Award Winner
Bryan Stevenson
on Truth &
Reconciliation

US Justice and the
DNA Revolution

ALBA Inspires
Massachusetts Teachers

The Lincolns and
Racial Justice
Dear Friends,

Bryan Stevenson stood on the stage at ALBA’s reunion in New York City on April 27 and shined his light on justice. His message reverberated with everyone present. His voice moved us to tears—and to action.

Bryan’s message was a simple one. This country and the world are deeply scarred by histories of injustice. But the past is also full of inspirational examples of effective struggles against that injustice. If we believe in truth and justice and reconciliation, then those histories cannot be buried or hidden or sugarcoated. They need to be acknowledged. They need to be taught. They need to be understood. This is why his Equal Justice Initiative combines hands-on work in prisons and courts with an ambitious educational program.

Education is what ALBA is all about. The new ALBA T-shirt puts it well: “Know History to Change History.” In March, we spent an incredibly productive day with high school teachers from Massachusetts (see p. 9). They will soon be teaching their students about the need to stand up for their beliefs, inspired by the volunteers of the Lincoln Brigade. Another teacher from Stuyvesant High School who attended our New York institute in the fall developed a stunning project in which her students studied the Lincolns and the Spanish Civil War and designed their own political posters (see p. 11). In addition, a group of her students attended our event. And another teacher from Springboro, Ohio, who attended our institute in 2010, has been teaching the subject every year since and is organizing a fundraising drive for ALBA.

Bryan Stevenson didn’t just talk about the need to acknowledge the uncomfortable past and its enduring legacy of injustice. He also talked about the need for solidarity, alliances, and commitment. These are terms we understand. After all, few people in American history exemplify those three values better than the volunteers of the Lincoln Brigade, whose internationalist solidarity was the force that drove them to join the alliance against fascism and racism.

We know you are committed, too. To continue our important educational work, to reach young people who hold the future of our ideals, we need your support now. We need your help to ensure that your legacy, our legacy, the Lincolns’ legacy, will endure. If you need your help to ensure that your legacy, our legacy, the Lincolns’ legacy, will endure.

Safar!

Solidarity Forever— the commitment to see justice that inspired the volunteers of the Lincoln Brigade stood as a passionate rallying cry at this year’s 78th reunion ceremonies in New York on April 27. Highlighting the event was a musical homage to the late troubadour of the left, Pete Seeger, and the bestowal of the fourth ALBA/Puffin Human Rights Activist Award to the charismatic Bryan Stevenson, founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, an Alabama-based group that provides legal support for indigent defendants and prisoners who have been denied their legal rights.

Three sets of songs—performed by Josh White, Jr., Jennifer Glass and Brian Koehler; and the quartet of Peter Blood, Brian Hoffman, and David Beross—linked Pete’s ballads of protest with the Spanish Civil War songs he immortalized on vinyl tape, and CDs. A brief video, rescued from the ALBA archives, showed Pete performing for the Lincoln veterans in the early 1970s. A signing for Free Angela Davis appeared above Pete’s banjo. He was, as the day’s MC Sebastian Faber remarked, the most frequent and most loved singer of protest with the Spanish Civil War. Stevenson reminded the audience that Geist spoke about the Lincoln veterans’ struggle to win rights both during the Spanish Civil War and in numerous civil rights struggles after they returned to America. (See page 5.) Geist’s remarks segued smoothly to the Human Rights Award ceremony. Introduced by actor Mike Farrell, who heads the anti-capital punishment group Death Penalty Focus, and by Steven Hawkins, executive director of Amnesty International USA, Bryan Stevenson presented a plaque that provides legal support for indigent Stevenson while celebrating the Lincoln volunteers’ commitment to social and racial justice.

At ALBA’s moving event in New York, actor Mike Farrell, singer Josh White, Jr., and Amnesty International’s Steven Hawkins helped honor Pete Seeger and Bryan Stevenson while celebrating the Lincoln volunteers’ Solidarity Forever: New York Reunion Carries the Torch Forward

By the Editors

The annual ALBA/Puffin Award for Human Rights Activism recognizes individuals or organizations whose work has had an extraordinary positive impact on the advancement and defense of human rights. Established by the Puffin Foundation, the $100,000 cash award supports the laureate’s ongoing activist work. The Award was established in 2011 to honor the International Brigades and all those who fought against fascism during the Spanish Civil War. Good Work

The Volunteer

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“This was one of the very best gatherings—and I’ve been attending since the very beginning. It truly recalled the spirit of the Volunteers” —Granny Peace

“That was a brilliant event. Mazel tov. Kudos. Felicidades” —Gina Herrmann

“What a wonderful day of joyful camaraderie! Sitting in the audience, I was most inspired with the entire program” —Doug Yeager, producer

Some 90 African-Americans joined the Lincoln Brigade in Spain. They came from urban inner cities in the north and the rural south; they were sharecroppers, labor organizers, mechanics, laborers, merchant seamen, and students. They all shared a commitment to justice and equality.

I must keep fightin’/Until I’m dyin’... Paul Robeson sang these lyrics to “Old Man River” in a concert at the Royal Albert Hall in London in December 1937, changing Hammerstein’s original verses, “I’m tired of livin’/An’ scared of dyin’,” words to which he would never return. By Robeson’s own admission he was thinking of Spain when he sang these lines—“I must keep fightin’/Until I’m dyin’...”—and within a month he would visit that country in the throes of its bloody Civil War. It was a turning point in his life.

