

Academy Meetings

Presentations by Academy Fellows at Northwestern University

Darlene Clark Hine and Barbara Newman

This presentation was given at an Academy meeting held on the Northwestern University campus on May 7, 2007. Northwestern University President Henry Bienen and Academy CEO Leslie Berlowitz welcomed Fellows and guests to the meeting. At this meeting, J. Larry Jameson, Irving S. Cutter Professor of Medicine, Vice President for Medical Affairs, and Dean of the Feinberg School of Medicine, also spoke. His remarks will appear in a forthcoming issue of the *Bulletin*.



Photo courtesy of Northwestern University

Students outside University Hall on the Northwestern Evanston campus



Darlene Clark Hine

Darlene Clark Hine is Board of Trustees Professor of African American Studies and Professor of History at Northwestern University. She was elected to the American Academy in 2006.

The Black Professional Class

“The Black Professional Class” is the working title of a project that I have been engaged in for about twenty-five years. Given that length of time, you would think that I would

have completed it by now. Well, I am nearing the end, but at the moment I am in a conundrum. I invite you to share your thoughts as to possible resolutions.

I begin with a quote from Booker T. Washington, the head of Tuskegee Institute, known primarily for his staunch advocacy of industrial and agricultural education for black people. In 1905, Washington, in an apparent departure from his insistence on the primacy of agricultural and industrial education, declared, “No one understanding the real need of the race would advocate that industrial education should be given to every Negro to the exclusion of the professions and other branches of learning. It is evident that a race as largely segregated as the Negro is must have an increasing number of its own professional men and women.” On this point black conservatives and radicals shared common ground at the dawn of the twentieth century. Writing in 1908, T. Thomas Fortune, editor of *The New York Age*, echoed Washington’s call for more professional men and women, deeming them to be “vital forces in the work of racial redemption.”

In this study of the Black Professional Class during the Jim Crow era, I examine the consequences of white separatism and the legal denial to African Americans of equal access to employment and educational opportunities. In order to survive and progress, African Americans had to create a class of professional men and women, specifically nurses, physicians, and lawyers. This first, or emergent, generation of professionals acted individually and collectively to found the essential institutions – medical schools, hospitals and clinics, nursing schools, and law schools – required to facilitate professional reproduction. In order to advance itself and to better serve impoverished and exploited black communities while developing and honing their skills, the emergent generation founded an array of black professional organizations that were analogous to white-only organizations: physicians founded the National Medical Association (1895), nurses launched the National Association for Colored Graduate Nurses (1909), and lawyers established the National Bar Association (1925).

In order to survive and progress, African Americans had to create a class of professional men and women, specifically nurses, physicians, and lawyers.

One of the preeminent physicians of the emergent generation was Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, Northwestern University's first black medical graduate. In 1891, Dr. Williams founded Provident Hospital and Nursing Training School in Chicago – the first black hospital operated solely by African Americans. In 1894, he went to Washington, D.C., to help establish a Hospital and Nursing Training School, later affiliated with Howard University. By 1900, Dr. Williams – already renowned for his surgical skills – acquired a national reputation as a forceful proponent of autonomous black health-care and training facilities. He was a revered member of the National Medical Association. Its charter pledged that the NMA would “effect a strong organization among Negro physicians, dentists and pharmacists . . . in order that they may have a voice in matters of public health and medical legislation in general, and in such matters as may affect the Negro race in particular. . . .” It is this final charge that upon first reading gave me pause: “. . . and to develop a profound race consciousness.” What is a “profound race consciousness?”

A tireless lecturer, Williams enjoined black communities to create their own hospitals and nursing training schools. He explained why black institutions were necessary, declaring, “In view of the cruel ostracism, affecting so vitally the race, our duty seems plain. Institute Hospitals and Training Schools. Let us no longer sit idly and inanely deploring existing conditions. Let us not waste time trying to effect changes or modifications in the institutions unfriendly to us, but rather let us seek to promote the doctrine of helping and stimulating our race.” By 1912, there were 63 black hospitals. By 1920, the number had doubled to 118. By 1929, there were 300 black hospitals and nursing training schools.

Many of the proprietary hospitals and schools did not survive the economic devastation of the Great Depression. While hospital beds for African Americans remained in short supply, the opportunities for medical education were limited to the two black medical schools: Howard University School of Medicine (founded in 1868) in Washington, D.C., and Meharry Medical School (founded in 1876) in Nashville, Tennessee. None of the white medical schools in the south accepted black students and most of the northern institutions restricted their admission.

