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ABSTRACT

This paper is part of a larger study of southern African American women who were awarded fellowship awards by the Julius Rosenwald Fund and the General Education Board (GEB) for the purpose of graduate study at northern universities prior to school desegregation. An examination of their professional histories suggests that the women faced a glass ceiling constructed by race, class, and gender both in the larger southern community and within the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in which they worked. It also suggests, however, that advanced education and graduate degrees enabled them to informally construct their own authority within the strictures of the segregated South and the HBCUs during the first half of the 20th century, thus contributing significantly to academic and institutional leadership. This paper concentrates on the stories of four individuals: Florence Beatty Brown, Carrie Coleman Robinson, Flemmie Pansy Kittrell, and Lillian Burwell Lewis. Contains 31 notes. (Author/MM)

"Deserving to Go Further:" Philanthropic Fellowships, African American Women, and the Development of Higher Educational Leadership in the South, 1930-1954

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This paper is part of a larger study of southern African American women who were awarded fellowship awards by the Julius Rosenwald Fund and the General Education Board (GEB) for the purpose of graduate study at northern universities prior to school desegregation. An examination of their professional histories suggests that the women faced a "glass ceiling" constructed by race, class and gender both in the larger southern community and within the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in which they worked. It also suggests, however, that advanced education and graduate degrees enabled them to informally construct their own authority within the strictures of the segregated South and HBCUs during the first half of the 20th century, thus contributing significantly to academic and institutional leadership. This paper concentrates on the stories of four individuals: Florence Beatty Brown, Carrie Coleman Robinson, Flemmie Pansy Kittrell, and Lillian Burwell Lewis.

In 1943, Florence Beatty Brown applied for a fellowship from the Julius Rosenwald Fund for one year's study at the University of Illinois. Her goal was to develop study aids for rural students in the field of history and then to return to her current position as a social science instructor at State Teachers College in Fayetteville, North Carolina. Her previous applications for a fellowship (in 1938, 1940, 1941 and 1942) had been unsuccessful. Born in Cairo, Illinois, in 1912, she received her bachelor of arts degree from Fisk University in 1933, and a master of arts in history from the University of Illinois in 1936. Subsequently, she earned a master's degree in sociology from the University of Illinois in 1939. She studied at Teachers College--Columbia University during 1940-41 and had also served as a regional field worker in the North Carolina rural school program. One of her recommenders, Bruce Barton, said of Florence in a letter to Rosenwald Fund secretary George M. Reynolds in 1941:

My connection with this family goes back to the very beginning of my life. My father was a circuit rider in Tennessee when I was born. When I was less than a year old a mulatto boy came to the back door of our little home. He was the son of a black woman who had been a slave and of a worthless drunken white man. He was beaten and bleeding and in tears. Mother and father took him in, cleaned him up, gave him the name Webster Barton Beatty, figured he was about twelve years old and assigned him that age. And, since the day he came was the day before Thanksgiving, they told him that Thanksgiving day was his birthday.

This boy grew up in our home. My parents sent him through Berea College and the Dental School at Howard University. He had met an attractive colored girl at Berea and married her after his graduation from dental School. He has been a practicing dentist in Cairo, Illinois, more than thirty years.

He and his wife have three children, and it has been my privilege to extend some small help to them in the matter of education, as my father did to their father. I say small because their requests have always been trivial, since they have earned most of their college expenses by their own efforts....Barton [the son] put himself through college and is now Y.M.C.A. secretary in Detroit. Florence [the oldest daughter] worked her way through Fisk University and...earned an A.M. also. She married a Negro who, as I recall it, was working for his doctor's degree and subsequently became principal of a normal school in one of the southern states.

I have no reservations whatever about Florence Beatty-Brown. She has come up by her own character, hard work, and self-respect, and deserves to go further. [1]

