

“The Rich Implications of Everyday Things”
The Jeanes Teachers and Jim Crow, 1908–1968

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In 1940, Mozella Price, a Jeanes Supervisor in Appomattox County, Virginia, concluded her annual report with a final meditation: “It is impossible to put on paper the work of a Jeanes Supervisor. It is a mission of sympathy and loving service.” Although the Jeanes Teachers’ work defies definition, this essay charts the pedagogical movement that they crafted for generations of black schoolchildren between 1908 and 1968.¹ These African-American women were originally hired to implement a curriculum designed to instill black students with an acceptance of the white supremacist racial hierarchy. Instead, they transformed the curriculum into an educational philosophy that stressed community development, economic self-determination, and African-American children’s potential as citizens and leaders. Across 485 counties in fourteen southern states, Jeanes Teachers mediated between northern philanthropists, southern state and county government agencies, and rural black communities in order to expand black political participation and institutional power.² As liaisons to white leaders in the county, they occupied particularly powerful positions in their communities, wielding political influence to win major victories for black schools despite negligent or hostile white leaders.³ In their communities, they combated poverty, hunger, disease, and illiteracy among adults and children alike, all while managing administrative affairs, running parent-teacher associations, and raising money to build modern schoolhouses.

The Jeanes Foundation was born with an unusual philanthropic gift. In 1905, Anna T. Jeanes, a wealthy white Quaker woman from Pennsylvania, met with Booker T. Washington and

¹ In this essay I use the terms “Jeanes Teacher,” “Jeanes Supervisor,” “Jeanes educator,” and “Jeanes worker” interchangeably to refer to both county- and state-level Jeanes workers.

² Joan Malczewski, Building a New Educational State: Foundations, Schools, and the American South (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 3-4.

³ James L. Leloudis, Schooling the New South: Pedagogy, Self, and Society in North Carolina, 1880-1920 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 189. Adam Fairclough, A Class of Their Own: Black Teachers in the Segregated South (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 3.

Hollis B. Frissell, the directors of the Tuskegee Institute and the Hampton Institute, respectively. Heretofore, Hampton, Tuskegee, and other black higher education facilities had been the primary recipients of white philanthropy, but Jeanes envisioned the first fund that would directly support rural black primary schools.⁴ In her will, Jeanes bequeathed a gift of one million dollars to form the Jeanes Foundation, inviting the General Education Board (GEB) to direct the fund. The GEB, a philanthropic board founded by John D. Rockefeller that included notable corporate leaders such as Andrew Carnegie, George Peabody, Robert Ogden, and William Howard Taft, was closely associated with Hampton and Tuskegee. James Hardy Dillard, the Dean of Tulane University, was named President of the Fund. GEB leaders hoped that Dillard, a southern racial moderate with an extensive background in education, could effectively negotiate between northern donors and southern state and local governments.⁵

Nevertheless, for the first few years of the Jeanes Foundation's existence, the GEB simply did not know how to use the funds to effectively improve black rural schools. For the most part, Washington and Frissell used the money to encourage local counties to build new schools by offering additional funds to those who could raise most of the money themselves. This strategy manifested the GEB's belief that the average African American had "small interest in the education of his race" but that black communities could support their own school systems—without state investment—if they had the "proper leadership and guidance."⁶ Because of this lethargic start, the first Jeanes Teacher was not hired until October 1908. Jackson Davis, the Superintendent of Public Schools in Henrico County, Virginia, requested Jeanes money to

⁴ Booker T. Washington to Wallace Buttrick, April 11, 1905. Box 202, Folder 1924, General Education Board Papers, Rockefeller Archive Center, Tarrytown, New York.

⁵ Fairclough, 183.

⁶ "An Appeal for the Negro Race," September 1, 1906; Washington to Buttrick, November 1, 1907; Washington to Buttrick, October 5, 1906. Box 202, Folder 1924, GEB-RAC Papers.

hire Virginia Randolph, a veteran black schoolteacher, as a countywide “industrial teacher.”⁷ Randolph pioneered the county industrial supervisor model, shaping the Jeanes Foundation’s long-term purpose and direction.

Industrial Education and the Making of Segregation

Southern public school systems had always been inextricably tied to racial politics. In the antebellum period, common schools were abundant in the North, but schooling in the South took place in the home or in private schools. Southern public schools were born out of Reconstruction: freedpeople established common schools through the Freedmen’s Bureau and the American Missionary Association, and African Americans in state legislatures spearheaded efforts to fund public schools.⁸ By the end of the nineteenth century, as the South grew more heavily industrialized, progressive-era school reformers had revolutionized white public education, lobbying state legislatures for increased funding and greater state oversight. Even in poor rural white schools, classroom pedagogy was redesigned to train students for success in business. Reformers encouraged active learning, inductive reasoning, and individual competition to prepare white children for leadership positions in the New South.⁹ They also urged state legislatures to increase expenditures on black education, but their purpose was, in the words of North Carolina governor Charles Aycock, to socialize black children into accepting “permanent white supremacy.”¹⁰ For white politicians and businessmen, it was “progressive” to spend more money on black schools to implement industrial training, and they congratulated themselves on their tolerance and financial generosity toward this end. None of them were progressive enough

⁷ Jackson Davis to James Dillard, October 26, 1908. Box 221, Folder 2122, GEB-RAC Papers.

⁸ Heather Williams, Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 193.

⁹ Leloudis, 21 and 29-30.

¹⁰ Ibid., 179.

to recognize African Americans as their moral and intellectual equals, or to imagine an end to racial hierarchy.

As county industrial supervisors, Virginia Randolph and other early Jeanes Teachers were hired to implement industrial education, a curriculum that white leaders explicitly supported as a method to entrench racial hierarchy. Industrial education was first proposed by Samuel Armstrong, a white former leader in the Freedmen's Bureau who strongly believed that wealthy white men should "civilize" freedpeople in order to restore labor peace to the South after emancipation. He denigrated black people as an undifferentiated mass who were too "destitute of ambitions" and "supremely stupid" to overcome their "complacency and filth" without white control.¹¹ Armstrong became the first principal of the Hampton Institute, and thus industrial education was known as the "Hampton idea," although it was also implemented at the Tuskegee Institute and other black normal schools across the South.¹² Armstrong believed that African Americans should undertake a program of hard manual labor and strict discipline, which would inculcate values of diligence, obedience, and submissiveness.¹³

Not only a strategy to funnel black children into menial labor positions, Armstrong's method was explicitly designed to keep black southerners from voting and running for office, because it taught black students to think of themselves as "junior citizens" who were not yet capable of holding power or making political demands.¹⁴ A key part of the "Hampton idea" was

¹¹ Quoted in Robert Engs, Freedom's First Generation: Black Hampton, Virginia, 1861-1890 (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 89-90.

¹² The term "Normal School" here refers to schools that were specifically designed to educate future teachers. They were closer to high schools than to colleges, and most of their students were women who lacked other options for education after primary school.

¹³ James D. Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 42-43.

¹⁴ Ibid., 39; William A. Link, A Hard Country and a Lonely Place: Schooling, Society, and Reform in Rural Virginia, 1870-1920 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 176-77.

that black teachers would spread industrial education and its accompanying moral transformation. Thus, while white prospective teachers in the South received four-year liberal arts educations at state normal schools designed to provide what instructors called “genuine literary culture,” black prospective teachers at Hampton and Tuskegee spent more hours performing unskilled manual labor than they did in class.¹⁵ The academic classes they did take taught them that African-American poverty was due to less advanced “racial evolution” and stressed harmonious relations between labor and capital.¹⁶ Industrial education, then, was the pedagogy of Jim Crow, designed to acculturate children into a system of political, economic, and social segregation.



Female prospective teachers plough school fields at the Hampton Institute. Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, 48.

Although they considered themselves racial progressives, members of the General Education Board strongly supported the “Hampton idea” and sought to enforce it through their philanthropy. As Northern corporate leaders, they were interested in creating a unified national economy, which required replacing Southern localism with strong state and national

¹⁵ Leloudis, 100; Anderson, 54-55.

¹⁶ Anderson, 52-53.

government.¹⁷ As such, they were interested in education for social efficiency, whereby workers would be trained to maximize their economic output, rather than education for democratic equality.¹⁸ At one conference, William Baldwin Jr., the GEB's first president, advised black educators to "avoid social questions; leave politics alone... know that it is a crime for any teacher, white or black, to educate the negro for positions which are not open to him."¹⁹ Edgar Gardner Murphy, executive secretary of the Southern Education Board, the GEB's southern counterpart, celebrated industrial education as a way to replicate "under conditions of freedom, those elements of skill, those conditions of industrial peace, which our fathers supplied under the conditions of slavery."²⁰ Murphy tied labor strife to racial equality, revealing anxiety that African-American political participation would undermine corporate profits.

Industrial education was enacted on the ground by Rural State Agents for Negro Education, white men whom the GEB hired to oversee their programs and most of whom shared their values. In 1914, George Godard, the state agent in Georgia, insisted on referring to black schooling as "'training' and not 'Education.'"²¹ When describing Jeanes Teachers' fundraising work, Godard wrote, "If the Negro is a resource of the state, and he is, why should he not be made as profitable a resource as he may be? He is susceptible of training, since he can think,

¹⁷ Malczewski, 20-21 and 75.

¹⁸ Historian David Labaree argues that American educational history up to the present day is marked by a tension between three goals: education for citizenship, which requires equality for all students; education for social efficiency, which sorts students into an academic hierarchy according to available jobs and economic needs; and education for social mobility, which treats education as a private good that individual students must compete to receive in order to compete for high-status social positions. David F. Labaree, "Public Goods, Private Goods: The American Struggle over Educational Goals," American Educational Research Journal 34, no. 1 (Spring 1997).

¹⁹ Quoted in Anderson, 84.

²⁰ Link, 178.

²¹ "Report of Geo. D. Godard," April 1, 1914. Box 67, Folder 591, GEB-RAC Papers.

remember, will, and act.”²² As late as 1939, Mississippi’s state agents, P. H. Easom and J. A.

Travis, opened a report on Mississippi black schools with the following metaphor:

When Robinson Crusoe was shipwrecked on an island, the only other human being on this island with him was a cannibal, named Friday. Before Friday could be useful, handy, and helpful to Crusoe, he had to be given something of Crusoe’s culture.... A parallel situation exists with respect to the two racial groups in Mississippi today. Mississippi’s population is made up of a million white people and a million colored people. Before these colored people can be of much value in the progress and development of the state, they must be given something of the culture of white people.²³

These passages highlight the self-interested racism of those who claimed they were altruistically helping African Americans. The allusion to shipwreck suggests that white Mississippians were stuck with the black population against their will. By comparing black Mississippians to cannibals, Easom and Travis evoked the common racial myth that African Americans were primitive, uncivilized, and immoral. Furthermore, Godard’s condescending assertion that black people did, in fact, have basic cognitive functions (as if his reader doubted it) demonstrates his belief that black people had extremely limited intellectual capacities and were thus “susceptible” to a training that was little more than economic manipulation. Nevertheless, both reports express the sentiment that African Americans should be made profitable to the state, echoing the GEB’s focus on state-building and economic unity. In their view, black individuals’ only potential was as a profitable resource to be exploited by the white state, not as leaders of intellectually and culturally vibrant communities.²⁴

²² George Godard, “Report for May 1914.” Box 67, Folder 591, GEB-RAC Papers.

²³ P. H. Easom and J. A. Travis, “The Negro Schools of Mississippi, 1939.” Box 98, Folder 878, GEB-RAC Papers.

