

seven

Plaque in a Hallway

Augsburg's long and complicated relationship with race and gender

CONCERNING MATTERS of race and gender, Augsburg's history is full of ignorance and innocence, good intentions and clumsy implementation, love, hate, brilliance, stupidity, anger and embarrassment. In other words, Augsburg's history with race and gender is the history of America.

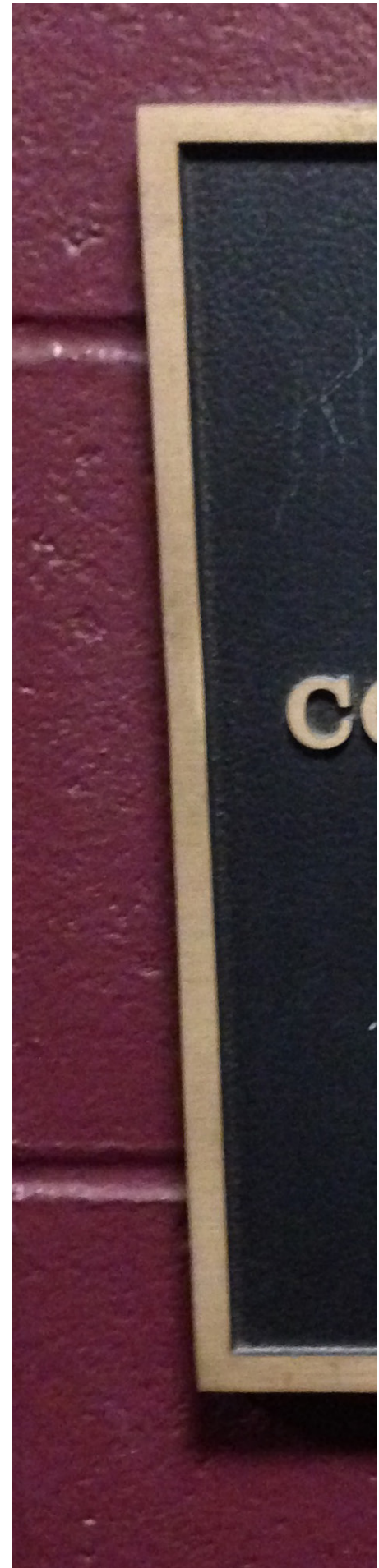
I want to begin by showing you this plaque (Figure 7.1), which is about 12 x 12 inches square, and, unless you know the story behind it, is surely the most innocuous piece of metal you could ever see. There's a long story behind the plaque, which fewer and fewer people at Augsburg know, and even those who know the story, often don't know that there's a plaque, or where it's hung. I will get to that story, but first—as you might expect—there's some background and context leading up to it.

Assimilation of the Jews

The Progressive Era in America (roughly 1897 to 1920) had many things to recommend it, most notably its plethora of good intentions. One of the problems it tried to solve was the issue of immigration, and in particular, how to get new immigrants to embrace American culture. This was the era of the “melting pot” metaphor, where all immigrants were supposed to fuse together into a single, unified society.

The idea of the “melting pot” actually came from a 1908 play of the same name, written by Israel Zangwill, a Jewish playwright who had fled the Russian pogroms with his family. In an impassioned speech, the play's hero proclaims, “America is God's Crucible, the great Melting-Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and reforming ... Germans and Frenchmen, Irishmen and Englishmen, Jews and

Figure 7.1 — Plaque for Elroy Stock.





**AUGSBURG
COMMUNICATION
CENTER**

**MAJOR FUNDING BY
ELROY M STOCK**

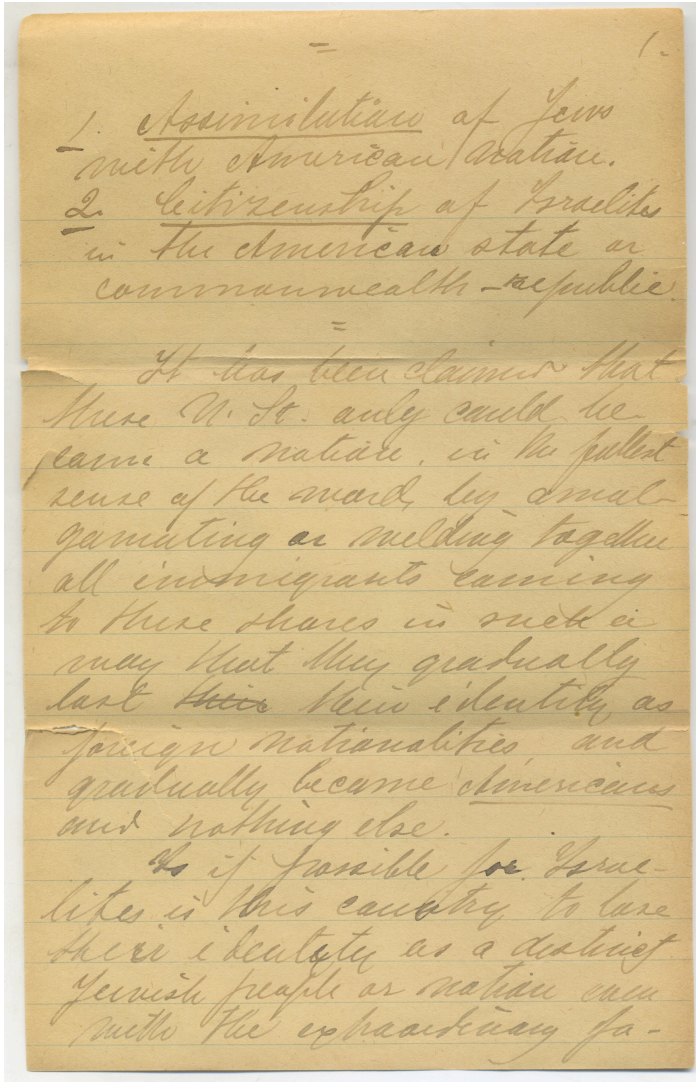


Figure 7.2 — Sven Oftedal, “Assimilation of the Jews with American Nation.”

