oral History*. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Halbwachs, Maurice. *On Collective Memory*. Translated by Lewis A. Coser. Chicago:

University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Hamilton, Paula and Linda Shopes, eds. *Oral History and Public Memories*.

Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009.

Harcourt, Felix. *Ku Klux Kulture: America and the Klan in the 1920s*. Chicago:

University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition*. New

York: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Jackson, Kenneth T. *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930*. New York: Oxford

University Press, 1967.



Katz, William Loren. *The Invisible Empire: The Ku Klux Klan Impact on History*.

Washington, D.C.: Open Hand Publishing, 1986.

Landsberg, Alison. *Engaging the Past: Mass Culture and the Production of Historical Knowledge*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.

Lassiter, Matthew D. *Silent Majority*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006.

Latour, Bruno. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Linenthal Edward T. and Tom Engelhardt, eds. *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 1996.

Loewen, James W. *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006.

Lutholtz, M. William. *Grand Dragon: D.C. Stephenson and the Ku Klux Klan*. Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1993.

MacAdams, Dan P. *The Redemptive Self: Stories American Live By*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Marx, Karl. "The German Ideology." 1845-46. Available online at Mark/Engels Internet Archive. [https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx\\_The\\_German\\_Ideology.pdf](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_The_German_Ideology.pdf).

McGirr, Lisa. *Suburban Warriors*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001.

- McVeigh, Rory. *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan: Right-Wing Movements and National Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.
- Megill, Alan. *Historical Knowledge, Historical Error: A Contemporary Guide to Practice*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.
- Neuenschwander, John N. *A Guide to Oral History and the Law*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Newton, Michael. *White Robes and Burning Crosses: A History of the Ku Klux Klan from 1866*. North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 2014.
- Norkunas, Martha K. *The Politics of Public Memory: Tourism, History, and Ethnicity in Monterey, California*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993.
- Olick, Jeffrey K., Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy, eds. *The Collective Memory Reader*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Olick, Jeffery K. Ed. *States of Memory: Continuities, Conflicts, and Transformations in National Retrospection*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.
- Parsons, Elaine Frantz. *Ku-Klux: The Birth of the Klan during Reconstruction*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015.
- Pegram, Thomas R. *One Hundred Percent American: The Rebirth and Decline of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2011.
- Perks, Robert and Alistair Thomson, eds., *The Oral History Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Polletta, Francesca. *It Was Like a Fever: Storytelling in Protest and Politics*. Chicago:

University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Portelli, Alessandro. *Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue*.

University of Wisconsin Press, 1997.

Portelli, Alessandro. *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1991.

Riordon, Michael. *An Unauthorized Biography of the World: Oral History on the Front Lines*. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2004.

Ritchie, Donald A. *Doing Oral History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Rothberg, Michael. *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009.

Rutstein, Nathan. *Healing Racism in America: A Prescription for the Disease*.

Springfield, MA: Whitcomb Publishing, 1993.

Sanchez, Juan O. *Religion and the Ku Klux Klan: Biblical Appropriation in their Literature and Songs*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2016.

Self, Robert O. *All in the Family*. New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2013.

Shopes, Linda, *History from Below: How to Uncover and Tell the Story of Your*

*Community, Association, or Union*. New Haven: Commonwork Pamphlets and Advocate Press, 1986.

Sims, Patsy. *The Klan*. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky, 1996.

- Smith, Robert Charles. *Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era: Now You See It, Now You Don't*. New York: University of New York Press, 1995.
- Solinger, Rickie, Madeline Fox, and Kayhan Irani. *Telling Stories to Change the World: Global Voices on the Power of Narrative to Build Community and Make Social Justice Claims*. New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Sommer, Barbara W. and Mary Kay Quinlan. *The Oral History Manual*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2009.
- Stanton, Cathy. *The Lowell Experiment: Public History in a Postindustrial City*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006.
- Straub, Jurgen. *Narration, Identity and Historical Consciousness*. New York: Berghahn, 2006.
- Taylor, Charles, K. Anthony Appiah, Jürgen Habermas, Stephen C. Rockefeller, Michael Walzer, and Susan Wolf. *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Temple-Raston, Dina. *A Death in Texas: A Story of Race, Murder, and a Small Town's Struggle for Redemption*. New York: H. Holt, 2002.
- Thompson, Paul. *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Underwood, Kathleen. *Town Building on the Colorado Frontier*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987.

Wade, Wyn Craig. *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987.

Wertsch, James. *Voices of Collective Remembering*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Williams, Howard C. *Gateway to Texas: The History of Orange and Orange County*. Orange, TX: Heritage House Museum of Orange, 1986.

Yow, Valerie Raleigh. *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005.

Theses and Dissertations:

Berndt, Matthew Tyler. "Prohibition, Women, and the Klan in 1920s Southeast Texas" Master's Thesis, Lamar University, 2013. ProQuest. URL: <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1438892305?pq-origsite=summon>.

Pirnie, Christopher. "Lumberton, TX: A Sundown Suburb." Master's thesis, Lamar University, 2015. ProQuest. URL: <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1727611862?pq-origsite=summon>.

Selepak, Andrew G. "White Hoods and Keyboards: An Examination of the Klan and Ku Klux Web Sites." Dissertation, University of Florida, 2011. ProQuest. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1727612166?pq-origsite=summon>.

## VITA

Amanda Michel Saylor graduated from Nacogdoches High School in 2008 and attended Angelina College between the years of 2008 to 2012. She started attending Stephen F. Austin State University in 2012 and majored in History with a minor in Philosophy. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from Stephen F. Austin State University in May 2017. Amanda then began attending graduate school at Stephen F. Austin State University in August of 2017 and became the Graduate Assistant for the East Texas Research Center. During her time as a graduate student, Amanda collaborated on several endeavors, including oral history transcriptions and projects, digital preservation, archival processing, museum exhibition building and technical, preservation and historic tourism design, and collections management.

Permanent Address: 167 County Road 8111  
Nacogdoches, Texas 75964

Citation formatting based on *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17<sup>th</sup> edition.

This thesis was typed by Amanda Michel Saylor.