Several black medical schools, such as the Leonard Medical School at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, had become casualties of the 1910 *Flexner Report*. Its author, Abraham Flexner, had concluded that of the ten or so black medical schools founded in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, only “Meharry at Nashville and Howard at Washington are worth developing and until considerably increased benefactors are available, efforts will wisely concentrate upon them.” He elaborated further: “The Negro needs good schools rather than many schools. Schools in which the more promising of the race can be sent to receive a substantial education in which hygiene rather than surgery for example is strongly accentuated.” White philanthropic foundations, including the General Education Board and the Rosenwald Fund, heeded Flexner’s recommendations. Foundation support was essential to the survival of Meharry and Howard. From 1919 to the advent of the modern civil rights movement, Howard and Meharry produced approximately 90 percent of all black physicians in the country.

The second generation of black professionals concentrated efforts on alleviating or ameliorating the devastating social costs of educational segregation, economic discrimination, and political disfranchisement that African American communities collectively paid. Individual professionals provided leadership in the community-building process that included their service as officers of improvement associations and mutual aid societies. They also helped by raising funds and investing their own resources in community centers and schools. Black professionals helped to spur the establishment of real estate busines-

ses, newspapers, drug stores, funeral homes, and transportation services. They frequently mediated between the white and black communities. This work within their respective communities enhanced their social status, and their economic autonomy freed them from dependence on white people. The black professional class laid the ideological foundation for racial solidarity and self-sufficiency.

Black professionals balanced precariously on the thin line separating oppositional activism that challenged the separate but unequal system of racial apartheid and the militant embrace of Black Nationalist thought – that is, advocacy of the creation and maintenance of a “nation within a nation.” While physicians and nurses focused attention on the medical and health-care needs of black communities during the Great Depression decade and the resultant migrations of hundreds of thousands

Black professionals helped to spur the establishment of real estate businesses, newspapers, drug stores, funeral homes, and transportation services.

of dispossessed farm workers to urban areas, African American lawyers began a concerted, decades-long assault against the legal foundations of Jim Crow segregation and discrimination. Their efforts helped to shape the modern civil rights movement. Indeed, in 1993, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall insisted that “long before the Civil Rights Movement ever crystallized the plight of African-Americans, Negro lawyers had identified the inequities in the legal order and begun to lay the foundation for social change.”

Black lawyers inhabited a different professional universe. Those able to become apprentices by either reading or working in the law offices of a practicing attorney or securing admission into law schools were allowed to practice in the court system. Actually, most black lawyers had to augment their work with other jobs if they were to secure enough mon-

ey to make a living by practicing law. By 1910, there were approximately 700 black lawyers – only a dozen of whom were women. By the 1940s, the number of black lawyers had more than doubled to approximately 1,700. There were approximately 3,500 black physicians and 7,000 black nurses attending to a black population of over 11 million.

Clearly, I am talking about a very small number of professionals. Many of the prominent black lawyers who would become engaged in social justice and civil rights struggles, in association with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, were, ironically, educated at elite white institutions in the north. Charles Hamilton Houston and William H. Hastie were both graduates of Harvard Law School; James A. Nabrit, a future president of Howard University, was a graduate of Northwestern University Law School. These men spearheaded the revitalization and transformation of Howard University Law School during the 1930s, and they were responsible for training a special cadre of civil rights lawyers, of which Thurgood Marshall would become the most renowned and representative.

The black professional class laid the ideological foundation for racial solidarity and self-sufficiency.

Beginning in 1938, black physicians, nurses, and lawyers entered the last premodern civil rights movement phase, one of class consolidation. NAACP lawyers Charles H. Houston, William H. Hastie, and Thurgood Marshall, along with members of the National Bar Association and faculty at Howard Law School, masterminded the legal assault against Jim Crow segregation and discrimination. Black lawyers won four important United States Supreme Court cases. One was the 1938 *Gaines* decision, which essentially set in motion the process of desegregating professional schools. A second was the 1944 *Smith v. Allwright* Supreme Court decision, which declared the Democratic white primary unconstitutional and opened up the arena for African Americans to retrieve the right to vote. The third was the 1948 Supreme Court ruling that housing discrimination or restrictive covenants

Professional black men and women, working through medicine, law, and nursing, essentially, helped to lay a foundation for the modern civil rights movement.

were unconstitutional. The fourth was the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. The civil rights lawyers worked together on these cases. Indeed, *Brown* was a composite of regional cases. That was the legal triumph.