²³⁹ Israel Zangwill, *The Melting Pot* (1908), quoted in Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century*, (Princeton, 2001), 51.

²⁴⁰ Sven Oftedal, “Assimilation of the Jews with American Nation,” rough draft, Augsburg University Archives, Box 12:1:1, SO-9C.

Russians—into the Crucible with you all! God is making the American.”²³⁹

The Norwegians who founded Augsburg were part of this immigration to the New World, and they had struggled with their own place

in the melting pot, their own assimilation. Thus, it is interesting to see the assimilated immigrant Sven Oftedal grappling with the problem of Jewish assimilation. Figure 7.2, “Assimilation of the Jews with American Nation,” written in Oftedal’s hand, is undated, but was most likely written between 1890 and 1910, i.e. between the time that began the greatest Jewish immigration to the U.S. and the year of Oftedal’s death. Some of the language Oftedal employs—“amalgamating,” “melding,”—suggests the piece was written closer to the later date, after the melting pot metaphor had come into vogue. “It has been claimed that these United States only could become a nation, in the fullest sense of the word, by amalgamating or melding together all immigrants coming to these shores in such a way that they gradually lost their identity as foreign nationalities, and gradually became Americans and nothing else. Is it possible for Israelites in this country to lose their identities as a distinct Jewish people or nation?”²⁴⁰

Oftedal goes on to give numerous historical examples—the Israelites in the Roman Empire, the Israelites in ancient Babylon—to show that “the Jews” have never successfully assimilated in the past, and according to this logic, will not be able to assimilate successfully in the present. Oftedal’s intent for this piece is unclear. Was it a speech he delivered? An article he meant to publish? Whatever Oftedal’s intent, this piece marks the beginning of Augsburg’s complicated relationship with “the Jews.”

In the early twentieth century, much of Augsburg’s attention to the Jewish people concerned their potential conversion to Christianity through missionary efforts, or their role in predicting the Apocalypse and the Second Coming of Christ. According to

a speaker invited to campus in 1938, “The return of the Jews and the rehabilitation of the Holy Land,” he declared, “are fulfillment of prophecies.”²⁴¹ In 1943, Augsburg’s Mission Society invited Martin Gandel a “converted Jew,” who claimed “The Jew must be shown that he needs Christ and His salvation, before he will turn to Him.”²⁴² As late as 1959, missionary zeal was still strong at Augsburg, and speakers advocating the conversion of Jews still visited the campus. As part of a festival with the theme “Christ for the World,” one speaker gave a talk entitled “Christ for the Jew.” In fairness, the festival also featured talks on “Christ for the Arab” and “Christ for Tibet.”²⁴³

Beyond this “benevolent” institutional racism, there were also random moments of outright anti-Semitism. In a campus talent show produced in 1927, one performer “very cleverly ... [impersonated] a sophisticated Englishman, a talkative woman at the theater, and a Jew.” This should be seen in the context of comedy routines of the time, which often depended on ethnic humor, and were not as subject to today’s high standards of political correctness.²⁴⁴ Most disturbing was a 1934 talk by Augsburg German language professor Karl Ermisch, who presented on the positive aspect of “Hitlerism,” sponsored by the International Relations Club. An *Echo* reporter responding to Ermisch’s presentation said, “No matter what our attitude toward Hitler may be, the fact remains that there are certain things which we must give him credit for: 1) uniting the German nation, 2) putting a stop to bribery, 3) sending the people back to church, 4) raising the moral standard, 5) prohibiting certain physically unfit elements from continuing the race.”²⁴⁵ Again, in fairness to the times, it was not uncommon in the early 1930s for people naïve to Hitler’s greater plan to be initially

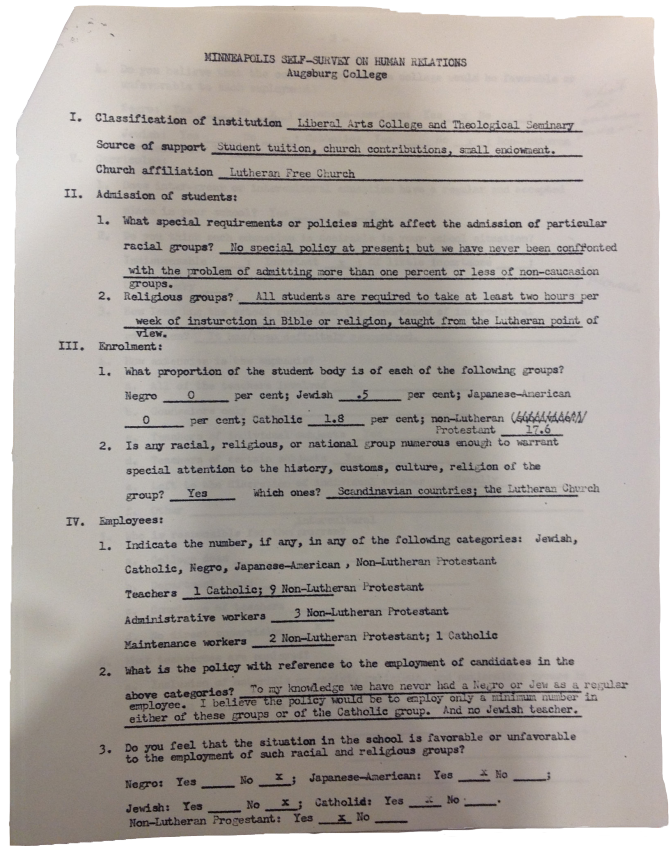


Figure 7.3 — Minneapolis Self-Survey on Human Relations, 1947.

taken in by some of his “successes”—he built the *Autobahn* and all that. Still, the reporter might have seen that last bit about “prohibiting physically unfit elements from continuing the race” as a sign of eugenics having gone too far.