We are here today to honor Bryan Stevenson with the ALBA-Puffin Award for Human Rights, in recognition of his tireless and brilliant work for economic and racial justice. What are the links that allow me to mention Paul Robeson, a war that raged on the southern flank of Europe nearly 80 years ago, and Bryan Stevenson in the same breath?

When Paul Robeson visited Spain in January 1938 he met a number of the 2,800 young Americans known as the Lincoln Brigade. Among those he met was Al Chisholm, who later wrote a book about his experiences in Spain. Chisholm was one of the many African-Americans who joined the Lincoln Brigade and fought in the Spanish Civil War.

A LEGACY OF RACIAL JUSTICE

By Tony Geist

Some 90 African-Americans joined the Lincoln Brigade in Spain. They came from urban inner cities in the north and the rural south; they were sharecroppers, labor organizers, mechanics, laborers, merchant seamen, and students. They all shared a commitment to justice and equality.
Abraham Lincoln Brigade who volunteered to fight fascism in that country. They in turn were part of the International Brigades, 35,000 of them who came from 22 different countries to defend democracy from the assault by Franco, Hitler and Mussolini. Among the American volunteers were some 90 African-Americans.

They came from urban inner cities in the north as well as the rural south of the United States. They were sharecroppers, labor organizers, mechanics, laborers, merchant seamen, and students. They all shared a commitment to justice and equality that led them to offer their lives to achieve those goals.

Al Chisholm said that he volunteered to fight in Spain because when Mussolini invaded Ethiopia in 1935 “there wasn’t a hell of a lot I could do about it.” Spain was the first chance to fight back, and Al and his African-American comrades knew when to step up.

The Lincoln Brigade was the first racially integrated military unit in American history. Even during World War II, black soldiers had to serve in segregated units. Yet in Spain black and white fought shoulder to shoulder. The Lincolns were aware at the time that they were making history, and were proud of it.

Oliver Law was a labor organizer from Chicago who as commander of the Lincolns became the first African-American to command white troops in the history of the American armed forces. Oliver Law was killed in the battle of Brunete, leading his men in an attack on Mosquito Hill, where he lies in an unmarked grave.

Jimmy Fates survived the war and wrote a wonderful memoir, From Mississippi to Madrid. We are fortunate to have him on film talking about his experiences in Spain, in this clip from Souls without Borders: “Spain was the first time as a black man I felt a free man.”

Eighty or 90 women volunteered with the Lincolns, mostly in the medical corps, including Salaria Kea, a nurse from Akron, Ohio. Salaria had a passion for medicine from a young age yet was refused admission at three nursing schools in Ohio because of her race before she finally was accepted to the Harlem Hospital Training School in New York, where she graduated in 1934. She experienced discrimination when she volunteered for the Red Cross and enlisted for Spain in 1937.

In Spain the Lincolns fought the good fight yet they lost. It was there that they learned, in the words of Albert Camus, “that one can be right and yet be beaten, that force can defeat spirit, that there are times when courage is not its own reward.” Nearly a third of the American volunteers, black and white, Jewish and Christian, Latino and Asian, lie buried in the Spanish earth. When the survivors came home they were greeted as heroes by the Left and as common criminals by the government.

When the United States entered World War II most of the able-bodied veteerans volunteered for service. Despite the fact that they were virtually the only Americans with direct combat experience they had difficulty being sent overseas. The African-Americans, who fought side by side with their white comrades in Spain, were forced to serve in segregated units and were not assigned combat roles until the very end of the war. After the war, they faced a double discrimination: for their skin color (“back to the bottom,” as Salaria Kea put it), and for their politics. For they had lashed in Jim Crow America, a country caught in the throes of the anti-Communist hysteria of the McCarthy era.

It wasn’t until the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s that things began to change. We have a picture of Paul Robeson with Julian Bond as a child: passing the torch, handing on the passion for justice from one generation to the next.

The vets didn’t sit out this good fight either. Del Berg recently recalled that his proudest moment since Spain was “When I was elected vice president of the local NAACP.” Mill Wolff worked for the Civil Rights Congress, touring the south with an African-American folk singer in defense of black prisoners. Jack Penrose joined sit-in strikers to integrate lunch counters in Gainesville, Florida. And Abe Osheroff spent the Freedom Summer building a community center in a rural black community in Holmes County, Mississippi, where he lived with activist Hartman Turnbull. Veteran Robert Klosny organized a fundraiser for the Southern Christian Leadership Council, whose first president was Martin Luther King.

And so we come full circle. Today we are presenting the ALBA/Puffin Award for Human Rights Activism to Bryan Stevenson because in his own striving for economic and racial justice he carries the spirit of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade into the 21st century. I believe that Stevenson expresses it best, when he quotes Martin Luther King: “the moral arc of the universe is long but it bends toward justice.”