²⁴ GEB leaders also promoted industrial education in various other settings of racial domination. Through the Phelps-Stokes Fund, another foundation managed by the GEB, the Jeanes program was implemented in British colonial Africa, where male Jeanes Teachers similarly worked to transform the program’s narrow goals into a far-reaching rural community development initiative. Mary Ciambaka Mwiandi, “The Jeanes School in Kenya: The Role of the Jeanes Teachers and Their Wives in “Social Transformation” of Rural Colonial Kenya, 1925–1961”

Historians disagree about the impact the industrial education model had on black education, largely because they disagree about the extent to which the industrial curriculum was ever really implemented. James D. Anderson argued that philanthropists' "great economic expenditures and reform crusades for black industrial education" directly caused long-term black educational "underdevelopment" by depriving black children of high-quality academic instruction.²⁵ On the other hand, William Link suggests that the "conceptual vagueness of industrial education" transformed it into a "nearly meaningless concept."²⁶ Adam Fairclough agrees, claiming that African-American educators professed their devotion to industrial education in order to receive foundation funding but rarely enacted the philosophy.²⁷ In her study of black women's political activism, Glenda Gilmore offers a somewhat different interpretation, arguing that black female educators adopted the practices of industrial education but engaged in a "slight but important" ideological "tilting" of the philosophy.²⁸

This historiographical debate points to the underlying paradox of Jeanes work: Jeanes teachers were hired to enact a pedagogy of subservience to white authority on the local level, but surely they did not buy into their employers' racial ideology. How, then, did industrial education manifest in black children's everyday classroom experiences? While many other histories of education draw on white philanthropists' letters and reports to answer this question, this essay

(Ph.D., Michigan State University, 2006). In the American Southwest, industrial education was also used to train the children of Mexican migrant laborers. During World War II, the Office of Inter-American Affairs, directed by Nelson A. Rockefeller, hoped industrial education would lessen Mexican-American protest against racial discrimination, improving US-Latin American relations. Gilbert G. Gonzalez, Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 1990), 88-99 and 148-60.

²⁵ Anderson, 235.

²⁶ Link, 180 and 83.

²⁷ Fairclough, 250.

²⁸ Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, Gender & Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 160.

uses Jeanes Supervisors' monthly reports, correspondence, and newsletters to detail their day-to-day activities in black rural schools. A close study of Jeanes Teachers' firsthand accounts reveals that they employed many of the activities suggested by industrial education, but transformed the ideas and values underlying those lessons into a pedagogy of racial empowerment. Jeanes Supervisors pivoted from vocational work to a "life-related" educational movement based on a belief in black children and communities' enormous capacity for creativity and leadership. They also pioneered a pedagogy of black citizenship, one which encouraged black children to feel responsible for solving problems in their communities but also for questioning white supremacy and making demands of white authorities. Their educational leadership formed the intellectual roots for the Citizenship Education Program and Freedom Schools, two educational programs which embraced community-based pedagogy to win crucial victories in the civil rights movement. Furthermore, their pedagogy charts a path of resistance for teachers seeking to combat racialized pedagogy and discipline today.

Historians agree that industrial education was discredited by the late 1920s, largely because of a 1927 student strike at Hampton that accused the industrial education model of perpetuating racial hierarchy.²⁹ Consequently, many histories of the Jeanes program draw a distinction between first- and second-generation Jeanes Teachers, arguing that earlier Jeanes Teachers led industrial activities in schools and communities while post-1930 Jeanes Supervisors focused on academic instruction, curriculum development, and school administration.³⁰

Although many philanthropists turned away from the Hampton model by the 1930s, I contest the notion that this date marks the end of industrial education or a sharp divide in Jeanes work. This

²⁹ Anderson, 274. Fairclough, 262.

³⁰ Valinda W. Littlefield, "I Am Only One, but I Am One": Southern African-American Women Schoolteachers, 1884–1954" (Ph.D., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2003), 15 and 74-5. See also Malczewski, 84.

essay highlights the striking continuities of Jeanes Teachers' work between the first and second generations. Jeanes Teachers' continued use of agricultural and vocational activities in the classroom well into the 1930s and 1940s was not a sign of their devotion to industrial education ideology. It was a testament to the enduring power that their transformed approach to industrial education held. Jeanes Teachers were able to appropriate these activities as long-term strategies for empowerment and political participation in black communities. The biggest difference between first and second generation Jeanes Teachers was that, in the second generation, the Jeanes Foundation began to hire black women as state and national Jeanes Supervisors, which enabled black women to articulate their own goals and values as state and Foundation policy for the first time.

Early Jeanes Teachers

The first Jeanes Teachers not only shaped the Foundation's work, but also directed the formation of modern schools in black communities. Each Jeanes Supervisor worked with her county superintendent of schools, giving her direct access to local channels of power. Often, neglect of black schools was so profound that Jeanes Supervisors controlled their county's black schools on their own. Sarah Delany, a Jeanes Teacher in Wake County, North Carolina, remembered, "I was just supposed to be in charge of domestic science, but they made me do the county superintendent's work. So, I ended up actually in charge of all the colored schools in Wake County, North Carolina, although they didn't pay me to do that or give me any credit."³¹ At the same time, white government authorities' lack of interest allowed Jeanes Supervisors relative freedom to shape their own styles of leadership. The Jeanes Story, a remarkable history of the Jeanes program compiled by former Jeanes Teachers after the program's end in 1968,

³¹ Quoted in Gilmore, 162.

celebrated the fact that “no absolute rules were laid down for Jeanes Supervisors. These educators were free to follow any possible line of school and community improvement. The choice was theirs, and in freedom, flexibility, innovation and creativity lay the success of Jeanes work.”³² James Dillard, President of the Jeanes Fund, intentionally cultivated this culture of flexibility, resisting other white leaders’ “disposition to standardize their efforts” and asserting that “a Jeanes Teacher knows best what she can best do. Her freedom has been her strength.”³³

Jeanes Teachers’ educational model became an early form of far-reaching community organizing. In 1914, the nineteen Jeanes supervisors of North Carolina organized 121 School Improvement Leagues and Parent-Teacher Associations, and held 288 community meetings with a total attendance of 8,090 people.³⁴ In 1916, North Carolina Jeanes Teachers made 3,458 school visits, raised \$15,293.34 from black communities, and formed 143 “moonlight” schools—night schools where over 3,429 adults learned to read and write.³⁵ White authorities saw Jeanes Supervisors’ fundraising efforts as one of the most successful parts of the program. Industrial education required black schools to be modern, sanitary buildings that included industrial equipment and facilities.³⁶ Jeanes Teachers’ fundraising allowed southern states to implement industrial curricula without footing the bill. Nathan Newbold, Rural State Agent in North Carolina, boasted that for every dollar that local counties had paid for the Jeanes program, five

³² Mildred M. Williams and NASC Interim History Writing Committee, The Jeanes Story: A Chapter in the History of American Education, 1908-1968 (Atlanta: Southern Education Foundation, 1979), 58.

³³ James Dillard, “To the Members of the Slater and Jeanes Boards,” November 23, 1927. Box 222, Folder 2123, GEB-RAC Papers.

³⁴ Nathan C. Newbold, “Report of State Agent of Negro Rural Schools for North Carolina,” December 30, 1914. Box 115, Folder 1042, GEB-RAC Papers.

³⁵ “Summary of Reports of Mr. N C Newbold, January 1, 1916 to December 31, 1916.” Box 115, Folder 1043, GEB-RAC Papers.

³⁶ Link, 183.

dollars had been raised.³⁷ Philanthropic foundations employed a similar model to improve school facilities. The Rosenwald Fund gave black communities money to build new schoolhouses, which were named “Rosenwald Schools” and then turned over to the county government as state property. Although the first Rosenwald school in North Carolina cost \$1,473, the Rosenwald Fund paid only \$300 while the black community contributed the majority of the funds.³⁸ Thus, Jeanes Teachers’ fundraising allowed white leadership to engage in the phenomenon of double taxation, whereby black individuals paid taxes that should have funded their schools but were directed to white children’s schools instead, leaving African Americans to pay for their schools a second time through donated money, land, and labor.

At the same time, early fundraising efforts built deep bonds between African-American communities and their schools. Jeanes Teachers formed parent associations, land cooperatives, penny savings clubs, mothers’ clubs, reading circles, and moonlight schools.³⁹ Not only did these organizations bring parents and community members closer to the school, but they also provided resources for adults. For example, in Neely’s Grove, North Carolina, one of the strongest school leaders was a man who, at age seventy-three, had learned to read and write for the first time at a moonlight school.⁴⁰ Jeanes Supervisors also led an enormous effort to combat disease in rural black communities. Because many southern states did not allow black residents access to state tuberculosis sanatoriums, African-American educators were the primary actors responsible for dramatically reducing deaths from this disease in black communities.⁴¹ North Carolina Jeanes

³⁷ Nathan C. Newbold, “The Jeanes Supervising Industrial Teachers; Some things they helped to do last school year. (1916-1917),” October 25, 1917. Box 115, Folder 1044, GEB-RAC Papers.

³⁸ Gilmore, 164.

³⁹ Letter from Mary E. Foster to Teachers of Spartanburg County, South Carolina, January 1918. Box 131, Folder 1200, GEB-RAC Papers; Littlefield, 20.

⁴⁰ “Summary of Reports of Mr. N C Newbold, January 1, 1916 to December 31, 1916.” Box 115, Folder 1043, GEB-RAC Papers.

⁴¹ Littlefield, 64.

Supervisors Telia Faulk and M. A. C. Holliday invited local black doctors and dentists to give students workshops on disease prevention.⁴² By exposing children to educationally and professionally successful African-American role models, this seemingly innocuous strategy contradicted the maxims of industrial education, which stressed that black children should not be taught that they could hold powerful professions.

Over the summers, Jeanes Supervisors led corn clubs, tomato clubs, and Homemakers' Clubs, where girls and mothers joined together to can vegetables and fruits and sell them to families. While Georgia Rural Schools Supervisor George Godard praised canning clubs as a way to save the state money, Georgia Jeanes Teachers had a very different notion of their work. Fannie Tookes of Emanuel County noted that the Homemakers Clubs provided a source of community for local women; Osceola Dwight of Houston County and Mary Jones of Macon County believed that by encouraging black families to grow foodstuffs, they could reduce their communities' reliance on cotton farming.⁴³ Benefits included protecting their livelihoods against the boll weevil disease that threatened cotton crops, preventing undernourishment and disease during winter, and allowing black farmers to gain economic self-sufficiency. Homemakers' Clubs also allowed Jeanes Supervisors to make home visits, getting to know their students' families and convincing them of the importance of regular school attendance.⁴⁴ This helped combat the stereotype that impoverished rural families did not value education. Annie Wealthy Holland, a celebrated North Carolina Jeanes Supervisor, wrote, "When I first came here I thought [poor school attendance] must be slothfulness, but I've visited every home and find in

⁴² "Progress Letter, May 6, 1924" and "Progress Letter, March, 1925," Division of Negro Education Reports. Box 119, Folder 1076, GEB-RAC Papers.

⁴³ "Reports from the Field: On the Jeanes Industrial Work in Georgia, January 1, 1917." Box 68, Folder 593, GEB-RAC Papers.

⁴⁴ Littlefield, 37-8.

most cases they (the people) can't do any better."⁴⁵ She noted that, often, families could not even properly clothe their children in order to send them to school.

