

**Writing Rhetorical Education through Archival Records and Oral Histories:
Articulating the Researcher's Location through moments of Disruption**

Summary

Since February 2009, as I found archival evidence of a black rhetorical society—an active forum operating during the first half of the 20th century and sponsored by an African American church in Champaign, IL—I have been engaged in a collaborative project with church members aimed at re-constructing their rhetorical history. In this paper, I reflect on my first fifteen months of apprenticeship conducting such recovery work as an outside researcher. As this work demanded multivocality, I have studied archival texts, collected oral histories, and observed people, practices, and places. This paper documents my process of experimenting with research methods, as archival texts, places and people became research tools for me (sources), which I circulated among my informants. Yet, these same texts, places and people became memory tools for the members of this church, and occasions for reflections on their own political literacies and community involvement. Most notably, my sources have mutually informed each other; yet they have also disrupted my learning and this community's memories and perceptions of their own work. Hence, this paper documents moments of disruption, which signaled a need to interrogate both my own locations as an outside researcher, and the roles of historians these church members were enacting as they claimed church spaces, archival texts, and memories as instances of Christian duties, community advocacy, and race work.

Locating a Site of Rhetorical Education: Reading the Archives

In February 2009, as I was searching for local, textual evidence of African American rhetorical education at the turn of the 20th century, I found at the University of Illinois Archives the Albert R. Lee Papers (1912, 1917-1928). The Lee Papers—a collection of institutional letters and literacy programs—documents the activities of Bethel AME Church, an African American congregation in Champaign, IL, located in what has traditionally been known as the North End. From these few letters and manuscript programs written in the 1920s, I found evidence of a black rhetorical society—the Baraca-Philathea Lyceum (ca 1910-1940)—run by African American university students, who were Bethel members, and whose work was organized by Albert Lee. Lee was President of this lyceum during the 1920s and chief clerk in the President’s Office at the University of Illinois (Guide, 1994; Lee, 1922).

This collection speaks of an active black church, community, and lyceum whose rhetorical training aimed at promoting “[e]verything that is good for the *Race* [my emphasis] and the community” (Gray & Thornhill, 1920). I learned that this lyceum, as a non-denominational venue, held monthly programs (second Friday of each month) from ca. 1910 to the mid 1940s, but their most active years might have followed the end of World War I until the mid 1920s when Lee became its President. As an instance of evening entertainment and education (Logan, 2008, p. 59), the Baraca-Philathea Lyceum organized its work around literary and musical numbers. As Lee (1922) observes, “[t]he literary numbers should include readings, declamations, papers, orations, extempores on current question[s], and an occasional debate. The musical numbers should include vocal and instrumental.” (p. 1). Where most numbers closely resemble rhetorical display (with *epideictic* components) and performative rhetoric (Logan, p. 97), the Baraca-Philathea Lyceum included instances of Parliamentary

Drills (as a regular feature) and Parliamentary Meetings—Political Conventions (as a special feature); that is, political *deliberation* was an aspect of their own rhetorical training made visible in their lyceum.

My readings of these primary texts aligned with the scholarship on black literary societies, and lyceums during the Reconstruction Era and the first half of the 20th century—Logan, 2008; McHenry, 2002; Ray, 2005; & Royster, 2000. Bethel’s lyceum emerged as a site of rhetorical education and display for African American university students, while Lee, its most forceful and visible organizer, emerged as a *rhetor*, engaged in university venues and actively constructing a particular community identity for Bethel—as religious, cultured, and civic-minded. Not only was Lee a parliamentarian, in charge of deliberative training in Bethel, but he also embodied a commitment to activism, advocacy, and action, as his organizational efforts illustrate moments of crossing over from a black church venue to a university space, which may not have been too accommodating with its black students.