Tony Geist, longtime ALBA Board member and Chair of the Spanish Department at the University of Washington, presented this talk at the 2014 reunion. ▲
The U.S. history of discrimination and injustice that lives on in a judicial system overwhelmingly skewed against racial minorities and the poor.

gave their time, energy, and in too many instances their lives to defend democracy and human rights,” said Farrell, president of the non-profit organization Death Penalty Focus, “there is no better person than your honoree in today’s America to recognize with the ALBA/Puffin Award. Bryan’s is this country’s most powerful voice for truth and justice. He is one of the leading spokespeople for what is right and good in our country. And his Equal Justice Initiative is leading the way toward a much-needed process of truth and reconciliation.”

“In the United States we are utterly incapable of reflecting honestly on our history and the things that we do wrong,” Stevenson said. “We confuse pride and support for America with the notion that we can never apologize, never acknowledge our defects. And we are suffering because of it. At the Equal Justice Initiative we are working to change the narrative of race and poverty in this country.

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“The way I see it, four institutions have shaped the lives of people of African descent. It is these myths that allowed good people to feel okay about having slaves. Now, unfortunately, there is nothing about those myths in the Emancipation Declaration. As a result, slavery didn’t end: it just evolved during Reconstruction.

“The second institution shaping African-American lives goes from Reconstruction until World War II—an era of terrorism. What shaped my grandparents’ worldview was lynching, convict leasing: the daily threat of violence. It was this threat—4,000 lynchings, 10,000 near-lynchings—that made people submit to racial hierarchy and segregation and that destroyed black families.

“The third institution is the Civil Rights era, which gets a lot of attention, but in a way that is much too superficial and ‘The third institution shaping African-American lives goes from Reconstruction until World War II—an era of terrorism. What shaped my grandparents’ worldview was lynching, convict leasing: the daily threat of violence. It was this threat—4,000 lynchings, 10,000 near-lynchings—that made people submit to racial hierarchy and segregation and that destroyed black families.

“The fourth contemporary institution is mass incarceration: the fact that one in three black male babies born in the United States today is expected to go to jail or prison. That was never true in the 20th century or in the 19th. The presumption of guilt that we assign to people of color, black or brown, is a legacy of our failure to tell the truth about our racial history. It is a result of the fact that we never had a truth and reconciliation process like they had in South Africa or in Rwanda. I firmly believe that until we tell the truth about this history, we will not recover, we will not move forward. The basic human rights violations are too grave and too overwhelming to just evaporate. They create constructs—lethal injection or executions by midnight—that allow us to think that this practice will not reflect on us, that we are not killing other people, many of whom are innocent. But it is in our name that these people are executed. And that is no better or different than letting people be raped or beaten in our names—or using drones to assassinate them.

Farrell, best known for his work on the popular television series M*A*S*H, is a long-time human-rights activist. Since 1979 he has been spokesperson for CONCERN/America, an international refugee aid and development organization, visiting refugee camps in Asia and Central America and helping to disseminate information about CONCERN/America’s work across the globe. He served as Co-Chair of the California Committee of Human Rights Watch from 1994 to 2004 and remains a member of the Committee. He presently serves with Death Penalty Focus and as a member of the advisory board of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty.

The new Common Core Standards provide ALBA with an opportunity to help more high school teachers introduce the Spanish Civil War into their classes.

ALBA 78th annual reunion was made possible with the support of an Honorary Committee including Julian Bond, Peter Coyote, Lila Downs, Gael Garcia Bernal, Oliver Stone, and the members of the Host Committee including Burt Cohen, Dan Czitrom, Kevin Dyet, Sebastián Fabelo, Jeanne Houck, Gabriel Jackson, Julie Newman, Ellyn Polshiek, Michael Ratner, and Frieda Weiss. The entire conversation between Stevenson and Farrell is available as a podcast at www.albavolunteer.org.

L A S T M A R C H, 30 social studies teachers from several western Massachusetts schools gathered on the campus of Mount Holyoke College in North Hadley for a productive six-hour workshop led by ALBAs Peter N. Carroll and Sebastián Fabelo together with master teacher Kelley Brown and Richard Cairn, Director of the Emerging America and Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources Program at the Collaborative for Educational Services of Northampton, MA.
fruitfully in a high school setting. “Students are more visually literate than any previous generation,” he said; “they are very good at reading and thinking about images, because they produce and manipulate images all the time.”

The participating teachers received a copy of the documentary The Good Fight, which they viewed in advance of the workshop, a 75-page binder with Lincoln Brigade letters, speeches and testimonies, lesson plan templates and other resources as well as access to ALBA’s new teaching resource website.

Under Rich Cairn’s and Kelley Brown’s expert guidance, the afternoon session allowed teachers to design lesson plans that use ALBA’s compelling primary-source materials to meet Common Core State Standards. Brown led the teachers through a gradual process that allows students to complete a complex task in a series of distinct steps. “The Common Core Standards set clear benchmarks for your students,” she said, “but they don’t tell you how to get there. For example, students are expected to formulate a research statement and find evidence in primary sources to back it up. That’s a daunting task for anyone. But when you properly scaffold your assignments it can be done.”

The participating teachers left inspired and energized. “Tremendous presenters and organization,” one of them wrote, “Any and all materials are prized for future use.” “Powerful subject matter,” another one said. “A wonderful way to spend a Saturday! And I mean it!” Other comments included: “Thank you so much for changing the way history is taught”; “I will be teaching this next year”; “I can’t wait to use the materials with my class!”