Finally, early Jeanes Supervisors sustained a commitment to their communities' literacy and promoted intellectual and cultural life alongside industrial work, rather than presenting the two as mutually exclusive. One strategy for doing so was planning county fairs and commencements, large community events where students showed off their industrial work and academic achievements simultaneously. Carrie Battle, the Jeanes Teacher in Edgecombe County, North Carolina, held competitions for the best industrial work alongside essay contests where students reflected on the importance of the school to their community, with prizes provided by affluent black professionals. Annie Holland, in her capacity as state supervisor, praised Mrs. P. L. Byrd for organizing the best "story telling, speaking and spelling contests" she had seen at any county commencement.⁴⁶ Newbold described these events as "a revelation, a wonder" for black families who "did not know their children could make the things they saw on exhibition."⁴⁷ Thus, Jeanes Teachers used county fairs to celebrate black children's intellectual talents and raise the community's self-esteem. Indeed, these events could be subversive. George Godard in Georgia worried that county fairs were threatening to white residents, who were left "wondering whether they can make as creditable show as the Negro is making for himself and his children."⁴⁸ Although county fairs seemed to be a manifestation of the industrial education model, insofar as students exhibited their industrial work, these events undermined industrial

⁴⁵ Quoted in Littlefield, 18.

⁴⁶ "Division of Negro Education: Progress letter, April 6, 1924" and "Progress Letter, May 6, 1924," Box 119, Folder 1076, GEB-RAC Papers.

⁴⁷ "Report of N.C. Newbold, State Agent Rural Schools for Negroes For North Carolina, For the Month of April, 1915." Box 115, Folder 1043, GEB-RAC Papers.

⁴⁸ George Godard to William Buttrick, April 30, 1914. Box 67, Folder 591, GEB-RAC Papers.

education's assumptions of black inferiority, challenging black and white residents alike to recognize and celebrate black students' capabilities.



Lelia B. Yancey, Jeanes Supervisor in Vance County, North Carolina, at an exhibition of her students' industrial work at a county fair. 1915. GEB-RAC Papers.

In fact, Jeanes Teachers' assumption that black children and communities had great possibilities pervaded their everyday work. The authors of The Jeanes Story asserted that "Jeanes Supervisors learned very early that the talent and potential of student aptitudes, faculty creativity and intellectual and moral fiber were there."⁴⁹ This assumption sharply contrasts with GEB leaders' understandings of black students and their communities, and its effects are clear in many Jeanes Teachers' day-to-day actions. Carrie Battle secured 525 books for a county-wide circulating library, and pupils read 341 of them within months. Lelia B. Yancey of Vance County, North Carolina, made home visits to urge parents to send their seventh-grade students to high school. Since there was no local black high school, she helped them make arrangements to travel and board far from home. Marie McIver of Halifax County purchased a portable Victrola and played music while students were doing physical exercises in order to expand students'

⁴⁹ Williams and Committee, 16.

cultural horizons and help them “know and appreciate worth while music.” Mrs. M. C. Falkener spent her Christmas Eve preparing gifts of books and toys for poor families in Guilford County. And all over North Carolina, Jeanes Supervisors started “industrial and literary clubs” which combined academic and cultural material with industrial instruction.⁵⁰ Early Jeanes Teachers built a model that understood black children and teachers as deeply intelligent people and sought to nurture their intellectual, cultural, and emotional needs as well as their economic ones. These values continued to be the bedrock of Jeanes work to come.

Gender and Jeanes Work

Early Jeanes Teachers often came from middle-class backgrounds; most were educated at colleges or normal schools and had had successful teaching careers before becoming supervisors. Like many other middle-class black women, they tended to join local and state black women’s clubs, and were devoted members of local churches.⁵¹ Thus, many of them adopted a political strategy that Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, in her study of women in the black Baptist Church, terms the “politics of respectability.” Because white supremacists often pathologized African-American women and their families as unclean, disorderly, and lazy to justify racial hierarchy, Jeanes Teachers stressed proper homemaking, impeccable individual behavior, and middle-class values as a way to expose the hypocritical fictions that formed a basis for their oppression.⁵² Thus, Jeanes Teachers’ curricula reinforced traditional gender roles: boys were taught carpentry, farming, and bricklaying while girls learned cooking, sewing, and laundry.⁵³ Maenelle D. Dempsey, a Jeanes Teacher in Bullock County, Georgia, came into conflict with the teachers she

⁵⁰ Division of Negro Education Progress Letters from March 6, 1924; April 6, 1924; June 5, 1924; January 28, 1925; and March 1925. Box 119, Folder 1076, GEB-RAC Papers.

⁵¹ Gilmore, 162.

⁵² Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 202-03.

⁵³ Littlefield, 31.

supervised when she urged them to stop wrapping their hair, a style she disparagingly called a “plantation habit.”⁵⁴ Jeanes Teachers used home visits to “beautify” black homes and urged school improvement leagues to “beautify” their communities, believing that aesthetic changes could win white peoples’ respect.⁵⁵ They navigated a tenuous path, seeking both to transform poor rural black communities so that they could gain access to mainstream political and economic opportunities, and to affirm these communities’ intrinsic worth in both black and white southerners’ eyes.

Jeanes Teachers espoused what historian Stephanie Shaw calls an ethos of “socially responsible individualism.” They understood their own education as simultaneously a source of personal success and a way to benefit their communities and, by extension, their race.⁵⁶ They strove to inculcate that same belief in their students. And if Jeanes Supervisors did not come to their work with a sense of political purpose, they soon found one. Jeanes Supervisor Catherine Watkins Duncan described her Jeanes work as a political awakening: “I had paid slight attention formerly to racial matters in light of my doing something about it. But Jeanes work... brought me face to face with matters which challenged me. I began to develop a sense of social responsibility.”⁵⁷ Black professional women thus used their relative advantages for community development, a strategy that tackled racism by providing what Deborah Gray White calls “intensive social service” to poor black communities rather than by explicitly challenging racial

⁵⁴ Stephanie J. Shaw, What a Woman Ought to Be and to Do: Black Professional Women Workers During the Jim Crow Era (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1996), 179.

⁵⁵ “Annual Report of Geo. D. Godard, Milner, GA., Special Rural School Supervisor,” May 19, 1915. Godard espoused the view that home beautification would develop black individuals’ “moral and spiritual side.”

⁵⁶ Shaw, 2.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 109.

hierarchy.⁵⁸ This seemingly nonpolitical guise was intentional and strategic. After black men had been disenfranchised in southern states, black women began to believe that they alone could effectively represent black communities' needs to white state officials.⁵⁹ As progressive reformers brought more and more social services under the state's purview, black women presented themselves as clients of the state, who could make demands based on their political status as mothers, educators, and community caregivers. By using their gender status, black women successfully worked with white local leaders and won important material gains for black communities.⁶⁰

Jeanes Teachers adroitly adopted this strategy to advocate on behalf of their communities in their frequent interactions with county superintendents and school boards. Virginia Randolph and Annie Holland both developed a method of appearing to embrace a self-help ideology in order to extract commitments from the state. They would begin raising money in the community for a new school improvement project, then approach county officials once the project was already underway to ask for permission and funding to complete it.⁶¹ At times, Jeanes Teachers accepted poor treatment from their superiors if they could secure better resources. For example, Lillian P. Rogers, a Jeanes Supervisor in Missouri, was the most influential person in her community, but she adopted a submissive air when meeting with her county superintendent in order to successfully negotiate for books and equipment for her students.⁶² On the other hand, Narvie J. Harris, a Jeanes Teacher in DeKalb County, Georgia, recounted a time when her

⁵⁸ Ibid., 208. Deborah Gray White, Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894-1994 (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1999), 27.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 36-43.

⁶⁰ Gilmore, 148-152.

⁶¹ Virginia Estelle Randolph to James Dillard, November 28, 1911, and Randolph to Dillard, December 29, 1914. Box 29, Folder 7, Southern Education Foundation Papers, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center, Atlanta, Georgia; Littlefield, 54.

⁶² Fairclough, 3.

county superintendent overburdened her with work that was his responsibility. Although she insisted that “at no time in my career—cause I was trained differently at home—was I ever insubordinate,” she decided to quietly but firmly insist that the superintendent fulfill his responsibilities toward black schools, even if she lost her job.⁶³ Harris’s plan worked, demonstrating that Jeanes Teachers could strategically push the boundaries of their position as black women.

Jeanes Teachers also created a blueprint for interracial cooperation in a period of violent racial hostility. Harris recalled that Jeanes educators had a special role in mediating between white and black communities: white people “would know the Jeanes supervisor if they didn’t know anybody else. If it had to do with black people, they would refer you.”⁶⁴ They often sought to cultivate goodwill among white local residents by convincing them that addressing needs in the black community was in their own self-interest. For example, white women might cooperate in anti-disease campaigns because they feared that their black domestic workers might spread contagious infections to their families.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, Harris believed that cooperating with white communities created friendlier relations by allowing white people to see that they had more in common with black people than they had previously supposed, undermining Jim Crow politicians’ fictions of absolute difference and hostility between the races.⁶⁶ Newbold noted that “the white people, as a rule, are more interested in the colored schools in counties that have had Supervisors than in those that have not.”⁶⁷ Thus, Jeanes Teachers’ efforts at interracial

⁶³ Narvie J. Harris, interview by Kathryn Nasstrom, June 11, 1992.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Gilmore, 170.

⁶⁶ Harris.

⁶⁷ Nathan Newbold, “Suggested Outline of a Plan to Develop A State School System for Negroes in North Carolina that will Fairly Meet their Needs,” January 11, 1916. Box 115, Folder 1038, GEB-RAC Papers.

cooperation helped secure stability as well as political and financial support for black education.

In 1949, educational expert Mabel Carney concluded that early Jeanes Supervisors’

basic technique of developing interracial amity through the simple expedient of getting members of both races to join forces and work together on such urgent mutual projects... is now the approved modern procedure of highly-developed interracial organizations like the National Urban League, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.⁶⁸

Jeanes Supervisors’ project-based approach to interracial cooperation had a long-lasting impact in anti-racist political organizations. Interracial cooperation, then, should not be seen as a concession to or tolerance of white supremacy, but a politically potent technique for destabilizing myths of difference and manipulating white resources to meet black community needs.

Virginia Randolph: Seeds of Dissent



A portrait of Virginia Randolph, often reprinted in Jeanes Foundation materials. Sessoms, Jeanes Supervision in Georgia Schools, 11.



Virginia Estelle Randolph. SEF Papers.

⁶⁸ Mabel Carney, “Forty Years of Progress in Jeanes Work,” in Jeanes Supervisors Quarterly 1, no. 33 (July 1949), 39. Box 146, Folder 12, SEF Papers.

Most Jeanes Teachers' firsthand accounts exist as reports to their county superintendents, which means they very rarely describe explicit tension with white authorities or resistance against white supremacist models. However, a close examination of the private correspondence between Virginia Estelle Randolph, the first Jeanes Teacher, and James Dillard, the first President of the Jeanes Fund, reveals the ways Randolph resisted white supremacist authority. Randolph was a celebrated figure in Jeanes lore. White GEB leaders praised her commitment to industrial education and her obedience to Henrico County Superintendent Jackson Davis. They believed she represented the "peculiar genius of Dr. Davis to elevate others" and the possibility that black communities would eagerly accept their second-class status in the education system.⁶⁹ To Jeanes Teachers, Randolph represented a model community servant who strove to give her students an excellent education that was equal to local white children's. The Jeanes Story pointedly recognizes that Randolph "visited the white school in the vicinity to see what the teachers there were doing for their pupils. She wanted to make certain that her pupils were exposed to and given the best. At times she spent a portion of her meager salary to buy supplies."⁷⁰ Randolph's letters tell a story that neither mythology captures and that has not been told in the secondary literature. They reveal that Randolph wholeheartedly embraced many of the activities involved in industrial education, but consistently rejected the "Hampton idea" by refusing to work with the Hampton Institute. Moreover, they show that Randolph knew that she was being exploited by Davis and other local officials, protested white authorities' undervaluation of her work, and demanded greater power to shape the national Jeanes program.