As far as physicians were concerned, their major triumph occurred during World War II, when, collectively, the nurses and the doctors mobilized to force the desegregation of the Medical Corps and laid the foundation for Harry S. Truman's Executive Order that would desegregate the United States military. These professional black men and women, working through medicine, law, and nursing, essentially, helped to lay a foundation for the modern civil rights movement.

Let me conclude by saying something about the conundrum that I find myself in. A member of the first President Bush cabinet, Louis W. Sullivan served as Secretary of Health and Human Services. From 1970 – 1975 he was Dean of the Morehouse School of Medicine. In 1985, the school became a four-year, fully accredited medical school. Dr. Sullivan confided that he worked to establish this school because “The idea of starting a medical school to increase the number of black physicians not only in Georgia but elsewhere in America” was something that intrigued him. The establishment of the school makes me wonder how far have we progressed in terms of making opportunities available to all Americans on a fair and judicious basis if in 1985 Dr. Sullivan – one of the preeminent black physicians of our generation – successfully creates a new black medical school.

To be sure, Morehouse School of Medicine is not a Jim Crow school. But it makes me ask whether the predominantly white medical schools have failed to recruit and train black physicians in the past half century. There are now four black medical schools, and they have the great responsibility for training black phy-

sicians in this country. Is this the model we should revisit and embrace – that is, the establishment of an array of black professional schools as the answer to the dire need for significantly more black nurses, physicians, and lawyers? What are the lessons to be derived from this study of the history of the black professional class? Did integration as social policy fail? Is a variant of nationalism, in the sense of Black Nationalism creating autonomous separate institutions, still a viable ideology and strategy for acquiring parity and facilitating greater entry into mainstream American society? It is hard to know where to come down on these questions. I anticipate that readers of my book, whenever it is published, will think about new ways to improve training and expand professional educational opportunities for African Americans by evaluating the methods that worked most effectively during the era of Jim Crow when black survival and progress depended on Howard and Meharry and other black institutions that produced the black professional class. We need to reason together.



Barbara Newman

Barbara Newman is Professor of English, Religion and Classics and John Evans Professor of Latin Language and Literature at Northwestern University. She was elected to the American Academy in 2005.

Frauenlob's Song of Songs: Translating a Medieval Performance

For a period of three or four years beginning around 2001, I found myself spending my leisure time in a rather unexpected way. To divert myself from stacks of ungraded papers

and to pass the long hours of insomniac nights and transatlantic flights, I took to singing duets with a poet who had been dead for seven hundred years. This is the way I see the art of verse translation, for unlike prose, a poetic translation can never attain transparency. In other words, the translator's voice cannot modestly lose itself within the author's, to be cited only by unusually scrupulous bibliographers. No, the art of verse is at once so playful, so demanding, and so irreducibly personal that the best one can hope for is a duet of compatible voices. In the brief time that we have today, I'd like to tell you why I decided to translate the German minstrel Frauenlob, and let you hear a little of both the translation and the original. Frauenlob's long poem, known as the "Song of Songs," is not just a text but a complex musical piece, its melody composed by the minstrel himself.

I took to singing duets with a poet who had been dead for seven hundred years.

A contemporary of Meister Eckhart and Dante, Frauenlob enjoyed a public career spanning four decades. Admired equally for his gifts as musician and poet, he became the acknowledged master of the so-called *geblümter Stil* or "flowery style." Like other performers of his age or, for that matter, like rappers today, he adopted a stage name. Born Heinrich von Meissen, our minstrel chose a sobriquet that can mean either "praise of ladies" (as in courtly love) or "praise of Our Lady" (meaning the Virgin Mary). The ambiguity is intended. From the mid-1270s until his death in 1318, Frauenlob traveled through the courts of northern and central Europe, composing and performing topical poems, religious verse, and the occasional love song for patrons ranging from the kings of Bohemia and Denmark to the archbishops of Bremen and Mainz. By the time of his death, he was a highly acclaimed and much imitated though controversial figure, whose talents and connections merited the privilege of burial in Mainz Cathedral. According to the chronicler Albrecht von Strassburg, "on the vigil of St. Andrew in the year 1318, Heinrich, called Frauenlob, was buried in Mainz, in the cathedral cloister near the school, with exceptional honors. Women carried him from his lodg-

ings to the sepulchre with loud lamentation and great mourning, on account of the infinite praises that he heaped on the whole feminine sex in his poems. Moreover, such copious libations of wine were poured on his tomb that it overflowed through the whole cloister of the church. He composed the *Cantica canticorum* [or *Song of Songs*] in German, known in the vernacular as *Unser Frowen laich*, and many other good things."