During this period, the Rosenwald Fund Fellowship Committee consisted of the director, William C. Haygood; Edwin R. Embree, the president of the Rosenwald Fund; Charles S. Johnson; W.W. Alexander, and Robert C. Weaver. As the Fellowship Program director, Haygood's role was largely administrative. While other members of the Fellowship Committee came and went over the course of its existence, the nucleus of Embree, Alexander and Johnson was a constant, with Embree and Johnson constituting the two most influential members. Yale-educated Edwin Rogers Embree was the grandson of John G. Fee, the white abolitionist and founder of Berea College, with whom he had lived as a youth. Before joining the Rosenwald Fund in 1927, Embree had served as director and vice-president of the Rockefeller Foundation. Sociologist Charles S. Johnson was a co-founder of the publication *Opportunity*, the political organ of the National Urban League, and director of the well-respected Social Science Institute at Fisk University. In 1947, he was named Fisk's first African American president. Will Alexander

was a white Southerner who became executive director of the Commission of Interracial Cooperation in 1938 and was eventually chosen by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to head the Farm Security Administration of the United States Department of Agriculture. Weaver, an African American, had earned a Ph.D. degree from Harvard in 1934, and worked with the U.S. Department of the Interior and the U.S. Housing Authority prior to his addition to the Committee.

The Fellowship Committee felt that Brown's application was jeopardized by the fact that she was pregnant. Haygood suggested that she defer the fellowship until she could pursue her graduate studies full-time, without the distraction of caring for a new baby. She defended her plan, however, stating that "My subsequent plans for my career are to remain in the teaching field since I apparently have been 'called,' my President says, a born teacher, and because I love to teach, and especially misguided rural students who have neither a fair chance nor good conscientious teachers who teach for the love of it rather than for the money in it." As the negotiations went on, the focus of her research changed. As the result of her work in the North Carolina rural school program, she had gained access to an extraordinarily complete set of records and diaries kept by a black family, and she now wished to write a generalized study. She intended to continue to teach at Fayetteville as she sifted through the materials which would be used in her thesis. [2]

Johnson expressed his concern to Haygood about Brown's ability to continue teaching or residing at Fayetteville. Johnson thought that she needed "close institutional supervision" and stated "she will not do justice to the fellowship and will set a rather questionable precedent." He suggested that this supervision be undertaken by a former Rosenwald Fellow, the sociologist E. Franklin Frazier, who was at Howard University. [3]

The deliberations of the Fellowship Committee continued. At this latter stage of the Fellowship Program (1942-1948), applicants were not as plentiful as they had been earlier (1936-41) The effects of World War 2 on the Fellowship Program caused an overall decrease in the applicant pool for several reasons. Some of the potential applicants were serving in the armed forces while others took advantage of employment opportunities offered by the United Service

Organization (USO) and wartime industries. The decline in student enrollments at many colleges and universities had caused retrenchment and faculty layoffs, leading to bitter fights over faculty positions and limiting the placement opportunities for Fellowship recipients. [4]

It is impossible to determine whether it was the relatively small number of applicants that year, Brown's persistence, or Barton's reference to Berea College in his letter of reference which caused Embree to finally cast a deciding vote for Brown. In any event, she was awarded a Rosenwald Fellowship for 1943-44. The following year, Brown reported that she was an assistant professor of sociology at Lincoln University (Pennsylvania). In 1946-47, she became acting head of the department of sociology at Lincoln and reported that she was rewriting her thesis, "A Study of the Middle Class Negro Family from 1870-1945" for possible publication. [5]

Historical Background

Brown's story is illustrative of two complex sets of conditions: first, the barriers to graduate education faced generally by southern African Americans; and second, the special set of barriers of race, class and which accrued to African American women. Prior to the United States Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), southern blacks who desired post-baccalaureate degrees had few choices. Excluded from southern white institutions by *de jure* segregation, only a few historically-black colleges and universities (HBCUs) offered coursework beyond the baccalaureate (notably, Fisk University and Howard University offered masters degrees). In addition to a lack of library and laboratory resources, faculty at HBCUs labored under heavy teaching loads and service responsibilities which prevented them from pursuing doctoral degrees. And although blacks could legally enroll in advanced courses of study at northern institutions, they often encountered financial hardship, *de facto* segregation, and the psychological effects of isolation which resulted from living apart from family and friends. To offset the financial burden of attending northern institutions, the large majority of blacks who chose to attend school in the North settled for out-of-state tuition scholarships established by most northern states

in violation of the United States Supreme Court ruling in *Gaines ex Rel. v. Canada* (1938). A more lucrative and prestigious form of aid was available from educational philanthropic funds which had established fellowship programs, but those programs were small, highly competitive, and exerted (in some cases) unrealistic demands on fellowship recipients. For example, Ph.D. candidates were often expected to finish all course work and dissertation requirements within one to two years. This was further complicated by the fact that many northern institutions would not accept credits from HBCUs. Students were "conditionally" admitted to northern schools with the stipulation that they enroll in additional courses (often in the liberal arts) in preparation for graduate study.

