

TO: Michael T. Ryan
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RE: 2012-2013 Library Research Awards Program
Final Report

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I am a dissertator associated with the Department of English at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Last spring I received one of the Columbia University Library Research Awards for the 2012-2013 funding cycle. The monies that I received through the Library Research Awards Program provided an invaluable opportunity for me to travel to New York City this past summer and spend a week working closely with the Vera L. Connolly Papers. This research could not have been completed without financial support from Columbia University and the Rare Book and Manuscript Library. As I conclude my current research efforts, I am submitting this short report on the nature of my work and my recent findings while at Columbia. I am very grateful for this assistance which enabled me to complete essential archival work for my doctoral dissertation and prepare a manuscript for publication within a peer-reviewed journal.

My dissertation analyzes the rhetorical legacy of Dakota activist, writer, and orator, Gertrude Simmons Bonnin (also known as Zitkala-Ša). For a period of time between 1928 and 1930, Bonnin corresponded with Vera Connolly, a journalist who shared Bonnin's

early-twentieth century concerns for social justice and civic improvement, particularly for native communities. In June of 1928, *Good Housekeeping* magazine hired Connolly to investigate and report on certain “Indian matters” that seemed to be drawing some limited national attention. After consulting with Bonnin and further conducting a six-month investigation, Connolly prepared a three-part series for *Good Housekeeping* magazine, documenting horrific levels of starvation, wide-spread abuse in government-run boarding schools, profound poverty affecting many tribal communities, and a federal Indian Bureau engaged in fraud and severe neglect—issues largely ignored by the contemporary press. The series ultimately led to the resignation of one key federal official and created a groundswell of public support for further Senate oversight which led swiftly to some legislative change and increased federal appropriations of more than three million dollars.

During my visit to the Rare Book and Manuscript Library this past summer, I focused primarily on Vera Connolly’s investigative work for *Good Housekeeping* magazine within this key period, looking most particularly at archival holdings from 1928, 1929, and 1930. The files regarding Connolly’s journalistic production during this time are extensive and exciting to review. I spent the bulk of my time examining material found within six archival boxes containing folders of notes, file drafts, and correspondence related to Connolly’s collaboration with Gertrude Simmons Bonnin and the “Indian” series authored by Connolly for *Good Housekeeping* magazine. This research allowed me to review closely the notes and interview transcripts which influenced Connolly’s textual production and further allowed me to track Connolly’s dialogue and correspondence with a number of key individuals working on federal Indian policy during this era, including Gertrude Simmons Bonnin, John Collier, James Frear, Stella Atwood, and the General Federations of Women’s

Clubs. This archival review also confirmed the outpouring of response from many parts of the country that Connolly's hard-hitting series generated—indeed, I had an invaluable opportunity to review the substantial, and rather remarkable, correspondence Connolly and her editors at *Good Housekeeping* magazine received in response to her three-part series from 1929 through the adoption of the National Indian Reorganization Act of 1934.

Most of this archival work will be used to shape and inform one of the leading chapters of my dissertation on early twentieth-century forms of collaborative feministic rhetoric and social activism. Over the past two months, I have also drawn heavily upon my archival work at the Rare Book and Manuscript Library in order to develop a manuscript entitled, "This Speaking Leaf: Vera Connolly's *Good Housekeeping* Crusade for the Indian Cause." The manuscript has been accepted for publication and will appear as a leading article in the inaugural issue of *Peitho: A Journal of the Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric & Composition*. The article recovers Vera's Connolly's provocative work on the "Indian Cause" for *Good Housekeeping* magazine, and then attempts to identify and analyze some of the socio-cultural contexts shaping and influencing this specific rhetorical event. It should appear in print this December.

I hope to return to Columbia University and the Rare Book and Manuscript Library for at least one more week before July of 2013 in order to review files drafts, notes, and correspondence regarding several other articles Connolly completed for women's magazines between 1930 and 1950. Leading scholars working within my field agree that more archival work needs to be done to identify the rhetorical possibilities, and the rhetorical limitations, associated with the discursive opportunities journalists such as Vera Connolly and the female-oriented trade magazines provided for American women during

the first half of the twentieth century. If I am able to complete this second visit, I will be sure to send an updated report to your attention that summarizes my subsequent findings. In conclusion, I would like to note my sincere thanks for this opportunity and my deep appreciation for the kind assistance I received during my time at Columbia from the very helpful staff at the Rare Book and Manuscript Library. It was a pleasure and an honor to be on site and work within this rich archive.