Frauenlob is the most famous of a neglected group of poets who fill a key place in medieval German literature. Traditionally called *Spruchdichter* – an umbrella term for "lyric poets who were not minnesingers" – these itinerant artists composed and performed songs on a wide variety of subjects: religious, political, and moral. Unlike minnesingers or love poets, who were for the most part noble amateurs, the *Spruchdichter* were professional traveling minstrels, usually of bourgeois origin, who embraced the arts of poetry and song as a vocation rather than as a polite accomplishment. Since they made their living by their art, contemporaries called them singers who "took *guot* for *ère*," that is, received payment in money and in kind for the praise of their patrons. The willingness of nobles to support such traveling artists shows how highly they valued them for both the prestige and the entertainment they could offer.

Unlike such court poets as Geoffrey Chaucer, Frauenlob and his German contemporaries could not expect stable long-term patronage, but moved frequently, settling for a time at any court where they found a warm welcome and a solvent prince. This itinerant lifestyle was a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it rendered poet-singers marginal and highly suspect to the arbiters of morality. Like goliards or wandering students, they traveled too much to be trusted, for they seldom stayed in one place long enough to become permanent members of parishes, households, or other stabilizing institutions. If accused of any crime, they lacked family connections and long-term acquaintances to vouch for them. On the other hand, the minstrel's wandering ways enhanced his value to his patrons. Court records and account books show that, when they were not performing, poet-minstrels filled a variety of useful and remunerative roles as messengers, heralds, watchmen, interpreters, and spies. Well-traveled, versed in a range of dialects, and

Frauenlob traveled through the courts of northern and central Europe, composing and performing topical poems, religious verse, and the occasional love song.

welcomed by all social strata, such performers could be skilled information gatherers. Finally, at important festivals such as knightings, weddings, and coronations, a seasoned entertainer would be given the role of "minstrel king," responsible for devising ensemble performances and serving as master of ceremonies.

It may be in such a role that Frauenlob appears in the illuminated Manesse codex from around 1340. Or perhaps his author portrait shows him at the "singing school" he is said to have founded in the town of Mainz. In either case, the artist depicts Frauenlob presiding from a lofty chair at an outdoor music lesson or performance. Over his striped tunic he wears a cloak of ermine and a coronet trimmed with the same fur, usually reserved for high nobility but here representing the gift of a particularly lavish patron. With his right hand raised in a stylized teaching gesture, the singer-poet holds in his left hand what looks – anachronistically – like a conductor's baton. On a carpet below, stretched out by a piper on the right and a drummer on the left, a fiddler performs while other musicians listen, holding a variety of instruments including flute, psaltery, and shawm. The *meister's* identity is confirmed by a symbolic coat of arms representing his Lady, the crowned Virgin, who extends her mantle over his shield in a gesture of protection and favor. The poem I have translated was probably meant for the kind of lavish musical performance illustrated in the Manesse miniature.

Celebrated during his lifetime and for centuries afterward, Frauenlob's fame suffered a rapid eclipse around 1700. Although a few of the Romantics appreciated him, most modern critics had little use for his hermetic and immensely learned poems, which in their view savored too much of the intellect and too little of the heart. Protestants tended to

find his fervent Marian piety blasphemous, and rationalist scholars even questioned his sanity. In 1913, the first editor of his *Song of Songs*, Ludwig Pfannmüller, lavished tremendous erudition on Frauenlob's text, but he was hardly an admirer of the poet. In fact, he devoted much of his introduction to diagnosing "inadequacies of the style and the man," whom he branded a *Strudelkopf* ("noodle-head"). Thus ill-served by his editor, Frauenlob continued to languish in obscurity until 1972, when Karl Stackmann paved the way for a new critical edition with an essay arguing the radical thesis that Frauenlob's poems were, and were meant to be, comprehensible: neither the ravings of a madman, nor empty rhetoric composed merely "to please the ear and intoxicate the senses," nor oracles whose interpretive key is lost beyond recovery.