The ALBA Institute was made possible with the generous support of the Puffin Foundation, ALBA donors, the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources Program, and the Collaborative for Educational Services.

In April, a Student Showcase Day at New York City’s prestigious Stuyvesant High School marked the 75th anniversary of the end of the Spanish Civil War with presentations based on ALBA’s recent Teaching Institute. Students in Advanced Placement (AP) Spanish Literature, AP Spanish Language, and 3rd-year Spanish presented interpretative poems accompanied by guitar or saxophone, fictional letters written from the perspective of an imagined American volunteer, and contemporary political posters inspired by the posters of the Spanish Civil War.

The Showcase was organized by Anna Montserrat and Robert Weldon, Stuyvesant’s Spanish teachers, who were inspired to dedicate a week of study on the Spanish Civil War after attending ALBA’s New York Teaching Institute last November. The program culminated with a dedication to Moe Fishman, who graduated from Stuyvesant before joining the Lincoln Brigade, and featured the late Pete Seeger’s musical rendition of La Quince Brigada.


Students Showcase their Lessons


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Monthly Donations
Make a Difference!

MONTHLY PLEDGE PROGRAM

Yes, I want to join the Monthly Pledge Program and help support ALBA’s continuing educational work and programs.

To donate, please call 212 674 5398 or mail the enclosed envelope checking the recurring donation box.

The Volunteer


Stuyvesant students at the showcase. Photo Xóchitl Gil-Higuchi.

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The era of DNA has changed the face of criminal justice forever. DNA tests have contributed to the exonerations of hundreds of innocent individuals—and exposed a deeply flawed system. Maddy deLone, executive director of the Innocence Project, makes the case for science-based judicial reform.

Marvin Anderson served 15 years of a 210-year sentence and three years on parole, for a rape, before he was exonerated in 2002 by DNA evidence. The victim was a white woman who had been attacked by a black male. Anderson, who is black, became a suspect in the case simply because he was known by the police to have dated a white woman. He had no prior criminal record, but police included his work identification card, which was in color, in a photo spread that included the black and white mug-shot photos of five other men. Not surprisingly, Anderson was selected. Within an hour of the photo spread, the victim was asked to identify her assailant from a live lineup. Anderson was the only person in the lineup whose picture was in the original photo array. Her memory having been tainted by the earlier photo, the victim wrongly selected Anderson again. When the organization was founded in 1992, not one state had laws requiring DNA testing. Anderson, in fact, was selected. Within an hour of the photo spread, the victim was asked to identify her assailant from a live lineup. Anderson was the only person in the lineup whose picture was in the original photo array. Her memory having been tainted by the earlier photo, the victim wrongly selected Anderson again. Marvin Anderson speaking at the Virginia Commonwealth University in 2013. Photo courtesy of VCU Libraries.

The Innocence Project has helped to persuade state and local policy makers to adopt more reliable identification procedures and other science-based reforms across the nation. When the organization was founded in 1992, not one state had a law granting access to post-conviction DNA testing of evidence to prisoners; now, every state has one. Similarly, nine states have now adopted identification reforms and 23 require mandatory recording of interrogations. Moving forward, the Innocence Project has its sights on improving some of the other egregious flaws in the system, such as those stemming from the tremendous volume of people processed through an overburdened system that cannot provide the time to treat each individual as a person, let alone do the work that would better protect the innocent.

Mistakes are inevitable in any system, and the criminal justice system is no exception. However, when life and liberty are at stake, errors must be treated as learning opportunities. It is possible to minimize the risks of the innocent without undermining the prosecution of the guilty, and in order to achieve this there is still work to be done in recognizing and reforming the various systemic weaknesses that can cause wrongful convictions to occur in the first place.

Maddy deLone is Executive Director of the Innocence Project (www.innocenceproject.org), a national litigation and public policy organization dedicated to exonerating the wrongly convicted through DNA testing and reforming the system to prevent further injustice. Marvin Anderson currently serves on the Board of the Innocence Project and is the Fire Chief in Hanover, Virginia.
Production Manager for ALBA's Spring Event
Don Myers

managed all of Jackie Mason's shows on Broadway and toured success and ran over two years. From 1986 to 2005, I stage my wits but the show ended up being an enormous Broadway stage manager. I was 24 years old, very green and scared out of New York and started a new chapter in my life as a professional. With Jackie's unwavering support I joined the union, moved to hometown and realized that I loved that aspect of theatre as community theater and then moved on to semi-professional. I felt like I had wasted a year of my life so I began working in performing in summer stock in Salinas California, I went to my sister who was the original set designer for Jackie Mason's mine, who was the amazing speakers and entertainers at the events. For many years we were fortunate to have Bruce Barthol leading the band for the event however last year he was on a European tour, so we changed things around a bit and had two bands. This year we plan on changing things around again to keep things fresh and new.

What are some highlights from working on an ALBA event?
Some of my favorite years were when we still had a lot of the vets coming to the events and telling their stories. Many of them would sit on the stage or in the front row and we would pass the microphone around giving each of them a chance to talk. They would talk about their experiences and memories that they had of their days fighting for the Lincoln Brigade. I treasure those years. Now their stories are told by others but I consider myself privileged to have met some of them and heard them recount their memories directly. Moe Fishman in particular was a spectacular guy and could talk for hours telling some of his great stories. I was very sad when he passed.

