COMMUNITY CONVERSATION SERIES

NO EASY WAY:
Integrating Riverside Schools—
A Victory for Community

SATURDAY, JANUARY 31, 2015
1:00—3:00 PM
UCR Culver Center of the Arts
3834 Main Street, Riverside, CA 92501
Parking at Mission Square and Lot 46
(enter from 9th St.) and at City Hall

FREE and Open to the Public

The Inlandia Institute announces the first of
six community conversations around the book
No Easy Way: Integrating Riverside Schools—
A Victory for Community, by Arthur L.
Littleworth.

Moderator: John Bender, Politics, Projects,
and Investigations Editor, The Press-Enterprise

Panelists: Robert Bland
V.P. Franklin
Irving Hendrick
Susan Straight
Sue Strickland
Frances Vasquez

Watch for upcoming monthly gatherings at
neighborhood venues in partnership with:
- Center for Social Justice and Civil Liberties
- NAACP, Riverside Branch
- Riverside African American Historical Society
- Riverside Human Relations Commission
- Riverside Latino Network
- Riverside Mexican-American Historical Society

No Easy Way is a
local story of national
significance—the
tumultuous tale of the
voluntary integration
of Riverside’s schools
in 1965. This essential
book is by Arthur L.
Littleworth, then School Board president.
An unknown arsonist burns Riverside’s Lowell
School. At the same moment, parents petition
the School Board for integration. These factors
set in motion a crisis that grips the community
just 20 days after the upheaval of the Watts
riots. No Easy Way tells the story of this
turning point in history.

No Easy Way is available at the Riverside
Public Library, for sale online, and at local
bookstores. This project was made possible
with support from Cal Humanities, a non-profit
partner of the National Endowment for the
JOIN OUR DISTINGUISHED PANELISTS FOR AN ANIMATED DISCUSSION

Moderator: John Bender. Politics, Projects, and Investigations Editor, The Press-Enterprise

Longtime journalist John Bender lives in Moreno Valley with his wife and two sons. He has worked as an editor at The Press-Enterprise since 2000, serving in a variety of roles, including Riverside zone editor and Metro editor. Bender, a graduate of Cal Poly Pomona, currently is Politics, Projects, and Investigations editor, and is responsible for editing much of the front page content. He's also an avid poet.

Bender used his skills as a journalist to help inlandia locate at least one of the principal players in the Riverside schools integration for the interview portion of NO EASY WAY Integrating Riverside Schools—A Victory for Community. He searched Press-Enterprise photo archives—and albeit unsuccessfully—for the originals of the iconic news images of the Lowell School fire. He also assisted with permissions to reprint clipping from The Press-Enterprise in the book.

Bender is honored for the chance to moderate the first forum centered on NO EASY WAY and for the chance to help foster this important and interesting dialog in the community. As evidenced by the recent tragic shootings, the integration of American society is by no means finished or complete, but is an ongoing struggle—one in which the lessons of the past are more relevant than ever before.

Robert Bland. Community Leader and Engineer

Robert Bland was born and raised in Virginia where the schools he attended were totally segregated. He applied to the University of Virginia, even though he knew it was a white school, because it was the premier academic institution in the state. Robert Bland was in the first undergraduate class of three African Americans, entering the engineering program in 1955. Bland chose electrical engineering as his major. While accepted without differential treatment in the classroom, the three African Americans were isolated in terms of the university's social life and Bland's two black classmates left in spring of 1956.

Bland's experience at the university demonstrated to him that minority schools in Virginia were not teaching at the same level as white schools and there was significant coursework in math and science missing from his high school education. He persevered and became the first African-American graduate in engineering in 1959.

After graduation, he went to work for the Naval Ordnance Laboratory in Corona and lived in Riverside. There he became one of the leaders of the movement to integrate Riverside schools. Later, he moved to Newbury Park and worked for the Naval Weapons System Engineering Station at Port Hueneme where he was department manager of Missile and Launching Systems. Bland is currently CEO of the Conejo Compassion Coalition, a nonprofit corporation based in Ventura County California that provides worldwide poverty relief and development assistance.

V.P. Franklin. Author and Educator

V.P. Franklin holds a University of California Presidential Chair and is a Distinguished Professor of History and Education at UC Riverside. He edits The Journal of African American History, and has published over fifty scholarly articles and co-edited five books on African American history and education.


Irving Hendrick. Historian and Educator

Irving Hendrick is the author of The Development of a School Integration Plan in Riverside, California. A History and Perspective (1968).

