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ABSTRACT

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Special Relationship

A Special Relationship: Rockefeller, Child Study, and Race

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Abstract

In 1928, the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial granted funds to the University of Cincinnati to establish a child study and parent education program for African-Americans. This paper traces the origin of the idea for this program to a special relationship between the family of John D. Rockefeller, Sr. and Spelman College, an African-American women's college in Atlanta, Georgia. This relationship embodied Rockefeller's interest in women and children, in Baptist charities, in higher education especially in the South, and race.

A Special Relationship: Rockefeller, Child Study and Race

One reason I stand here today is that once I got a taste of archival research I was utterly, totally and permanently hooked. I have some bad habits to confess and one is that I have a terrible tendency while researching one topic to get distracted by interesting tidbits I uncover that hint of other stories I'd also like to know about. I call this a bad habit because I like to think that properly trained historians don't have this problem, but I suspect that they do and I suspect that in this audience of both properly trained historians and psychologist/historians like me there are one or two or 20-something of you who share my problem. This paper has come about as a result of one of my transgressions or digressions or whatever the appropriate term may be.

In the course of my investigations of Helen Thompson Woolley's work with school children in Cincinnati OH, I ran across mention of something called "Mothers Training Clubs" which appeared to be organized by University of Cincinnati psychologist Ada Arlitt to offer child study and parent education especially for African-American women in the 1920s. Sometime later at the Rockefeller Archives, in the course of investigating Woolley's work at the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial-funded Child Development Institute at Teachers College, I saw in the finding aid some folders for University of Cincinnati. I couldn't leave without looking at them, and when I did, I discovered that beginning in 1928, the Rockefeller Memorial had funded a program at the University of Cincinnati under Ada Arlitt's direction exclusively focused on African-American child study and parent education. It is this story that I want to sketch for you this afternoon, and it will have to be a sketch because it involves at least three separate but inter-related story lines: first, the history of child study and parent education,

second, the impact of Rockefeller philanthropy, and third, the development of higher education for African-American women. What I want to argue is that the funding for the program at Cincinnati, particularly the funding of the African-American nursery school and parent groups was an outgrowth of a very special relationship between the Rockefeller family and Spelman College, an African-American women's college in Atlanta, Georgia. This relationship embodied Rockefeller's interest in women and children, in Baptist charities, in higher education especially in the South, and race.

Let me begin with the puzzle that started my investigations. The Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial (hereafter, the Memorial or LSRM) was established in 1918, the fourth of the Rockefeller philanthropic institutions. Beyond a general preference for charities designed to help women and children, it had a lack of focus in the early years. With the appointment of Beardsley Rummler as director in 1921, the Memorial became more focused in its efforts and, it was said, "in its brief but brilliant career did more than any other agency to promote the social sciences in the United States" (R. M. Hutchins, 1929, cited in Bulmer & Bulmer, 1981, p. 351). The role of the Memorial in the funding of child development and parent education initiatives has been described by a number of authors (e.g., Cahalan, 1991; Grant, 1998; Richardson, 1989; Schlossman, 1981). Lawrence K. Frank, hired by Rummler in 1923, was the person at the Memorial who served as midwife for the child development and parent education programs. He was committed to spreading what Steven Schlossman has referred to as "the gospel of child development" and facilitated the establishment of major child research institutes at Iowa, Berkeley, Minnesota, Yale, Toronto, and Teachers College. In approximately 1926, an

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evaluation committee asked to review the Memorial's activities suggested that "there is need for an additional such center in the south."¹ In addition, they recommended establishing programs at 10 women's colleges, "The Committee is inclined to the view that the results would justify the expenditure. These colleges are in positions of leadership as respects the liberal education of women..."² The Memorial found the northeastern women's colleges not much interested in developing such programs fearing it promoted notions of "women's education" differing from that for men (see Rossiter, 1982, e.g., for discussion). To give the committee credit, they also recommended experimental programs in child study and parent education at two to three men's colleges.³ In addition to the child study institutes, as detailed by Cahan (1991) from 1926 to 1930, the LSRM financed child study fellowships which were administered through the Committee on Child Development of the National Research Council (CCD). Beginning in 1927, a small number of child study fellowships were designated for African-Americans; these fellowships were not administered through the CCD but directly through the institution employing the fellow. A total of 6 of these fellowships were awarded, all to women, five of whom worked at the University of Cincinnati.

When I originally discovered these fellowships and the subsequent funding of a program at the University of Cincinnati with which five of the six fellows were associated, I was intrigued. Psychologist Ada Hart Arlitt had arrived to take charge of the Department of Child Care and Child Training at the University of Cincinnati's School of Household Administration, in 1925. Shortly after taking the position, Arlitt contacted Beardsley Ruml about the possibility of funding a nursery school experiment. Experimental nursery schools were associated with all the LSRM funded child research institutes. Ruml referred her to Lawrence Frank who was

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initially encouraging to Arlitt, but in October, 1925 wrote, "At the present moment it does not seem likely that we will take up any new projects of this kind until we have had an opportunity to study the work of the experiments now being organized." Beardsley Ruml replied similarly to the Dean of the College of Education's request to duplicate at Cincinnati "the work your Foundation is making possible with the pre-school child at Iowa, Minnesota, etc."⁴

Undeterred, in September, 1926, Arlitt was able to establish a nursery school at the University with the aid of a group of local philanthropists. Led by Mr. Henry Jonap, they organized the Mothers' Training Center Association of Cincinnati with Arlitt as director which offered parent education and a nursery school associated with the School of Household Administration. Arlitt remained in contact with Frank at the LSRM and as of December, 1926, Cincinnati was approved by the CCD as a site for the Child Study Fellowships with Arlitt as supervisor.⁵ Beginning with the 1927-28 academic year, several white women held LSRM fellowships at the University of Cincinnati .⁶