How did you break into production management?
After leaving home in 1984 and spending the summer months performing in summer stock in Salinas California, I went to visit my sister in Los Angeles. While there, I auditioned for the role of Curly in a production of Oklahoma and got the part. It was then that I decided to stay in LA. For two years I took acting classes and did stage management. A friend of mine, who was the original set designer for Jackie Mason's production of Oklahoma when I was young, invited me to help out with the load-in of the show. From that I was hired onto the running crew and three months later took over as the production stage manager. I soon started hearing rumors that the show was going to Broadway. With Jackie's unwavering support I joined the union, moved to New York and started a new chapter in my life as a professional stage manager. I was 24 years old, very green and scared out of my wits but the show ended up being an enormous Broadway success and ran over two years. From 1980 to 2005, I stage managed all of Jackie Mason's shows on Broadway and toured with him both nationally and internationally. I have been privileged to have worked with some of the best in the business including Sam Ellis, who was the production manager for the ALBA events for many years before I took over. I continue to stage manage both on and off Broadway productions and have a show coming up called Character Man starring Jim Brochu. This is my third production with Mr. Brochu. Previously I worked with him on The Last Session and the award winning Zero Hour.

How did you get interested in working in theater?
My mother, who was a model and singer, encouraged my sister and me to perform when we were very young. From early childhood we would entertain at garage halls and convalescent hospitals over the holidays. In my teens, I was lucky to go to a remarkable junior high school that was devoted to its drama department and put on major musical productions with amazing sets and costumes. I acted in nearly every school production through high school. After high school, I attended one year of junior college but found it disappointing and felt like I had wasted a year of my life so I began working in community theater and then moved on to semi-professional productions. In 1980 I stage managed my first show in my hometown and realized that I loved that aspect of theatre as much as performing.

What do you do as a production manager?
I oversee the technical and presentational aspects of the event and coordinate with both in-house and outside contractors to make sure everyone is communicating with each other and aware of their responsibilities on the event. I set the schedule for the day of the event and do my best to keep us on schedule by dealing with unexpected issues, preferably in advance or as soon as they occur.

How has producing the spring event changed over the years?
The heart of the event and the reason that we do it hasn't changed. We are there to honor the vets and the ideals that they fought for as well as honoring those that have inspired and those who today fight for the values that they lived their lives for. What has changed from year to year are some of the amazing speakers and entertainers at the events. For many years we were fortunate to have Bruce Barthol leading the band for the event however last year he was on a European tour, so we changed things around a bit and had two bands. This year we plan on changing things around again to keep things fresh and new.

How did you get involved with ALBA?
I was very happy to have worked as an assistant to Sam Ellis, who was the production manager for ALBA's annual events for many years. After Sam closed down his production office on 2004, I passed the gig on to me and I have been doing it ever since. I look forward to working on the event every year, not only because I had a chance to see many of the vets in the early years but because I think it's important to keep their memory alive.

What are some highlights from working on an ALBA event?
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How did you get interested in working in theater?
My mother, who was a model and singer, encouraged my sister and me to perform when we were very young. From early childhood we would entertain at garage halls and convalescent hospitals over the holidays. In my teens, I was lucky to go to a remarkable junior high school that was devoted to its drama department and put on major musical productions with amazing sets and costumes. I acted in nearly every school production through high school. After high school, I attended one year of junior college but found it disappointing and felt like I had wasted a year of my life so I began working in community theater and then moved on to semi-professional productions. In 1980 I stage managed my first show in my hometown and realized that I loved that aspect of theatre as much as performing.

What do you do as a production manager?
I oversee the technical and presentational aspects of the event and coordinate with both in-house and outside contractors to make sure everyone is communicating with each other and aware of their responsibilities on the event. I set the schedule for the day of the event and do my best to keep us on schedule by dealing with unexpected issues, preferably in advance or as soon as they occur.

How has producing the spring event changed over the years?
The heart of the event and the reason that we do it hasn't changed. We are there to honor the vets and the ideals that they fought for as well as honoring those that have inspired and those who today fight for the values that they lived their lives for. What has changed from year to year are some of the amazing speakers and entertainers at the events. For many years we were fortunate to have Bruce Barthol leading the band for the event however last year he was on a European tour, so we changed things around a bit and had two bands. This year we plan on changing things around again to keep things fresh and new.

What are some highlights from working on an ALBA event?
Some of my favorite years were when we still had a lot of the vets coming to the events and telling their stories. Many of them would sit on the stage or in the front row and we would pass the microphone around giving each of them a chance to talk. They would talk about their experiences and memories that they had of their days fighting for the Lincoln Brigade. I treasure those years. Now their stories are told by others but I consider myself privileged to have met some of them and heard them recount their memories directly. Moe Fishman in particular was a spectacular guy and could talk for hours telling some of his great stories. I was very sad when he passed.

How did you get involved with ALBA?
I was very happy to have worked as an assistant to Sam Ellis, who was the production manager for ALBA's annual events for many years. After Sam closed down his production office on 2004, I passed the gig on to me and I have been doing it ever since. I look forward to working on the event every year, not only because I had a chance to see many of the vets in the early years but because I think it's important to keep their memory alive.