Lee’s letters convey a sense of urgency—a need to gather university students, faculty, people in the community, and professional men; a need to be punctual; to have balanced programs, and to excel in them; and to produce a written journal. These concerns align with practices of insertion seen in African American rhetorical circles, where their visibilities wished to challenge white notions of black inferiority (McHenry, 2002; Ray, 2005). Lee was also not shy in expressing his disappointment/concerns. In a letter to his officers—African American university students in charge of organizing the lyceum numbers (November 1922)—Lee observes how their previous “program was good, but many who had promised to participate failed us, and we were forced to the expedient of supplying the omissions by extempores” (Lee, 1912-28, November 28, 1922).

Typical in Lee's letters to his officers read as follows, "One other complaint, and I shall exhaust my supply, is, that the members of the Program Committee [student officers], are not all doing their part in securing numbers. ... The attractiveness and strength of our organization lay in its well balanced programs, and the attendance will depend upon public's confidence that we shall always have a good program." (Lee, 1912-28, February 1, 1923). This suggests that the lyceum came to embody Bethel's rhetorical image for their community, and Lee was protective of that image. In previous letters, Lee sets his expectations for the lyceum, where a 'good' program is one starting on time, and with lively and spontaneous discussions, a large audience, and well-performed music (Lee, 1912-28, January 3, 1923).

Race discussions are frequent components in the lyceum's programs, as the scholarship on African American rhetorical education supports (Logan 2008, McHenry, 2002; Ray, 2005). An annotated set of programs and informal extempores lists the following topics: Anti-lynching laws, tendencies seen in the Ku Klux Klan in Champaign, labor opportunities and educational vocations for African American students, expected contributions from the NAACP, and Negro migration to the North, for instance. These concerns align with Royster's (2000) observations: "African American societies have consistently shown evidence of a basic mandate—that is, the need for those forming such alliances to operate in conscious regard of political and economic forces." (p. 208). That is, these concerns suggest an understanding of *situated ethos*, as they invoke matters arising from power and access differentials that compromise their progress—lynching, the KKK, and restricted labor. Moreover, these topics, and the lyceum programs, suggest practices of intellectual insertion and *invented ethos* as Bethel created a rhetorical space of its own (Royster, 2000, p. 168). Yet, even as Bethel extended invitations to the university community, from reading the Lee Papers, it does not

become clear if the connections bridging both venues were *only* Lee and the African American students (and Bethel members) whom he appointed as officers.

Following Glenn and Enoch (2009), “[n]ot all archival research in rhetoric and composition begins—or ends—on a university campus or at a great library” (p. 326). Mine had begun on a campus library; yet learning about this lyceum from the Albert R. Lee Papers, and relying only on archival texts proved to be insufficient. After I approached Bethel, shared my archival findings, and requested senior members to meet with me, I witnessed a focus group in Bethel become an instance of collective memory reconstruction. Memories were positioned against privately archived texts brought to our meeting, and compared to Lee’s documents, which I had contributed, as members reminded each other of their lyceum, their Bible groups, and their libraries. This experience led to a moment of scholarly reflection—an academic mandate to cross-reference textual information, combine local archives, consult the press, but most importantly, conceive this recovery work as a co-construction project. That is, given that several members remembered their lyceum, collecting oral histories became the only means to make sense of incomplete records and to secure the memories of aging members.

As I began conducting my interviews from August to November 2009, I realized how members’ individual and collective memories shaped their texts—the archival ones that I had called to their attention and their own private ones. Moreover, their memories suggested an implicit challenge to university records by complicating notions of access to university venues ‘without discrimination’ (University of Illinois, 1940). Frequently, in composing their oral histories and attending to my inquiries, Bethel members directed my interviews as they claimed knowledge of their community-space—their lyceum, their church, and the North End.

In some instances, interviews were followed by walks around the neighborhoods in the North End where Bethel members made sure I saw the houses of senior members, visited their schools and libraries, and saw the church's mural, the streets named after, house developments, and railroad tracks. In directing my learning, these members redefined my own locations—my researcher-space—and situated my inferences within their lived experiences. They became the historians—the 'archivist agents' (Glenn & Enoch, 2009).