The most notable and comprehensive philanthropic fellowship programs were those of the General Education Board (GEB) and the Julius Rosenwald Fund. Blacks who were awarded fellowships were provided tuition fees and living expenses which assisted them in earning doctoral degrees at northern institutions which were superior even to that of white universities in the South. Beginning in 1902, the General Education Board fellowship program awarded nearly 2000 grants to black and white individuals before it ended in 1954. The chief aim of the program was the preparation of teachers, with the GEB's initial efforts in the South were fellowships/scholarships* given to whites who were identified as possessing leadership potential for political influence in the public school system. Over time, the term "scholarship" denoted work beyond the baccalaureate degree and "fellowship" was associated with studies beyond the master's degree. The GEB fellowship program was eventually expanded to higher education. In 1924, the GEB began to award fellowships to promising black instructors in southern institutions. The amount of the stipend grant to black fellows ranged from $1000 for an unmarried man to $1500 for a married man. This was intended to cover travel, living expenses, and tuition fees for one year at a northern institution. By 1938, candidates for fellowships had to have earned a master's degree. At about the

*the terms were used interchangeably until the 1930s

same time, the GEB began a pattern of comparing notes with members of the Rosenwald Fund Fellowship Program as to candidates who had been given fellowships and the merits of past recipients. The fund officers were keenly award that candidates navigated between the two funds in an effort to complete graduate and professional training, which could rarely be done within the relatively short duration of a fellowship. Applicants who received a Rosenwald Fellowship one year would apply for a GEB fellowship the next year, for example. [6]

The Julius Rosenwald Fellowship Program developed from informal handouts to petitioners by Julius Rosenwald himself to a formal program which awarded over 800 grants between 1928-1948. The Rosenwald Fellowship Program represents three distinct stages, beginning with an emphasis on advanced training for Black medical and nursing personnel, vocational and industrial teachers, and librarians to serve Black schools and hospitals. This emphasis clearly reflected the philosophy of the founder, Julius Rosenwald, who supported the educational ideology of Booker T. Washington. As the program was formalized both administratively and policy-wise, awards were granted to "superior individuals" in the liberal arts, fine arts, and social sciences very much in the vein of W.E.B. DuBois' "Talented Tenth." [7]

In addition to the financial support which came from families, churches, clubs and other organizations, blacks were able to draw on out-of-state scholarship programs which were established by nearly all southern estates in an effort to circumvent black demands for the support of advanced public education. Many of these programs date from the 1930s, and were maintained in violation of the ruling in *Gaines ex. Rel. v. Canada* (1938). In this decision, the United States Supreme Court essentially rendered the practice of out-of-state scholarships illegal on the basis of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, ruling that "the payment of tuition fees in another state does not remove the discrimination." [8] Generally administered by state departments of education or HBCUs within individual southern states, the amount of money was meager and the process rife with bureaucracy. An added complication occurred when the philanthropic funds decided to make the awards mutually exclusive: i. e. blacks had to make a choice between

fellowship awards from the funds or taking advantage of out-of-state aid. In some cases, the GEB demanded reimbursement from fellows when it was learned that they had also received the state tuition funds. [9]

African American Women and Higher Education

There is no doubt that the state tuition grants and philanthropic fellowships were instrumental in the efforts of African American women to surmount the barriers to higher education prior to the ruling in the *Brown* case. But the opportunity afforded by the fellowship award was muted by the responsibilities undertaken by (and expected of) black women, many of whom were the economic mainstays of their families. Accepting the fellowship meant, at the least, leaving those families. And upon returning to their institutions after completing graduate work, they were sometimes met with jealousy on the part of colleagues or the indifference of administrators who considered advanced training or graduate study superfluous, particularly for women. The situation represented a double-edged sword. Changing accreditation requirements for colleges and universities required faculty to professionalize by earning advanced degrees in order to retain their positions. But HBCU administrators, coping with the reality of scarce resources and increased institutional competition for students, often appeared reluctant to institute a hierarchical reward system of salary increases, faculty rank or promotion to administrative positions. This is exemplified by Georgia Poole's experience upon finishing her Fellowship year and returning to Georgia State.