By mid-century, the college began to move away from seeing the Jews simply as an object of conversion. In 1948, Augsburg students attended a conference in Chicago aimed at producing “better understanding between the Protestant, Catholic, and Jew; to develop, encourage, and put into action a wholesome

²⁴¹ “Jewish and Colombian Missions are Discussed,” *Echo*, 42:7 (4 March 1938), 3.

²⁴² “Converted Jew Speaks to Mission Society,” *Echo* 37:7 (3 February 1933), 1; “Society Hears of Gideon Program,” *Echo*, 43:6 (9 February 1943), 3.

²⁴³ “Mission Festival To Feature ‘Christ for the World’ Theme,” *Echo*, 65:10 (19 March 1959), 1.

²⁴⁴ “Sophomores Give Humorous Program: Audience in Continued Spasms of Laughter,” *Echo*, 31:7 (17 February 1927), 1.

²⁴⁵ “Hitler or Hitler?” *Echo*, 38:7 (29 March 1934), 7.



Figure 7.4 — Homecoming buttons with racist images, 1947 and 1949.

and brotherly attitude toward those of different races on our college campuses.”²⁴⁶ Bernard Christensen’s work as chair of Mayor Hubert Humphrey’s Council on Human Relations from 1946 to 1950 helped to “work against racial and religious discrimination in all areas of Minneapolis life.”²⁴⁷ This was important work for the college to be connected to, especially in an era when Minneapolis was viewed as one of the most anti-Semitic cities in the country. Yet, while this moment in the university’s history is often held up as an example of Christensen’s tolerance and ecumenism—which I do not deny—it also reveals some of the dark racist sentiments at the institution itself.²⁴⁸

Sadly, the College’s responses were in keeping with the times (Figure 7.3, page 104). Concerning diversity in enrollment in 1947, the College reported 0 for “Negroes” and Japanese-Americans, 0.5% for Jews, 1.8% for Catholics, and 17.6% for non-Lutheran Protestants. On a faculty of roughly fifty teachers, there were no Jews, “Negroes,” or Japanese-Americans, and only one Catholic instructor. There was one more Catholic on the maintenance crew. In response to a question regarding the hiring conditions for minorities, Catholics and Japanese-Americans were marked “favorable,” while conditions for Jews and Negroes, “unfavorable.” According to the qualitative interpretation of the study, “As to employment of minority groups on the instructional or maintenance staffs, the institution seems not to have formulated a policy. Negroes and Jews have never been engaged as regular employees. Any policy adopted . . . would not consider employing any Jewish teacher.”²⁴⁹

Tomahawk the Toms

“Have the savages any right to the land in which they live?” This was the question for debate at an 1875 meeting of Augsburg’s Demosthenian Society. While the Affirmative side argued that “savages must have a home as well as the civilized,” the Negative maintained that “the savages have no right to the land in which they live because they misuse the land or [do] not use it at all, and therefore can the civilized take it in possession, cultivate it and receive the crop of it and drive the savages away.” The date of 1875 was “only thirteen years after the Minnesota Sioux Wars, and one year before Custer’s Last Stand.”²⁵⁰ Although the Demosthenian debaters could not have known about the latter, this context gives us a good sense of the cultural attitudes of the day. By 1916, Augsburg students had shifted to more of a “noble savage” approach. An anonymous student writing a critique of Longfellow’s 1855 epic poem, *The Song of Hiawatha*, claimed Longfellow “has placed his characters in a primitive country; a country rich in barbarous Indian legends. The hero, however, does not possess the savage traits usually conceived of in the Indian warrior. His altruism seems to pervade all.”²⁵¹

While such attitudes must always be judged in the context of the times, from our present perspective it is difficult not to wince. For example, in 1947 and again in 1949, the homecoming committees for those years chose racist depictions of American Indians for the homecoming buttons (Figure 7.4). Nobody thought twice about it.

In 1993, Anita Paz, an American Indian student, protested the homecoming theme “Dance, Bethel, Dance,” on the grounds that

²⁴⁶ “Students Summarize Sessions,” *Echo*, 54:2 (24 September 1948), 2.

²⁴⁷ Chrislock, *From Fjord to Freeway*, 200.

²⁴⁸ According to the *Minneapolis Self-Survey on Human Relations: Augsburg College and Theological Seminary (1947)*, 1: “The chief instrument in the study was an institutional questionnaire . . . Groups of freshman, sophomores, and senior class college students varying in number from 40 to 75 served as a sample . . . The inventory was also sent to the faculty . . . [from whom] a return of about fifty percent was secured.”

²⁴⁹ *Minneapolis Self-Survey on Human Relations: Augsburg College (1947)*, 1.

²⁵⁰ Chrislock, *From Fjord to Freeway*, 105-106.

²⁵¹ Anonymous, “Hiawatha’s Altruism,” *Augsburgian* (1916), 84.

the slogan was intolerant toward religion—Bethel prohibited dancing because it was a Baptist university. The homecoming committee claimed it was just a joke. Outcry ensued. People took sides. It was innocent fun in the name of good, old-fashioned school rivalry vs. insensitivity to multiculturalism and religious expression. Paz argued that she had encountered the same kind of prejudices, for example, when sports teams used Native Americans as mascots.²⁵² It's not clear whether or not Paz knew that her own college had done the same thing. Once word got out about the "slogan incident," a story appeared on the front page of the *Star Tribune* Metro section. The *Clarion*, Bethel's student newspaper, carried a story about Paz being harassed and intimidated by other Augsburg students for protesting the slogan, to the point where she considered leaving school. According to Paz, "One thing that comes over my answering machine is, 'Go back to where the Indians live; you don't belong here.' I've been called a b—h, and some said they were going to beat the s—t out of me if Augsburg lost the game."²⁵³

Lest the stories of the homecoming pins and the harassment of Anita Paz be considered isolated events, stories of American Indian students being heckled with names like "Chief" and "Injun" lasted into the 1980s (if not later), and seem to harken back to Ole Paulson's mid-nineteenth-century use of the term "treacherous redskins."