Hence, examining and contrasting multiple sources to recompose a rhetorical history extended expected academic practices—cross-referencing—and became ways of imagining 'literacy in its particulars' as "literacy connects profoundly, variously, and inextricably with ... lives in specific contexts ..." (Royster, 2000, p. 45). That is, for *our* recovery work, this realization entailed collecting oral testimonies, approaching Bethel spaces, staying there and crossing over to university spaces, but most importantly, it demanded that I shared my writing process with Bethel members.

Disruption as a Productive Moment in Historical Recoveries

In his discussion on the role of oral testimonies in historical recoveries, Duffy (2007) observes how "[d]ocuments are by far the most common of ... primary sources" (p. 85). Indeed, my recovery work during the earlier stages of my project had been informed solely by written texts, most of which had not even been stored in Bethel. Yet, Duffy (2007) acknowledges that recently "there has been another approach to the historical study of literacy, one based not exclusively on written materials but also on spoken language" (p. 85). This approach has also demanded a close proximity to communities of study, "who [may] have been ignored, oppressed, and/or forgotten." (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 368). Even as oral testimonies depend

on individuals' memories, which are liable to error or bias, this approach emerged not only as a method to complete the historical gaps of this lyceum but also as a evidence of how Bethel makes sense of its own rhetorical education by choosing meaningful moments and by dismissing others, and by interpreting experience variously. Making sense of its rhetorical past further entails conceiving private locations as valid archives—a home's attic/basement, artifacts displayed in a kitchen, or a family trunk for instance (Glenn & Enoch, 2009; Hog, 2006; Okawa, 2008; Rohan, 2008).

Hence, anticipating conflicting memories and contradictions in documentary and oral histories, and multiple locations is not only expected, but I claim to be productive as well. Therefore, based on Duffy's (2007) notion of 'cultural meanings'—the "speakers' beliefs, attitudes, and values concerning an historical event" (p. 92)—the task of conducting research and identifying my own locations/investments in this project appeared to be more productive as my learning of Bethel, my readings of secondary source claims, and even members' memories and perceptions were disrupted. Moreover, memories as they depend on the "dialectic of remembering and forgetting" (Nora, quoted in Okawa, 2008, p. 97) appeared to be completing some gaps, but creating others in the process.

As I reflect on how my sources multiplied, from partial documentary histories to oral testimonies I witnessed moments of disruption. In this paper, I reflect on three of these moments, which revealed a community-space engaged in their own history project, and situated my research-space as that of an interested outsider. *First*, the Albert R. Lee Papers (and Bethel's texts and memories) appeared to oppose official university discourses. These accounts did not map directly onto each other, as they each understood access to university spaces 'without discrimination' in conflicting ways. *Second*, in my conversations with Bethel

members, multiple notions of what constitutes an archive and how it should be preserved emerged; at times, these notions led to church decisions regarding its institutional texts to which some members oppose. *Third*, Bethel members see their church spaces performing multiple functions—rhetorical, religious, and political/civic (Bethel, 1938; Bethel, 2008). In doing so, members assign event-categories to their spaces—civic affairs may have no place in the pulpit, or civic and religious concerns may be inextricably bound in time and space.

Conflicting Texts and Memories: Re-reading the Archives

As I was first studying the Albert R. Lee Papers, and engaged in working archival texts only, I also encountered a University of Illinois text written in 1940, the *Negro Students* (1939-1940) report, stored in the General Correspondence of President Arthur C. Willard. This seven-page typewritten report records black students' engagements in academic and professional venues in and out of campus. Its three-page statistical appendix documents enrollment and graduation figures. This text complicates my readings of the black experience in campus during the first half of the 1900s. While seemingly a favorable depiction of African American accomplishments, the report is in fact a problematic narrative suggesting a prejudicial academic location/climate for black students. Hence, the first moment of disruption occurs as the Lee letters/programs, this university report, and preliminary conversations and memory collections suggest conflicting visions of university locations.

