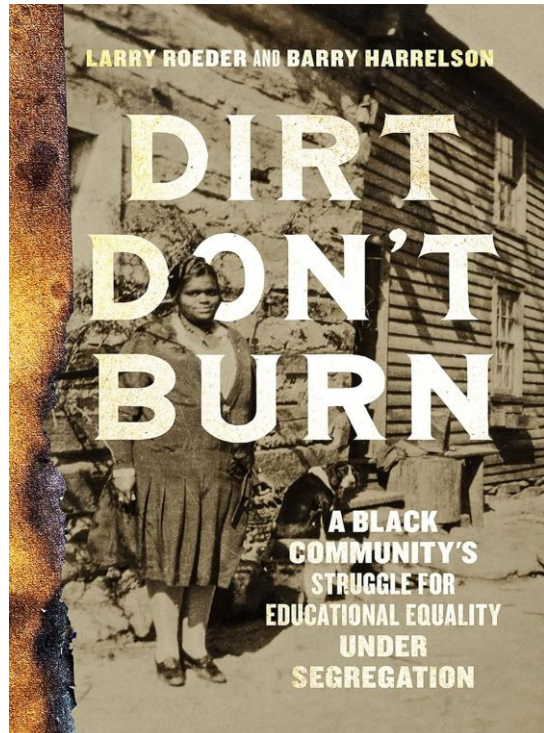


Notes by Larry Roeder: Why Tell This Story?

Beginnings...

I started my research about 10 years ago comparing white vs black schools, then just before the pandemic the Washington Post did a front page story on my research. That led to Georgetown University Press approaching me. After some interviewing they asked me to write a book. I was a little floored. I've written books before but it was always after seeking

a publisher. This time they sought me out, for which I'm grateful and I was accepted after a rigorous peer review.



Our Publisher...

Georgetown University published this study of the struggle by Blacks for educational equality in Loudoun. It is called [Dirt Don't Burn](#). My co-author, Barry Harrelson and I worked on the book for two years, the first serious published study on the topic. It is told within the larger context of the same struggle across Virginia and the nation - especially important given pushback this season in Florida and elsewhere on minority rights.

Why did I write this book?...

I imagine you might wonder why a white person is writing this book. I was asked the same question during a lecture I gave to an auditorium full of 4th graders in Loudoun. To explain, I have to tell a few

stories. The first takes us back to 1956 when I was a child in Egypt. My father was serving at the US Embassy in Cairo.

One night air raid sirens went off and pretty quickly my mother and I joined a pre-arranged convoy of Westerners who drove across the desert under artillery fire to Alexandria. We then were loaded into buses, but ours was strafed. Eventually, we made it to the port and were boarded onto the USS Chilton (**APA-38**), a Bayfield-class attack transport, but even as we left the port for Italy, bombs were falling in the waters! After more adventures, we landed in Naples where we were placed under the care of the US Navy.

Some weeks later my Dad flew out and I asked him directly why I was being targeted, a mere 7 year old. Why were people trying to kill me? Mom and Dad were both veterans of World War Two and tried to explain that in their opinion war and social conflict came from greed and also people's unwillingness to learn and appreciate people who are different. Dad's wartime experiences led him to become a Diplomat. Mom's led her into intelligence, where I also served for a time, after which I also turned to diplomacy.

That explanation back in 1956 has resonated with me over the years, as well as an experience of Dad's before the war. His parents died as WWII was breaking out in Europe, so he was financially dependent upon his mother's family who were quite wealthy, but my grandmother's sister-in-law was anti-Semitic. When it was discovered that Dad was dating a Jew, he and the girl were placed under pressure and had to split up. He resented that kind of prejudice for the rest of his life, something he reminded me of when he was dying.

This takes me to my Black history experiences. When I left Europe for college in Missouri, I dated a girl from Zaire. Neither of us had lived much in America and Marie and I knew little about Black American history, only the headlines. One day we were refused entry to a restaurant because of her skin color, so some faculty members agreed to form a Black History Club, not only to expose us to the details of what was happening to Blacks, but also to educate other students. That was quite a revelation, and as a result, I did a lot of research on prejudice in college, then in my career, and living in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

That led to my joining the Black History Committee at the Balch Library in Loudoun County, Virginia and agreeing to a request by the Prosperity Baptist Church near South Riding where I lived to write a history of their former "colored school." Based on that study, LCPS (Loudoun County Public schools) asked me to manage a larger study, which has now been going on for about a decade - the Edwin Washington Project. That led to a front-page story in the [Washington Post on my research](#), followed by Georgetown University Press asking me to author *Dirt Don't Burn*. As I mentioned, it is a peer-reviewed study. I also do similar work with the Muslim Community here in Loudoun, often speaking on their behalf in order to reduce irrational fear of their religion.

Where can you purchase this book?...

Dirt Don't Burn is available in advance on [Amazon](#) or directly from [George Washington University Press](#). Georgetown also allows copies to be ordered right now through Hopkins Fulfillment at <https://www.hfsbooks.com/>. Use the promo code TGUA for a discount. That's what I will be using to order copies for the local School Board and the Board of Supervisors.

Thank you!

Larry Roeder and Barry Harrelson