

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

<p><b>Institution:</b> Edge Hill University</p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 30 - History</p>
<p><b>Title of case study:</b> Improving the knowledge and understanding of the African American freedom struggle by educators, school and undergraduate students and the public from the research by Professor Kevern Verney on black civil rights and race relations in the United States.</p>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p><b>a) Educational</b> - improving the performance of school students in coursework and the knowledge and understanding of teachers and undergraduates at other HEIs. Dissemination by talks to schools, online publications and books and articles targeted at schools and undergraduate audiences.</p> <p><b>b) The General Public</b> – improving public knowledge and awareness through radio appearances, public lectures, online and book publications for non-academic audiences.</p> <p><b>Reach:</b> <u>Direct, quantifiable</u> contact (schools/lecture audiences, online ‘hits’, single-authored books sales) at least 5,500 people. In excess of 160,000 if other reach is included - sales figures for journals, essay collections, radio programmes where Verney was a contributor.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Research underpinning this case study was undertaken by Verney at Edge Hill University between 1998 and 2013. Verney joined Edge Hill in 1989 and has been continuously employed at Edge Hill to the present date. He is currently Associate Dean (Research) in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.</p> <p>In recent years historians have stressed the importance of the ‘long civil rights movement’, moving away from an emphasis on the events of the 1950s and 1960s. There has been recognition of the need to research the antecedents of the post-war civil rights movement. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), as the leading civil rights organization in this period, has been the subject of increasing scholarly attention. Verney’s work has focused attention on the work of NAACP branches at state and local level which have been neglected in the existing civil rights historiography.</p> <p>Civil rights historians have also moved away from a ‘King-centric’ approach – shifting attention from national civil rights leaders to the vital contributions made by lesser known local activists. Alabama was central to the twentieth century civil rights struggle. For much of this time John LeFlore was the leading civil rights campaigner in the state, yet is barely mentioned in civil rights histories. Verney’s work <b>(3v)</b> corrects this omission, focusing attention on the civil rights struggle in Mobile, a city often overlooked because of the attention devoted to other urban centres in the state. Donna Baker, Editor in Chief, Alabama Heritage and Acquisitions Editor for History, The University of Alabama Press, e-mailed: ‘I want to congratulate you on your very fine article in the July 2013 <i>Alabama Review</i> on John LeFlore and thank you for bringing attention to a character we have overlooked in our civil rights history’. She invited Verney to contribute a full-length monograph on LeFlore.</p> <p>Verney’s historiographical work <b>(3ii)</b> attracted favourable reviews and, when published, was the only up to date, full-length, study of the historiography of the civil rights struggle.</p> <p>More recently, Verney’s research has focused on Barack Obama. He compared 2008 with Jesse Jackson’s earlier campaigns for the Presidency to assess why Obama won and Jackson lost, and what this revealed about the changing role of race in electoral politics <b>(3iv)</b>. He questioned the claims made by many commentators in the aftermath of Obama’s victory that race no longer played a significant role in U.S. political life.</p> <p>Since 2010 Verney has been co-investigator for an AHRC Research Network on Obama. His latest</p>

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research (3vi) examines the public debate on immigration to the United States. He challenges claims by commentators like Pat Buchanan and Samuel Huntington, that present day immigration is fundamentally different from historical experience. He also examines the nation's changing demography. By 2042 white Americans will no longer be a majority of the U.S. population. It has been argued by some that this will bring an end to white domination of U.S. political life. His research questions the validity of such predictions.

### 3. References to the research

All outputs are assessed as being 2\* minimum. Outputs iii), iv), v) and vi) are submitted in REF 2. Outputs i) and ii) were submitted to RAE 2008. All outputs available on request.

Output ii) has been positively reviewed by Dr Lee Sartain, then at the University of Nottingham: "...Verney has achieved a virtually impossible task with a breadth of knowledge and intimacy of style that will entertain, inform and challenge the reader".

[http://www.americansc.org.uk/reviews/black\\_debate.htm](http://www.americansc.org.uk/reviews/black_debate.htm)

Verney's co-edited essay collection (Output iii) was commended by Manfred Berg, a world leading authority on the subject, in the *Journal of American History* as the most important work published on the NAACP during its centenary year. The collection received favourable reviews in a range of scholarly/non-scholarly publications, including commendations for Verney's essay on Alabama.