Georgia Cowen Poole had received an A.B. degree from Talladega College. She had taught at Georgia State Industrial College (Savannah, Georgia) for four years prior to receiving a Rosenwald Fellowship in 1936 to pursue a master's degree. Her plan was to study in the field of children's literature in order to develop age-and grade-appropriate materials for rural children. Upon completing her studies and returning to Georgia State, she reported to the Fund that no raise would be forthcoming. In response to her request for a salary increase, Georgia State President

Benjamin F. Hubert had written:

> I realize that you have done your work well and have been loyal to the institution, but I think you must agree that the institution has provided for you an opportunity to show what you can do. It is also through the institution that you were able to receive a scholarship. Other employees have asked for recommendations in order that they might have scholarship awards permitting them to study. We feel that when we excuse a person to study that we have favored them as well as the institution which they have agreed to service.
>
> I shall always try to use my best efforts to help provide an opportunity for deserving teachers to work in an atmosphere that would make it possible for them to render their best service. We are requesting that teachers who plan to work next year report not later than Sept. 15. [10]

Poole discussed the situation with L. M. Lester, Associate Director of the Division of Negro Education of the Rosenwald Fund. Lester was unable to exert any influence on Hubert and told Poole, "I talked with President Hubert this week and found him not inclined to offer you an increase in salary next year. He feels that the opportunity for study meant more to you than to the college." [11] In 1937, Poole left Georgia State and accepted an offer to teach at Spelman College.

Carrie Coleman Robinson

The nexus of race and gender not only played prominently in the fellowship selection process, but affected Fellowship recipients during their terms of study at northern universities and afterward. Born in Madison County, Mississippi, Carrie Coleman was one of six children, the daughter of a school teacher and a farmer. She earned a bachelor of arts degree at Tougaloo College in 1931 and then spent a year at Hampton Institute, earning a bachelor's degree in library science in 1932. She then became the librarian at Western Kentucky Industrial College, from 1932-34. From 1934-40 she was employed by the American Missionary Society and was employed by several AMA-affiliated institutions (Barber Scotia College, Tillotson College, and Avery Institute). After her marriage to Thomas Robinson in 1940, she spent a year at Columbia University, taking some additional courses as she worked toward a master's degree because "Tougaloo was not an A-rated school when I graduated from it. So I took courses in humanities [at Columbia]. I spent one

year there, then I enrolled in the masters program." [12] She remembers, "The racial animosity I encountered on the part of one professor in English literature at Columbia was liberally offset by the delight I derived from Willard Heaps' course in school library science administration and from courses taught by other professors, especially in religion, philosophy and political science." [13] She left Columbia in 1941 without a degree. In 1946, she was recruited by H. Councill Trenholm, the president of Alabama State College, to build a library training program at Alabama State. But she was able to get the master's when, in 1948, she became a GEB Fellow at the Graduate Library School of the University of Illinois. Her goal was to prepare to teach library education in the Fifth Year Program in both summer and regular school sessions at Alabama State Teachers College.[14] To her, the GEB scholarship "made a tremendous difference. When I came home from Illinois I had a master's degree in library science from one of the Big Ten universities. The university to which I was denied entrance (the University of Alabama) was offering only a minor in library science. And all of those white librarians thought they had a master's. But the master's was in education with a minor in library science. So I had a degree that was accepted throughout this country". [15]

But it became Carrie's dream to earn a doctorate in school librarianship, and she returned to the University of Illinois for the 1953-54 academic year. After she finished the coursework, however, her mother broke her hip as the result of a fall. She had moved her family to Chicago while studying at the University of Illinois in order to care for them. A further complication was her advisor's insistence that her dissertation topic focus on a school program in Indianapolis, Indiana. But Indiana, as a border state, exhibited uneven patterns of *de facto* segregation and she was not allowed to pursue her study. She was "denied that opportunity because I was black. I could not work for that school system." With the pressures of caring for her family and the barriers of racism, she resumed her position at Alabama State. Years later, she would still count the failure to pursue the doctorate in school librarianship as a bitter disappointment. [16]

Carrie's most formidable test was yet to come, however. In 1969, the Alabama State Department was reorganized. The supervision of secondary school libraries was assigned to a White woman, a recent graduate from Louisiana State University. Robinson was to assume the duties for supervision of elementary education. Unwilling to relinquish responsibilities for secondary school libraries in Alabama, Robinson filed a suit against the state of Alabama. As a life member of the National Education Association, the suit was filed on her behalf by the NEA and the Alabama State Association of Education, a Black organization which included school staff, teachers and administrators. In 1971, the case was settled out of court in Robinson's favor. The events of Carrie's educational history would come full circle in 1972, when William Hug, the director of the library media program at traditionally-white Auburn University, asked Robinson to come to Auburn and teach in that program. She went to Auburn as an associate professor and retired from there three years later. [17]