From Uncle Bob to the Black Student Union

By 1953, Augsburg had admitted only a handful of black students, but the college had had a number of moments where students encountered African Americans and ideas



Figure 7.5 — Robert "Uncle Bob" Belton in 1939.

concerning racism. Back in the 1930s, Robert Belton (Figure 7.5), African-American gospel singer, poet, and orator, was a frequent guest of Augsburg College. In between songs, Belton spoke to students about racism and discrimination against African Americans. "We

²⁵² Kurt Doerring, "Dance, Bethel, Dance," *Echo*, 100: 4 (14 October 1993), 1.

²⁵³ Dirk Kingsley, "'Dance, Bethel Dance' slogan protested by Augsburg student," *Clarion* 69:4 (21 October 1993), 1.

Gida gah bines ikwe

BONNIE WALLACE is Anishinaabe from the Fond du Lac Reservation in northern Minnesota. She is a respected leader in her community, indeed in many communities, including Augsburg's Board of Regents. She is also a compelling storyteller. Her Ojibwe name is *Gida gah bines ikwe* (Spotted Eagle Woman). For a variety of reasons, not the least because the White Man often gets the story of indigenous peoples wrong, here is Spotted Eagle Woman, telling the story of her time at Augsburg, in her own words:

I first became involved with Augsburg College after receiving a telephone call from President Oscar Anderson. It was 1976, and I was working as a Scholarship Specialist for the urban office of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe in Minneapolis. Anderson asked if I would please consider serving on a Task Force to address the lack of an 'Indian presence' on campus, which is located within walking distance to the third largest urban Indian population in the country. Knowing that American Indians are/were the most unrepresented and under-represented population on campuses across the country, I agreed to be on the Task Force. 'But,' I asked, 'just where is Augsburg?'

This Task Force was led by Charles Anderson, [then Dean of the college], and after two years of surveys, reports, data collecting, etc., a proposal was submitted to the Honeywell Foundation requesting a three-year grant to begin the possibilities of creating an American Indian Student Support Program. Hiring soon took place and a person who had close ties with the National Indian Lutheran Board was selected. But after his first day, Dean Anderson called to inform me the person had quit. Halfheartedly I asked, 'Is it that dreadful over there?' Several phone calls and several meetings over

several months took place with the Dean, who attempted to recruit me to work for him. I resisted. Anderson persevered. I finally agreed to come to Augsburg for one year.

I arrived on campus only to find myself located in the basement of Memorial Hall, in an office the size of a closet. I wondered just what I'd gotten myself into. Soon I discovered there were only two Indian students, both sophomores on campus. I was delighted, but no sooner had I met them in my office, when they announced they were leaving at the end of the term. I literally begged them to stay, promised them my full support, but they had already made up their minds. They said they were just not prepared nor willing to accept any further incidents of outright racism. Too many people kept calling them 'Chief,' or worse yet 'Injun.' They left.

Within a week after they departed, Charles Anderson, who had become president, called me into his office, and no doubt he was upset. He not only questioned my professional abilities, but was downright confused as to why they would leave. I didn't hold back in my explanation, but I also told him that I would have a one-year 'Action Plan' on what I hoped to accomplish, on his desk the next day. As I handed it to him the next day, all neatly typed and organized, I also handed him my letter of resignation, which I signed but didn't date. Included was an area for his signature and date, so whenever he felt I was not performing up to the 'Augsburg' standard, he could simply sign and date it, and I would leave. No hard feelings.

Within the first year, I recruited over 20 American Indian students, lectured in numerous classrooms, provided 'In Service Training' with administration, faculty, staff and students, brought in American Indian speakers, did outreach work with the native communities of

Minnesota and Wisconsin, created American Indian curriculum that resulted in three faculty-approved classes, all taught by Indian professionals, and started an American Indian Library Project.

In 1989, Anderson needed a gift for his meeting with His Holiness the Dalai Lama—who was about to win the Nobel Peace Prize. He called me into his office. At first, I thought I was in trouble. In fact, Anderson had an idea for a gift, and wanted to seek my advice. ‘Would it be appropriate,’ the president inquired, ‘to give a Lakota pipe to the Dalai Lama?’ My response was a mixture of pride in my people’s culture, respect for Anderson for having come up with the idea (and asking my opinion), and a kind of giddiness that comes when you realize that you’re going to somehow be involved with the Dalai Lama. I arranged for Amos Owen, a Sioux spiritual leader of Prairie Island, to carve a sacred pipe for the Dalai Lama. Honored to carve the pipe, Owen wrapped the finished pieces in red fabric, ‘simple but beautiful,’ and wrote a note for the Dalai Lama from one spiritual leader to another. ‘Dear Dalai,’ he wrote. Owen explained that the pipe wasn’t blessed until the pieces were put together, and that the Dalai Lama’s spiritual agency would be enough to bless the pipe.

Eighteen years after arriving at Augsburg, I had helped recruit and graduate over 100 Indian students. I helped develop a strong American Indian Studies Department, and a major was approved along with a minor. Fundraising was a constant part of my job, certainly not my favorite, but over my time I created 13 American Indian Scholarships on the campus, which includes a \$600,000.00 endowed fund.

At my farewell party, many people got up to thank me for my many years of service, but the most moving speech was given by Charles Anderson, who was fighting cancer at the time. His comments were sincere (and a little lengthy), but what brought me and others to tears was when he dug into his suit jacket pocket and pulled out that letter of resignation I had given him 18 years earlier, and read it aloud. He then handed me a bouquet of 100 red roses to honor the 100 Indian student graduates!



