

ENG 340

4 May 2017

Explanation: In writing this essay, I explored an area of Appalachian history that has long gone under-studied. Although it is a local history, that makes it no less Appalachian. I am from a distressed county in Appalachia, and this essay examines many themes common throughout Appalachian history. I discuss class issues, racial issues, outsiders entering the region, cultural aspects of Appalachia, the results of extractive industries, labor issues, and more. Perhaps most importantly, my essay looks at Appalachia as a complex region and works hard to contextualize the events that resulted in the creation of, relocation of, and current memory of the original Highlander Folk School in Grundy County, Tennessee.

I use primary sources found in my research at the Grundy County Historical Society. Many of these sources are only stored there and at the current Highlander Center in New Market, Tennessee, so while I did not use the Weatherford-Hammond Mountain Collection in the Hutchins Library Special Collections, I used a valuable resource available for my area of study. I also have primary sources interviewing members of the Grundy County community with the goal of eventually creating an oral history project available to the public. While this is an in-depth research project, I hope to work on gathering more research on the original Highlander Folk School and to eventually turn this into a book-length work of scholarship. Until then, I hope you enjoy reading about an important part of Appalachian history and appreciate any comments or suggestions you might have for me on my future work with this exciting project.

Uncovering the Memory of the Highlander Folk School

As far as I was concerned, the Highlander Folk School consisted of one building across from the Summerfield Cemetery. I had my first sleepover at my friend Olivia's house which my

dad told me used to be the meeting hall for the folk school. Any significance was lost on my first grade self, and what I remember most about the time I spent at that house was my favorite grave in the cemetery across the street. It was the grave of twenty-one month old Gracie Lee Levan who died in May, my birth month, and whose body was shrouded by a little wooden house the same way the Highlander Folk School was shrouded from the memory of the community.

Highlander Folk School, a training center for social change, was originally located right down the road from my house in Monteagle, Tennessee. I grew up hearing about the school from my parents but only in bits and pieces. Although they had both attended Sewanee: The University of the South about ten minutes away from the folk school, neither of them knew much about the school other than that it was a focus of Civil Rights training, a place visited by Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks.

Other than my parents, no one seemed to know about this mysterious place, so in my mind, the myth and mystery behind it grew exponentially. When I learned about Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks in elementary school, I could proudly say I had stood in the same room as they did, but when people would ask me about Highlander, that was all the information I could give.

Slowly, Highlander began to fade from my memory even though I still visit the little cemetery. My memory of Highlander blurred and mutated, intertwining in my mind with Gracie's grave until I could no longer separate the two. Then, during an Appalachian Literature course I took my first year of college, Silas House mentioned the Highlander Folk School located in East Tennessee, right outside of Knoxville.

My brain hit rewind. Was this *my* Highlander? All I could think was that my professor must have been confused, must have tangled his thoughts together about the folk school because

clearly—or so I thought—Highlander was located in my hometown, in Middle Tennessee. I raised my hand and commented that I had a Highlander Folk School where I lived, too, in Monteagle. He nodded but said that the new one was located in New Market, Tennessee, nearly a three-hour drive east. Apparently, the Highlander Folk School had lived on. My memory was reawakened.

After some preliminary research, I discovered that people in the area who started to complain about the original Highlander Folk School in Monteagle forced it to shut down in 1962. Ever since, Monteagle and the rest of Grundy County have been working to actively forget what happened at the school and even to go so far as to somewhat erase the folk school from local memory. The destruction of some of the folk school properties and a hush that has fallen over the topic in conversation led to the active forgetting of the school. When looking at how the Highlander Folk School is remembered locally today, there are clear memory patterns of destruction and active forgetting, but there is also an ongoing movement to transform the memory of the folk school into something new.

In this paper, I examine the original Highlander Folk School in Monteagle through a memory studies lens. I begin by detailing claims made by a few major memory theorists, particularly focusing on sites of shame, obliteration of memory, the differences between memory and history, manipulations of memory by those in power, the unpredictability of memory, the usability of memory, and how memory can be repurposed. From there, I delve into the history of Highlander and its founder, Myles Horton, in order to better understand the goals of the school and why people in Monteagle and the surrounding area ended up in such opposition to the school. My consideration of the history of the place led me to question how the memory of Highlander was created even as the trial to revoke the charter was in progress, so I then explore

early memory formation of the school in Monteagle's community memory. After that, I investigate how the memory of Highlander has changed over the years and how it is remembered now, and I wrap up my paper with a look at what is being done to preserve the original Highlander Folk School today and what the future of the place might consist of. I argue that the ways in which the Highlander Folk School is remembered--or forgotten--today reflect the effects of small town political power on memory formation.