On June 6, 1927 Ada Arlitt sent Lawrence Frank the names of two African-American candidates for child study fellowships; Mary Roberta Busch and Louise Briscoe thus became the first two recipients of LSRM child study fellowships especially designated for African-Americans.⁷ These two child study fellows were not the only African-American students at Cincinnati. The university had had an open admissions policy from its founding in 1870 and approximately 13 or 14 African-American undergraduates were taking classes in Arlitt's Child Care and Training Department during the period she was negotiating with LSRM.⁸

Six months later, January 10, 1928, Ada Arlitt wrote again to Beardsley Ruml, a six page letter describing the work on child development and parent education at the University of

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Cincinnati. The letter concluded: “..we are most anxious to secure further support for our work. We shall be most grateful for any suggestions as to procedure in getting this support that you feel at liberty to give us.” A handwritten note at the top of the letter indicates that the letter was delivered in person January 14, 1928. Then on January 18th a letter was written requesting \$5000/year for 3 years to fund :

Nursery school worker in colored day nursery

(Part time Parental education with negro group)

Research in parental education with white and colored groups

Additional part time worker in nutrition and child care on staff⁹

What is fascinating about this request is that the words “negro” and “colored” do not appear on any of the 6 pages of Arlitt’s letter of January 10th. There is, in fact, nothing in that letter to indicate that any activities of the Child Training program were being carried out with African-Americans in spite of the presence of the two African-American graduate fellows. The 1926 letter from Dean Pechstein, at the University of Cincinnati, to Ruml indicated that their department conducted teacher training for “white and colored students.” The only possible indication in Arlitt’s January 10 letter that parent education involving African-Americans was being contemplated is her mention of research opportunities for graduate students with mothers and children receiving Mothers Pensions, a child welfare provision enacted in 1913 to provide subsidies for mothers to remain at home with their children (see Goodwin, 1997, for discussion). However parent education groups conducted only with Mother’s Pension holders would have involved only a very few African-Americans in Cincinnati.¹⁰ There were certainly no parent education groups exclusively for African-Americans in the city of Cincinnati at the time of

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Arlitt's letter to the Memorial. All photographs of the nursery school which was housed on the university campus in the School of Household Administration building show only white children and I am confident that no African-American children attended. There is some conflict in the materials about whether an African-American Day Nursery existed in the city at all prior to the Rockefeller grant, but one was established at the community center known as Friendship Home after the grant was awarded ¹¹; until this nursery was established the undergraduate and graduate students at Cincinnati--black and white--apparently received their training in the white nursery school. ¹²

So where did the idea for African-American nursery school and parent groups originate? Arlitt's proposal to establish a nursery school for "colored" children and to institute parent training with African-Americans apparently arose during an interview on January 14th when she delivered her letter, but there is no memorandum in the LSRM archives of an interview. Further, in her official proposal letter of January 18th, Arlitt cautions: "While we are most anxious to have this money to increase our work with both white and negro students and parents we should wish to avoid any public announcement that we are carrying on negro education as part of this grant, inasmuch as, if this became public our classes would be swamped with colored students. Such a preponderance of colored students would have an unfortunate effect upon our department and upon the University as a whole." This statement suggests an ambivalence about the project on the part of Arlitt and perhaps also the university. It further suggests that Arlitt was likely not the source of the idea for such a program. African-American students were acceptable as long as their numbers were not too great. There was no objection from the granting agency to the request to avoid publicity; there is a handwritten line drawn in the margin next to this statement in

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Arlitt's letter and the notation "O.K" initialled "L.O." (Leonard Outhwaite).¹³

I pursued a number of different avenues trying to establish the origin of the idea for this African-American parent training program at Cincinnati. My first question was whether the Memorial or any Rockefeller philanthropic group had funded other similar projects. In 1924, the LSRM awarded the Child Study Association of America (CSAA) \$30,000 to support its parent education activities and to extend its work into African-American communities. The first CSAA African-American parent education group was organized in Harlem in 1925. As an outgrowth of this original African-American parent group, in the spring of 1929, the Inter-Community Child Study Committee of the CSAA was organized with local branches in Harlem, Brooklyn, Baltimore, Englewood and Montclair, NJ, and Washington D.C. The organization of child study and parent education groups for African-Americans in Cincinnati was occurring at approximately the same time as these CSAA groups were being organized and so could not be the stimulus for the Memorial's grant to Cincinnati and, in addition, the groups differed substantially in character. Although intellectually rigorous, the CSAA was not really an academic group (Grant, 1998; Schlossman, 1981); the parent education project in Cincinnati, based in an academic department, was designed for research purposes. The project included, in addition to parent training, training of African-American nursery school workers and leaders of parent education groups. There seemed to be an assumption that this program could serve to train African-American parent education leaders for a wider constituency. I believe the shape of the Cincinnati training program was developed during the interview between Arlitt and Memorial staff but the stimulus for the program came from somewhere else. The question was where.