Above, Bonnie Wallace, Spotted Eagle Woman. Below, Amos Owen shows a sacred pipe he made to Mankato mayor Bill Basset, 1972. (Image courtesy of the Blue Earth County Historical Society.)





Figure 7.6 — John Howard Griffin speaking to the press in Si Melby Hall in 1965.

wave the lamp of Christianity in the faces of sinners, but the lamp isn't lit," he said, adding, "I have always been greatly impressed with the sincerity and earnestness of the students at Augsburg."²⁵⁴ The students cheered happily and thanked him, calling him "Uncle Bob." Then, they requested an encore: "Shortnin' Bread," a song oozing with nostalgia for plantation life in the South, which was actually written by white poet James Whitcomb Riley in the "Negro dialect" in 1900. Every time he came to Augsburg, students requested the song, and Uncle Bob always played it. Irony? Ignorance? Insensitivity? However we judge these song requests, Belton's concerts and talks represent some of the first instances of Augsburg inviting discussion about racial injustice onto its campus. In 1939, after another of Belton's visits to campus, an *Echo* editorial offered suggestions on how to combat racism, including keeping "an open mind," showing "genuine sympathy," and talking to people suspected of discrimination on a personal level. Concerning the African-American response to discrimination, the editorial said, "The dark race has found its voice and shortly it may find its arm."²⁵⁵

In 1954, about a decade after Robert Belton last came to Augsburg, the Supreme Court decision to outlaw segregated education in *Brown v. Board of Education* marked what most Americans see as the start of the Civil Rights Movement. Groups like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, though they had different strategies and tactics, and drew members from different classes and backgrounds, all worked to eliminate the racist system of Jim Crow segregation from American institutions. Stories and photos

in news dailies and on the nightly news showed "hopeful, disciplined, and dedicated young people shaping their destinies. They were met with hostility, federal ambivalence and indifference, as well as mob and police violence. African Americans fought back with direct action protests and keen political organizing, such as voter registration drives ... The crowning achievements were the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965."²⁵⁶

The Augsburg community seemed interested in hearing black speakers and discussion about civil rights as long as one thing was clear: violence would not be tolerated. In 1963, Augsburg brought black journalist and author Louis Lomax to campus.²⁵⁷ Lomax was one of the producers of *The Hate That Hate Produced*, a television documentary in which Lomax interviewed members of the Nation of Islam, including Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X. The movie exposed many white people to the Black Power movement, a "radical black alternative to the Civil Rights Movement" that was denounced as "anti-white power ... a reverse Ku Klux Klan."²⁵⁸ Provoked by Lomax's portrayal of Black Power, black social scientist James Tillman Jr. stated angrily that white people expected African Americans to "demonstrate that [they are] worthy to receive freedom," and thus, anger and violence from blacks was a sort of proof that they were not worthy.²⁵⁹

In 1965, less than a month after Malcolm X's assassination, John Howard Griffin, author of *Black Like Me*, came to campus. Griffin (Figure 7.6) had gone undercover as an African-American, "darkening his skin through the means of pills, vegetable dyes, and

²⁵⁴ "Bob Belton, Negro Lecturer and Singer, Flays Racial Injustice," *Echo*, 44:5 (14 December 1939), 1.

²⁵⁵ "Bob Belton, Negro Lecturer and Singer," 2.

²⁵⁶ Kenneth R. Janken, "The Civil Rights Movement: 1919-1960s," *Teacher Serve, National Humanities Center*, at <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/freedom/1917beyond/essays/crm.html>.

²⁵⁷ Biederman, Carolyn, "Augsburg Appearance of Lomax Questioned," *Echo*, 70:8 (20 November 1963), 1.

²⁵⁸ Kevern Verney, *The Debate on Black Civil Rights in America* (Manchester, 2006), 117-118.

²⁵⁹ Carolyn Biederman, "Augsburg Appearance of Lomax Questioned," *Echo*, 70:8 (20 November 1963), 1.

ultraviolet treatments,” as a way of conducting a kind of experiment to see what it was like to be black in the South.²⁶⁰ Unsurprisingly, what he discovered was as awful as any black person could have told him. Despite the seeming absurdity of the experiment, one African-American writer wrote that, “the real merit of the book [was] that a southern white man became so involved with his own conscience that he became a Negro and ... published his frightening discoveries for his friends and neighbors to read.”²⁶¹ At the very least, Griffin’s book shed light on the problem of discrimination for some white people who otherwise may have been indifferent.

Griffin’s experience highlights one of the main reasons Augsburg students didn’t understand racism: few of them were black. For white students, just as for all white people, racism cannot be felt by experience, it can only be understood through listening and observation. Yet “listening” could often turn into an expectation that African Americans had a certain duty to help educate white people. In 1970, a white student expressed that, “It seems that the Black man has been carrying the burden of getting white people hip to certain things for a long time.” Yet, he asked, “how long can we expect Black people to be bothered with this burden when it seems to have no more effect than to make whites participate in freedom rides, sit-ins et al and then, ‘when the shit hits the fan,’ to copout on Black groups like the Black Panthers[?]”²⁶²

Tensions increased around topics of racism and discrimination at Augsburg, at least among the growing number of black students at the school. Yet for some at Augsburg, indifference was more prevalent. In 1968, the day after it was announced that Martin Luther King



Figure 7.7 — Members of Augsburg’s Black Student Union in 1969, James “Jimi Tee” Thomas is in the back row, on the left.