Obliterating, Forgetting, Repurposing

Kenneth Foote argues that sites of shame or trauma are often subject to obliteration in order to quicken the process of forgetting. He explains that some tragedies are “so viciously or recklessly intentional that they scar a place almost permanently” and are therefore subject to destruction.¹ These places are often destroyed through graffiti, arson, bulldozing, and general neglect in order to blur memory of the place. While the intention is to forget or absolve these sites, often the result is to leave a mystery around a particular place of shame that leads to questioning and rediscovery. Foote references Thomas Bruneau's examination of silence, stating that it is “closely regulated by sociocultural norms that define social status and position.”² This makes silence as powerful as language if not more so. While obliterating some of these sites makes them disappear, the remaining buildings are made all the more precious to those in the community who recognize the importance of these sites.

In his classic essay, Pierre Nora considers the differences between history and memory. He asserts that memory “remains in permanent evolution” while history “is the

¹ Kenneth E. Foote, *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1997), 174.

² Ibid 181.

reconstruction...of what is no longer.”³ He argues that “[m]emory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects.”⁴ The link to place makes memory more palpable than history. Even if someone attempts the obliteration that Foote describes, the places themselves still hold memory. Nora argues that his concept of *lieux de mémoire* are the “remains, the ultimate embodiments of a memorial consciousness” in a time when people’s memories of events no longer exist because they are abandoned in favor of historical distortion.⁵ These places work to preserve a past that is no longer directly accessible other than through a historical lens because the memory is stored within the place itself.

Paul Ricoeur and Ron Eyerman both focus on forgetting and manipulation of memory by those in power. Ricoeur claims, “Even when it is methodologically guided by historical criticism, this forgetting boils down to a forgetting of the victims.”⁶ Throughout history, victims have been neglected because those in power take control over community, collective, and national memory. Although this forgetting of victims often leads to trauma, Eyerman argues that it can also provide positive opportunities for counter-narratives that create space for minority voices to be heard.⁷ It is in this space that people are able to challenge dominant ideas and memories to bring minority narratives to attention.

Eyerman also explains cultural trauma as a “loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people who have achieved some degree of cohesion.”⁸ The loss

³ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux De Mémoire*,” *Representations*, no. 26 (1989): 8-13, DOI: 10.2307/2928520, 8.

⁴ Ibid 9.

⁵ Ibid 12.

⁶ Paul Ricoeur, “From ‘Memory--History--Forgetting,’” in *The Collective Memory Reader*, ed. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and David Levy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 480.

⁷ Ron Eyerman, “From ‘The Past in the Present: Culture and the Transmissions of Memory,’” in *The Collective Memory Reader*, ed. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and David Levy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 305-6.

⁸ Ibid 304.

of identity can lead to a split in a community or on a broader scale and can also lead to a split in memory. One group might remember something in one way while the other remembers it in a different light. Eyerman talks about “the power of political elites, for example, of mass media in selecting what will be represented, thus affecting what will be forgotten as well as remembered.”⁹ Media manipulation has the power to warp collective memory by bringing a particular view to attention and preserving it through writing, film, the internet, etc.

Barbie Zelizer talks about the unpredictability and usability of memory. She explains that those who study memory are “unable to prepare for which parts of the past become significant dimensions of a recollection, which personalities are most effective in activating memory, or which contemporary circumstances serve to engender new rewritings of the past.”¹⁰ The unpredictability of memory means that in the present, no one can control the way a certain event or experience will be remembered later on. It is possible for a memory to start out as one thing but over the years to morph into something entirely new. Zelizer also contends that memory studies centers on “its usability, its invocation as a tool to defend different aims and agendas.”¹¹ Different collectives use memory in different ways. Generally, those in power have the greatest control over how memory is used, but as Eyerman explains, there are still spaces for minorities to take control over memory and talk back to power narratives.

Aleida Assmann gets further into the usability of memory by looking more closely at how memory can be repurposed. She discusses the canon and archives in terms of cultural memory stating, “The continuous process of forgetting is a part of social normality.”¹² It is impossible to

⁹ Ibid 306.