The *Negro Students* (1939-1940) report argues for the visibility of African American students in university venues based on non-discriminatory admissions' policies. "All curricula" the report contends, "are open to Negro students in all Colleges and Schools without discrimination, both at Urbana and Chicago." (University, 1940, p. 2). Moreover, the

report indicates that African American students have favored the College of Education, while noting, “Negro students have shown good judgment ... in entering into curricula which lead to fields open to them after graduation” (p. 2). This statement is not only a tacit acceptance of their limited labor opportunities in general, but an indifferent discourse on a social concern, which is only aggravated when the report concedes that African Americans have rarely found a job in campus (p. 3).

African American visibility is further argued in terms of their increasing numbers—enrollment and graduation rates. The report states, “[n]egroes participate in the Commencement exercise in the same [way] any other student does, without discrimination as to marching or seating.” (p. 3). More tellingly, the report documents the extra curricular activities, in which black students engaged from ca 1900 to 1920, a period overlapping with the early lyceum work. The report lists, as relevant rhetorical venues for African Americans, the Illini (a student newspaper), the Philomathean Literary Society, the Illinois Inter-collegiate Debating Team, and the Honorary Debating Fraternity. Yet, the report only acknowledges two African American students who belonged to these organizations (University of Illinois, p. 4).

As I was making sense of what access ‘without discrimination’ could have meant for this report, of how this access was visible in campus during the early 20th century, and as I considered how black students may have “wisely judged” their academic/labor options, my oral histories collection began. Hence, I began interrogating the significance of university locations for its black students, and for the black community in Champaign. In referring to university students, my interviewees consistently signal Bethel as a popular, and much needed site for African American students. A recurrent memory in Bethel articulates a sense of exclusion from campus. “[N]egroes- negroes couldn’t stay at- ... there was a sorority and a

fraternity, but ... there was not a place for negroes ... to stay on the campus, so huh I think there were six or seven women in the church, Bethel Church, ... and we decided to take these students.” (Mrs. L. Gray, Interview, September 18, 2009). These woman’s recollections align with the report as it indicates how accommodations for black students were at “some distance” from campus, while noting that “theoretically” the women’s residence halls were open to African Americans (p. 5). As locational disruptions, memories of questionable classroom climates and a clear sense of their minority status were frequent too (Mrs. E. Bridgewater, Interview, September 17, 2009).

The university report does acknowledge the role of Bethel in supplying social spaces for students. Most notably, as part of my recovery work, the report becomes the last archival record documenting the existence of the Baraca-Philathea Lyceum. “Bethel AME Lyceum which has functioned for about thirty years, is now managed and attended almost entirely by Negro students.” (p. 6). That is, where no other source—testimonial or documentary—confirms the work of the lyceum until 1940, this report suggests otherwise. Yet, in its welfare/religion section, the report characterizes the lyceum in ways that I also find problematic. Bethel’s Lyceum is portrayed as “laboratory,” as a venue for the expression of repressed ideas (p. 6), thus suggesting that such ideas may have not have its place in university spaces.

Therefore, where the Lee letters do not explicitly locate black university students in university spaces and where the report articulates a non-discriminatory presence, these memories locate these students in campus in less than comfortable ways. As I began realizing how members became archives, their cultural memories informed my readings of this university report, and my locations (my sense of membership and methods) were disrupted, as

reading these texts destabilized my learning. Was the university a truly accommodating space for its African American student during the early years of the 20th century? Most notably, how am I to read further official university discourses? When could the university's emphasis on 'access without discrimination' have changed its meaning? Members' recollections align with larger cultural narratives documenting the insertion of African Americans in mainstream literate venues (Logan, 2008; Royster, 2000). As I reread texts and people, a conflict of interpretation emerges as the university report defines access in terms of its admission's figures, while Bethel members do so, in terms of their own material circumstances and sense of safe participation.