On Output vi) (arising from work undertaken under an AHRC Network Award) Stephen Burman of the University of Sussex writes "*Arising from a powerful collaborative research network, this book provides us with a sobering perspective on the unfolding of the dreams and hopes generated by Obama's election in 2008. It is rich in interdisciplinary perspectives that bring together diverse issues into the most coherent and comprehensive analysis yet of the Obama story so far.*" (See Section 5, Other Source 6).

- i) Authored Book: Kevern J. Verney, *The Art of the Possible: Booker T. Washington and Black Leadership in the United States, 1881-1925* (New York: Routledge, 2001).
- ii) Authored Book: Kevern J. Verney, *The Debate on Black Civil Rights in America* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).
- iii) Edited Book; Chapter in Book: Kevern J. Verney and Lee Sartain (eds.), *Long is the Way and Hard: One Hundred Years of the NAACP* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2009). In addition to being the lead author of the introduction Verney contributed a single essay, "To Hope Till Hope Creates": The NAACP in Alabama, 1913-1945', xv-xxviii, 105-120.
- iv) Journal article: Kevern J. Verney, 'Change We Can Believe In? Barack Obama, Race and the 2008 Presidential Election', *International Politics*, 48, Numbers 2-3 (March-May, 2011), 344-363. DOI 10.1057/ip.2011.13
- v) Journal Article: Kevern Verney, "Every Man Should Try": John L. LeFlore and the NAACP in Mobile, Alabama, 1919-1956', *The Alabama Review*, 66, No. 3 (July, 2013), 186-210.
- vi) Edited Book; Chapter in Book: Mark Ledwidge, Kevern Verney and Inderjeet Parmar (eds.), *Barack Obama and the Myth of a Post-Racial America* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013). Edited essay collection with contributors from Britain, Europe and the United States. In addition to being the author of the introduction Verney contributed a single essay, 'The Final Frontier: Barack Obama and the Vision of a Post-Racial America', vii-xiii, 116-132.

### 4. Details of the impact

#### a) Educational

In recent years the black freedom struggle in the United States has had increasing prominence on 'A' level courses and enjoyed growing popularity as a subject option with sixth formers. Verney regularly receives requests from schools to speak about his research. From 1 January 2008-31 July 2013 he gave lectures at 12 events for schools. This included a one day schools conference on the Obama Presidency at the British Library, London, in March 2013 for which Verney was co-organizer and a chair for two panels.

All schools work was related to topics on 'A' level courses. The Heads of History in *section 5*

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(Factual Statements 1-3) have confirmed that the visits had a direct impact in improving student performance. The Head of History at Winstanley College (Factual Statement 3) wrote 'your lecture...inspired the students to research a range of sources and to engage with historiography on King in their studies. In addition, by mentioning alternative leaders to King...this prompted some to further research their impact on the movement. Therefore a number of students achieved full marks in this module'. The student secretary of the Winstanley History Society noted Verney's contribution was 'exceptionally valuable to students writing their coursework and provided a brilliant explanation of the different historical viewpoints on the civil rights movement'.

Verney has published two student texts that are widely used in schools (Other Source 1):

- *Black Civil Rights in America* (Routledge, 2000), sales 1.1 2008-31.7.2013, 5,217
- *African Americans and U.S. Popular Culture* (Routledge, 2003), sales, 1,527

Although a monograph **3ii** is used in schools and undergraduate courses because of its historiographical focus. All three books have been continuously in print since their initial publication. *Black Civil Rights In America* alone earned £2,322.91 in royalties from photocopying in schools during the census period (Other Sources 2, 3).

Verney's works are used as recommended texts on a range of undergraduate courses at other HEIs, for example, the Universities of East Anglia, Heidelberg (as one example, Other Source 4) Liverpool, Manchester and Northumbria.

In recommending his text on popular culture Donna Gilton, Professor of Library Science at the University of Rhode Island, wrote: 'Any student of African American history or cultural studies will find this a fascinating and highly useful book' (Other Source 5).