¹⁰ Barbie Zelizer, “Reading the Past Against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies,” *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12 (1995): 221.

¹¹ Ibid 226.

¹² Aleida Assmann, “From ‘Canon and Archive,’” in *The Collective Memory Reader*, ed. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 334.

remember every little detail of an event, so communities choose the narratives they remember. She further describes active forgetting as “implied in intentional acts such as trashing and destroying” and as “violently destructive when directed at an alien culture or a persecuted minority.”¹³ The treatment of minority culture goes back to what Eyerman and Zelizer say about the loss of minority narratives. If a community actively destroys minority narratives, then it is hard to establish these counternarratives. Assmann explains that archives are used for memory that is “in the intermediary state of “no longer” and “not yet,” deprived of their old existence and waiting for a new one.”¹⁴ Therefore, these archives of memory have potential to be transformed into different uses. These memories are perhaps the ones most likely to be repurposed by minorities because the majority has cast aside these memories into storage.

Planting a Vision: 1932-1961

Myles Horton, an activist from Savannah, Tennessee, founded the Highlander Folk School in Monteagle, Tennessee, in 1932. In his autobiography, Horton discusses how his poor beginnings led him to go to college but also allowed him to understand the perspective of people affected by poverty, of social others.¹⁵ He attended Cumberland University where he started trying to break down segregation by promoting inclusivity in the student YMCA.¹⁶ Next, he attended Union Theological Seminary which led him to a greater interest in social issues.¹⁷ From there, Horton attended the University of Chicago where he attended a Danish Lutheran church as was inspired by the Danish-born ministers to go look at a Danish folk school.¹⁸ The focus on

¹³ Ibid 334.

¹⁴ Ibid 336.

¹⁵ Myles Horton, *The Long Haul: An Autobiography* (New York: Teacher's College Press, 1998), 2-3.

¹⁶ Ibid 13.

¹⁷ Ibid 33.

¹⁸ Ibid 50.

self-guided study, study through a social movement and historical lens, and community accomplishment through development defined these schools.¹⁹ Horton felt that a labor school following these guidelines would better serve the Appalachian community where he wanted to station the school than a fully traditional folk school would because many rural areas were experiencing downfall and poverty after labor companies took advantage of them.²⁰ Thus, Horton set out to create Highlander.²¹

Finally, he found the perfect location for his folk school in Monteagle, and local benefactor Dr. Lillian Johnson granted him the land. Although she was originally “very critical of the school” because she thought they were “moving too fast for the community,” she eventually came around and saw the good in what the folk school was accomplishing.²² During the school’s beginnings, teachers encouraged students of the folk school, who the teachers often brought in from other parts of the country, to be highly active in the community on top of their classes. The community activism created a fragile bond of trust between the outsiders who founded the school, those who came to study there, and the locals who were distrustful of people coming in since they had been exploited when coal companies came to the area and took all the wealth from the county leaving behind a wake of poverty. Poverty led to the first major projects at the school. The first was to try to set up community gardens to help feed local families. The other was an attempt to increase wages for bugwood cutters who worked for the Tennessee

¹⁹ Ibid 51-2.

²⁰ Ibid 53-6.

²¹ Famous Appalachian poet, Don West, also helped to found the Highlander Folk School, but he left soon after, so for the purpose of clarity, I am leaving him out of the paper since he does not particularly pertain to the narrative I wish to examine.

²² Ibid 65.

Products Company out of Nashville by striking.²³ Although the strike proved ineffective in raising wages, it served to kick-start Highlander's activism on the labor union front.

The primary focus of the school was for teachers to train students for civil disobedience through labor activism and only later moved into civil rights around 1950. Until then, the local people lived fairly contentedly alongside the school and thrived off of the programs put on by the school. The school offered piano lessons, folk dances, community picnics, meetings with community members to try to help solve local issues, and even visits from First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, but none of this mattered once the school turned its primary focus to civil rights. Major players in the Civil Rights Movement including Septima Clark—the founder of many African American literacy schools, Rosa Parks right before her bus boycott, and Martin Luther King, Jr. whom Horton had met when King was a junior at Morehouse College, visited or attended classes at the Highlander Folk School.²⁴

The radical ideas put forth at the folk school led many to suspect the school of communist activities during a time when the Red Scare was whisking everyone into a panic. The *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* put out an article stating, “Highlander’s position was seriously undermined in August, 1939, by an event on the international scene, the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between Russia and Germany.”²⁵ Community suspicion increased the distrust already felt by many community members who were against the desegregation practiced by Highlander. As if the scare was not enough, the *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* called out the *Nashville*

²³ John M. Glen, *Highlander: No Ordinary School* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 34; Frank Adams and Myles Horton, *Unearthing Seeds of Fire: The Idea of Highlander* (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair Publishing, 1975), 37. According to Adams and Horton, bugwood is defined as “knotty crooks of trees which can be found in any cut-over forest.” It is “unfit for sawing into lumber, but was harvested for use in distilling wood alcohol.”