Reconfiguring Archival Practices and Texts: Self-proclaimed Historians

My first approach to archival texts, locations, and practices occurred in a large university library, where requesting procedures followed formal rules and where files were organized in labeled files and boxes. Yet, as my work progressed and my reading and learning locations migrated to Bethel spaces, my interviewees exposed me to their own private archives variously maintained in filing cabinets and in labeled hanging folders, in boxes in attics, in basements, or under beds. I have studied some texts on loan; yet others have been named, but guarded from me. As I realized the wealth of documentary texts distributed among multiple community locations, and as I considered how institutional and private sites might share goals—preserving a history—yet be distant spatially and historically, I sensed displacement once more. This time my discomfort was considerably lower—I was not about to learn the meanings of a university crutch ('without discrimination'), but I was about to follow traces in the most mundane spaces, and so my work had multiplied. Hence, the second moment of

disruption occurs as the material culture of an archivist engages non-traditional places, texts, and practices, and as purposes change and memories decline.

My first oral interview (focus group) in Bethel took place in February 2009 after I had realized the need for spoken discourse. Several senior members attended that meeting and I only needed to prompt them once with a question about the Baraca-Philathea Lyceum, and the meeting turned into a collaborative reconstruction of their lyceum, its heir—the Baraca Bible Class for men—and how documents previously stored in Bethel, and that I was sharing with them, had been discarded at one time. Where men outnumbered women, the latter were the most vocal members in that meeting. Most notably, three women, sisters, in their eighties and seventies, had come to the focus group prepared—with texts, letters, photographs, newspaper clippings, and issues of black periodicals from the time of the lyceum.

Even as records seemed to be dispersed among members, not sanctioned by any institutional archive, this meeting signaled when I first reconfigured my notion of what an archival text could be. This was when artifacts that had been displaced from their private locations, were being used in spoken discourse to articulate a history. As Okawa (2008) observes, artifacts are seen as *reminders* and “physical embodiments of cultural memory” (p. 103). These texts were prompting members talk and recollections, even as some conflated church spaces as I found later. The meeting spaces in Bethel became a valid archival location/display. This was finally when an outsider was taking an interest in their history. To me, this was also when I first saw Albert R. Lee’s face in a newspaper article—the man whose penmanship I had come to recognize, and whose forceful tone, in his letters, I had memorized.

An intriguing moment in this meeting occurred as members recognized some of my own artifacts—some of Lee’s letters—but located them in a time when the old church building had a library (also known as the Baraca Room), where the lyceum meetings were held. Texts documenting the lyceum and their early Bible classes were discarded some time during the 1960s. Most of their books, notebooks, and photographs, and artwork, were distributed among interested members. While some members have not withheld these recollections from me, others have avoided discussing the issue, as I perceived they were “exercising a form of editorial control regarding the dissemination of historical information.” (Duffy, 2007, pp. 100-101). However, I have learned that the church hierarchy at the time made this decision; it is not clear to me whether members were consulted, but some remember this event with a sense of loss—dismantlement and redistribution of materials (Mrs. E. Merrifield, Interview, November 12, 2009). Some members have expressed regret, and after having requested materials to be returned (recently), this request was met with resistance.

I see these comments as cultural moments, where my location is being defined by these members, but also where artifacts were labeled and remembered differently, thus possibly valued differently too. Acknowledging these decisions is relevant as disruptive moments in the valuing of artifacts not only because as an outside researcher these memories were shared to me with various levels of trust, but also because as these texts involved the lyceum and the early Bible classes, discarding and distributing artifacts might align with the lyceum’s decline thesis. This thesis claims that literary societies declined as its training was offered elsewhere—at universities, in women’s clubs for instance (Logan, 2008, p. 91). That is, these documents/books may not have been deemed relevant anymore, as the lyceum was no longer explicitly visible in Bethel. Yet, I contrast these decisions with the practices of

preservation that these three sisters, whom I interviewed months later, reveal. These women behave as professional archivists—their texts may be stored in attics or basements, but with light and temperature control. They have become the repositories and even as they were nurses, and school principals, some members refer to them as historians.