What has changed from year to year are some of the amazing speakers and entertainers at the events. For many years we were fortunate to have Bruce Barthol leading the band for the event however last year he was on a European tour, so we changed things around a bit and had two bands. This year we plan on changing things around again to keep things fresh and new.
“Bob Merriman had been after me for some time for my refusing to eat at the officers’ mess.” When Liversedge heard about the Spanish Civil War, he knew that he had to go. In the Spring of 1937, he said his goodbyes and sailed to France. In his memoir he vividly describes his struggle to make it to shore after his ship, the Ciudad de Barcelona was sunk by an Italian submarine. Shaken by his welcome to the Spanish Civil War, Liversedge made his way to Albacete, where he began to advocate for the creation of a separate Canadian Battalion. Many Canadians had either joined their American comrades in the Abraham Lincoln and George Washington Batallions or had been scart- ted throughout the European brigades. After a few tense conversations with their American comrades, the Canadians finally earned their own unit. Indeed, this memoir provides an alternative understand- ing of the war to the ones offered by many American veter- ans and scholars: “All attempts to get down to real discussion about the necessity for the formation of a Mac-Pap Battalion [with the Americans],” he writes, “were met by barely concealed scorn, and a studied assumption of the patience of a father trying to explain to an ignorant, fraction child.” Later, Liversedge gave up command of the Mac-Paps as “Bob Mer- riman had been after me for some time for my refusing to eat at the officers’ mess. He charged me, and the Canadians in general, with making a fetish of democratism.” Liversedge’s memoir traces his actions at Fuentes de Ebro, his time with the Canadian Clerical Service, his service with the 35th Artillery Battalion, and his repatriation to Can- ada in 1939. An honest depiction of a prominent member of the National Brigades, this book is essential for anyone interested in North American participation in the Spanish Civil War. ▲

Reid Palmer, a senior history major at Oberlin College, has just finished an honors thesis on Alvah Bessie.

Canadian Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War. Photo: James Skitt (City of Vancouver Archives).

Mac-Pap: Memoirs of a Canadian in the Spanish Civil War.


With the exception of Dr. Norman Bethune’s innovative mobile blood-trans- fusion units, Canada’s role in the Spanish Civil War has largely been forgotten by both Canadians and Spanish Civil War historians. Al- though the largest number of International Brigade volunteers in proportion to their population hailed from Canada, only a handful of scholars have studied the Can-adian Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, often referred to as the Mac-Paps. The recent publication of Ronald Liversedge’s Mac-Pap: Memoirs of a Canadian in The Spanish Civil War adds a fascinating and much needed contribution to the steadily increasing number of books on Canada’s role in the war.

Born in Bradford, England on April 12, 1899, Ronald Liversedge was forced to leave school at a young age to sup- port his large family. After enlisting in the British Army after the outbreak of World War I, he grew disillusioned with the country that seemed to care little for his life. The war served as a political awakening for Liversedge. In the summer of 1918, he met a German prisoner of war who converted Liversedge to communism in under two hours. “I will never forget that little man,” he later wrote, “he gave me something to live and fight for.” After the war, Liversedge became deeply engaged in the British Communist Party, and after emigrating to Canada in 1927, became a prominent Canadian Communist, even helping to organize the famous 1935 “On to Ottawa Trek.”

Spain’s Violence; An English Woman’s View

Malaga Burning: An American Woman’s Eyewitness Account of the Spanish Civil War.


Reviewed by Katherine Stafford

Spanish Civil War literature is replete with expatriate philosophizing about the Spanish character as a response to the violence of 1936-1939. Robert Jordan, of Hemingway’s For Whom the Bell Tolls says, “What sons of bitches from Cortez, Pizarro, Mendez de Avila all down through Enrique Lister to Pablo. And what wonderful people. There is no finer and no worse people in the world. No kinder people and no crueler. And who understands them? Not me, because if I did I would forgive it all. To understand is to forgive. That’s not true. Forgiveness has been exaggerated. Forgiveness is a Christian idea and Spain has never been a Christian country. It has always had its own special idol worship within the church.” (354-355)

Gerald Brenan wrote in The Spanish Labyrinth, “Where there was envy of the rich (and Spaniards are a very envious race) it took the form of desiring to bring them down almost as much as raising themselves.” (xvi)

Gamel Woolsey, a lesser-known writer, also wrote of the Spanish “character” and tried to reconcile her love and appreciation for the Spanish people with the chaotic and merciless violence of the Civil War. Her father and her husband, historian and writer Gerald Brenan, lived in Churriana, Málaga at the outbreak of the conflict. Both wrote about this sur- real, horrifying, and heartbreaking experience. Brenan in his famous history, The Spanish Labyrinth (1943) and much later, more intimately, in his memoir, Personal Record 1920-1975 (1975). Gamel Woolsey published a less well-known memoir, Death’s Other Kingdom in 1939, which would later be re-released as Malaga Burning in 1998 by Pythia Press (and from which the edition the quotes here are taken). It has been translated into two Spanish editions (Málaga en llamas, Temas de Hoy, 1998, and El otro rein de la muerte, Agora, 1994, 2005), and has enjoyed great success in Málaga in the 21st century. Antonio Banderas, originally from Málaga, was intent on adapting the book into a movie, a plan that never came to fruition due to complications regarding the rights to the manuscript.