²⁴ Horton, *The Long Haul*, 107.

²⁵ “Highlander: Attacks on school gradually became serious,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, December 1964.

Tennessean for saying, “Highlander’s leaders were connected with Moscow; they were using Grundy county as a laboratory for spreading communist doctrine; their library contained communist literature...they were teaching revolution to secure the working-man’s rights’ and they were teaching the students how to make the employer use force...”²⁶ Because what Horton was doing with Highlander was radical and unprecedented in the United States, people were automatically distrustful of the school, and fears of communist activities whipped people into a frenzy.

The Red Scare provided a perfect cover-up for the real reason why people wanted the school shut down. Slandorous attacks started flowing from nearby newspapers in Nashville and Chattanooga leading to suspicion on the local and national level.²⁷ When the Federal Bureau of Investigation came through and asked the community if the school was involved in communist activities instead of going and investigating the school itself, the bureau managed to increase a culture of distrust that turned local people against the very school that had saved many from starvation and had always fought for the people in the surrounding community.²⁸ Between attacks against the school by Chattanooga and Nashville-based newspapers and this FBI meddling, it was impossible for Highlander to maintain good footing with the local community.

Some community members including C.H. Kilby who served as a minister and official of the Tennessee Consolidated Coal Company and his group of Grundy County Crusaders took it upon themselves to get Highlander out of the area. The *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* quoted Kilby saying, “the Crusaders were used as ‘my front in order that I may work.’”²⁹ They threatened the folk school, planned attacks with dynamite, and worked in the community to turn

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Glen, *Highlander*, 71-75.

²⁸ Ibid 146.

²⁹ “Highlander,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*.

other local people against the school.³⁰ Ultimately, the Crusaders' work led to a local trial in Altamont, the county seat. The charges pressed against Highlander included accusing Horton of dissipation of assets since he was given the land and used it for his benefit, claims that the school served beer without a license, and allegations that the school was in violation of segregation laws.³¹ Although the court dropped the charge against breaking segregation even though it was the most easily provable, the other charges won out, and the courts revoked Highlander's charter in Monteagle. The *Chattanooga Daily Times* published an article explicitly revealing the racial tension behind Highlander's closure stating, "Because of its aggressive support of liberal causes, labor unionism and its policy of integration in a region where no Negroes live, Highlander has been a controversial institution for many years."³² Glen seconded this claim writing, "Fearful of the Communist threat to the United States, and furious over the Supreme Court's *Brown* decision, opponents once again began to denounce the school as a Communist training center bent on fomenting racial strife and disrupting established values and institutions in the south."³³ Racism and fear may have killed Highlander in Monteagle, but Horton was not yet ready to give up on his dream.

Rather than letting this kill his dream, Horton relocated the charter to Knoxville. He sent a letter to his supporters reminding them not to give up and informing them of the new location still open for business.³⁴ While there, he faced many of the same issues he did in Monteagle because there were so many people in the big city to question what he was doing, so he once

³⁰ Ibid 76.

³¹ Oliver Jervis, interview with author, March 7, 2017.

³² Mouzon Peters, "Highlander School Held Not Entitled to State Charter," *Chattanooga Daily Times*, February 17, 1960.

³³ Glen, *Highlander*, 207.

³⁴ Myles Horton, letter to Highlander supporters, October 12, 1961.

again relocated the charter to New Market, Tennessee. The school remains active in New Market today and primarily helps with issues in Appalachia including labor issues.