One of the early holders of an African-American graduate fellowship to Cincinnati was

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Pearlie Reed who subsequently took a job at Spelman College, an African-American women's college in Atlanta, GA. In combing through the Rockefeller archival records on Spelman more or less just to see how Pearlie fared, I discovered the memo of a meeting of Spelman's brand new president, Florence Read, Lawrence Frank, Leonard Outhwaite and Dorothea Davis of the LSRM, on November 3, 1927. "Miss Reed (sic) considering enlarging homemaking course to include child development study. ...There are some difficulties in the way of supplying personnel but this might be obviated for the present, at least, by employing a white pediatrician and psychologist, inasmuch as approximately two-thirds of the staff of the College are now white workers." Read wanted to know whether LSRM would "make provision for fellowships for the training of future instructors or leaders among the colored people and Mr Frank thought that this might receive favorable consideration by the Memorial." This was one of those archival moments...!! This meeting took place at the end of November and in January Arlitt received the funding to establish an African-American nursery school and parent education program—not likely to be a coincidence!

For Florence Read's request to stimulate this kind of a response suggests to me that Frank and others at the Memorial are not just stimulated by a great idea, but that Spelman's needs were clearly of special concern to them. The question is why and so I now turn to the story of the Rockefeller relationship to Spelman College.

It is surely not an overstatement to call John D. Rockefeller a legendary figure in American history. Born in 1839, the son of a bigamous scoundrel and a very upright, religious mother, he dropped out of high school at 16 and by the age of 40 controlled 90 percent of the oil refining in the world. And that was only the beginning, estimates are that by 1889 at the age of

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50, the Rockefeller fortune amounted to over 40 million dollars and it kept growing. When the Standard Oil Trust monopoly was broken in 1911, the value of the stock of the individual companies that had made up the monopoly began to rise and Rockefeller became America's and the world's first billionaire—or just shy (900 Million or so..) (Chernow, 1998; Deane, 2000).

There are those who have tried to suggest that Rockefeller turned to philanthropy as a way to assuage guilt associated with all this money, but this argument is simply not in the least convincing. As the ledgers he kept from the age of 16 years attest, Rockefeller consistently contributed to charities from the time he earned money of his own. The ledger shows the 20-yr old Rockefeller contributing about 10% of his earnings, primarily to Baptist charities, but also to “a black man in Cincinnati to purchase his wife's freedom from slavery” and the following year to “a black church, a Methodist church and a Catholic orphanage”(Chernow, 1998, p.50).

While in high school, Rockefeller had become acquainted with two sisters, Lucy and Laura Celestia Spelman, called “Cettie.” Their parents, Harvey Buel Spelman and Lucy Henry Spelman, were social reformers—avid abolitionists and temperance advocates. Their home in Akron, Ohio, was a stop on the Underground Railroad; Sojourner Truth once spent several days with them. Harvey Spelman experienced periods of great prosperity as well as less affluent spells, but when John and Cettie met, the Spelmans were of a higher socioeconomic class than the Rockefellers and it was another nine years before John would have the position and the courage to ask Cettie to marry him.

After their marriage in September, 1864, the Rockefellers took a month long honeymoon. On their way home they stopped at the Oread Collegiate Institute in Worcester MA which the Spelman sisters had briefly attended. The institute was founded by abolitionist Eli Thayer and

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was known for its support of “women’s rights and black welfare” (Chernow, 1998, p.92). The newlyweds met two new teachers there, Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles who, nearly 20 years later were going to renew their acquaintance and establish a very significant long term relationship with the Rockefellers. In sum, Rockefeller and his wife clearly had interest in issues of black welfare and Cettie certainly was a proponent of higher education for women. They were also devout Baptists and supporters of Baptist charities.

Sophia Packard, also a Baptist, served as co-principal of the Oread Collegiate Institute from 1864-1867 and left under trying circumstances eventually becoming the assistant pastor at the Tremont Baptist Temple in Boston. In 1877 a group of Baptist women gathered at the Temple to form the Woman’s American Baptist Home Mission Society (WABHMS), an auxiliary to the American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS). The goals of the WABHMS were to provide women missionaries to educate and convert to Christianity Native Americans, “heathen immigrants” and the recently freed African-Americans.¹⁵ As corresponding secretary of this group, Packard made a trip South to view conditions and assess needs. When she and Harriet Giles, who joined her for part of her trip, returned to the WABHMS they were determined to do something for the education of African-American women and girls. Georgia had the largest black population of all the southern states and a large proportion were Baptist; in addition, the ABHMS had a school for African-American men in Atlanta, the Atlanta Baptist Seminary (later Morehouse College) (Read, 1961). After considerable struggle to raise funds for a school (Giles sold her piano), they finally received the financial support of the WABHMS to go to Georgia as missionaries.

On April 11, 1881, Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles began a school for “colored girls”

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in the basement of Friendship Baptist Church in Atlanta Georgia. The school was in session for only three months, but when it closed in July the enrollment had grown from 11 on the first day to 80. Demand for schooling was so great that as of February, 1882, Packard and Giles had to close admissions at 150 pupils since they were the only two teachers; later in the year two additional teachers were hired but classes were being offered in the coal bin.

In addition to their teaching, Packard and Giles were constantly trying to raise funds to support their work. In June, 1882, Sophia Packard spoke about their work at the Willson Avenue Baptist Church in Cleveland OH. In the congregation were John and Cettie Rockefeller who emptied their pockets and pledged an additional \$250 to the building fund, John asking "Are you going to stick? If so, I will do more for you" (Read, 1961, p.64). With 220 girls and women crowding into the basement of the Friendship Church in late December, 1882, the ABHMS purchased a nine-acre property which had previously been an Army Barracks and on February 16, 1883, opening exercises for the school were held in one of the barracks buildings.