Jr. had been assassinated, the school did not cancel its annual carnival, a decision that students agreed was “generally deplored.”²⁶³ One disgusted student pointed out the school’s hypocrisy after King’s death, saying, “Those who wallowed in the mire of apathy while he was living now praise him as some would a saint. Perhaps their consciences are bothering them.”²⁶⁴ Another student seconded that thought, saying, “The insensible murder of Dr. Martin Luther King has awakened the white community and filled it with shock, sorrow, fear and guilt. This is as it should be.”²⁶⁵

In the wake of King’s assassination, black students at predominantly white institutions, like the universities of Wisconsin and Michigan began forming Black Student Unions; demanding more African-American students, faculty and staff on their campuses, as well as the development of African-American Studies departments.²⁶⁶ In 1969, Augsburg students created their own Black Student

²⁶⁰ Geraldine Neff, “Griffin to Speak Tomorrow,” *Echo*, 71:17 (10 March 1965), 1.

²⁶¹ Neff, “Griffin to Speak Tomorrow.”

²⁶² Saul Stensvaag, “U.S.A.—A Nation of Contradictions,” *Echo* [Whisper] 1:14 (13 May 1970), 9-10.

²⁶³ Stephen J. Schultz, “Convo Talk Inconsistent,” *Echo*, 7:21 (15 May 1969), 3.

²⁶⁴ Allen Zirzow, “Hypocrisy Reflected in Whites’ Praise of King,” *Echo*, 74:18 (24 April 1968), 2.

²⁶⁵ “Prejudice at Augsburg,” *Echo*, 74:18 (24 April 1968), 2.

²⁶⁶ See “Black Student Union to Fight Discrimination,” *Oshkosh Advance Titan*, 59:20 (29 February 1968), 1, at <https://newspaperarchive.com/oshkosh-advance-titan-feb-29-1968-p-1/>; and Emily Barton, “Birth of the Black Action Movement,” *Michigan Daily* (1 December, 2006) at <https://www.michigandaily.com/content/birth-black-action-movement>.

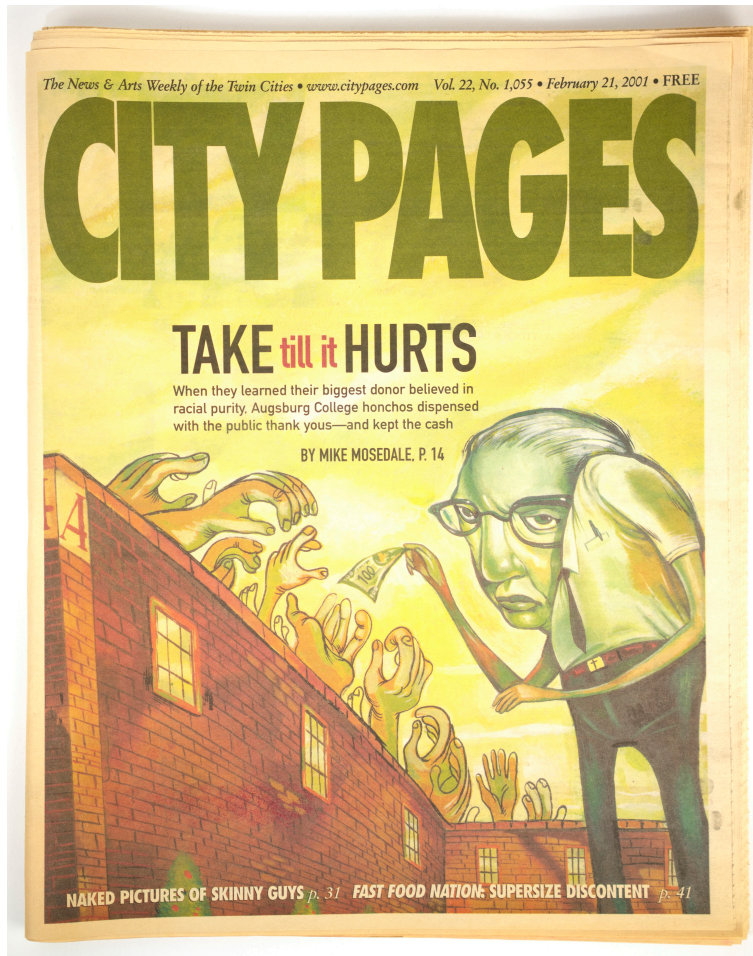


Figure 7.8 — "Take till it Hurts," cover for the Elroy Stock story, 21 February 2001. (Image courtesy of *City Pages*.)

Union (Figure 7.7, page 110). James Thomas, known as "Jimi Tee," was its leader. Thomas laid out his thoughts for the appropriate use of force in racist matters. "Force and brutality can only be eliminated by counter force through self-defense," Thomas said. "We have been taught that we must please our oppressors, that we are only ten percent of the population, and therefore, we must confine our tactics to categories calculated not to disturb the sleep

²⁶⁷ James Thomas, "BSU Head Sees 3 Sides in America," *Echo*, 75:16 (27 March 1969), 3.

of our tormentors. The power structure inflicts pain and brutality upon the peoples and then provides controlled outlets for the pain in ways least likely to upset them or interfere with the process of exploitation ... As long as the racist dogs pollute the earth with the evil of their actions, they do not deserve any respect at all, and the rules of their game, written in the people's blood, are beneath contempt."²⁶⁷

Race relations at Augsburg were complicated during this period. There was no "force and brutality" per se, but the school's quiet, institutional racism persisted, as it often does. Then in the late 1980s, the college took fundraising money from an avowed racist and kept the money even after this donor's past was made public. Cut to Elroy Stock.

That plaque in the hallway

In 1987, Elroy Stock donated \$500,000 to build the communications building at Augsburg. At the time, it was the largest gift in the history of the College. Shortly after this gift, news of Stock's past as a secret racist agitator came to light, his gift became tainted, and the College fell into scandal.