Local Suspicions: Molding Early Memories of Highlander

From the beginning, the people of Monteagle and Grundy County were suspicious of the Highlander Folk School because it primarily served people who came from outside the area. Even though Horton was a fellow Tennessean, local people still distrusted him because he was educated and well-traveled; he had gotten above his raising and was no longer relatable to people who still lived in poverty. Although many local people benefitted from the school's community-building activities, very few actually participated and took courses at the folk school. A few curious people took the plunge and visited the school where educators tried to help solve their problems including food production, childcare, and labor issues.³⁵ More, however, remained wary of the apparent wealth of people at the folk school in comparison to surrounding families. Although Horton himself was not wealthy, the patroness of the school, Dr. Johnson, certainly was. Her land grant to Horton made him appear much wealthier than he was in reality because he was able to live in comfort and dedicate time to issues other than survival. Memories of wealthy outsiders coming into the area in the form of coal companies led to a predisposition to fear all wealthy outsiders, including Horton and other teachers and students at the folk school. Local memory was already against the newcomers, and as time went on, it only grew worse.

Although the folk school was originally active primarily in the Monteagle community, the school's objectives quickly grew to encompass a wider range of labor workers and union organization. The school worked closely with the Congress of Industrial Workers formed by the

³⁵ Thomas Bledsoe, *Or We'll All Hang Separately: The Highlander Idea* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 37.

United Mine Workers Association and the United Auto Workers, neither of which were particularly relevant in Grundy County.³⁶ Because there was a shift away from community focused activism at Highlander, local people started to view the folk school as just another business coming into and taking advantage of the region. John M. Glen argues that “Some residents were embittered by the withdrawal of Highlander from the community; others reportedly would have nothing to do with the folk school after the demise of the WPA [Work Progress Administration] unions, and still others regarded its dances as the source of drinking and loose morality.”³⁷ When Highlander did things that helped locals, the community took it in stride, but when Highlander started to do things that local people disagreed with, they were quick to forget the school’s kindness and to retaliate by turning their loyalties against the school.

By the time the school started dabbling in civil rights work, many local people had already decided that they did not approve of the racial inclusivity at the school. Horton always stood by his opinion that at Highlander, “discrimination was unthinkable” which led to “hundreds of Negro and white leaders” leaving the workshops “not only with their first understanding of the fact that they could work together, but with the beginnings of what were to become firm friendships.”³⁸ The people of Grundy County had trouble getting on board with the racial differences embraced at Highlander which led to further suspicion and retaliation when given the opportunity. According to Oliver Jervis, the head historian at the Grundy County Historical Society, after the communist witch hunt started in the 1940s, “[t]he local people of Grundy County became prejudiced against the school and withdrew.”³⁹ Although Jervis would not admit that racial tensions were to blame for the hunt against Highlander, Denis Marlowe, a

³⁶ Jervis, interview.

³⁷ Glen, *Highlander*, 63-4.

³⁸ *Ibid* 5.

³⁹ Jervis, interview.

local man whose parents were students at the school, was quick to admit, “It was all about race. People may say it wasn’t, but it was.”⁴⁰ After the FBI and major newspapers started making claims about the communist activities going on at the school, locals cast away the positive memories of what Highlander had done for the community in years prior in favor of an opportunity to remove the racial and political ‘outsiders’ from the area.

Even Eleanor Roosevelt, a major supporter of the school, was unable to save Highlander from public opinion. She tried by writing a letter stating, “I have had the school checked by people in whom I have absolute confidence and am convinced that the newspaper attack and the groups which have been opposed to you are not opposed to you because of any communist activities, but because they are opposed to labor organization and, therefore, labor education.”⁴¹ The fact that even the first lady of the United States was unable to inspire trust in Highlander showed just how far people had turned away from the school. Her defense was prior to the racial tensions that ultimately led to the downfall of Highlander, but already people were beginning to turn against the school.

Chester C. Chattin, the judge in Altamont when Myles Horton went on trial, was already well aware of the significant impact the trial could have if given the opportunity. In a time when racial tensions were high due to the Civil Rights Movement, the charge against segregation could easily have made it to the United States Supreme Court.⁴² Instead, the courts convicted Horton of using funds for the school for his personal benefit—known liars testified that he was using funds for the school as his own earnings instead of for school activities—and for selling beer illegally

⁴⁰ Denis Marlowe, interview with author, March 7, 2017. My guess is that the reason Jervis would not admit that racial tensions were to blame for the hunt of Highlander is that he could easily receive backlash from the community for casting them in a bad (if true) light. Marlowe, on the other hand, could be more open with me. He does not hold a position of power in the county, so there is nothing really for him to fear.

⁴¹ Eleanor Roosevelt, letter to Mr. Dombrowski, February 1, 1941.