⁶⁹ "Address by Dr. J. C. Robert, Professor, University of Richmond at the Dedication Exercises – Jackson Davis Elementary School – Henrico County – April 26, 1964 – 3:00 p.m." Box 1, Folder 5, Jackson Davis Papers, Rockefeller Archive Center; Dillard, "Statement V: The Henrico Plan," June 10, 1909. Box 222, Folder 2125, GEB-RAC Papers.

⁷⁰ Williams and Committee, 25.

Randolph was undoubtedly committed to the mission of the Jeanes Fund, especially in the Fund's early years. Before becoming a Jeanes Teacher, she had promoted industrial education as a Hampton-educated schoolteacher at the Mountain Road School in Goochland, Virginia. She remembered that, when she began teaching at the age of sixteen, "the people said I was teaching a kind of work that they could teach their children at home and got a petition with eighty names signed to put me out. I used tact all the way and finally convinced them I was right."⁷¹ Randolph had actually met with significant resistance to vocational education in her own community, where families preferred that their children receive an academic education at school that they themselves could not impart. Randolph responded by transforming the local school into a community center, using industrial work to beautify the school building so that local families felt proud of their school.⁷² She became a beloved leader in the community and a vocal supporter of industrial education. As a Jeanes industrial teacher, she clearly enjoyed the work and believed that it was beneficial to her community. In 1910, she eagerly wrote to Dillard, "I feel so proud of my work when I think that this is the foundations of great good in the future and so much credit is due you... I want to remain with you as long as I am in the work."⁷³

At the same time, Randolph recognized that she was overworked, underpaid, and not given credit for her efforts in shaping Jeanes work. For example, Dillard requested that Randolph travel across the South to help train new Jeanes Teachers, but rarely reimbursed her for her travel. She frequently reminded Dillard that she spent her own money on school projects, travel expenses, and printing expenses, and although she "intend[ed] to make my work a success if it takes all of my salary," she also asked him for a salary that was equal to the local white

⁷¹ Randolph to Dillard, January 2, 1929. Box 29, Folder 8, SEF Papers.

⁷² Fairclough, 247.

⁷³ Randolph to Dillard, October 6, 1910. Box 29, Folder 7, SEF Papers.

supervisor's.⁷⁴ Randolph freely expressed the pain she felt when Dillard and other GEB leaders did not recognize her enormous impact and hard work. In 1914, Randolph learned that Dillard had traveled to Virginia and not bothered to visit her county, despite her frequent requests that he visit. She angrily wrote to him, "I have made every sacrifice the six years I have had this work and not a Supervisor in this State that I have not len[t] a helping hand and yet you pass through Henrico.... These conditions are heart rendering [*sic*]. I do not think I can stand it any longer. I am willing to give up now."⁷⁵ In fact, Randolph considered quitting her position several times because she recognized that she was being exploited and undervalued by her employers. Each time, the people of Henrico County begged her to stay.

Most remarkably, Randolph frequently came into conflict with her supervisors—Jackson Davis, who had been promoted to State Rural Supervisor of Negro Education, and Arthur Wright, the State Superintendent of Education—over the value of the Hampton model. As early as December 1911, Randolph wrote Dillard to say that she had attended a "very discouraging" meeting at Hampton and believed that Jeanes Supervisors were too narrowly confined by Davis's control and the Hampton ideology. She complained,

I heard Dr. Frissell say Tuesday night that Mrs. Anna Jeanes would not leave the money to Hampton or Tuskegee, but to the Rural schools. Now if that is the case why do they want to narrow the State down to Hampton when their [*sic*] are other schools doing the same work? I want my Fourth Annual Report to exceed any that I have had, but without a change my hands will be tied to Hampton. I want to feel free.⁷⁶

In that same letter, Randolph asked Dillard to hire her as his assistant so that she could direct the national expansion of the Jeanes work, a request Dillard summarily ignored.⁷⁷ Although

⁷⁴ Randolph to Dillard, July 20, 1909. Box 29, Folder 7, SEF Papers; Randolph to Dillard, May 29, 1913. Box 29, Folder 8, SEF Papers.

⁷⁵ Randolph to Dillard, April 28, 1914. Box 29, Folder 7, SEF Papers.

⁷⁶ Randolph to Dillard, December 14, 1911. Box 29, Folder 7, SEF Papers.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

Randolph never explicitly wrote that she wanted to move the Jeanes Fund out of Hampton's control because of its commitment to racial hierarchy, she did imply that the directors of Hampton did not have rural black schools' best interests at heart and that she found the Hampton approach overly restrictive. Perhaps her emphasis on her professional freedom suggested a desire for political and economic freedom that the Hampton model did not condone. In other letters, Randolph mentioned that she avoided attending meetings led by "the Hampton people" and called a Hampton graduate her county had hired an "absolute failure." Thus, Randolph distanced herself from the school and its techniques even though she was ostensibly a perfect manifestation of Hampton's industrial training model.⁷⁸

Randolph was professionally and financially punished for her critique of Hampton. In December 1915, Arthur Wright withheld Randolph's paycheck, demanded that she submit her monthly reports to him rather than to Dillard, and tried to seize a store that she had opened within a black school to raise money for the community and provide students a chance to run their own business. Randolph angrily protested Wright's mistreatment, which she believed was a retaliation for her noncompliance with Hampton. She insisted, "If I were to run to Hampton every time they say so and give them my ideas I would have no trouble, but I don't think it the proper thing to do. I wish you only knew the true conditions of things and every Supt. [superintendent] would look after their Supervisors and Mr. Wright's position would be abolished."⁷⁹ Randolph's letter, along with her desire to join the national Jeanes staff, reveal her ambition that Jeanes Supervisors, rather than white state and GEB authorities, would shape the program. From this, we can infer that Randolph was deeply committed to vocational activities,

⁷⁸ Randolph to Dillard, March 12, 1912 and Randolph to Dillard, May 29, 1913. Box 29, Folder 7, SEF Papers.

⁷⁹ Randolph to Dillard, December 14, 1915. Box 29, Folder 7, SEF Papers.

but took issue with “industrial education” as white authorities and Hampton leaders interpreted it. Although industrial education was meant to teach students to docilely accept racial oppression, Randolph provided a model of resistance by confronting white leaders with their own hypocrisy. She was not afraid to “tell [Jackson Davis] that he don’t seem to be acting square” and that “I expect to go through this world dealing fair and square with my fellow man.”⁸⁰

Randolph used her industrial work to bring black Henrico residents economic self-sufficiency and greater access to education despite white resistance. Her proudest achievement—building a black high school in Henrico County, the Virginia Randolph Training School—was accomplished in spite of Wright’s opposition and the Henrico county school board’s reluctance to provide funding.⁸¹ By the end of her career, Randolph had become deeply disillusioned with Dillard and Davis; still, she wrote to Dillard frequently requesting financial support for her schools. While Randolph was never even promoted to a state-level position, Arthur Wright became the second President of the Jeanes Fund and Jackson Davis was the vice president of the General Education Board. Randolph sadly noted this disparity. She wrote, “Look at Mr. Davis 1907-08 and look now, then look back at poor me. I love Henrico County in fact I am doing all I possibly can for all children.”⁸² Randolph pointedly contrasted her profound devotion to black children’s well-being with white leaders’ attitudes. She bitterly resented the fact that she had not been rewarded for her labor and self-sacrifice with a promotion in the Jeanes Foundation. Over the course of her career, Randolph had confided in Dillard as a friend, believing he would advocate on her behalf, but she recognized that Dillard had rarely done so: “I am realizing more

⁸⁰ Randolph to Dillard, December 29, 1914. Box 29, Folder 7, SEF Papers.

⁸¹ Randolph to Dillard, June 17, 1915. Box 29, Folder 7, SEF Papers.

⁸² Randolph to Dillard, January 2, 1929. Box 29, Folder 8, SEF Papers.

and more that you and Mr. Davis don't want to help me any more but I am still praying that 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.'”⁸³

Virginia Randolph's letters reveal that Jeanes Teachers could wholeheartedly commit to vocational activities without necessarily buying into the Hampton doctrine of racial inferiority, insofar as they did not believe that manual work inculcated in black children unquestioning acceptance of racial hierarchy. Although Randolph was remembered as an obedient worker, her willingness to confront white leaders about their discrimination exposes the (often hidden) anti-Jim Crow resistance that was central to early Jeanes teachers' work.

Jeanes Teachers After the Great Depression: A Pedagogy of Empowerment

If GEB leaders had become less vocal about the Hampton model after 1930, their state allies and employees had not. In 1937, P. H. Easom, the GEB's state agent in Mississippi, collected and approvingly sent to GEB headquarters a series of editorials in the Jackson Daily News advocating for greater state expenditures on African-American education. In one opinion piece, the author criticized the injustice of double taxation but concluded that “Negroes don't need such an education as we are giving white children—that may be even more wrong than right.”⁸⁴ An editorial speculated that the state legislature should expand black schooling because “there are many thousands of negro girls who would make better house servants if properly trained.”⁸⁵ Affirming that “trained laborers” would be more profitable to the state, the editorial board echoed the moral language employed during the Hampton era, claiming that training black children for menial jobs would transform them into “self-respecting, self-supporting, law-abiding

⁸³ Randolph to Dillard, March 7, 1929. Box 29, Folder 8, SEF Papers.

⁸⁴ J. W. Haddon, “Duties We Owe to our Negroes,” Jackson Daily News, Jackson, Mississippi, November 19, 1937. Box 98, Folder 878, GEB-RAC Papers.

⁸⁵ Editorial, “Teaching the Negro,” Jackson Daily News, Jackson, Mississippi, November 27, 1937. Box 98, Folder 878, GEB-RAC Papers.

people.”⁸⁶ Judging from his comparisons of black Mississippians to the cannibalistic Friday in Robinson Crusoe, Easom shared this view. Thus, although philanthropic pressure to implement industrial curricula lessened, the idea remained influential. The second generation of Jeanes Teachers still needed to appear to implement industrial education as white authorities envisioned it while finding subtle ways to subvert white supremacy.

One of the most striking aspects of Jeanes Supervisors’ pedagogy during this period was their determination to bring children’s life experiences into the classroom. It was the key distinction between Jeanes Supervisors’ interpretation of “industrial education” and that of white leaders. GEB directors and southern state authorities still saw industrial training as a tool to impose, from the outside, a belief in racial hierarchy on black communities. By contrast, Jeanes Supervisors believed that the purpose of industrial education was to make lessons learned in the schoolroom relevant to children’s everyday lives. They believed that African-American children had enormous potential as learners and leaders; the best way to develop that potential was to provide education tailored to their experiences, communities, and interests. Jeanes Teachers’ conviction that education should be relevant also allowed them to incorporate children’s local environments, preparing children to become leaders and public servants in their communities.

Perhaps the most important change that occurred in the “second generation” of Jeanes work was that the GEB began to encourage and fund states to hire black women to oversee the Jeanes program. Although Randolph could only dream of holding such a position in 1911, by 1921 North Carolina hired Annie Holland as a State Supervisor; in 1932, Florence Octavia Alexander, a Mississippi native with four degrees in education, became a State Supervisor in Mississippi; and in 1935, Helen Whiting, a former Jeanes Teacher and principal, was hired in

⁸⁶ Editorial, “Train the Negro,” Jackson Daily News, Jackson, Mississippi, October 19, 1937. Box 98, Folder 878, GEB-RAC Papers.

Georgia. By this time, the Jeanes Fund had been consolidated with the GEB's other philanthropic projects under an umbrella organization called the Southern Education Foundation (SEF). When Shellie Northcutt, a former Jeanes Supervisor and Columbia graduate, joined the SEF staff in the late 1930s, she became the first national Jeanes Teacher. She founded the National Association of Jeanes Supervisors (NAJS) and worked to align Jeanes work with current scholarship on education and learning.⁸⁷



Annie Wealthy Holland, State Jeanes Supervisor in North Carolina. Newbold, Five North Carolina Negro Educators, 68.