Flemmie Pansy Kittrell

Flemmie Pansy Kittrell was born in Henderson, North Carolina in 1904, the seventh of nine children. She received her bachelor of science degree from Hampton Institute in 1928 and took a position as a teacher of home economics at Bennett College. In 1929, she received an award of $1000 from the Rosenwald Fund Fellowship Program to study at Teachers College--Columbia. But Kittrell responded that she would not be able to spend an entire year as a student at Columbia. Due to the misunderstanding, the Fund awarded her $250 for summer study. She went on to receive a master's degree from Cornell in 1930 for her study "A Study of Home Economics Education in Negro High Schools and Colleges of North Carolina." Exhibiting the tendency of Fellowship applicants to navigate between the two funds, she received a GEB fellowship for the year 1933-34 academic year at Cornell. In 1936, Kittrell reported to the Rosenwald Fund that she was the Director of Home Economics and Dean of students at Hampton Institute. [18]

She reported that "[the Rosenwald fellowship] encouraged me to go on even after receiving

the master's degree. My work for the Ph.D. degree in nutrition with honors was completed at Cornell in September of 1935. "[19] She received the degree in 1936. Her dissertation--a direct outgrowth of her master's thesis-- was "A Study of Negro Infant Feeding Practices in a Selected Community of North Carolina." She became chairperson of the department of home economics at Howard University in 1944, expanding the field to include such areas as child development research. Beginning in 1947, she became internationally known in the field of nutrition, working under the auspices of the United States State Department. She is considered to be one of the first African Americans to earn a Ph.D. in the natural sciences. [20]

Lillian Burwell Lewis

Lillian Burwell was teaching biology at Tillotson College when she applied for a Rosenwald Fund fellowship to enable her to make progress toward a doctor of philosophy degree in zoology at the University of Chicago. She had received her high school diploma from Tougaloo College in 1919 and the bachelor of science degree from Howard University in 1925. With the assistance of a General Education Board fellowship, she had earned a master of science degree from the University of Chicago in 1931 after three summers and one semester of study. The Rosenwald Committee awarded her a fellowship of $1000 to study zoology during the 1932-33 academic year at Chicago. But when notified of the award, Burwell responded that the grant would not cover all her expenses. Besides being in debt from the financial burden of earning the master's degree, she wrote "My mother was stricken with paralysis and is now an invalid. My father is too old to support her and take care of her needs properly. In rearing the thirteen children, my parents were unable to save very much for a time of need like this and I am the only one of the children without a family and able to contribute materially to their needs. If I should stop work they would be reduced to absolute want and so I must continue to make my monthly contributions." [21] Neither the Fund nor the University of Chicago was willing to supplement the grant, and Burwell's award was cancelled. She continued to teach at Tillotson and to attend the University of Chicago during

the summer. But it was not until 1946, nearly 15 years later, that she earned the doctor of philosophy degree from the University of Chicago. In 1947, she and her husband John F. Lewis (a native of Winston-Salem, North Carolina whom she had met at Tillotson) left Tillotson when Lillian accepted a position as head of the science department and professor of biology at Winston-Salem Teachers College, from which she retired in 1970. In 1960, she became the first black woman to be elected to the county school board in Forsyth County, North Carolina. [21]

Her dissatisfaction with the reward system at Winston-Salem is revealed in the following letter to Francis L. Atkins, president of Winston-Salem Teachers College.

> A look at the salary scale for the Winston-Salem Teachers College since the 1959 Legislature provided 3.5 million dollars for faculty salary increases, as "has been worked out by institutions and the State Department of administration," will show that the raise you agreed to give me previous to this appropriation puts me in the rank of an assistant.
>
> In view of the appropriation and the fact that you are trying to qualify Teachers College for the Southern Association rating with additional PhDs, I believe you will agree that it is fair that I receive at least the salary of an association, $7500, if not more.
>
> As I stated to you previously, if I were just beginning to teach I would have time to capitalize upon my advanced degree, but with me it is now or never.
>
> Because of the effort to pay teachers more, it is going to be increasingly difficult to obtain a person with a doctorate for under $7000. A. and T. still has that vacancy in Biology for a PhD. along with a need of several others with a doctorate to qualify for the Southern Association rating.
>
> I do want to stay at Teachers College, especially since Liberal Arts courses are being added, but I must look out for the education of my sons and my retirement. [23]