⁴² Jervis, interview.

at the school.⁴³ By using unreliable testimonies, the county was already pushing a narrative of white power onto the surrounding community and showing that in Monteagle, there was no space for desegregation and minority narratives. In a town where there were no black people, the unjust trial was not a bit deal to anyone except the people at the folk school. From this moment, the judge in a position of power shaped memory of the school. Because Highlander never made it to the national level in the court system, it was able to slip away from local memory fairly quickly and easily. After the trial, the courts dispersed many of the Highlander buildings and burned them down both to erase the memory of the place and to collect insurance.⁴⁴ Marlowe shared with me, “Everyone in a position of power in Grundy County got their money from arson.”⁴⁵ When people obliterated most of the folk school buildings, the community the school once helped serve quickly forgot about it.

Repurposing Highlander: Reinstating Memory

Now, memory of the folk school is being repurposed. Within the Grundy County community, there are few people who have ever heard of the school and only a handful who can say anything about it. The Grundy County Historical Society, however, has created an exhibit about the folk school but has framed it in a way that local people will not be offended by it. The positive aspects of the school—including that it provided childcare and was supported and visited by Eleanor Roosevelt—are on the front side of the display while the more controversial aspects—including interracial interactions at the folk school, Horton’s trial, and details about arson—are reserved for the loop around to the back of the exhibit. When speaking to Dr. Jervis,

⁴³ Glen, *Highlander*, 224-26

⁴⁴ Marlowe, interview.

⁴⁵ Marlowe, interview.

it was clear that he was careful not to offend anyone with what he said. In a town where over ninety-eight percent of the population is white, it is not surprising that he chose to tread lightly because if word got out that he said something too outrageous, he could receive backlash.⁴⁶

Although it is a good sign that the memory of the Highlander Folk School is starting to poke its head through the surface, perhaps reinstating itself in community memory, there is still a long way to go if even the head historian struggles to admit the real reason why Grundy County got rid of Horton and the folk school.

Outsiders to the community are showing more interest in repurposing and reclaiming the memory of the Highlander Folk School. The Tennessee Preservation Trust (TPT) is working to purchase the remaining buildings that were not burned down in post-trial arson with the goal of turning them into a historical learning opportunity. Although they have not managed to purchase all of the properties associated with Highlander, David Currey who heads the Highlander project for the TPT shares that the “TPT has purchased almost 8 acres of the original campus, including the library” with the goal of restoring the library, getting it placed on the National Historic Register, and offering it as a historic learning resource.⁴⁷ As of now, there are a few special tours of the site that used to be offered by a former professor at Sewanee: The University of the South, Dr. Scott Bates, and are now offered by the TPT.⁴⁸ Other than that, the TPT has not managed to accomplish anything with the site.

Perhaps what gives me the most hope for the future of remembering the Highlander Folk School in Grundy County is that my generation is beginning to show an interest in the site and the story. Kelsey Arbuckle, a girl in my graduating class from Grundy County High School and

⁴⁶ Grundy County, Tennessee, *American Fact Finder*, 2010, https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml?src=bkmk.

⁴⁷ David Currey, e-mail message to author, May 4, 2017.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

dear friend of mine who now attends Sewanee: The University of the South, is also studying Highlander and looking into ways to actively revive the memory of the folk school in the area.⁴⁹ Both of us are particularly interested in the structures of power in our county that allowed people to forget the folk school and arguably even promoted its obliteration. In speaking to Mr. Marlowe, he told me that he would like to work this summer on mapping out all of the original spaces used for the Highlander Folk School, and Kelsey and I are both on board to help out.⁵⁰ I have realized that if Highlander is going to be remembered by future generations, it is my responsibility to take action. I have hope because at least a couple people in my generation are taking interest in and an active role in rediscovering Highlander and revealing uncomfortable memories that ultimately could educate the people of Grundy County about acceptance and teach them to go look at new experiences with an open mind in order to avoid once again ending up on the wrong side of history. Opening Grundy County citizens up to new ideas will take a lot of work, starting by providing education on how structures of power work and allowing a space for the limited minority narratives in the community to make themselves heard, but already I am seeing greater interest in Grundy County youth in learning about what is going on in the world and in looking at the world with a more open mind.

⁴⁹ Kelsey Arbuckle, text message to author, April 13, 2017.

⁵⁰ Marlowe, interview.

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