Helen Adela Whiting, State Jeanes Supervisor in Georgia. Sessoms, Jeanes Supervision in Georgia Schools, Dedication.

For the first time, black educators were able to formulate statewide policy that articulated their own values and beliefs. On the one hand, these women created a new policy commitment to academic learning. Holland, for example, developed more academically demanding statewide

⁸⁷ Williams and Committee, 26-7.

standards for black school accreditation and teacher certification.⁸⁸ On the other hand, these women – especially Helen Whiting – pioneered a “life-related movement” that became prevalent among Jeanes Supervisors across the South. Life-related education reinforced the importance of industrial, vocational, and agricultural activities in black school curricula, but integrated challenging academic work into those activities. Because Holland and Whiting were both former Jeanes Supervisors, it makes sense to see this integration of the academic and the industrial as a continuation of early Jeanes Teachers’ work, rather than as a break from it. What was novel was that this pedagogy of empowerment found its expression in the world of policy for the first time.

For example, in 1937, Georgia’s Division of Negro Education published an extraordinary document called “The Open Road: A Teacher’s Guide to Child and Community Development” under Whiting’s leadership. The report began with an assertion that education should prepare students to participate in a democratic society, better their communities, and prosper economically, intellectually, physically, emotionally, and socially. Whiting called on black teachers to cooperate with their students to create “supplementary reading based on the life and experiences of the people in their immediate rural areas and elsewhere.” Parent-Teacher Associations, meanwhile, should hold study groups where adults could study local and state political issues and voice their personal experiences with such issues. Teachers would then design learning experiences where children used local and state resources to solve problems and address needs in their own communities. Whiting stressed that “improvement of rural home and farm life should become the main interest. The [academic] subject matter is only important as it is tied up with the problems of living to these areas. Reading, therefore, is stressed only as a medium for gaining information from such fields of interest.” Her point, however, was not to

⁸⁸ Malczewski, 110.

deemphasize reading, academics, and the arts, which she considered important means of self-expression for black students. Instead, Whiting hoped to show that academic and cultural content could be intertwined with lessons on rural life. Life-related lessons should teach students skills in “selecting, planning, executing and evaluating experiences” and “foster an inquiring attitude.”⁸⁹ Thus, although life-related education continued to focus on farming, handwork, and domestic beautification, the values it strove to inculcate could not have been more different from those of industrial education. It strove to empower children to interrogate and shape the world around them, rather than passively accepting it.

The progressive new educational values championed by leaders like Whiting became popular among Jeanes Supervisors across the south. The Jeanes Teachers believed that their pedagogy, with its emphasis on the black child’s capabilities and interests, was a novel one. The Jeanes Story reveals Jeanes Teachers’ belief that they were pioneers of life-related education: “In rural America, where the need was greatest for innovation... revitalizing education meant providing the learner with content he could use. It meant changes in feelings and behavior.... It meant, above all else, that the learner became able to discover his capabilities and see relevance in what he learned and how he learned it.”⁹⁰ This excerpt underscores the newness of the Jeanes Teachers’ approach by using the words “innovation” and “revitalizing,” suggesting that they implemented a dramatic change from the techniques previously used in black rural schools. At the same time, the novelty of the Jeanes workers’ approach had to do with their recognizing the positive qualities that African-American students and teachers already had. In other words,

⁸⁹ Helen Whiting et. al., The Open Road: A Teacher's Guide to Child and Community Development (Georgia: Division of Negro Education, 1937). Box 68, Folder 593, GEB-RAC Papers. See also Letter from Helen Whiting to Leo Favrot, June 16, 1938. Box 67, Folder 589, GEB-RAC Papers.

⁹⁰ Williams and Committee, 16.

acknowledging that black schools had value was an innovation that could shift the “feelings and behavior” of the school community. Jeanes Supervisors brought the “child-centered” approach to black rural schools, but in the context of the Jim Crow South, this took on a subversive edge. Affirming that Jeanes work succeeded because of the black community’s “intellectual and moral fiber,” not philanthropists’ beliefs and external influence, powerfully countered notions of black teachers’ and students’ inferior intelligence like those expressed by Easom.

If any common thread stands out in the Jeanes Teachers’ writings, it is their unwavering belief in their students’ worth. In the March 1949 issue of Jeanes Supervisors Quarterly, an Oklahoma Jeanes Supervisor named Willa Green Perry celebrated the nation’s first Jeanes Supervisors with these words: “The children who sat at your feet were as precious diamonds, but a great deal more interesting. A diamond when found, cut, and mounted remains the same quality – but this human on which you worked – had possibilities.”⁹¹ In another Jeanes Supervisors Quarterly issue later that year, Mayme Copeland, the President of the National Association of Jeanes Supervisors, wrote, “The humblest boy or girl of today may become the chief buttress of tomorrow, and the only one able to meet its challenges.”⁹² Jeanes Teachers were confident that their students’ ideas and experiences were invaluable – indeed, “precious” – and that their students could make essential contributions not only to black communities but to society as a whole. The emphasis on children’s “uniqueness” speaks to Jeanes Supervisors’ commitment to varying instruction to meet students’ different needs and abilities. More subtly, it also defies any attempt to reduce black children to an undifferentiated mass defined only by their race.

⁹¹ Willa Green Perry, “Tribute To Jeanes Teachers Of Twenty Years Or More Service,” Jeanes Supervisors Quarterly, March 1949. Box 146, Folder 12, SEF Papers.

⁹² Mayme Copeland, “Improving the Way of Life and Living in the Southland,” Jeanes Supervisors Quarterly, July 1949, 43. Box 146, Folder 12, SEF Papers.



T. C. Beam in Caswell County, North Carolina, founded a Rhythm Band for her students. She proudly sent this photograph to the 1947 issue of Jeanes Supervisors Quarterly. SEF Papers.

In part, Jeanes Teachers' "child-centered" approach was pragmatic. Because poverty and illness in black rural communities depressed school attendance, Jeanes Supervisors made a concerted effort to tailor lessons to students' interests so that they would feel motivated to come to school. Carrie M. Denney, a Jeanes Teacher in Tennessee, founded a countywide circulating library for elementary school students "in order to stimulate more reading, better reading, reading for information, reading for pleasure, reading for understanding and a desire for good literature."⁹³ Denney did not force students to read and did not want them to see it as tiresome labor; rather, she fostered a genuine love of reading in students in order to spark their desire to learn. T.L. Walker, a Jeanes Teacher in Crisp County, Georgia, boasted, "Attendance has improved and teachers are striving to keep it that way by making their classroom presentations and extra-curricular activities so interesting and challenging that pupils are thinking twice before

⁹³ Carrie M. Denney, "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939-1940, Chester County, Tennessee." Box 145, Folder 1, SEF Papers.

they say, 'I don't want to go to school today.'”⁹⁴ Precisely because economic conditions made it so challenging for students to attend school, black educators were under a special pressure to make school worth students' time. Walker's emphasis on challenging students reveals that she saw pushing students to realize their potential as a way to make school more appealing to them. Jeanes Supervisors moved beyond rote memorization and academic drills because they recognized that dynamic lessons and active learning were most likely to keep students in school.

Jeanes Teachers often created their own alternative reading texts, moving away from state curriculum and inviting students to shape their own course material. Aretha Davis, the Jeanes Supervisor who succeeded Virginia Randolph in Henrico County, noticed three male students who were wholly apathetic during lessons, only showing interest when they were allowed to draw cars during art class. Davis brought in a comic strip about cars, and the boys became so eager to figure out the story that they asked Davis to teach them how to read the words on the page. Davis explained, “This was a crude way to arouse their interest but it served the purpose that was needed to arouse in these youngsters the desire for knowledge. This was not State Board text but environmental material supplemented.”⁹⁵ Rather than blaming the boys for their lack of interest, Davis trusted that the boys wanted to learn and helped them discover their own academic curiosity. In Lowndes County, Georgia, Alma Stegall planned an early literacy lesson whereby young children would collect pictures that were significant to them, make art projects with them, and then create written and oral stories about those images. At the end of the unit, the class produced a booklet entitled “Our Own Stories.”⁹⁶ Both Davis and Stegall invited

⁹⁴ Jeanes Supervisors Quarterly, March 1949. Box 146, Folder 12, SEF Papers.

⁹⁵ Aretha Davis, “Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939-1940, Henrico County, Virginia.” Box 146, Folder 5, SEF Papers.

⁹⁶ “Sketches from the Field,” Georgia Division of Negro Education, March 1938. Box 68, Folder 593, GEB-RAC Papers.

students to participate in the creation of their own literacy texts, showing students that learning was a mode of creative self-expression. This method is strikingly similar to the literacy education method that Paolo Freire would develop decades later as a strategy for political consciousness-raising and liberation from oppression. Like Stegall and Davis, Freire used provocative images from students' environments to prompt readers to tell, and then read and write, their own stories.⁹⁷ Thus, Jeanes Teachers anticipated the radical educational philosophy that when literacy education is tied to environmental material, it can have profound political consequences.

Jeanes Supervisors also focused on black children's individual capabilities because, without state investment, impoverished black communities sometimes saw their children as their sole path toward empowerment. Winifred Daves, a Jeanes Teacher in Jones County, North Carolina, reflected, "Much has been said about native materials. The development of the child is the most important of all resources and with such conditions as bad roads, bad buses, bad weather, farm duties, etc. our only choice... is to teach each child according to his or her ability to progress."⁹⁸ Daves illustrated one major distinction between the sense of individualism fostered by progressive-era reformers in white schools and that fostered by Jeanes Teachers. Whereas white public school students' performance only affected their own personal enrichment, the health of the entire community depended on black students' success. Furthermore, Daves contended that Jones County teachers' "only choice" was to develop students' individual talents. This wording indicates that tailoring lessons to students' needs was a matter of survival. African-American teachers simply could not afford to fail in their efforts to cultivate leaders in the community. A classroom that did not meet the needs of all students wasted the community's

⁹⁷ See Andrew J. Kirkendall, Paolo Freire & the Cold War Politics of Literacy (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

⁹⁸ Winifred E. Daves, "A Scrapbook of Jeanes Work, 1940," Jones County, North Carolina. Box 37, Folder 2, SEF Papers.

most precious resource. Industrial work was therefore appropriated as a means for children to express themselves. Whiting urged Georgia educators to “train [students] to express their ideas received in art or other handwork.” In Caroline County, Virginia, Mayme Coleman began the “Industrial Work” section of her annual report, “Working with the hands is urged as a part of the guidance given children, promoting the best in them, finding their hobbies, and helping to develop a wise use of leisure time.”⁹⁹ Industrial work was no longer a method of imposing racist morals on black children; instead, handwork helped them to discover their best selves.

Because Jeanes Teachers believed so strongly in their students’ potential, they designed lessons based on the underlying assumption that students would become economically successful. In 1938, Helen Whiting gave Dorothy Hadley, the Jeanes Teacher of Evans County, Georgia, books about the pine industry, which dominated the county’s economy. After students had read those books and planted pine trees, they asked Hadley about the economic uses of the pine tree. Hadley designed a field trip to a pine distillery owned by a black man named Mr. Clark, because it was rare for African-Americans to own their businesses and homes, especially in the pine industry. Hadley proudly reported that students had felt comfortable asking Mr. Clark “all the questions they wished because he was colored,” and that he in turn had assured them that they had “a very bright future” as distillery owners in the pine industry.¹⁰⁰ Although Hadley’s lesson was vocational in nature, her goal was to teach students that they could thrive economically, not to make them more profitable for the state or white employers. Though black

⁹⁹ Whiting, The Open Road, and Mayme Coleman, “Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939-1940, Caroline County, Virginia.” SEF Papers, Box 145, Folder 5.