Having begun my career by studying Hildegard of Bingen – another quirky, brilliant, esoteric poet-composer in the same religious tradition, but a century and a half earlier – I recognized a kindred spirit in Frauenlob.

The Lady is not only the mother of Jesus but also a celestial goddess, the eternal partner of the Trinity.

Drawn to the intricate beauty of his verse as well as the challenge of his thought, I juggled rhyme schemes and prowled through Middle High German dictionaries in my off-hours until I had a passable translation of twenty double strophes in just over five hundred lines. But whatever was I going to *do* with them? Much to my consternation, I realized that I would have to write a whole book about Frauenlob to accompany the translation, since the sum total of Anglophone scholarship on my author amounted to less than fifteen pages. Happily, though, my book provided an occasion for the North American release of a CD by the premier early music ensemble, Sequentia, which had recorded Frauenlob's masterpiece some years earlier. I hope that the *Gesamtwerk* will now make this hitherto obscure but magnificent poet not only available to scholars, but teachable in the classroom, whether of medieval literature, religion, or early music.

Frauenlob's hallmark is the unique blend of learning, Biblical allusion, dense wordplay, and lush sensuality. . . .

The *Song of Songs* takes the form of a visionary dialogue between the poet-speaker and a Lady who is conventionally identified as the Virgin Mary. But she is also much more – not only the mother of Jesus but also a celestial goddess, the eternal partner of the Trinity, identical with divine Wisdom as well as the goddess of Love, Frau Minne – a kind of Christianized Venus. In celebrating this composite figure, "Frauenlob" fully earns his sobriquet. His hallmark is the unique blend of learning, Biblical allusion, dense wordplay, and lush sensuality he offers as homage to his Lady and places in her mouth. I will end by citing three strophes of the poem, the first two in the seer's voice, the third in the Lady's.

Strophe 3

Fertile maid and favored lady,
your meadow wet with heaven's dew
flowers in resplendent show.
Hear the turtledoves singing their song,
loud-ringing,
a song of longing
for sweet May's treasure.
Winter's ordeal is over:
your vineyards blossom
with fruit so wholesome.

Your beloved calls from the vineyard, from
the garden
where hallowed grapes ripen:
"Come, love, come!" He is waiting
on the mountain of myrrh where lions stalk.
Your way cannot err
should he wish to talk
among roses. Listen with love
most tender, daughter,
mother, maid, you must go!

Strophe 4

Tell no lie, never try to deny:
you alone were meeting
with the king
in his cellar—

you knew his greeting,
you felt his touch. How much,
fair maid, did you dally?
We do not envy the wine of bliss
you drank there with sweet, sweet milk.

I know well his own tongue should tell you
the toll—
why the watchmen took
your cloak,
asking what do you seek,
fair maid, so late
in these alleys? "Never cease,
we must seize
the beloved!" Deep in your wounds
he's branded his threefold mark.

Strophe 9

I am the great and chosen Lady,
my will is ripe, my desire is mighty.
For fervent love I must unbar
the lattice of my cloister door—
my love all passionate drew near.
His hand caressed me, wet with dew—
O taste of honey through and through!
I ate the comb
and drank the foam
then came back home.
My God, such bliss!
What's the harm in this?

I the weasel bore the ermine
that bit the snake. With morning dew
I split the hard rock of the curse.
My divining rod, unforked,
crushed the heads of hell's black vermin.
When the palm tree of the Cross
saw me, it reddened without dye.
Speak, wise Adam, noble friend,
and tell how I
have come to end
your ancient blight—
I the Maid, by a mother's right.

Translations from Barbara Newman,
*Frauenlob's Song of Songs: A Medieval Poet
and His Masterpiece* (Penn State University
Press, 2007). ■

© 2007 by Darlene Clark Hine and Barbara Newman, respectively.



J. Larry Jameson, David Austen-Smith, Lauren Pachman, Robert Porter, and Mark A. Satterthwaite (all, Northwestern University)



Xenia Semenova and Yuri I. Manin (Northwestern University)



Former Visiting Scholar Jay Grossman (Northwestern University)



Northwestern University President Henry Bienen and Robert A. Lamb (Northwestern University)