Packard and Giles were under pressure to merge their school with Atlanta Baptist Seminary. This was in fact one reason the Home Mission Society purchased the property. The ABHMS strongly supported the education of women. In 1883 they asserted that if they could only educate 100 blacks; they would educate 50 men and 50 women rather than 100 men (Higginbotham, 1993, p.24), surely a startling admission at a time when white women were still struggling for equal educational opportunities. But Packard and Giles resisted the proposed merger of the male and female seminaries with support from the WABHMS maintaining that a separate school for women taught by women was important. "It is the unanimous opinion of those who have labored longest among this people, that the elevation of the race depends on the

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elevation of the women; and that the creation of truly Christian homes...is emphatically the work of Christian women, and *only* theirs.”¹⁶ Packard wrote to Dr. Henry Morehouse, corresponding secretary of the ABHMS that some of what female teachers were offering their women students, they “could not impart in the presence of gentlemen;” she reiterated her pride in the progress of the students and her faith in “their ability for culture” (cited in Read, 1961, p. 78). Finally, Morehouse was convinced and agreed that the schools could remain separate if the Packard and Giles, with the help of WABHMS could pick up the mortgage on the barracks property.

Fund raising efforts were increased; several appeals were made by Packard and Giles to Rockefeller emphasizing the importance of a separate school for women and suggesting that it might be named after him “let it if you please be called ‘Rockefeller College,’ or if you prefer let it take your good wife’s Maiden name or any other which suits you” (cited in Chernow, 1998,p.240 NB slightly different quote in Read, 1961, p.80). Rockefeller paid the remaining \$5000 on the mortgage and on Friday, April 11, 1884, John, Cettie, her mother, and her sister, Lucy along with a couple of the Rockefeller children attended a convocation for the now 450 women students at which it was announced that the new Board of Trustees had voted to change the name of the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary to Spelman Seminary in honor “of a lady of the company (Cettie’s mother) and in memory of her honored husband.” (Read, 1961, p. 82).

I have described Rockefeller’s early personal interest in Spelman, how did this develop over time? As the Rockefeller fortune continued to grow John D. Sr found himself beginning to be overwhelmed with the appeals which inundated him daily. According to biographer Ron Chernow, as early as 1883, Rockefeller wrote to Henry Morehouse, Executive secretary of the ABHMS inquiring whether “to avoid having all these people from every part of the country

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calling on me,... it might not be much better ..to give all through the Home Mission Society” (Chernow, 1998, p. 241). From \$124,000 in 1889, Rockefeller’s giving jumped to \$510,000 by 1891, but the personal cost was high. Rockefeller seemed to find giving away money much more stressful than earning it and in 1891, he enlisted the help of Baptist minister and executive secretary of the American Baptist Education Society, Frederick T. Gates in managing this burden. This was the beginning of a shift in Rockefeller philanthropy from a somewhat haphazard personal or narrowly denominational approach to charity to an organized more ecumenical philanthropy handled through boards or agencies. At the urging of Gates, the first Rockefeller philanthropic institute, the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research was established in 1901 followed in 1902 by the founding of the General Education Board, whose aim was to support education in the United States "without distinction of race, sex or creed." (Fosdick, 1962, p. 8). John D. Rockefeller, Jr was instrumental in founding the GEB. He originally intended it to be the Negro Education Board, but according to Raymond Fosdick’s history of the GEB, he recognized that education in the South for whites was also in need of assistance and that southern attitudes would make it difficult to help blacks unless support were also provided for whites. Once the GEB was established most of the Rockefeller gifts to Spelman were funneled through this board; although in addition to annual appropriations there were a number of special gifts usually for buildings.¹⁷ Rockefeller Sr remained personally involved as well: he wrote encouraging letters to Packard and Giles, sent them small gifts. In 1890 he sent “his own landscape architects to redesign the campus, and he himself selected the trees and shrubbery” (Chernow, 1998, p. 241).

Spelman was first and foremost a Baptist Seminary. The Baptists, then, as well as Rockefeller’s GEB were particularly interested in supporting Southern schools for black men &

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women. They did such a good job that in Georgia by 1900 the legislature was being pressured to provide more support for education for white women because African-American women were being provided with more educational opportunities at a lower cost than white women thanks to this Northern support (Corley, 1985, p. 42). One source of the increasing pressure for education of black women was their identification as the ones most responsible for racial uplift; they were needed to read the Bible to their children, to be good wives, mothers, church workers, and most importantly teachers. To some, this meant a curriculum with more emphasis on normal school training, or industrial, vocational and domestic arts, but others, such as T.J. Morgan, executive secretary of the ABHMS from 1892-1902, and a charter member of the Board of Trustees of Spelman Seminary, believed that black women's education should be equivalent to that of black men, and moreover equivalent to that offered at the northern women's colleges such as Mount Holyoke, Vassar or Wellesley (Morgan, 1896, p. 161).

This dual educational emphasis—the industrial educational emphasis associated with Booker T. Washington and the classical liberal education promoted by WEB DuBois-- was seen in the curriculum at Spelman Seminary. Until 1910, Spelman's curriculum covered elementary, secondary, some college work and various types of industrial work including printing, dressmaking, millinery, cooking and laundry. Nurses training began in 1886 and missionary training in 1891. Spelman awarded its first Bachelor's degrees in 1901, but most of the college level academic work of these graduates was done at nearby Atlanta Baptist College (for men). When Lucy Hale Tapley (1910-1927) succeeded Harriet Giles as president of Spelman there was a shift toward a more vocational emphasis in the curriculum. Training of teachers for rural black elementary schools was a priority and home economics received a greater emphasis for two

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reasons 1) so that the rural school teachers could be of broader service to the communities in which they taught and 2) to train teachers of home economics. The Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Building devoted to Home Economics began construction in 1917 thanks to a gift of \$85,000 from the GEB. It contained a model apartment as well as laboratory facilities, however, the course work in home economics did not include any courses in child psychology or in parent education—this was not unusual, by comparison, at the University of Cincinnati, while the psychology department began offering a course that focused on child study in 1906-7; child development did not become part of the home economics curriculum until the arrival of Ada Arlitt in 1925. So, how did the interest in adding these courses come about ?

