

*Catalyst Profile*  
**Lynda Morgan**

The social injustice-fighting career of Lynda Morgan, the WCU alumna of 1978, began with her 1992 book, *Emancipation in Virginia's Tobacco Belt, 1850-1870*. The piece, published by the University of Georgia, delved into the intricacies of slavery in the rural south. Now, as a professor of history at Mt. Holyoke College, she challenges her students to do the same.

In her 28 years at the Massachusetts women's college, Morgan has taught seminars on the Civil Rights Movement, senior-level colloquiums on abolitionism, and introductory courses on "American People, 1500 – 1865." She is also known beyond Mt. Holyoke, teaching courses such as the "Age of Emancipation" at Amherst College and "Segregation: Origins and Legacies" at Smith College.

Hoping to bring relevancy to her classes, she leads discussions on Oscar-winning films like "12 Years a Slave" and writes blog posts on police brutality for the school's website.

"But there is a long history of violence and police brutality that every generation of African Americans since the seventeenth century has had to confront," wrote Morgan in a recent article. "And that has left a number of profound legacies."

Morgan began analyzing these "profound legacies" while pursuing her doctorate in African American Studies at the University of Virginia. Before enrolling as a student of the Carter C. Woodson Institute, however, Morgan was a Catamount.

As an undergraduate, this Fletcher native studied biology. According to Morgan, Cullowhee was an "open-minded place" in the '1970s, a place where she could freely explore her academic interests. And after graduating in 1976, she began a graduate degree at WCU in her current passion—American History.

Since then, Morgan has been "engaging people" in the historical and contemporary issues that surround being black in America. She has served as chair of Mt. Holyoke's African American and African Studies Program for over five years. Societies such as the Southern Historical Association and the Organization of American Historians also regularly publish her articles, which often focus on slavery in Virginia.

Currently, Morgan is working on "Known for My Work: African American Ethics from Slavery to Freedom." The piece analyzes how slavery "shaped subsequent generations' intellectual and social approaches to labor and ethics."

It is her hope that current students, at WCU and elsewhere, will expand their knowledge of history, explore academia and "have an open mind."

“We need to know these histories,” wrote Morgan in “From Slavery to Charleston,” an article published on Mt. Holyoke’s website. “If we are to be effective proponents of social justice in our day.”