¹⁰⁰ Dorothy Hadley, “A Story of the Pine Tree,” Supplement to The Open Road, 1938. GEB-RAC Papers, Box 68, Folder 594.



Pearl C. Nichols, the Jeanes Supervisor in Shelby County, Tennessee, documented industrial work in her county during the 1939-1940 school year. These two photographs show young girls working in the school garden and a community canning day. SEF Papers.

distillery owners were rare, Hadley carefully planned a lesson that would allow her students to visualize their own bright futures in the Evans County economy. Ida Nance Givens, a Jeanes Teacher in Louisiana, achieved a similar goal by inviting alumni of her county's black schools to tell students about their successful careers in medicine, business, pharmacy, and law.¹⁰¹ This lesson echoes early Jeanes Supervisors' practice of inviting African-American doctors and

¹⁰¹ The South's Essential Light: Jeanes Supervisors Quarterly, (Vol. 1, No. 2, March 1949), 11. SEF Papers, Box 146, Folder 12.

dentists to schools in order to bring students into frequent contact with models of black self-sufficiency and success.

Notably, Jeanes teachers did not punish students harshly or seek to foster the sense of competition that white teachers of the progressive era encouraged in their students. Instead, Jeanes Supervisors used teamwork, cooperation, and communal responsibility to instill academic diligence in students. Aretha R. Davis recalled:

A boy had been very mischievous in classroom and when he became tired of working, would not let his classmates work; I suggested to the teacher that he should be made captain of the team.... He became very interested in the very idea that he was responsible for the success of the unit, curbed his actions and the interest that he manifested surprised all the teachers. The spirit of responsibility, organized leadership, working harmoniously with others and the friendly spirit of cooperation are some of the qualities we are trying to instill in our boys and girls.¹⁰²

Instead of presuming that the boy's behavior was a result of innate idleness or stupidity, Davis insisted on seeing potential even in the boy's shortcomings. Stella House Smith, a Jeanes Supervisor in Maury County, Tennessee, used a similar tactic when she asked older students who had dropped out of high school to serve as mentors and guards at school functions. "They feel responsible for certain things," she wrote. "At entertainments they are on guard for any disorder, who have been known to disturb programs before."¹⁰³ Jeanes Supervisors' tendency to teach morals and address misbehavior by assigning children responsibility for their classmates, rather than through strict discipline and hard manual labor, was an early version of what today's

¹⁰² Aretha R. Davis, "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939-1940, Henrico County, Virginia" SEF Papers, Box 145, Folder 5.

¹⁰³ Stella House Smith, "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939-1940, Maury County, Tennessee." Box 145, Folder 2, SEF Papers.

educators would call restorative justice.¹⁰⁴ It demonstrated their faith in students' ability to lead their community, even if those children misbehaved or made mistakes.

It is striking that these educators foregrounded cooperation because it demonstrates that black and white teachers conceived of leadership differently due to their students' social and economic surroundings. Both progressive-era white teachers who encouraged competition and Jeanes Teachers believed that they were preparing students for leadership positions. This difference signifies the different kinds of leadership that black teachers believed their students would embody. Both Davis and Smith gave wayward students responsibility for others in order to correct their behavior. Their counterintuitive strategy of rewarding misbehaving children with a leadership position in the classroom, rather than punishing them, indicated their faith that all pupils (even those who had dropped out of school) could play a vital role in the school community. Moreover, Davis and Smith clearly defined leadership as responsibility for others, rather than an individual's accumulation of power. Their focus on cooperation demonstrated the unspoken assumption that all students could be essential leaders in their communities, and that the success of the black community as a whole would rest on their competence.

¹⁰⁴ The term "restorative justice" was first used in an educational context in the 1990s. It refers to practices that emphasize alleviating harm and helping rulebreakers adjust their behavior rather than punishment. For general information on restorative justice in education, see Belinda Hopkins and Guy Masters, Just Schools: A Whole School Approach to Restorative Justice (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2003). For the role of race in restorative justice, see Allison Ann Payne and Kelly Welch, "Restorative Justice in Schools: The Influence of Race on Restorative Discipline," Youth & Society 47, no. 4 (2015); Thalia González, "Keeping Kids in Schools: Restorative Justice, Punitive Discipline, and the School to Prison Pipeline," Journal of Law & Education 41, no. 2 (2012). Earnestine Jackson, a Jeanes Supervisor in Knox County, Tennessee, also modeled restorative justice practices by using play, not punishment, to teach morals. She wrote, "The practice of fair play on the grounds has made for honesty in classroom. Determination to win and to excel in... games has instilled in children the purpose to master classroom problems and to surpass." Earnestine Jackson, "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939-1940, Knox County, Tennessee." Box 145, Folder 1, SEF Papers.

Teaching Citizenship

During this period, African Americans remained largely disenfranchised. Thus, Jeanes Teachers emphasized a vision of citizenship that included far more than just voting. They built on early Jeanes Teachers' notions of community development by teaching students to be citizens who both contributed to their communities' well-being and demanded services and resources from the state. Helen Whiting defined citizenship education in terms of students' values, including integrity, tolerance, community responsibility, and scientific and cultural appreciation.¹⁰⁵ Writing just a few years later, Winifred Daves defined citizenship in terms of avoiding crime, joining civic and church organizations, owning property, "seeking the viewpoint of others," and voting.¹⁰⁶ Citizenship education encompassed the whole student, including his or her personal life, intellectual attitudes, social activity, and relationships with others.

Jeanes Teachers found new ways to weave academically rigorous challenges into students' community activism projects. For example, second-generation Jeanes Teachers continued to lead school beautification projects, but also created challenging geometry problems based on the measurements of shades and curtains for the school's windows. Jeanes Supervisor Willie Anderson Sykes even considered school beautification a form of citizenship education: since schools were the primary civic institutions with which rural black southerners interacted, it was important for students to "participate in school management." Students might also open community museums, produce plays and concerts, or travel around the community building wells or farming hotbeds for needy residents, practicing reading, writing, and arithmetic exercises based on those projects.¹⁰⁷ Algee Currie, a Tennessee Jeanes Teacher, boasted that "our

¹⁰⁵ Whiting, *The Open Road*, 2-3. GEB-RAC Papers.

¹⁰⁶ Daves, "A Scrapbook of Jeanes Work, 1940," SEF Papers.

¹⁰⁷ A farming hotbed is an enclosed patch of soil heated by fermenting manure, used for forcing or raising seedlings. "Sketches from the Field," March 1938. Box 68, Folder 593, GEB-RAC

schools are real community centers in the fullest sense of the word” after elementary students led their own campaign against tuberculosis, composing songs, plays, posters, and stories to educate the community about public health concerns.¹⁰⁸ Winifred Daves framed literacy education as a way of exposing the community to new political ideas. She chose to emphasize reading for pleasure both to bring students “joy and satisfaction” and because “the greatest handicap which faces the Negro in Jones County is his inability to receive and transmit ideas. The basic difficulty lies in reading.”¹⁰⁹ Jeanes Supervisors combined academic work and industrial work to create a curriculum that taught students that they had both the responsibility and the power to shape their communities and solve collective problems.

Jeanes Teachers’ use of the local environment encouraged students to value their communities as culturally, socially, and intellectually rich. Several Jeanes Supervisors compiled histories of the communities where they worked, so that teachers could help students understand and evaluate changing local dynamics and chronic economic problems.¹¹⁰ Carrie Denney of Chester County, Tennessee, worked with teachers to integrate the community into the classroom whenever possible: “At group meetings, points of view and aim of educators was stressed, with the idea that every local environment offers opportunity for varied rich experiences, that an

Papers; Helen Whiting, "Summary of Supervisory Activities, 1937-1938," July 8, 1938 and "Guide to Developmental Program of Demonstration Schools in Georgia," 1937. Box 68, Folder 594, GEB-RAC Papers; Unsigned “Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939-1940, Hardin & Decatur Counties, Tennessee.” Box 145, Folder 1, SEF Papers; Willie Anderson Sykes, “Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939-1940, Halifax County, Virginia.” Box 145, Folder 5, SEF Papers.

¹⁰⁸ Algee Curry, “Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939-1940, Haywood County, Tennessee.” Box 145, Folder 1, SEF Papers.

¹⁰⁹ Daves, “A Scrapbook of Jeanes Work, 1940,” SEF Papers.

¹¹⁰ See, for example, H. L. Pempleton, “Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939-1940, Crocket County, Tennessee.” Box 145, Folder 1, SEF Papers; L. McFarlin Gibbes, “Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939-1940, Botetourt County, Virginia.” Box 145, Folder 5, SEF Papers; Daves, “A Scrapbook of Jeanes Work, 1940,” SEF Papers.

inquiring and investigating attitude of mind best promotes learning and that children should be made aware of the rich implications of everyday things.”¹¹¹ Denney’s pedagogy, while not explicitly political, had political consequences. First, by treating the local black community’s cultural and economic traditions as worthy of classroom discussion, Denney expanded the range of what could be considered “intellectual”; if, for example, the classroom examined farming techniques, students could see their parents’ occupation as something that deserved to be studied. Second, Denney’s pedagogy linked “inquiring and investigating” thought to local conditions. By teaching students to interrogate their direct surroundings, the teachers of Chester County indirectly equipped them to question manifestations of racism and poverty in their daily lives. Denney instilled in students the belief that their everyday lives had “rich implications” – in other words, that their experiences had deeper significance worth analyzing and studying. This gave students the ability to interpret the meaning of their own experiences, rather than accepting dominant narratives that denigrated rural African-American southern communities. Moreover, it is doubtless that some students who questioned their own lives found structural, societal answers, creating a political consciousness.

Lillian Edwards, a Jeanes Supervisor in Peach County, Georgia, delineated an educational philosophy that explicitly tied the study of local problems to political participation and economic inequality. She began by questioning the purpose of education:

Society which supports education in a democracy has a right to challenge the program of education with the following questions: 1. Does the school help to raise the standard of living? 2. Does it strengthen democracy through developing efficiency of living together? 3. Does it promote optimum growth and development of the individual by providing for him an appropriate educational experience in solving problems which remove difficulties in everyday living? 4. Does it lift the level of living in the community by helping

¹¹¹ Carrie M. Denney, “Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939-1940, Chester County, Tennessee.” Box 145, Folder 1, SEF Papers.

the people to recognize, to attack and to solve their real life problems? 5. Is it built cooperatively with people and upon their needs?¹¹²

Edwards' educational approach was lodged in an economic critique. Because southern states were rich in resources but members of her community continued to live in poverty, Edwards embraced the "resource-use education" philosophy as a way of helping her students take matters into their own hands. To accompany her economic egalitarianism, she invited them to "challenge" the very school system she oversaw, modeling deliberative, anti-hierarchical democratic engagement. Edwards saw ordinary rural life as inherently intellectual, so that her students needed myriad "knowledges, skills, habits, attitudes, and stimulation" to thrive.¹¹³ For example, in Myrtle, Georgia, excessive rain had led to soil erosion in 1949. Edwards had students perform experiments on local soil, write letters to local farmers asking for advice, and watch a test of the soil at a local college. The result was that students practiced science and literacy skills, were exposed to new sources of expertise in their community, and were able to use the lesson to help their parents improve soil quality and agricultural output.

What relationship did Edwards see between studying soil quality and strengthening democracy? How could such a lofty goal as reducing economic injustice be addressed through such simple means? On a basic level, the soil quality lesson allowed students to address a problem in their community, perhaps substantially increasing their parents' income that year. However, Edwards suggested that the lesson had taught students a process wherein they recognized local problems and used their academic skills and community resources to find

¹¹² Lillian D. Edwards, "Resource-Use Education," Jeanes Supervisors Quarterly, March 1949. Box 146, Folder 12, SEF Papers. Resource-use education was popularized in African-American normal schools and colleges in the late 1940s and 1950s. A detailed study of the program can be found in Theodore Roosevelt Speigner, "An Analysis of the Resource-Use Education Program of North Carolina College at Durham" (University of Michigan, 1961).