Even as improvements in the facilities and teaching of home economics began, big changes were on the horizon for Spelman and these changes were both closely watched and orchestrated with Rockefeller influence. In 1921, a group of Spelman alumnae wrote to the ABHMS and the WABHMS listing a number of specific complaints among them that the representation of African-Americans on the Board of Trustees and on the faculty at Spelman was inadequate. Wallace Buttrick, Chair of the GEB, indicated his support for appointing a Spelman alumna to the Board, asserting, “Spelman has been at work for forty years and if women have not been developed whose presence on the Board of Trustees would be helpful to the institution, then Spelman would have failed in its work”¹⁹. In 1924, Spelman Seminary became Spelman College which, Tapley announced, “would be a Teachers College, offering curricula in secondary education, elementary education and home economics education” (Read, 1961, p.). As early as the following year, however it was becoming clear to a number of those involved with both Rockefeller foundations and the college that Spelman needed to aspire to something

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more. In a report made by a member of the GEB at the request of Spelman's Board of Trustees, it was asserted: "Those most intimately acquainted with the educational needs of the South, and those most intimately associated with Spelman, believe that its greatest immediate service lies in the field of a high-grade college of liberal arts. Its work, while limited in scope, should be so fundamental and so thorough that it will become the pace-maker of the South. Unless Spelman can become such a college, there is really no place for it, as there are already quite enough so-called colleges for Negroes. The immediate aims that should dominate Spelman may be stated as follows: (1) To offer liberal college opportunities to such persons as desire a purely general and cultural college education, and (2) to offer academic and professional opportunities to prospective high school teachers, and even college teachers, in the fundamental academic studies and in home economics." ²⁰

In December, 1926, Trevor Arnett, a member of the GEB and chair of Spelman's Board of Trustees, sent a memorandum to JDR, Jr reporting that Spelman's president, Lucy Tapley had indicated she would retire at the end of the academic year and suggesting that since a new president needed to be found, that the GEB and the college had some decisions to face. He pointed out that to date, the college had been "supported and controlled" by the North with a Board and faculty almost all of whom were white, and asked, "...is this not the appropriate time to examine the situation to see whether the College should not eventually become a Southern institution, controlled and largely supported by the South, preferably by the Negroes themselves?" He went on to suggest that "I have a conviction that if proper care and direction are given to its affairs, the College should become the Vassar or Smith of the Negroes"²¹

In June, 1927, Florence Matilda Read, became president of Spelman College. She was

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hand-picked by Trevor Arnett. Read was Executive Secretary of the International Health Division of the Rockefeller Foundation and so known to the members of the various Rockefeller philanthropic boards which were all housed in the same building. One condition of Read's acceptance of the presidency of Spelman was that the college no longer be subject to annual grants from the GEB but that an endowment be established. At a meeting with John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Wickcliffe Rose, President of the GEB, and Trevor Arnett, they agreed to the new vision of Spelman as a college for African-American women of the finest kind and agreed on a total of contribution of \$2.5 million, half from the GEB and half from Rockefeller personally. Later, this was changed; according to Read, 1961, the GEB gave \$1.5 million conditional on a matching funds being raised by the college. The Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial donated \$1 million to a LSRM Fund "for the purpose of promoting the well-being, physical, mental, social and spiritual, of the young women and girls of the Negro race in the United States" which was applied to the matching requirement (Read, 1961, p. 213). The Memorial made very few gifts of this size and the only other educational institution to receive a gift of this size was the U of Chicago—another instance of the special interest of Rockefeller in Spelman. The funds secured, faculty were added, the curriculum was broadened and Spelman began its transformation to a liberal arts college.

As part of this liberal arts transformation, Florence Read proposed to add child development to the home economics curriculum which resulted in the meeting with the staff of the Memorial in November, 1927, and in turn to the funding of Ada Arlitt's program for African-Americans in Cincinnati. The Memorial then took what appears to me to be a proprietary interest in the success of the Cincinnati program in providing trained leadership for Spelman's

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child development curriculum. In May, 1928, Dorothea Davis of the LSRM wrote to President Read about a recent visit she had with Ada Arlitt at Cincinnati, saying, "She has no persons in mind for fellowships next year, but was wondering whether you would like to suggest any graduate or undergraduate students. ... We also felt that there would be a decided advantage in training Southerners to return to the South."

Interestingly, she goes on, "As you know, these fellowships have been administered during the past year by the University of Cincinnati, but Mrs. Arlitt sees several objections to making this a continuing practice. The university does not wish to gain a reputation for granting scholarships in this field to negro students.." ²². The fact that Davis would share this information with Read along with the further assurance that if the LSRM is not willing to take over the fellowships, they might be able to find some other institution to take over the funding suggests that Davis on behalf of the Memorial is assuring Read of their interest in providing the trained personnel Read indicated she needed.

