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## A Remembrance of Jean Richardson upon her retirement

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## A Tribute to Jean Richardson

Now that Jean Richardson is approaching her retirement as associate professor of history at SUNY Buffalo State, a first memory of many of her colleagues and students might be of passing by her office door and remarking on one of two things. If the door was open, which was often the case, Jean was meeting with a student—the two immersed in thoughtful discussion. And if the door was closed, its window clearly displayed a list of the many courses she taught for our Department: New York State History, Immigration / Ethnicity, Nineteenth Century History, Women's History, Local History.... Indeed, Jean was well known by all of her colleagues for the large number of popular courses she taught, the success she had in working with her students, and for the long list of Masters Theses she directed (over 20 completed or nearing completion). Having worked with her on a couple of those theses myself—either as a second or first reader—I can certainly understand why students sought her for their advisor. Her wise, encouraging, and deliberate manner, and her wide ranging specializations provided them with true professional guidance and the opportunity to develop their thesis in any one of a variety of fields. Students also sensed, and probably identified with, Jean's encompassing passion for the study of people who sought to improve their position in society.

On top of this first remembrance, however, it is obvious that Jean contributed a broad number of special talents to our department at the time of its transition from a larger corps of professors hired mostly in the 1970s, to a somewhat smaller body with a considerable number hired in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Jean came to teach for our Department in 1995 as an adjunct professor, having graduated summa cum laude as a non-traditional student at Buffalo State, and finishing her PhD at SUNY Buffalo. Her graduate level specialties enabled her to offer courses in

women's and social history once taught by Dr. Brenda Shelton, and in nineteenth century and Civil War history when Dr. Jack Cardoso retired. In 1999 her knowledge and experience in African American history was of critical importance when she collaborated with Dr. Nuala Drescher in successfully obtaining over \$15,000 in grants to plan and host the two day conference, "Fostering Community Through Applied History: A Conference in Honor of Monroe Fordham." Soon after joining the ranks of the Department's tenure track professors in 2000, she worked with Dr. Cynthia Conides in designing a plan to develop the Monroe Fordham Regional History Center archival facilities and upgrade the nearby student computer lab. In 2003 she became the Project Director of the Fordham Center, where she was instrumental in establishing procedures, incorporating new submissions, updating the Center's website, and making contacts with a variety of community institutions to preserve their records and collections. She was subsequently elected twice to the Executive Board of the Afro American Historical Association of the Niagara Frontier and, in 2009 to the office of First Vice President of that association.

She simultaneously published a book stemming from her dissertation, *A History of the Sisters of Charity Hospital, Buffalo, NY 1848-1900*, and a later edited volume, *Conversation with Monroe Fordham*. She has also written a range of articles, chapters, encyclopedia entries and book reviews, and presented papers at a number of professional conferences, and addresses on local history to regional organizations. She was a strong contributor over five years to sessions and study tours of the Teaching American History grant headed by Dr. Jill Gradwell, and she served on a wide variety of Buffalo State committees. Always devoted to working toward a strong professional union, Jean served from 2000 to 2012 as UUP Chapter Department

Steward, since 2001 as UUP Statewide Chapter Academic Delegate, as UUP Buffalo State Chapter Vice President from 2009 to 2011, and in a number of other capacities.

All members of the Department, and many students already have begun to miss Jean as she has focused this last semester on advising her graduate students in the completion of their theses. We will try to find a qualified new hire to offer as many of the courses she routinely taught. We are much the poorer without her wide range of other contributions she always made to the Department. We are lacking her wry sense of humor to help buoy us in our daily tasks. And finally, we miss her strong devotion to teaching, research, and service. Having once been a graduate of our Department with a B.A., she has given back many times to her students, her Department, Buffalo State, and to the community. We all wish her well in her future retirement. She already misses teaching, but she does plan to remain active in a variety of professional activities, as well as having additional time for her family.

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