When reflecting on how her grandfather's bundles of letters aid in the reconstruction of the internment experience of Japanese Americans during World War II, Okawa (2008) identifies the process of constructing a community memory as that of literally and metaphorically unbundling and re-bundling private letters (pp. 94-95). When I met with these three sisters months after the focus group (November 2009), a dynamic similar to that experienced by Okawa emerged, as these women offered their personal memories to construct a community one. Most notably, I saw them unbundle newspaper collections and work with me through their content. Even as they tended to my questions, they defined who the historians for my project were and who the apprentice was. In describing the roles of the researcher-agents, Glenn and Enoch (2009) observe, “[a]rchivists catalogue the materials, decide what to preserve, and determine how to catalogue it, thereby controlling the materials we can access and the processes we take to get to them.” (p. 329). It was this act of controlling their materials and choosing what to bring from their attic as our interview progressed, which prompted me to acknowledge them as agents in their own archival locations.

Church Spaces: Merging Religious and Civic/Political Locations

Spaces, just as archival artifacts, store cultural memories. As my learning of Bethel's spaces suggested a dialectic of exclusion and inclusion, multiple spaces with overlapping purposes,

and single spaces with multiple representations emerged. I see this dialectic working not only in terms of prejudicial practices that may have taken place in university spaces; but I also see it in the ways members signal spaces as event-locations. That is, lyceum meetings took place in their library; race work did not take place in the sanctuary; socials may take place anywhere in the church. In terms of outside spaces, university spaces (classrooms and residence halls) and events (admissions, Commencement, or rhetorical venues) were variously articulated in the *Negro Students* (1939-1940). Yet, African American students in the early 20th century do not seem to have inhabited them comfortably or even come closer to some venues. Community spaces, circumscribed to the North End, appeared to have been more significant to these students and to Bethel members as church spaces provided support. “[The] church was our social life, we looked forward to go to church, it was uh- this is where we met friends.” (Mrs. L. Gray, Interview, September 18, 2009).

Community space—the one that surrounds the church—has been deemed suitable for representation, as a mural drawn in the 1970s depicts the African American experience in Africa and in the US. Finally, church sites seemed to have responded to an economy of space, where multiple engagements took place at a single location—a library in their old building. Hence, the third moment of disruption occurs when members, in recalling their lyceum, fix their space—the library—but combine memories of the lyceum and the Bible classes, which were both held there. These confluences are significant as they reveal how church members make sense of their work—as religious, as civic, or both. Far from being a frustrating disruption, conflating spaces complicates the meaning of race work in productive ways.

Bethel held several learning endeavors in one single space—its library—but members mistake the Baraca-Philathea Lyceum for the Baraca Class (Bible Study), since the lyceum’s

organizational meetings and Bible studies took place in that location until the mid 1940s. Mason's meetings were held occasionally in the Library. Therefore, when some members remember being told, as children, not to approach the room, other members think the reason for this request is the privacy that Masons required (Mr. N. Banks, Interview, March 18, 2009). As I was initially exploring lyceum parallels in Bethel, this conflation becomes salient when members see in the Baraca Class—currently the Men's Bible Study—organization modes similar to those of the lyceum. Since their Bible studies do include civic concerns (as applications of scriptural work), rendering a space as rhetorical and religious points to the multiple roles Bethel was serving, and to how members were making sense of how busy the Baraca Room—Library—was (Ethnographic Notes, Focus Group, February 25, 2009).

More tellingly, as spaces and functions overlapped in these members' memories (not only in terms of the Library), my learning was disrupted once more. My concern with what race work meant for this community was addressed as civic duty, Christian duty, or political activism. To my question, 'where do you see these lyceum-type of activities in Bethel' or 'where do you see race work' (Interview Protocol, August 2009) people responded variously. Some members used these labels interchangeably; yet others, in representing their community reject ever being political, which prompts me to interrogate my own interview protocol. When I asked a senior member, a 97 year old woman, who remembers the lyceum, and who had met Lee, about their topics of conversations during the Saturday socials, she responded, "No ... nothing, we weren't political, we weren't organized or anything" (Mrs. L. Gray, Interview, September 18, 2009), possibly signaling a non-partisan characterization of their church spaces. The social and religious characterizations of Bethel, do not seem to conflict; yet,

religious times were clearly distinguished from their social ones, even if the latter took place in their sanctuary too.