As I mentioned, the Memorial supported a program at the UGA which included two "extension agents," one to work with white and one with black schools. Davis also contacted Martha McAlpine at UGA for suggestions for the African-American fellowship at Cincinnati, saying, "It is fairly simple to find persons...from among the negroes in northern cities, but we have been wondering whether it would not be more helpful to you in your extension programs if some of the persons from Georgia might not be trained to return to work with parents in their own territory". ²³ In August, 1928, Pearlie Reed, a Fisk University graduate from Ft. Valley Georgia was recommended for and granted the Cincinnati fellowship. ²⁴

In April of the following year, 1929, Arlitt reported to the Memorial that "Reed, who is

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our present negro scholar is one of the most responsible and effective students to date” In September, Pearlie Reed was appointed to the staff of the University of Cincinnati as the Director of the “Negro Work in Child Care and Parent Education”²⁵. In February, 1930, President Read of Spelman informed Beardsley Ruml that they had someone in mind who would be competent to work out plans for a nursery school and parent education at Spelman and asked if the Spelman Fund (the successor to the Memorial) would support it. Ruml deferred the answer to Lawrence Frank who, I suspect, had some conversation with Florence Read prior to his letter of March 27, 1930, in which he stated:

“I saw Pearlie Reed in Cincinnati and talked with her about the possibility of your calling her to Spelman for the nursery school and parent education work. I told her that she was free to decide whether she wanted to go because we would not exercise any influence in the matter in any way. She said she was immensely eager and interested to do for the South what Dr. Arlitt has been doing for Cincinnati”²⁶. A few days later he wrote an official letter to President Read informing her that The Spelman Fund has “approved in principle” the plans for child study and parent education at Spelman College. Florence Read replied with thanks, a promise to submit a formal application for work to begin in September, 1930 and an indication that she was sending a letter to Pearlie Reed expressing “our interest in considering her for a position.”²⁷ She obviously solicited Ada Arlitt’s opinion who wrote on April 25th indicating that Frank had made her aware of Spelman’s plan and indicating that Pearlie Reed would be an excellent choice, but asking to know definitely whether Spelman wanted her because Cincinnati would need to find a replacement and “The number of Negro people trained in Parent Education and Pre-school work is very small. .. In releasing Miss Reed, we are giving you the best person of her race in the field

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at the present time..”²⁸ In May, Florence Read invited Pearlie Reed to accept the position. In June, 1930, Spelman College received a grant of \$50,500- \$8,000/year for 6 years to support the program and \$2,500 for alterations. Progress got a little bumpy over the summer. Unfortunately Pearlie Reed failed her Masters examination, but Spelman wanted to hire her in spite of that; however, Pearlie must not have thought so, because she made some plans to go to Ft Valley which caused consternation at Spelman who desperately needed her to begin the now fully-funded program. After a flurry of exchanges, Pearlie Reed accepted the position and the Spelman College Nursery School opened its doors on November 6, 1930. In doing so, it became the first African-American laboratory nursery school at any college or university. With Pearlie Reed came Sarah Bennett and Ethel Seames, both of whom were associated with the Cincinnati program.²⁹

The Spelman preschool and parent education program looked very much like Rockefeller supported programs at other institutions. The nursery school was clearly a laboratory supporting courses taught by Pearlie Reed in child development. All Home Economics students were required to take the course which involved three hours of observation per week at the nursery school. It became a very large and incredibly well-run facility. Reed pursued her graduate work in the summers at U of Cincinnati and at Minnesota with Florence Goodenough. On April 12, 1935, Arlitt sent a telegram to Florence Read , “Pearlie Reed passed one of the finest Masters examination ever taken in this department.” A penciled note on the telegram indicate that copies were sent to Lawrence Frank and to Trevor Arnett.³¹ In 1936 with the aid of funds from the GEB, Spelman purchased the Orphan’s Home across the street from the campus and expanded the nursery school from 20 children to 100 in four different age groups.

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In conclusion, I hope I have convinced you that one impetus for the funding of the African-American Child Study and Parent Education program at Cincinnati was the desire to provide trained personnel for Spelman College to support their offering of child development to strengthen their home economics curriculum. The Cincinnati program gave the LSRM entree not only to the South but to a woman's college and to a college for African-Americans. I'm not arguing that the program at Cincinnati was designed ONLY for this reason; it was certainly a way to spread the gospel of child development to African-Americans in the same way that the other Memorial supported institutes were spreading it to white Americans. Without Florence Read's request for training for someone to take charge of Spelman's program, however, Ada Arlitt's request for funds would most likely have been denied yet again. It is clear, I think, that without the African-American emphasis, Cincinnati would not have received funding simply to duplicate other programs. The staff at the Memorial seem to have a proprietary interest in the success of training a Fellow for Spelman.. and while Lawrence Frank maintained that Pearlle Reed was not being persuaded to go to Spelman, none of the other African-American Fellows who participated in Cincinnati's program ended up at a college or university program. Several were unemployed; Lillian Foster directed the nursery school at the Rosenwald housing project in Chicago. One Fellow wrote asking for help in finding a job and, the Child Study Association was simultaneously complaining to the Memorial about the lack of trained African Americans to lead their parent groups, but none of the Cincinnati fellows were steered their way. I believe then that the special relationship between the Rockefeller family and Spelman College worked to establish a child study and parent education program exclusively for African-Americans at the University of Cincinnati which in turn led to the recruitment of Georgian Pearlle Reed for

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training and groomed her to take charge of the Spelman College Nursery School.

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[Note: According to Rockefeller archive but wrong date? School didn't open until Nov 1930].

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Notes

1. Recommendation to Trustees of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, n.d. but must be between June 1927 and January 1928 because Cincinnati is considered southern by Memorial staff. LSRM Series 3.8, Box 28, Folder 292, p.10).