For a decade and a half, Elroy Stock sent close to 100,000 letters to mixed-race couples and their children, constructing his "mailing list" from wedding and birth announcements in newspapers. Sherry Quan Lee, author of *Love Imagined: A Mixed Race Memoir*, was one of the recipients of Stock's venomous letters. In addition to photocopies of articles and images of mixed-race couples and children, Lee relates how Stock's letters contained type-written notes, with racist diatribes. For example, "Now we have our governments and churches brainwashing our

American citizens into thinking it's alright to destroy God's created races through sex-relations and producing mixed race children for future generations of America. Have we not had enough of Satan's freedom to destroy? ... God created the pure race people, sinful man created the mixed-race people."²⁶⁸

According to Charles Anderson, then president of Augsburg, Stock "feels he is just trying to teach people. He's a very gentle person. Even if you disagree with him, he's very gentle."²⁶⁹ This is an amazing display of Christian charity when one considers that Anderson's white son and African-American daughter-in-law had also received letters from Stock. Was the president's comment intended as an act of understanding forgiveness for Stock's sins? *SPY* magazine, which reported on the story in 1990, claimed more cynically that, "at its highest levels, fundraising is all about turning the other cheek, about offering the embrace of forgiveness, and then ramming one's head into the nearest sand pile."²⁷⁰

In 2001, Twin Cities' alternative paper *City Pages* dedicated a cover story to the Elroy Stock scandal (Figure 7.8). They spent a fair amount of time hearing from Stock himself. The story opened with a description of Mr. Stock's home—in particular, two photographs of Stock with Charles Anderson. One, from 1987, was "a classic grip-and-grin, with donor and president both smiling broadly." The other, from 1990, shows Anderson's smile "replaced by an expression equal parts puzzlement and distaste, like a homeowner who has just stamped out a flaming paper bag that's been left on his front stoop." In the words of *City Pages*, Stock had gone from being "a generous, albeit obscure, alumnus to a civic embarrassment."²⁷¹

Indeed, Anderson found himself in a complicated, almost impossible situation. Augsburg was not an institution so financially independent that it could easily return half a million bucks on principle. The board of regents went so far as to deny Stock the naming rights for the building, but it did not vote to return his money. Many faculty, staff, and students were outraged, and thought the money should be returned. Even Mark Hanson, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, with which the college is affiliated, said it was the right thing to do. But Anderson claimed the money could be used for minority scholarships, or for whatever the college wanted, and the *Star-Tribune* and *Pioneer Press* wrote editorials supporting the president's decision, while at the same time vilifying Stock. In brief, Augsburg did not return the money, but it also did not display Stock's name prominently on the front of the building. Instead, they hung a tiny plaque in the back hallway of what is now known as the Foss Lobeck Miles Center. According to Anderson, the money was not from "some Norwegian cocaine connection," but had been earned legitimately by Stock, a local accountant. Despite the Stock affair, Anderson said the school had no plans to rewrite its fundraising policies. "It has to be judged on a case-by-case basis," Anderson said. "You don't require that donors take a litmus test or urinalysis."²⁷²

The problem of colleges and universities receiving big donations from questionable sources is not unique to Augsburg. In fact, beyond single buildings, there are some institutions whose entire existence was the result of what *SPY* called "money with a greasy texture," including Duke, Stanford, and Vanderbilt. The Brady Urological Institute at Johns Hopkins University came into being through a gift from Diamond Jim Brady, the

²⁶⁸ Sherry Quan Lee, *Love Imagined: A Mixed-Race Memoir* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2014), 77.

²⁶⁹ Alex Heard, "Embarrassment of Riches—Certain Riches Anyway," *SPY* (January 1990), 82.

²⁷⁰ Heard, "Embarrassment of Riches," *SPY*, 82.

²⁷¹ Mike Mosedale, "Take Till It Hurts," *City Pages* (21 February 2001), 14.

²⁷² "When a College Gets A Gift That Is Tainted," *New York Times* (9 November 1988), 11, at <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/11/09/us/education-when-a-college-gets-a-gift-that-is-tainted.html>.

president 1980-1997

Charles S. Anderson

Chuck's Smile

THIS IS the official portrait of Charles Samuel “Chuck” Anderson, 8th president of Augsburg. It looks like every other portrait of a college president: balanced composition, centered subject, body leaning slightly forward. Anderson’s blue eyes seem at once cutting and kind, dark circles under them suggest late nights of worry. His mood seems stern, even a little sad. A medal hangs from his lapel—the Knight’s Cross First Class of the Royal Order of Merit, given to him by King Harald V of Norway. This adds the requisite gravitas, supplemented by the red brick background to complete the portrait’s comfortable combination of hominess and conservative stability.

But wait. Is he smiling? Look closer. His thin lips look like a backwards tilde in a Mexican piñata. Scientists and art historians studying the Mona Lisa’s smile have dubbed this enigmatic feature “the uncatchable smile.”¹ Chuck’s portrait has that, too.

As it turns out, Chuck’s official portrait doesn’t tell the whole story. The photograph on which the portrait is based reveals much more about Anderson’s character. The composition offers more than just head and shoulders. The full pose is almost rakish, revealing the former

athlete and Marine who, as the theatre people might say, is “comfortable in his body.” Now Anderson looks as if he’s leaning in to tell you a secret, or a joke. And you, as the viewer, want to hear what he has to say. In another photo, we see Anderson in his office, smiling a very different smile. Here Chuck isn’t holding back. There’s no pretense about what needs to be conveyed in an official portrait. With a book in his hand, and shelves filled with books behind him, he seems fully himself, the scholar, and has the smile to prove it.

One of the most storied relationships about Chuck was his seemingly endless public feud with Spanish professor Mary Kingsley, who taught at Augsburg for 42 years and served in various faculty leadership roles, including on the faculty senate.² Anderson and Kingsley argued about everything from shared governance to faculty salaries to unfair HR practices. In the midst of one of these arguments, Anderson wrote to Kingsley, “I want to know in writing if you respect your president.” Kingsley replied, “I show my respect for you by telling you what I really think.” And on, and on.