Other members, while conceding that Bethel *was* political, emphasized that their work *never* came from their pulpit (Mrs. M. Benson, Interview, September 10, 2009). Yet, other members saw their spaces as inextricably political *and* religious, and remembered Bethel as forum for their views and opinions, which may not have been heard elsewhere—a memory resembling a university discourse (1939-40) on ‘pent-up’ ideas. “To me,” Mrs. E Merrifield claims, “... just because you go to church, doesn’t mean you divorce yourself from the public interest.” (Interview, November 12, 2009). Her sister, Mrs. H. Suggs, also observes, “you are taught the concepts [sense of civic duty] at church.” (Interview, November 12, 2009). Furthermore, members also choose to represent themselves and Bethel with the artifacts they preserve—newspaper clippings documenting education and housing in the community. That is, I claim that these choices signal what they see their church spaces perform—civic duties. Finally, other members displace their political concerns to locations outside of Bethel as they locate their activism for instance, in marches held to exert pressure for black employment in downtown Champaign stores.

Concluding remarks

This reflective piece is the result of the many instances during these fifteen months of work that I have noticed a disruption modifying my learning process and opening research spaces that I had overlooked. These realizations have not only expanded the scope of my original inquiries—the life of Bethel’s lyceum—but they have prompted an interrogation of my own locations as the researcher interested in this recovery. As Glenn & Enoch (2009) observe,

“[e]ven the most collaborative and dialogic ethnography or archival inquiry, even the most ethically admirable, is an intervention into a world that has been lived and narrated by the person who has experienced it and then is once again recorded, interpreted, and circulated by the researcher.” (p. 335). Therefore, as *my* project began as a historical work that *I* was performing—a type of intervention into the Bethel’s rhetorical past—the cultural memories that Bethel members brought to our meetings, and their sense of ownership of artifacts, spaces, people, and of methods, disrupted my locations, my sense of methods, and prompted me to acknowledge a new researcher-space. That is, I realized that I had been a co-participant, and that even as I interviewed church members, they were sharing *their* project with me as they were intervening in my writing process.

Moreover, as my visibility in the community and my lack of a recognizable racial bond appeared evident to some Bethel members, Royster (2000) reminded me that as an outsider to the community that I was studying, I could be interested and have investments in this recovery project, as long as I articulated carefully what my viewpoints were (p. 277). I am not an African American woman, yet I have developed an affective connection for a rhetorical work that has not yet been written—one where women were activists, where a man bridged two seemingly distant spaces, and one where, as I had seen in my own family, senior members guard and keep artifacts of social history. As I attempt to follow Bizzell’s (2000) advice, and explore “the multiple functions of emotions and experiences in defining ... [my] relationship to [this] research” (p. 13), I initially articulate my attachments to Bethel spaces as stemming from an academic curiosity and from an appreciation of the archival habits that take place there.

Indeed, I have yet to articulate more, and more deeply. Yet, even as my apprenticeship has not been lengthy and it continues, as Royster (2000) observes, I am being attentive to various experiences, “especially when the people whose experience it was are no longer alive and when they did not always leave clear records of themselves” (p. ix). Most importantly, I am beginning to feel comfortable with disruption, and I am considering what it suggests about archival research and research in general—how knowledge is layered. Bethel members have expanded notions of archives—places and artifacts. Moreover, they have claimed knowledge of their spaces and artifacts; they have maintained and discarded others; and their embodied practices of remembering and forgetting have defined my own locations, and have displaced and re-configured church spaces too. Mostly, as I move into the next stages of my research, these discussions on locational literacies are now informing my initial inquiries in productive ways: how is race work understood and reconfigured in safe and conflictive spaces, and how is it embodied as members cross over spaces.

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