2. Recommendation to Trustees, op cit, p. 17

3. Op.cit. p.17 I find no evidence that these were ever proposed to any men's college

⁴ L. K. Frank (LKF) to Ada H. Arlitt (AHA), Oct 30, 1925. L.A. Pechstein to Beardsley Ruml, November, 1925. LSRM Series III-5 Box 44 Folder 456 University of Cincinnati Child Study 1925-30.

⁵ Memo of interview of AHA by LKF, November, n.d.,1926. LSRM Series III-5, Box 44, Folder 456 University of Cincinnati Child Study 1925-30. Minutes of a Meeting of the Committee on Child Development of the Division of Anthropology and Psychology of the National Research Council held December 29-30, 1926 at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA. LSRM Series III-5, Box 30, Folder 322 Committee on Child Development 1927.

⁶ LSRM Fellows; University of Cincinnati Catalogues 1928-34; Letter Dean of College of Education, Pechstein to AHA February 7, 1928, AHA wrote to him asking why he claimed no knowledge of LSRM Fellows when queried by "Dr. Baldwin" (has to be Bird Baldwin of CCD) tells him Shaw & Stix. Pechstein says he asked the registrar who told him that Louise Briscoe and Mary Roberta Busch were fellows but not in College of Education. The only African-American LSRM fellow whose name appears in the course catalogs is Genevieve Goff. Beulah Oliver is also African-American but supported by Spelman Fund not LSRM. (Report to Spelman

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Fund, March 3, 1934). Busch, Briscoe, Foster and Reed do not show up anywhere in the Cincinnati catalogs, nor is Foster listed as a staff member in the reports of the Mothers Training Clubs.

1927-28 Katherine Shaw, Regine Stix

1928-29 Martha Ransohoff, Helen Smith

1929-30 Ruth Lindquist, Imogene McPherson, Anna Gabriel

1930-31 Lola Yerkes, Esther Blakeney, Lois Lindsey, Genevieve Goff (African-American)

1931-32 Beryl Gordon, Druzilla Kent, Adele Methner, Beulah Morrow Oliver (also African-American)

1933-34 Dora S. Lewis

There is a letter from Norma S. Thompson, The Rockefeller Foundation, to Ruml, April 15, 1929 indicating that The Spelman Fund (formerly LSRM) had been approved to “extend fellowships for child study and scholarships in the social sciences and social work for American negroes within the balances available in appropriations LS 918 and LS 965.” LSRM Series III-5, Box 29, Folder 305 Child Study Fellowships 1924-32. This date is almost two years after the first fellowships were awarded. Beulah Oliver’s support must have come from this new appropriation. She is not included in any of the evaluative research carried out on the LSRM fellows.

⁷ Letter AHA to LKF June 6, 1927. This letter names the two candidates for the fellowships. A letter from Beardsley Ruml to Arlitt, July 14, 1927 approved the fellowships to be administered through the University of Cincinnati. LSRM Series III-5, Box 29, Folder 307 Child Study Fellowships-Cincinnati 1926-28. No applications were sent to the CCD for these fellows and

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their funding was routed through the University not the CCD. This was true for the only African-American fellow not affiliated with Cincinnati. Ruth Howard's child study fellowship in 1929 at Teachers College, Columbia University was similarly arranged through contact directly with Teachers College. Memo from Marian A. Knight to Beardsley Rumml, April 13, 1929 indicates that the "applications from the two negro girls were sent to Mrs. Woolley (Miss Howard) and Dr. Arlitt (Miss Goff) as directors of places of study" LSRM Series III-5, Box 29, Folder 306 Child Study Fellowships-Reports.

⁸ Memo of interview with AHA, Miss Afton Smith, parental education specialist; Miss Dyer, Dean of the School of Household Administration; Miss Ellen Kleppe, nutritionist; and Miss Babcock, superintendent of nurses at Children's Hospital by Dorothea Davis, May 15, 1928. LSRM Series III-5 Box 44 Folder 456. Arlitt also had experience working with African-American children. Her research at Bryn Mawr had focused on the effects of race and social status on intelligence in children based on subjects drawn both from schools in Philadelphia and New Orleans. She shared the prevailing belief in the inferior intelligence of African-Americans as shown by her conclusions in her two papers on race and intelligence (Arlitt, 1921, 1922) but she also found that social status differences produced greater disparities in intelligence than race (Arlitt, 1922).

⁹ AHA to Beardsley Rumml, January 10, 1928; January 18, 1928. LSRM Series III-5 Box 44 Folder 456 University of Cincinnati-Child study 1925-30. Pechstein to Rumml, November, 1925, op.cit.

¹⁰ Only 4 of the first 100 mother's pensioners in Hamilton County, Ohio were African-Americans (Edmonds & Hexter, 1914). Between 1920 and 1930 approximately 12% of the city

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population was African-American, but even so, only 39 of the 451 families receiving Mother's Aid during this period were African-American (Children's Bureau, 1933; "Social Work Statistics", 1939).

¹¹ Arlitt, A. H. Report to the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Foundation 1928-29. Attached summary of report by MAK of LSRM. LSRM Series III-5, Box 44, Folder 456, University of Cincinnati Child Study 1925-1930. "Until the grant from the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Foundation in 1928, there was no program for parental education for Negroes in Cincinnati or in the surrounding counties." p. 1.

¹² AHA to BR December 16, 1930. "In the University, Negro workers in Child Development and Parent Education are trained in the same classes and under the same conditions as are the White graduate and undergraduate students" p. 2. LSRM Series III-5, Box 44, Folder 456.

¹³ AHA to Beardsley Ruml, January 18, 1928. ibid. Arlitt refers to "our interview" in this letter, so it did take place. If a memorandum of the interview was produced, it is not in the Rockefeller files.

