

dramatic public conflict such as protests, arrests, and violence at the expense of less vivid yet crucial aspects such as community organizing and political negotiation. Historiography, public history, and textbooks frequently reinforce this narrow version of the movement. However, the experiences of individuals in Orlando, both white and black, in using music education in the 1960s to confront racial segregation provides instructors with an accessible example of how activists leveraged visible yet seemingly less important aspects of education in the Jim Crow South to promote meaningful social change.

Richard Hughes  
Illinois State University

**Robert Cassanello and Lisa Mills, Directors. *Filthy Dreamers*. Orlando, FL: UCF Burnett Honor's College, WUCF, 2020. Film.**

Florida's educators, and other teachers across the nation today, face censorship in their classrooms. Educational institutions are under attack for teaching "divisive concepts" and calls have emerged for books, often those with LGBTQ+ themes, to be removed from library shelves and course readings lists. Unfortunately, this scenario is not something new. In *Filthy Dreamers*, a short documentary film created by students and faculty at the University of Central Florida, the filmmakers look at a moment in the 1920s when religious fundamentalists ridiculed the curriculum, faculty, and administration at Florida State College for Women (FSCW) in an attempt to influence what students could be taught. At the time, this establishment stood as the only college for women in the state, making it a site of particular concern for those interested in policing morality and advocating a conservative definition of white womanhood.

In a period when more American women than ever were attending college, specifically white, middle and upper-class women, and some American women were experimenting with higher skirts, short hair, and taking advantage of their newly won right to vote, increasing anxiety emerged over the proper role for women in American society. At the same time, debates over the teaching of evolution were taking center stage on a national level with William Jennings Bryan and the "Scopes Monkey Trial." Both of these forces are at play in *Filthy Dreamers*, as a local religious crusader and his followers accused FSCW of teaching atheism, free love, and other "unchristian" values to its students. The dispute went so far as to get a state senate committee to investigate supposedly salacious textbooks. Students themselves spoke out against the accusations, writing in a statement from student government that the allegations unfairly stained their reputations, using their position as ladies to fight back. Ultimately, FSCW's President managed to protect an embattled faculty member and made no changes to the curriculum. To tell this story, the film features interviews with women who attended FSCW in the 1940s, archival photographs, footage from the period, political cartoons, and statements from academic experts to paint a picture of the broader period and the specific controversy at FSCW.

With a run time under thirty minutes, *Filthy Dreamers* can be screened and discussed in a single class period. The film would be appropriate for undergraduate courses focused on women's history, gender, the history of Florida, or the history of education. The film could work for advanced high school students, though the focus on college life will likely resonate more strongly with university-level learners.

The film has an accompanying educational website hosted by PBS LearningMedia. The website offers short clips from the documentary as well as a variety of activities, such as a Venn diagram, a graphic organizer, a mock debate, and discussion questions. The activities are geared towards a K-12 audience, though some of the discussion questions could be modified for use in the university classroom. There is one newsletter activity that would benefit from stronger guidance for instructor implementation. Copyright may make this difficult, but it would be enriching to have some of the primary sources used in the film available for students to explore.

The production quality is great, but there are a few aspects of the film that could be improved upon. The first is that the documentary could continue to make more explicit the connections between gender and allegations

of immoral course content. It remains a bit unclear if groups like the Florida Purity League particularly targeted FSCW, or were these same issues being argued across the state? The program could also talk more about racial tensions in Florida and the country in the period. While the film nods to controversies over curriculum at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College during the period, a racially segregated college for Black students, and the firing of the College's President, a more thorough look at this incident would also help to illuminate the debates at FSCW. For instance, the film mentions advocating interracial marriage as one of FSCW's critics' concerns, but does not take time to contextualize the charge. Finally, more could be said about the broad composition of the student body at FCSW in the 1920s. About how many students attended the college? Were they mostly from middle-class families? From rural Florida?

*Filthy Dreamers* is a great example of the local as a microcosm for national debates, and though the setting is a very specific one, the film can be used as an opening to discuss some of the key social issues of the 1920s, especially relating to women and gender. Ultimately, the film sheds light on a forgotten moment in Florida education history that is uncomfortably topical today.

PBS Streaming site: <https://www.pbs.org/video/filthy-dreamers-vshf7s/>

Film Website: <https://filthydreamersdocumentary.org/>

PBS Learning Materials: <https://florida.pbslearningmedia.org/collection/filthy-dreamers/>

Eliza Martin

Georgia State University