¹¹³ Lillian D. Edwards, "Resource-Use Education," Jeanes Supervisors Quarterly, SEF Papers.

solutions. The same process of identifying local and state resources to address a community problem might be used to lobby the state to more effectively distribute its resources, or to tackle poverty in the area. By rooting students' education in community issues rather than abstract problems, the school also imparted moral instruction, nurturing a sense of public service and communal responsibility in students. Edwards believed that the knowledge and skills that allowed one to solve everyday problems could also empower students to solve much broader political problems. Thus, the lesson – which on the surface had nothing to do with politics – prepared students for community and political participation.

Occasionally, Jeanes Teachers did explicitly organize community members to vote or otherwise lobby the county government for equal treatment. Carrie Wilder in Morgan County, Georgia, organized a civic committee to “discuss informally or formally with local officials the conditions of our rural schools, roads, and the like and ask their sympathetic help to improve these conditions. They will be reminders to these officials but not become boresome. They will be patient waiters on success but not sleepers.... This group will study the importance of voting, and how to vote.”¹¹⁴ Wilder's cautious but insistent tone suggests that political organizing could still meet with white retaliation, even when Jeanes Teachers worked tirelessly to win the support and trust of white members of the community. Nevertheless, since black residents had highly restricted opportunities to vote, the Morgan County civic club served as an alternate mechanism for political representation. In Caroline County, Virginia, Mayme Coleman organized a civic club that helped adults register to vote, pay their taxes, and lobby the county school board to build a black high school. She also organized an African-American teachers' association which

¹¹⁴ Georgia Division of Negro Education, “Community Organization,” September 19, 1938. Box 68, Folder 594, GEB-RAC Papers.

successfully petitioned the school board for increased salaries.¹¹⁵ In Okhtibba County, Mississippi, Mildred Williams led black teachers in establishing their own federal credit union to combat the injustice of their low salaries.¹¹⁶ Reta Sanders of Morris County, Texas, used a citizenship education unit to celebrate black achievements and contributions to American history.¹¹⁷ While this kind of explicitly political organizing was less common, it did demonstrate the clear political consequences of Jeanes Teachers' decades of community development work.

Most importantly, Jeanes Teachers taught their students they could make demands of their governments and of mainstream American society. When Catherine Watkins Duncan had her first political awakening, she realized that her objective as a Jeanes Teacher was "to do things which would hasten the acceptance by government of its responsibility in connection with Negroes, especially in the South."¹¹⁸ Winifred Daves's long-term goal for her county schools was "to develop the pupil so as to develop the best possible citizen, to bear his responsibility, to share the blessings of society, and in turn, contribute to society for its continued growth and prosperity."¹¹⁹ The Jeanes Story concluded that all Jeanes work served as a "base for fruitful participation of black children and youth in the mainstream of American life."¹²⁰ As much as Jeanes Teachers taught their students that they needed to be change-makers who addressed the symptoms of government neglect in black communities, they also taught them that they were citizens who were entitled to the state's resources.

¹¹⁵ Coleman, "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939-1940, Caroline County, Virginia," SEF Papers.

¹¹⁶ Williams and Committee, 72.

¹¹⁷ The South's Essential Light: Jeanes Supervisors Quarterly, 20.

¹¹⁸ Quoted in Shaw, 110.

¹¹⁹ Daves, "A Scrapbook of Jeanes Work, 1940," SEF Papers.

¹²⁰ Williams and Committee, 92.

Jeanes Supervisors were tireless social workers and activists who, despite their enormous impact on black education, have been largely overlooked by historians.¹²¹ In Botetourt County, Virginia, L. McFarlin Gibbes reflected, “I am The Doctor, Nurse, Home Agent, Farm Agent, Preacher, Teacher, or in short a Missionary. I have never refused an opportunity to serve my fellow man regardless of how long the day or dark the night.”¹²² Yet she and other Jeanes Teachers consistently wrote of the joy and personal fulfillment that their positions brought them. Virginia Miller, in nearby Buckingham County, wrote that she was “supremely happy” as a Jeanes Teacher despite the challenges she faced.¹²³ From the earliest days of the program, Jeanes Teachers believed their work was the work of nation-making, and they unabashedly referred to themselves as “The South’s Essential Light.”¹²⁴

Jeanes Work and the Civil Rights Movement

The Jeanes program lived and died with Jim Crow. Jeanes teachers saw the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision as a manifestation of their dreams for educational equality, and The Jeanes Story claimed that “all of Civil Rights legislation, most especially, the desegregation of schools, facilitates the original role and function of the Jeanes Supervisor.”¹²⁵ At the same time, Jeanes teachers felt ambivalent about the Jeanes program’s end; after decades of building a nurturing culture of educational excellence and citizenship in black schools, the loss of those schools was painful.¹²⁶ In fact, one of the major protests against one-way school integration policies that decimated black schools was tied to a Jeanes Teacher’s legacy. In 1968, when Hyde

¹²¹ Littlefield, 46.

¹²² L. McFarlin Gibbes, “Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939-1940, Botetourt County, Virginia.” Box 145, Folder 5, SEF Papers.

¹²³ Virginia L. Miller, “Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939-1940, Buckingham County, Virginia.” Box 145, Folder 5, SEF Papers.

¹²⁴ White, 36. The South’s Essential Light, in SEF Papers.

¹²⁵ Williams and Committee, 92.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 82-83.

County students boycotted school for a full year to protest the school board's decision to close three black public schools, they were especially eager to protect their prized O. A. Peay High School, which was named after their county's former Jeanes Teacher.¹²⁷

Jeanes Teachers' work reverberated through the Civil Rights Movement in another crucial way. During the Civil Rights era, female leaders were concentrated in educational programs which built on the Jeanes tradition of community empowerment through education. The Citizenship Education Program, which became a part of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1961, trained hundreds of black educators to lead adult literacy programs that prepared rural African Americans to register to vote and organize against segregation. The program's pedagogy was shaped by Septima Clark, who had taught in South Carolina public schools for forty years, and the program's first teacher, Bernice Robinson. Like Jeanes Supervisors, Clark and Robinson developed a program that began by inviting illiterate adults to share their own stories, using students' experiences and communities to build their literacy. They included sewing and crocheting as part of their program, since it allowed students to chat informally and grow comfortable together. On that foundation, citizenship teachers built up students' ability to discuss citizenship, state constitutions and voting laws, taxes, and social welfare policy.¹²⁸ These teachers also taught students that citizenship involved community development, not just voting: their students strengthened African-American economic self-sufficiency by starting their own credit unions, housing projects, and kindergartens.¹²⁹ Another key effort within the civil rights movement was the Mississippi Freedom Schools, one of the

¹²⁷ For a detailed history of the Hyde County school boycotts, see David Cecelski, Along Freedom Road (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

¹²⁸ Katherine Mellen Charron, Freedom's Teacher: The Life of Septima Clark (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 2009), 251-2.

¹²⁹ Charles M. Payne, I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1995), 75.

most visible components of the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer. Pioneered by activist-educator Ella Baker through her leadership in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Freedom Schools taught black children to question authority by adopting a non-hierarchical teaching model, in which teachers and students worked together to develop a highly local curriculum that fostered inquisitive intellectualism in students.¹³⁰

The enormous importance of educational work in ensuring civil rights successes is often overlooked in histories of the movement. This is in part because citizenship education was considered women's work. Charles Payne argues that although the majority of civil rights workers were female, women's leadership tended to emphasize a grassroots approach where they quietly trained local people to lead themselves, instead of the highly visible, top-down leadership style employed by many male civil rights workers.¹³¹ Although their inclusive leadership style allowed black women's contributions to be undervalued or ignored, it was also essential to the civil rights movement's success. SCLC's strategy relied on highly visible mass demonstrations, but rural black southerners, who risked job loss or violent retaliation, were understandably reluctant to support massive civil rights protests. Citizenship Schools and Freedom Schools alleviated students' fears by effecting a personal transformation through pedagogy, equipping them with pride, political literacy, and the feeling that their communities deserved more. They were established in communities long before high-profile leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr., initiated massive protests there, and their long-term organizing work was the reason those protests succeeded. Citizenship Schools also remained in communities long after the television cameras left, helping their communities achieve material gains and resist retaliations.¹³² Clark

¹³⁰ Barbara Ransby, Ella Baker & the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 326-9.

¹³¹ Payne, 274-7.

¹³² Charron, 303-304.

and Baker envisioned education as a form of long-term organizing, without which direct action could not succeed. Their model of empowering local people to address their own challenges strongly echoed the Jeanes Supervisors' program. Thus, as mentors and educators, Clark and Baker formed a bridge between the community development activism of the Jeanes generation and a new generation of radical activists involved in SNCC and the Black Power movement.

Although Clark, Robinson, and Baker were not themselves Jeanes Supervisors, they were long-time educators and organizers who worked closely with southern black teachers' organizations and civic clubs – the political infrastructure that Jeanes Teachers had built. Through their long experiences with rural communities and educators, they would have been exposed to the ideas underlying the Jeanes pedagogy of empowerment. This is not to argue that Jeanes Supervisors directly shaped civil rights pedagogy, but rather to trace the intellectual lineage between Jeanes work and civil rights education. Freedom Schools and Citizenship Schools proved what Jeanes Teachers had been saying all along: that community-based education, even if ostensibly nonthreatening and nonpolitical, was a subversive long-term strategy for equality. A pedagogy that invited black parents and children to shape curriculum, used their experiences and heritage as the basis for literacy, and designed academic experiences to challenge students to question and change the way things were, inevitably pushed the community toward political participation and economic self-determination.

Epilogue: A Lesson for the Future

The Jeanes Teachers worked during a period in American educational history that was remarkably similar to the current moment. Our schools are rapidly re-segregating as a result of housing segregation, legal decisions, and policies intentionally designed to undo the gains made by mandatory desegregation programs. Black and Latino/a students are increasingly isolated in

underfunded, high-poverty schools.¹³³ Moreover, corporate philanthropy has begun to dominate education policy targeted at low-income students of color, to an extent that has not been true in American education since the days of the General Education Board. The current Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, has never worked in education, but gained her experience in education policy through her philanthropic program that drastically transformed the public schools of Michigan, especially Detroit. Mark Zuckerberg, the Chief Executive Officer of Facebook, donated one hundred million dollars to the city of Newark on the condition that the city redesign its public education system, implementing a top-down reform that largely excluded African-American and Latino Newark families from the decision-making process.¹³⁴ Other philanthropists have chosen to donate to national charter school networks. Goldman Sachs donated twenty million dollars to the Harlem Children's Zone in 2011, while hedge fund billionaire John Paulson donated 8.5 million dollars to Success Academy.¹³⁵

What all of these donations have in common is that they have been used to implement market-based school reform that, in many cases, exposes children of color to a pedagogy of strict discipline and harsh punishment. They support charter schools and voucher systems on the grounds that the quality of education will rise if schools are businesses that must compete for

¹³³ Gary Orfield, Susan Eaton, and Harvard School Desegregation Project, Dismantling Desegregation: The Quiet Reversal of Brown V. Board of Education (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996); Gary Orfield and Erica Frankenberg, "Brown at 60: Great Progress, a Long Retreat and an Uncertain Future," (University of California Los Angeles Civil Rights Project, 2014).

¹³⁴ Dale Russakoff, The Prize: Who's in Charge of America's Schools? (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing, 2015).