¹⁴ Memo of interview. LSRM Series 3.8 Box 103 Folder 1036 Spelman College 1927-30.

¹⁵ BHMM, 1878, 1(1), p. 11. The leading goal of the WABHMS is "the evangelization of the women among the Freed people, the Indians, the heathen immigrants, and the new settlements of the West."

¹⁶ Statement of the WABHMS, BHMM, 1878, 1(1), p. 11.

¹⁷ By 1926, the GEB had given more than \$1.2 million to Spelman; of which \$431,000 was for buildings and equipment. There were yearly grants for expenses increasing from \$6,000 in 1902 to \$106,000 in 1926-27. Arnett, Trevor. December 14, 1926. Memorandum to Mr. John D.

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Rockefeller, Jr. with regard to Spelman College. FM, Record Grp 2, Series Education, Box 89, Folder 1112 G.)

¹⁸ Morehouse, H.L. (1896). The Talented Tenth. BHMM, 18, p. 277.

¹⁹ Letter Wallace Buttrick to George R. Hovey, ABHMS, March 29, 1921; Letter Spelman Graduates Club to ABHMS, Feb 12, 1921. GEB Ga 10 Box 40, Folder, Spelman College 1921-22.

²⁰ Bachman, Frank P., Report on Spelman College, October 17, 1925, p. 3. GEB, Ga 10, Box 41, Folder, Spelman College Clippings, Pamphlets, Reports. This is a lengthy and detailed report including proposed curricula for the college and the high school, projections about necessary size of faculty, salary recommendations for faculty, instructional expenses and so forth. Bachman was a member of the GEB and made the report at the request of Spelman's trustees, per Arnett memorandum May 26, 1927, GEB Ga 10, Box 41, Spelman College 1927-29). Recommendations were to discontinue the elementary school, the normal school training of elementary teachers, the nurse's training and hospital, all of which were accomplished by the end of 1927 (TS no author, Recommendations in connection with the Education work of Spelman College Atlanta, Georgia, April 1925. GEB Ga 10, Box 40, Folder Spelman College 1925; Read, 1961. The High School was maintained until 1930 because there were so few public high schools for African-Americans in Georgia. In 1926, there were two accredited high schools for the state's 376,217 African-American children. If Spelman was going to succeed as a college, the students needed to have good high school preparation; approximately 39% of the college students at Spelman were graduates of the high school (Read, 1961).).

²¹ Arnett, Memorandum to JDR, jr, p. 2. op cit

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- ²² Letter DD to FMR, May 21, 1928, LSRM Series 3.8, Box 103, Folder 1036
- ²³ DD to MM, July 20, 1928, LSRM Series 3.5, Box 44, Folder 460 UGA College of Agriculture 1928-1935
- ²⁴ MAK to AHA, August 21, 1928, LSRM Series 3.8, Box 29, Folder 304; MM to LKF, August 18, 1928, LSRM Series 3.5, Box 44, Folder 460 UGA College of Agriculture 1928-1935; Pearlle Reed even receives an endorsement from Georgia's first lady, Rosa Walker, Rosa Walker to Miss S. Walker, Sept 27, 1928, LSRM Series 3.5, Box 44, Folder 460 UGA College of Agriculture 1928-1935.
- ²⁵ AHA to MAK, April 8, 1929, LSRM Series 3.8, Box 28, Folder 294. Reed, 1931, *Spelman Messenger*; Letter AHA to MAK, Sept 12, 1929, LSRM Series 3.8, Box 28, Folder 294
- ²⁶ Letter FMR to BR, February 15, 1930; Letter LKF to FMR, March 27, 1930, LSRM Series 3.5, Box 39, Folder 414
- ²⁷ LKF to FRM, April 2, 1930; FMR to LKF, April 4, 1930, LSRM Series 3.5, Box 39, Folder 414.
- ²⁸ Letter AHA to FMR, April 25, 1930. Spelman College Archives, Pearlle Reed Personnel File.
- ²⁹ Report of Nursery School, Nov 10, 1930, Daisy A. Kugel to FMR forwarded to MAK, LSRM Series 3.5, Box 39, Folder 414.
- ³⁰ "...Negro workers in Child Development and Parent Education are trained in the same classes and under the same conditions as are the White graduate and undergraduate students. We have already trained some of the leaders in this field... The recently appointed parent education and nursery school staff member of Spelman College was trained by us" Letter, Arlitt, A.H. to Beardsley Ruml, Dec 16, 1930; p. 2; see also Arlitt, A H., Report to the Laura Spelman

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Rockefeller Foundation 1928-1929. LSRM, Series 3.5, Box 44, Folder 456. University of Cincinnati Child Study 1925-1930; and Dyer, Elizabeth, Report of the work carried on by the School of Household Administration, University of Cincinnati, under the Laura Spelman Memorial's Appropriation #894 for the year ending June 30, 1931, referring to the mother's meetings held at the Shoemaker Welfare Center, "A nursery school was conducted for children during the mothers' meeting. Colored women who were majoring in child care and training at the University took charge of the nursery" p. 5. Arlitt, A. H., Report of Activities Carried on under Spelman Fund Appropriation Number 72, March 21, 1933, p. . LSRM Series 3.5, Box 44, Folder 457.

³¹ Pearlie Reed Personnel File, Spelman College Archives.

³² Jones, D. n.d. probably 1939; Report from the President of Bennett College sent to J. H. Dillard at the GEB. GEB Record Group 1.1, Series NC 239, Box 117, Folder 1056, Bennett College 1936-1939, pp. 1, 4.



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