Late in his life, Anderson was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s. Kingsley’s husband had also had the disease, so she knew its debilitating effects firsthand, especially tough for those who’d lived the life of the mind. But Kingsley was heartened when a colleague related her regular visits with Anderson. When this other colleague would tell the former president the

names of faculty members who sent their greetings, Anderson, for the most part, was unresponsive. But when Mary Kingsley's name was mentioned, he would smile and laugh.³

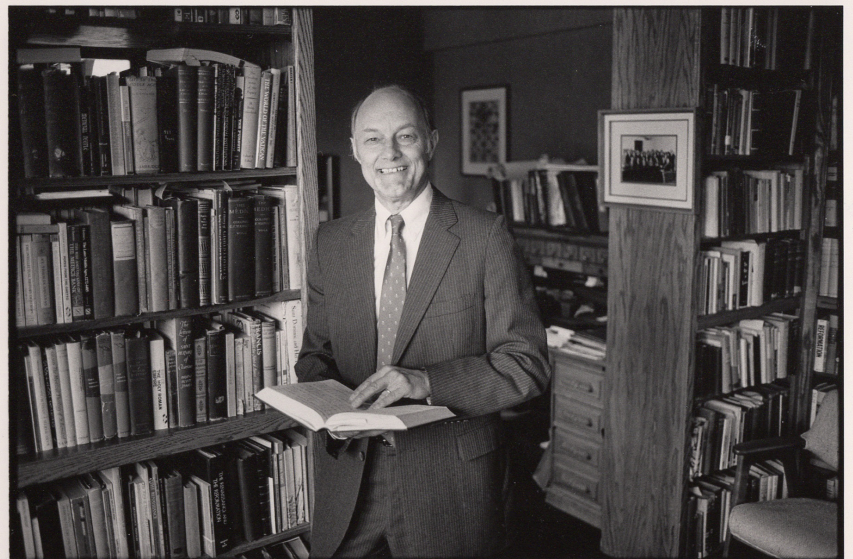
I don't know if it was the "uncatchable smile" of his official presidential portrait, or the full-toothed smile we see when Chuck is standing among his books. I like to think it was the latter.



¹ Amah-Rose Abrams, "Scientists Discover the Legendary Secret Behind the 'Mona Lisa' Smile," *ArtNet News* (21 August 2015), <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/secret-behind-mona-lisa-smile-discovered-326770>.

² The following anecdotes concerning the Kingsley/Anderson relationship are from Anny Finch, "Oral history interview with Mary Kingsley," Augsburg University (18 March 2015).

³ Finch, "Oral history interview with Mary Kingsley."



shady investor of the Gilded Age. And Ivan Boesky, who was indicted for insider trading in the 1980s, donated \$2 million to New York's Jewish Theological Seminary. After his legal troubles, Boesky himself asked that his name be taken off the seminary building. The seminary followed this request, but also kept the money. Even professors have been known to make morally bankrupt contributions to the schools they love. In the early 1990s, an art history professor named Anthony Melnikas hoped to establish a scholarship at the Ohio State University for the study of ancient manuscripts. The money to fund the scholarship was to come from the sale of medieval folios Melnikas had stolen from the Vatican Library.²⁷³

The fallout from Elroy Stock's morally loaded gift and Charles Anderson's response continued. In 1999, with Charles Anderson retired and William Frame as president, Stock sued the college, either to have his name put on the building, or to have his money returned. As evidence in support of his claim, Stock's lawyer cited a letter signed by Jeroy Carlson, then senior development officer at the college, which promised that Stock's pledge of half a million dollars "would involve the college recognizing your right to designate this pledge to name 'The Elroy M. Stock Communications Wing.'" Augsburg's stance of outrage over Stock's racism also seemed disingenuous, since, according to Stock's lawyer, the college continued to accept donations from Stock over the next ten years, totaling \$18,000. The plaque they hung in an isolated corner of the building was just a way to "mollify" Stock.²⁷⁴ Lengthy legal battles ensued. Augsburg won, at least to the extent that it was not required to return the money.

As it turns out, money is fungible, it can be traded or substituted. Even if you take and spend money for one thing, you can spend the same amount on something else and claim that was your intent all along. Money is fungible. Not only that, money is inherently amoral. People have morals. People are good or bad or, more often, a combination of these, depending on the circumstances. It's true that Augsburg took money from a bad man, or more precisely, a misguided and ill-informed man, a racist. But his money, as Charles Anderson pointed out, was the product of honest work and good investment. And for all his racism, which we are free to forgive, though we should not forget, Elroy Stock was trying to do something good with his contribution to the college. In the end, Augsburg exploited the fungibility of Stock's donation, learned something about itself as an institution, and made the college a slightly better place.

Frame did what Anderson said the college might do: use the money for scholarships. Indeed, if it's true that humans need to make mistakes in order to learn from them, then Augsburg has learned quite a lot. Reflecting on the Elroy Stock affair thirteen years after the scandal first broke, Charles Anderson had this to say, "Since it happened, the emphasis on minority affairs has been better ... the school has come to be known as a place of hospitality and one of having good support programs. It's not all sweetness and light either, because faculty and administrators are not omniscient."²⁷⁵

Speaking of "not all sweetness and light," let's not forget that folks with issues around racial diversity often have similar issues with gender orientation and diversity. Augsburg has an equally complex history with such matters, but one that has long been hidden.

²⁷³ William Honen, "Teacher Tied to Stolen Manuscript Pages Faced Prior Ethics Questions, Colleagues Say," *New York Times* (30 May 1995), 10, at <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/05/30/us/teacher-tied-stolen-manuscript-pages-faced-prior-ethics-questions-colleagues-say.html>.

²⁷⁴ Mosedale, "Take Till It Hurts," 16.

²⁷⁵ Nelson and Wood, *Anderson Chronicles*, 30-31.