Woolsey’s work begins in the garden with a detailed description of “the most beautiful day of the summer” and ends in Portugal with sadness, anger and disillusionment, as Brenan and Woolsey are forced to flee the village they had come to love. Unlike the works of her expatriate contemporaries, Woolsey includes very little historical or political analysis. This is a book about feelings and personal realities. It carefully recounts day-to-day life in this increasingly idyllic Mediterranean town, as death and violence gradually intrude and turn her world upside-down.

Brenan and Woolsey hide Spanish aristocrat Don Carlos Crooke Larios and his family for months in their house and help him escape the anarchists riots. They observe members of their quiet village turn against one another. They receive word of servants, friends, and acquaintances who are killed. Woolsey dreams ofturning their house into a hospital and helping the wounded. From a tower in her house she watches Nationalist rebels bomb the city of Málaga, located about 15 kilometers from Churriana. She and Brian Torremolinos and listen to various canards about the Spanish people from other foreigners. Everyone in their house listens to the angry words of General Queipo de Llano on the radio as he threatens to obliterate the masses.

Woolsey does not take political sides, but rather laments and condemns human frailty and the violent effects of all ideological persuasions. She does not describe the violence of the war as uniquely Spanish, but rather as human. What brings her most to despair is the depreciating and entitled attitude of the British and American expatriates observing and condemning the war and the Spanish at a safe distance in Gibraltar. While she does make some observations about the passionate Spanish “character,” found in nuns and anarchists alike, the work uniquely focuses on the female rather than male Spanish character and subject. She writes, “A great deal of the character for which the Spaniards are famous, I think, is found most of all in its older women. They have suffered and resigned themselves, worked beyond their strength, spent themselves for others. This patient, steadfast, stoic woman, hard but gentle, and quietly resigned, accepting life as it is with all its ills and trials, comes to fruition.”

Today, a visitor can view the historical setting of the book, as the Ayuntamiento de Churriana has restored Brenan and Woolsey’s farm house, named after a famous person who visited there. As members of their quiet village turn against one another. They receive word of servants, friends, and acquaintances who are killed. Woolsey dreams ofturning their house into a hospital and helping the wounded. From a tower in her house she watches Nationalist rebels bomb the city of Málaga, located about 15 kilometers from Churriana. She and Brian Torremolinos and listen to various canards about the Spanish people from other foreigners. Everyone in their house listens...
Woolsey does not take political sides, but rather laments and condemns human violence, empathizing with victims of all ideological persuasions.

The book not only provides an overall analysis of the Sección as a historical phenomenon from a dual theoretical perspective, it also makes a contribution that reveals the complexity of an organization that attracted a large group of activists over the course of four decades (1937 to 1977). First, the book explores the existence of two generations of women militants consisting of the women who founded the organization and participated in the Spanish Civil War and a second generation that dates from 1947 (with the Law of Succession, when the Franco regime configured itself as a “champion of women’s rights” in the 1940s, but she is right to analyze the achievements of the organization in light of this tension between the female Falangist elite and the masses, the constituency from which they drew necessary support and on which they relied as a source of legitimacy in the Franco regime. The first generation included women linked to the Falange through family ties, and who had been active participants in the civil war as social workers. A number of these women had been casualties during the war and their dedication and sacrifice served as a bridge of fidelity to the Franco regime. The women of the second generation tended to come to the organization seeking professional development and training, activities that garnered legitimacy through the use of the female uniform of the Sección as well as by the state-sanctioned representation of women’s other model of womanhood: that of the regime’s other main women’s organization, the Acción Católica, as well as from the despised left-wing (“communist” or “red”) models of female activism that bucked the established political order. The book also traces the contribution of the Sección Femenina to legislative reforms of Franco dictatorship in the areas of gender and describes how women activists engaged with the power both as distinct and overlapping roles.

The author explores the ways in which gender identity appeared in publications of the Sección Femenina and concludes that the identity promoted was far from fixed or monolithic. Offer shows how the publications promoted a female model that subverted the traditional dichotomy between public and private, and proposed a kind of “virile” activism that is not wholly aligned with the ideal of masculinity. These publications distanced themselves from two other models of womanhood: that of the regime’s other main women’s organization, the Acción Católica, as well as from the despised left-wing (“communist” or “red”) models of female activism that bucked the established political order. The book also traces the contribution of the Sección Femenina to legislative reforms of Franco dictatorship in the areas of gender and describes how women activists engaged with the power both as distinct and overlapping roles.

In short, Señoritas in Blue marks a milestone in the understanding of the Sección Femenina and the analysis of the Franco regime from a gender perspective. It not only offers a new reading, rich and suggestive of the many facets of women’s activism during Franco’s dictatorship, but also highlights the projects of this “female elite” within the regime and its capacity for empowerment. It also examines how the limits imposed by fidelity to the regime guaranteed the organization’s existence. ▲

Katherine Stafford teaches Spanish literature at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania.
Unfortunately, some of the author’s reasoning muddles his attempt at a more balanced look at Spanish artistic creations during the past 70 years.

