

CREST Residential Fellowship Application Cover Sheet  
Academic Year 2012-2013

Name Mark Ledbetter  
Rank Associate Prof.  
Department Philosophy & Religious Studies  
Campus address PO Box 2546 ; office 458 Western Ave #13  
Campus phone [REDACTED] Home phone [REDACTED]  
Email address [REDACTED]  
Previous CREST Residential Fellow? NO If yes, give year \_\_\_\_\_  
Title of Research Project "Ledbetter's Quarters"

Application materials:

- One copy of proposal narrative of roughly 1,500 words with cover sheet attached. Proposals should describe the project clearly and concisely for a multidisciplinary evaluation panel and address its relevance to current directions of research in the field. Please double-space proposals and use a 12-point type.
- One copy of bibliography not to exceed one page.
- One copy of *curriculum vitae*

Note to department heads:

- Residential Fellows will be released from one course during the fellowship year.
- This semester will tentatively be Fall 2012 or Spring 2013 (please circle one)

Department Head signature Laura Weed

Printed Laura Weed

If appointed in two departments:

Additional Department Head signature \_\_\_\_\_

Printed \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Applicant [Signature]

Applications must be received by Friday, February 17, 2012

Please mail to:

Dr. John Williams-Searle, Director  
Center for Citizenship, Race, and Ethnicity Studies (CREST)  
The College of Saint Rose  
432 Western Avenue  
Albany, NY 12203-1490

To: Dr. John Williams-Searle, Director, The Center for Citizenship, Race, and Ethnicity Studies

From: Mark Ledbetter, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

Re: Crest Residential Fellowship Proposal: "Ledbetter's Quarters"

**Scholarly Context:**

My proposed work addresses issues of race and racial divides in the context of poor, working class black and white people in rural Alabama during the 1960s and 70s. While historians and sociologists have produced extensive and substantive scholarly work in this area, much of it provides a divided picture, focusing either on race struggles and racial divides, or on the lives of working class whites, or the lives of African Americans. There is very little that shows the full complexity and tensions of integrated and interdependent lives, black and white, during a time of segregation. This is the contribution my work will make.

**Research Design I: The Story to Be Told** (an entry point and writing sample)

In the early 1950s my father bought 7 acres of land in the small town of Carrville, Alabama and began building houses there. Daddy had grown up in the area in a sharecropper family. Having just returned from WW II, he started a taxi business with three cars and two school buses. Carrville had its own mayor, city council, police force (2), and volunteer fire department, though the town numbered only about 450 people. The town was adjacent to a larger "cotton mill town," Tallassee, with a population of about 5000. Two towns with this size community could support my daddy's businesses: taxi and school buses, a bit of whiskey running, and now he was

adding landlord. He was quite the entrepreneur.

My father's 7 acres were located in the heart of downtown Carrville, off the main street—there was only one—appropriately down the hill from city hall, the town merchants and gas stations, and directly behind my daddy's taxi stand. The land was “colored” property in 1951, and on this land my father built 14 cinder block houses, a juke joint, and a barbershop. He did all the work himself, literally making the blocks for 6 of the houses using an old second hand block machine. Often one or two people would work with him, laborers who would eventually live in the houses they were helping to build. A narrow trail of about 100 yards led from the back of my daddy's taxi stand to the heart of this community.

I was born in 1956. From the time I was 7 years old until I was 13, I spent most of my waking time in this community, the only white child in a world called *Ledbetter's Quarters*, a segregated community that represented many of the worst things about the South and my hometown, hate and bigotry, white on black physical violence and economic exploitation, its own form of violence. And yet, as a young child, I loved the Quarters as a community and the people individually, and they showed me much love as well.

During the school year, I got off the school bus in front of my daddy's taxi stand and headed down a familiar, worn trail to be with my friends. During the summer, when there was no school, I would go to work early each morning with my daddy, walk to the Quarters from the taxi stand and spend the day with James, John, Larry, and Ronnie in their homes, in the woods that surrounded their homes, and on Rock Creek that ran behind the Quarters. On weekends I