Interestingly, Atkins himself had received a GEB fellowship for 1923-25, and was therefore thoroughly familiar with the limited opportunities for graduate education. It appears that some satisfactory solution was arrived at, because Lewis remained at Winston-Salem until her retirement in 1972. Known as a demanding teacher, she was integrally connected to the larger Winston-Salem community. Consistent with research done by Linda Perkins on black women in Seven Sisters colleges, Burwell was involved in a number of organizations such as the NAACP,

social sororities and church activities. She also wrote editorials to the local newspaper. The reference to the two sons is unclear, because she and John did not have any children. It is thought that she and her husband had assumed guardianship of two nephews. [24]

Discussion

During the period 1930-1954, higher educational opportunities for southern black women underwent dramatic changes. Motivated by the desire to render service to HBCUs and to contribute to racial uplift, increasing numbers of black women found ways in which to attain master's and Ph.D. degrees despite the hardships of the southern caste system. Confident not only in their own abilities to succeed in graduate school but their right to be there, they viewed education as an upwardly mobile path to middle-class status. In other words, they were driven by the simple belief that they deserved to go further--collectively and individually. By the mid-1940s, black women were attending colleges at a higher rate than either white women or black men. Many of these women were able to find jobs in the traditional "women's professions"--nursing, teaching, social work--but others were also seeking terminal degrees in mathematics, sciences, and school administration. By 1952-53, black women received 62.4 per cent of all degrees from HBCUs at a time when, across *all* colleges, the percentage of women graduates was 33.4 per cent. The percentage of black women graduates was in fact just a little below that of male graduates in all schools (66.6 per cent) and substantially higher than that of black men (35.6 per cent). Additionally, many of these women were "first generation," or the first in their families to receive college degrees. [25]

Also, more and more black women were earning degrees beyond the baccalaureate. In her dissertation study "The Negro Woman's College Education," Jeanne Noble found that 73 percent had studied beyond their bachelor's degree and 48 per cent had received a master's degree. Over 90 per cent of this group also had grade averages of B or better. By the early 1950s, more black women than men had master's degrees, although men still held the edge in Ph.Ds and medical

degrees by a significant margin. The upshot of this was a rise in the number of black professional women in general, who, by 1950, comprised 58 per cent of all black professionals. [26] But the gains did not come without a price.

In her dissertation study "Education and Marginality: A Study of the Negro Woman College Graduate," black educator Marion V. Cuthbert pointed out the tensions between black men and black college women which were beginning to manifest themselves . [27] Noble reported a pattern of decision-making which mirrored that of white college women studied by Anne Firor Scott and others. For example, educated middle-class black women tended to marry later (3-4 years after graduation) and to give birth to fewer than four children. In fact, in Noble's study, 38 percent of the women college graduates had one child, 15 per cent had two children, and 6 percent had between three and 6 children. But significantly, 41 per cent were childless. [28] The women represented in this study would appear to fit that mold. Kittrell was unmarried, Burwell and Robinson married later in life and had no children, and Florence Brown obviously did not feel that motherhood and graduate education were mutually exclusive.

The composite presented by these women is consistent with the thesis of this paper. Despite the barriers to graduate education confronting them by the southern caste system, black women took advantage of existing opportunities to pursue graduate and professional degrees. Within those opportunities were encountered prejudicial attitudes of race, class, and gender on the part of philanthropic fund representatives, HBCU administrators, and the white faculty and students of northern universities at which the women studied. And in addition to the usual pressures of graduate school, women carried a disproportionate amount of family responsibilities. Upon their return to the South, they were not always commensurately rewarded for their achievements and were forced to face the reality of the disconnect between educational attainment and institutional value systems, which were often based primarily upon loyalty to the institution or president.