“Cultural memory,” Treglown observes, “has no point if it recaptures only half the past.” Unfortunately, like the Falange’s yoke and arrows that appears on the book’s spine, some of the author’s reasoning muddles his attempt at a more balanced look at Spanish artistic creations during the past 70 years.

A aficionados of contemporary Spain will find a vivid survey of Spanish history and culture in Treglown’s book. A British journalist and expert on contemporary Spain, Treglown says he was inspired by reads both popular and obscure Spanish novels, artwork, and films, identifying as much material as possible available in English translation. His years as a regular visitor to the Iberian Peninsula are evident in his long-view discussion of the current state of the recuperation of historical memory: he watches as the graves of Spanish Civil War’s dead are exhumed from far-flung municipalities, talks to the curators of Spanish museums dedicated to commemorating the Spanish Civil War, and screens dictatorship-era Spanish films that were not widely seen outside the country (or inside it, as it turns out).

Treglown provides an engaging view of influential postwar Spanish historians, novelists, and filmmakers. With the benefit of hindsight, he sets these writers and directors into a historical and cultural context, laying out the obstacles they encountered and the effects they had in shaping the debates in dictatorship and democratic Spain. Although some of these artists and writers were considered friends of the Franco regime—the novelist Camilo José Cela worked as a censor, while the director Luis García Berlanga supported the Nazis by fighting with Franco’s Blue Division during World War II—many were trying to fly under the regime’s radar, releasing books and films under the heavy scrutiny and limitations of Franco’s government. Although Treglown recognizes the intellectual drain caused by the Civil War and the injustices of the Franco regime, he makes the seductive argument that the work of novelists and writers has been summarily and unfairly ignored. Of course novels are not the same as politics, and 1978 has changed: meant to memorialize Franco’s fallen soldiers, the documentary film that Bethune made and later toured the country’s transitional government had agreed not to enter into recriminations about the Civil War and dictatorship. Treglown asks “How dare anyone talk about an amnesiac deal?”

has changed: meant to memorialize Franco’s fallen soldiers in the Civil War, the monument is now a giant reminder of Spain’s continued struggles to untangle its divided past and remember the casualties on both sides of the war. This, ultimately, is Treglown’s intention as well.

Norman Bethune in Spain

Review edited by David Rodríguez-Solá

Bethune’s assistant to the civilian population after the fall of Malaga was a life changing experience. For three days, he and his aides treated hundreds of people en route to Almería in the unit’s ambulance. They would not have survived otherwise. Surprisingly, Letherbridge covers this episode in one chapter, relying mostly on the pamphlet mentioned earlier. Bethune’s presence on the road to Malaga was due to test the transport blood supplies from Barcelona in their refrigerated truck, an experiment he aborted after the humanitarian crisis confronted him. Bethune solved the deficit in blood supplies during the battle of Jarama—when 700 wounded were brought to his hospital in the first five days—by extracting blood from the deceased. Cadaver blood transfusion was an experimental method he tried in desperation to save lives.

Letherbridge’s choice of the word “conspiracy” in the book’s subtitle refers to Bethune’s withdrawal from Spain. It seems quite possible that it was linked to a report sent by some of his collaborators to Canadian Communist Party officials informing them of his automatic and selfish attitude toward his comrades. These slanderous accusations led to a police report on Bethune. He left Spain in May 1937.

In Letherbridge words, Bethune’s contribution can be put simply: “He had brought blood to the wounded twisting in agony on the front lines. He had built with his own hands and his own determination the world’s first unified mobile blood transfusion service. What more could be asked of any man?”

David Rodríguez-Solá is Visiting Assistant Professor of Spanish at Middlebury College. His most recent book is Teatro nacionales: La Segunda República y el teatro clásico español (Bemerra/Marx/Verlag, 2014).
What you leave to friends and loved ones and the causes you champion are ways of expressing your hopes and dreams for the future and perpetuate your story in the history of the Lincoln Brigade. As you make your plans, please consider including ALBA in your will or living trust, or naming us as a beneficiary of your estate. ALBA can accept legacy gifts in any amount, large or small. Please help us continue to expand our horizons and your beliefs. Help us to carry our shared ways of expressing your hopes and dreams for the future and perpetuate your legacy to the next generation and beyond.

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Special thanks to Ms. Susan Wallis for donating to ALBA the copyrights of Milton Wolff’s book “Another Hill.”

Contributions received after May 1 will be noted in the next issue. ALBA and The Volunteer depend on the generosity of our readers. Thank you!
78th Annual Celebration Honoring the Abraham Lincoln Brigade – West Coast
Sunday, October 5, 2014
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Graduate and undergraduate students world-wide are invited to submit an essay or thesis chapter about any aspect of the Spanish Civil War. Two prizes of $250 each will be awarded. Submission deadline is August 1, 2014.

For guidelines and information: www.alba-valb.org/participate/essay-contest

Call for Entries:
2014 ALBA’S Human Rights Documentary Film Series
Welcome filmmakers! Impugning Impunity: a Human Rights Documentary Film Series will take place in October 2014. Submit your film by August 1, 2014.

For requirements and information: www.alba-valb.org or email filmfestival@alba-valb.org

The Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives carries on the legacy of the American volunteers who challenged complacency and isolationism. Now you can continue their “good fight” by offering a legacy gift to ALBA.

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