Hendrick's higher education teaching, research, and administrative career began in 1964-65 at the University of Michigan, Flint College, and continued in 1965 at UC Riverside where he remained for the next 35 years. Following his retirement as Professor of Education and Dean of the School of Education, Professor Hendrick enjoyed some consultant appointments in administration, including one year as interim Dean in the position he had just retired from, and two additional years as Assistant Vice Chancellor of Development.

More recently, Hendrick is known for his service at Riverside Community College District, which includes five years as Dean of Education at RCC; two years as Interim President of the Moreno Valley Campus; and twice as Interim Chancellor of the District. Hendrick's emeritus professor activity at UCR since 1999 included three years as a member of the Academic Senate's Committee on Faculty Welfare, including two years as chair and representative to the System-wide Committee of the same name. Since 2010 he has been a member of the UCR Foundation Board of Trustees, chair of its Planned Giving Committee, and a member of the Foundation's Executive Committee.

Although his published books, monographs, book chapters, articles, and book reviews include a more diverse range of interests, the majority center on the California experience. He is the author or a major contributor to ten publications that focus on race and ethnic group relations, school segregation, and efforts to reverse the nation's history in that regard.

Susan Straight. Author and Educator

Susan Straight has published eight novels and two books for children. Her new novel Between Heaven and Here (McSweeneys) is the final book in the Rio Seco trilogy, Take One Candle Light a Room (Anchor Books) was named one of the best books of 2010 by The Washington Post and The Los Angeles Times, and A Million Nightingales (Anchor Books) was a finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize in 2006. Highwire Moon was a finalist for the 2001 National Book Award. The Golden Gopher, published in Los Angeles Noir, won the 2008 Edgar Award for Best Mystery Story.

Her stories and essays have appeared in The O Henry Prize Stories, Best American Short Stories, The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, Harper's, McSweeneys, The Believer, Salon, Zoetrope: Black Clock, and elsewhere. She has been awarded the Lannan Prize for Fiction, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and the Gold Medal for Fiction from the Commonwealth Club of California.

She is Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at UC Riverside. With Douglas McMillan, she writes for KCET, and their exhibit "More Dreamers of the Golden Dream" featured stories of Riverside's Eastside. She was born in Riverside, California, where she lives with her family, whose history is featured on susanstraight.com.

Susan Strickland. Community Leader and Educator

Susan Strickland is one of the founders and the first president of the Riverside African American Historical Society. She is currently serving as Treasurer on its board of directors. Susan is a retired educator. Her own education includes an associate degree from Los Angeles City College; a bachelor's degree from California State University, Los Angeles; and a master's degree from California State University, San Bernardino.

As an educator, she served as an elementary teacher (grades K-6), elementary education specialist for a UC Riverside research project evaluating desegregated schools, student teacher supervisor for UC Riverside, instructional coordinator for the Emergency School Aid Act Project, consultant for McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, and curriculum specialist.

In February 1966, as an elementary teacher, Sue was selected to transfer with Emerson students to Highland School as a part of the Riverside School integration plan. She is an active member of the community. In addition to her work with the Riverside African American Historical Society, she is a docent at the Riverside Metropolitan Museum and co-founder of the museum's Multi Cultural Council. She is a member of the Riverside International Relations Council, California Retired Teachers Association, and a life member of the Riverside NAACP and the Sickle Cell Organization. She is a member of the First Baptist Church.

Frances Vasquez. Community Leader

A second generation Mexican American, Frances Vasquez grew up bilingual and bicultural among her Mexican and white/pool sides family and her orange grove. She attended Highgrove Elementary, University Heights Junior High, and Polytechnic High in Riverside. She pursued higher education at Riverside City College and UC Riverside, where she earned a BS Degree in Social Relations and Work Life and an MBA in General Management.

Vasquez wrote her master's thesis on the status of Chicano leadership in U.S. corporations and other organizations and during her career she has held leadership positions with several nonprofit, public agencies, and legislative constituency offices.

In addition to serving on the Inlandia Institute board of directors, Frances' affiliations and community service have included: San Bernardino Symphony Board of Directors, Riverside Library Board of Trustees, Greater Riverside Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, San Bernardino County Hispanic Employees Alliance (founding officer), Sintonia Mexicana Board of Directors (founding officer), Kiwanis Club of Greater San Bernardino, Riverside County Mexican-American Historical Society, LULAC of the Inland Empire, and Coalition of Inland Empire Latino Organizations (CIELO).