Verney has published a number of articles in books/journals specifically targeted at school audiences. These include *New Perspective*, 14, No.1 (September 2008); *History Teaching Review*, *The Yearbook of the Scottish Association of Teachers of History* (2010); and the online resource *Milestones Documents in African American History* (2010) available at:

[www.schlagergroup.com/mdaah.php](http://www.schlagergroup.com/mdaah.php)

Verney receives regular invitations to contribute to book/journal publications as a direct result of his research, for example from Jonathan Este, Politics Editor of *the Conversation*, resulting in the two articles listed in **b**.

**b) The General Public**

The Obama Research Network, for which Verney is Co-Organizer/Investigator, is committed to public engagement and dialogue between scholarly researchers and the wider community. The Network Steering Committee includes representatives from the International Slavery Museum (ISM) Liverpool, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), as well as a schools representative. Commenting on **3vi** Stephen Burman from the FCO stated:

'It is rich in interdisciplinary perspectives that bring together diverse issues into the most coherent and comprehensive analysis yet of the Obama story so far'. (Other Source 6)

The Network was funded by a £31,320 award over three years from the AHRC which specifically uses impact criteria in the allocation of Network awards. In addition to the British Library Schools Conference in a) other impact related contributions by Verney for the Network include:

A blog on the 2012 U.S. elections at <http://blogs.edgehill.ac.uk/uselections/>

An interview on *Radio Merseyside* in October 2010 and two interviews on *Radio Lancashire* on the 2012 U.S. elections in October/November 2012. The last interview took place on the morning after the election. The average audience for the three interviews was 50,000.

A lecture to the Ormskirk Historical Society (October 2011) and a public lecture at Edge Hill in January 2013.

On 24 May 2013 Verney published an online article, 'End of the Affair? Barack Obama and the Liberal News Media', in *The Conversation*. By 31 July this had been read by 818 people with the following distribution as of 1 October: Australia 48.8% (411); USA 20.5 (173); UK 15.4% (130); Canada 3.8% (32); Other 11.4% (96). (Other Source 7).

On 28 June 2013 Verney published an online article 'Communication Failure, "Brand Obama" Tired and Tarnished' in *The Conversation*. By 31 July this had been read by 713 people with the following distribution as of 1 October: Australia 43.5% (350); USA 15.9% (128); UK 14.6% (117); South Africa 6.0% (48); Other 20.0% (161). (Other Source 7).

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

**Factual Statements** – each addresses impact on pupils' performance.

- 1) The Head of History, King's School, Chester
- 2) The Head of History, St Edward's School, Liverpool
- 3) The Head of History, Winstanley College, Lancashire.

### Other Sources

- 1) Routledge – for royalties, sales figures. Statement available to HEFCE's REF Team on request.
- 2) Manchester University Press – for royalties, sales figures. Statement available to HEFCE's REF Team on request.
- 3) The Authors Copyright and Licensing Society – for royalties, including from school photocopying - available to HEFCE's REF Team on request.
- 4) Professor Dr. Manfred Berg, University of Heidelberg (accessed 16 November 2013), *Historisches Seminar der Universität Heidelberg - Curt-Engelhorn-Professur für Amerikanische Geschichte*. Available at: [http://www.uni-heidelberg.de/md/zegk/schurman/studium/vl\\_freedom\\_struggle\\_syllabus.pdf](http://www.uni-heidelberg.de/md/zegk/schurman/studium/vl_freedom_struggle_syllabus.pdf) [Accessed 16 November 2013].
- 5) Professor Donna Gilton (accessed 16 November 2013), *Black Studies 101 - Best Sources: Best books, periodicals, and other information on Black or Africana Studies*. Available at: <http://libraryschool.libguidescms.com/culturalstudies> [Accessed 16 November 2013].
- 6) Routledge (2013), *Barack Obama and the Myth of a Post-Racial America*. Available at: <http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415813945/> [Accessed 16 November 2013].
- 7) Author's *Dashboard* at *the Conversation* which can be accessed by secure password to verify readership and reach for publications by Verney – available to HEFCE's REF Team on request.