The above reference to Marion Vera Cuthbert provides an interesting footnote. Although

Paul, Minnesota, she requested aid from the Rosenwald Fund to "study...the position in society of Negro College Women." A graduate of Boston University, she had served as Dean of Women at Talladega College from 1927-1930 and earned a master of arts from Teachers College--Columbia in 1931. She had attended Teachers College part-time from 1931-35 while working as the secretary of the National Board of the YWCA. The Rosenwald Fund granted her $2000 to study at Teachers College--Columbia for one year, and she received the Ph.D. from Columbia in 1942. [29] Although unaware of it, Cuthbert herself was nearly the victim of age discrimination and the paternalistic emphasis on character. In a report to the Rosenwald Trustees on the Fellowship Awards for 1941, the Fellowship Committee noted that Cuthbert was "Older than we usually consider. A remarkably fine person with a brilliant record and a definite and timely topic." [30]

Conclusion

As Linda Perkins concludes in her study of black women who earned baccalaureate degrees from the Seven Sisters colleges during the period 1880-1960, the experience "gave them the freedom, exposure and opportunity to prove themselves intellectually on the same basis as whites, and opened to them opportunities for a wider range of careers." [31] But ironically, while the degrees did function as windows of opportunity, they also brought with them a new set of constraints which acted to keep black women from receiving their just and well-deserved rewards. Just as with the subjects of Perkins' inquiry, the black women who obtained graduate degrees at Northern institutions "had little choice but to go South to teach in segregated...schools." [32] In fact, the early application forms of both the Rosenwald Fund and GEB contained the question, "Do you intend to return to the South?" [upon completion of the Fellowship]. The question was an important one for the foundation officers, whose goals included the institution-building of HBCUs. It may also have served to remind blacks of "their place" in the economic and political landscape. But, since the officers relied heavily upon the recommendations of presidents of

landscape. But, since the officers relied heavily upon the recommendations of presidents of HBCUs in their search for top candidates, it may also have served to reassure black college administrators that the fellowships would not decimate their faculty ranks. In regards to black women in particular, who were valuable economic contributors to the black community, there may well have been concern that the opportunity for graduate study in the North might educate them out of their sphere.

Beyond race, gender stereotypes figured heavily into the evaluation of black women's potential. An emphasis on their "good character" and work ethic often overshadowed a recognition of their intellectual abilities and potential. They were never exempt from "rendering service" to the institution or community. In some cases, highly qualified--and educated-- women filled such positions as secretary to HBCU presidents. While those positions carried with them a certain amount of prestige (the "halo" effect of working for an important man), the women who held them generally abdicated any serious academic leadership role. When undertaken by women, the Ph.D. degree, in particular, was often viewed as being superfluous, self-indulgent and contributing to "race suicide," as a result of the later marriages and small families.

As we approach the 21st century, the "glass ceiling" constructed by race, class and gender is still operational within formal educational settings. Among other issues, this study raises the question as to how well-educated African American women were able to construct their own authority within the strictures of the segregated South during the first half of the 20th century, thus contributing significantly to academic and institutional leadership. While their male counterparts often became institutional presidents, respected scholars or researchers, black women generally rose no higher than department chairs at HBCUs. In some cases, their career was attenuated as the result of family obligations or the need to take a lesser position at an institution which employed their spouse. But within the relative boundaries of the HBCUs, they were clearly able to establish their authority by virtue of their academic credentials, classroom presence and the autonomy (and portability) afforded them by the degree.

classroom teacher, which suggests that she established her authority in the classroom. Her letter to Atkins indicates the ways in which she used the Ph.D. degree as a bargaining chip, as well as her savvy knowledge of legislative events as they related to higher education in North Carolina. Carrie Robinson felt that receiving a degree from a Big Ten school gave her an academic authority which White female graduates of the University of Alabama did not have. She, too, tells stories of being referred to by students as a demanding teacher. Georgia Poole utilized the autonomy afforded by the degree to leave Georgia State for Spelman College when it became apparent that she would receive no raise. Informally derived, often unsanctioned by the institutional hierarchy, and partially conferred by the very fact of holding a master's degree or Ph.D. from a northern institution, the qualities associated with this conceptualization of authority allowed it to play a major role in the contribution to institutional competence and educational leadership made by black women graduates with professional and graduate degrees during 1930-1954.

In his letter of recommendation to the Rosenwald Fund on behalf of Florence Beatty Brown, Bruce Barton stated that she deserved to go further as the result of her character, hard work and self-respect. That remark could easily be generalized to the representative women profiled in this paper, who were often judged solely on their character, not always recognized for their hard work, but whose self-respect convinced them that they did, indeed, deserve to go further.

Notes

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28. Noble, 20.

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30. Report to the Trustees, "1940 Awards to Negroes," Box 374, JRF.

31. Linda M. Perkins, "The African American Female Elite: The Early History of African American Women in the Seven Sister Colleges, 1880-1960." *Harvard Educational Review* 67 (Winter 1997):718-756.

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