¹³⁵ Goldman Sachs, "Supporting the Harlem Children's Zone," <http://www.goldmansachs.com/citizenship/goldman-sachs-gives/meet-the-grantees/harlem-children-zone.html>. Kate Taylor, "Success Academy Gets \$8.5 Million to Add Charter Schools in New York City," New York Times July 30, 2015.

profit, despite evidence that in most cases these programs result in dramatic segregation.¹³⁶ Success Academy, Uncommon Schools, KIPP Academy, Harlem Children’s Zone, and Achievement First – the most prominent charter networks in the nation – embrace a “no-excuses” discipline model, which holds that low-income children need to be highly disciplined because unruly school environments prevent academic growth.¹³⁷ The teaching technique at these schools is inspired by Doug Lemov’s popular book, Teach Like A Champion. Lemov and his partners—almost all of whom worked in business before turning to education—have established the Relay Graduate School of Education in fourteen cities. Each year, Relay trains two thousand prospective teachers, including Teach for America participants, in the Teach Like A Champion techniques.

Lemov’s pedagogy is, by his own appellation, a classroom version of “broken windows” policing, and it is explicitly for African-American and Latino/a students.¹³⁸ It urges teachers to explicitly instruct students in how to sit, stand, fold their hands, take notes, and speak, and to punish students when they fail to uphold these standards; the emphasis is on physical behaviors designed to inculcate in students the values of hard work, concentration, and unquestioning obedience to the teacher. For example, Lemov recommends using the call-and-response technique because “students respond to a prompt as a group, exactly on cue, over and over again.... It makes crisp, active, timely compliance a habit, committing it to muscle memory. This reinforces the teacher’s authority and command.”¹³⁹ Eva Moskowitz, the Chief Executive Officer

¹³⁶ Richard Kahlenberg; Halley Potter, A Smarter Charter: Finding What Works for Charter Schools and Public Education (New York: Teachers College Press, 2014).

¹³⁷ Eva S. Moskowitz, “Orderliness in School -- What a Concept,” Wall Street Journal March 15, 2016.

¹³⁸ Doug Lemov, Teach Like a Champion: 49 Techniques That Put Students on the Path to College. (San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2010), 195.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 126.

of Success Academy, argued in the Wall Street Journal that because students’ “physical behavior reflects their mental state,” the ideal teacher must “set behavioral expectations to reflect the mental state he insisted his students have.”¹⁴⁰ This pedagogy is eerily similar to the Hampton model in its focus on using physical activities to inculcate emotional and moral attitudes which discourage children from questioning authority and encourage absolute obedience. Sociologist Joanne Golann argues that no-excuses pedagogy funnels students into working-class labor positions and poorly equips them for economic and political leadership, just as industrial education did.¹⁴¹ Moreover, overly harsh, racially disparate discipline places children of color at risk of incarceration, a phenomenon known as the school-to-prison pipeline.¹⁴²

Philanthropists have also used their political clout to push for federal policies that mandate a dramatic expansion of standardized testing, including No Child Left Behind and Race to The Top. Wayne Au argues that high-stakes standardized testing similarly exacerbates inequality. Because low-income schools, which primarily serve students of color, are most likely to be closed if they perform poorly on tests, test preparation dominates instruction. This reduces instruction in high-poverty schools to low-level drills and rote memorization tasks that are covered by tests, rather than the high-level critical thinking and community-based instruction that prepare students to be citizens in every sense of the word.¹⁴³ We are witnessing a return to the General Education Board’s vision of “social efficiency,” whereby education is used to track

¹⁴⁰ Eva Moskowitz, “Why Kids Need to Sit up and Pay Attention,” The Wall Street Journal November 12, 2015.

¹⁴¹ Joanne Golann, “The Paradox of Success at a No-Excuses School,” Sociology of Education 88, no. 2 (2015): 1.

¹⁴² Advancement Project, “Test, Punish & Push Out: How ‘Zero Tolerance’ and High Stakes Testing Funnel Youth Into the School-Prison-Pipeline,” 2010. <http://www.advancementproject.org/resources/entry/test-punish-and-push-out-how-zero-tolerance-and-high-stakes-testing-funnel>

¹⁴³ Wayne Au, Unequal by Design: High-Stakes Testing and the Standardization of Inequality (New York: Routledge, 2010), 88-9.

students into a racial and economic hierarchy instead of preparing them to build a more just, more equal society.

This essay, then, does not simply seek to recognize the Jeanes Supervisors for their historical contributions but also suggests a path for resistance today. The Jeanes Teachers developed a pedagogy that undermined racial hierarchy and built political and economic power in black communities at a time when the country's most "progressive" white leaders believed that a racialized pedagogy would cause African Americans to happily accept Jim Crow. Their educational tradition planted the seeds of civil rights pedagogy, but we are also indebted to them for many of today's progressive educational practices. In their accounts, we can see the roots of restorative justice in education, culturally relevant curricula, environmental justice programs, and place-based education. They demonstrate to today's teachers that an anti-racist educational movement must be both national in scope and highly local in its curriculum and design in order to mobilize students and communities for political action. The Jeanes Story concluded that "Power... comes only to those who produce it."¹⁴⁴ The task for educators today who seek to overcome the dictates of market-based school reform is to build power in their schools and communities, teaching children of color to interrogate the political realities of their experiences. The Jeanes Supervisors offer a lesson in shaping the radical movements of the future.

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¹⁴⁴ Williams and Committee, 92.

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Bibliographic Essay

In February 2016, I was in the process of interviewing for summer teaching jobs and exploring my options for teacher training after graduation. One of my interview experiences at a charter network, Uncommon Schools, both fascinated and troubled me: the school had sent me videos of “model teaching” which included strict regulation of students’ movements and “no-excuses” discipline. As I researched the network, I realized that its founder, Doug Lemov, was one of the most influential figures in the market-based education reform movement. I began to realize that the school and its incredibly widespread teaching philosophy, Teach Like A Champion, had gained their prominence through ties to corporate philanthropy. Many of the network’s leaders were former businesspeople, and its Board of Directors was comprised of leaders from financial institutions, consulting firms, and major corporations.

At the same time, I read James D. Anderson’s The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935. Anderson argues that the General Education Board’s philanthropy to black schools in the South was designed to reify racial hierarchy through industrial education, which would keep black students from challenging authority and make them efficient workers to profit their white bosses. This book had a powerful impact on me because it resonated so strongly with the phenomenon I was learning about in today’s schools, which are rapidly becoming resegregated. In both the early 1900s and the early 2000s, corporate leaders had swooped into schools with students of color, offering desperately-needed funds while imposing strict discipline, fewer intellectual opportunities, and a pedagogy that reinforced absolute obedience to authority. Next I read James Leloudis’s Schooling the New South: Pedagogy, Self, and Society in North Carolina, 1880-1920, a study of the rise of child-centered learning in white public schools as a way to prepare white children for business leadership. The contrast between industrial education and academically rigorous white public schools at the same time reminded me of the stark

pedagogical differences between affluent, majority-white public schools and no-excuses charter schools designed for children of color.

Because I want to be a teacher after graduation, I immediately wondered: how did educators resist the white supremacist ideology implicit in industrial education? Thus, my fascination with the Jeanes Teachers, African-American women who were hired to implement this very ideology, was born. Many historians have written about the impact of industrial education from the philanthropists' view, including Adam Fairclough in A Class of Their Own: Black Teachers in the Segregated South and William Link in A Hard Country and a Lonely Place: Schooling, Society, and Reform in Rural Virginia, 1870-1920. However, I wanted to focus on the Jeanes Teachers' firsthand accounts and experiences to get a sense of how they thought about their work. This was in part to seek an answer to a historiographical debate about how industrial education manifested on the ground. While Anderson argued that the impact of this racist ideology had been devastating, Fairclough and Link suggested that industrial education was a vague ideology that black teachers never really implemented, so its effect was minimal. My original research shows something of a middle ground: Jeanes Supervisors *did* adopt industrial education techniques, but they stripped them of their white supremacist underpinnings and replaced them with a community focus. Industrial education made an impact, but Jeanes Teachers strategically undermined its potential to exacerbate racial hierarchy.

I have been fortunate to have access to two archival collections with rich materials on the Jeanes Teachers. First, I visited the Rockefeller Archives Center to do research in the General Education Board Papers. Although during my first visit, I largely examined the correspondence of James Hardy Dillard and other GEB leaders, during my second visit I looked at reports and newsletters from various states' Divisions of Negro Education. From North Carolina, I was able to examine Nathan Newbold's reports. Because Newbold created monthly newsletters with

excerpts of Jeanes Teachers' reports, most of my primary material on early Jeanes Teachers comes from North Carolina; other than Virginia Randolph's letters, these excerpts were the only firsthand narratives that I could find from this period. Concerning the second generation of Jeanes Teachers, I found a wealth of information on Helen A. Whiting, her efforts to pioneer the life-related movement, and her profound impact on the Georgia Jeanes Supervisors. This included her correspondence, reports of conferences she organized, and issues of "The Open Road," a newsletter that included letters from Georgia Jeanes Teachers about their experiences. Whiting was the only state supervisor for whom I could find such detailed writings, which is why I concentrate on her leadership in the essay.

I also visited the Southern Education Foundation Papers at Atlanta University Center. These archives held several key resources for me. They included Virginia Randolph's personal correspondence with James Dillard; because so many of my sources were Jeanes Teachers' reports to their white supervisors, Randolph's letters are one of the only sources that are honest about conflict with and resistance against white school authorities. I also found a year's worth of reports from every Jeanes Teacher in Virginia and Tennessee for 1939-1940, issues of Jeanes Supervisors Quarterly (the newsletter of the National Association of Jeanes Supervisors), and Winifred Daves's scrapbook of her work in Jones County, North Carolina. Thus, my consideration of post-1930s Jeanes work is more geographically diverse than my section on early Jeanes Supervisors. These sources demonstrated that, across the South, Jeanes Supervisors were committed to life-related education, education for citizenship and community uplift, celebrating black children's potential, and addressing black communities' needs through education.

A final major primary source was The Jeanes Story: A Chapter in the History of American Education, 1908-1968, which I accessed at Yale's Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library. This incredible history was prepared by former Jeanes Teachers a decade after the

program's dissolution. Unlike many histories of the program, which focus on the white, male Presidents of the Jeanes Fund, this book is focused on celebrating the black women who shaped the program at the state and national levels. In addition to including excerpts from Jeanes Teachers' daily experiences, it includes an analysis of desegregation and the civil rights movement.

One of my most influential secondary sources in this essay was Glenda Gilmore's Gender & Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920. It contextualizes the early Jeanes Supervisors' work within black women's political organizing and community development efforts in North Carolina during the early years of Jim Crow. She shows that black women educators engaged in a subtle manipulation or "tilting" of industrial education, assuring funders that they adhered to the pedagogy while practicing very different values in the classroom. Moreover, Gilmore's work on black women's political strategies for community development theorizes interracial cooperation and their roles as clients of the state, and thus is readily applicable to the Jeanes Supervisors' work negotiating with white power structures for better schools in their communities. Stephanie Shaw's What A Woman Ought To Be and Do, a history of black professional women, describes black teachers' efforts to organize professional associations and includes many anecdotes about Jeanes Teachers. Shaw's conception of black professional women's "socially responsible individualism" and their emphasis on "community development" also provided a useful framework for analyzing Jeanes Teachers' values and motives.

Many Jeanes Supervisors were enmeshed in other middle-class black women's institutions, especially their churches and local women's clubs; the National Association of Jeanes Supervisors even urged Jeanes Teachers to join the National Association of Colored Women (NACW). I found Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham's Righteous Discontent: The Women's

Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920 and Deborah Gray White's research on the NACW in Too Heavy A Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894-1994 helpful in my efforts to understand the social and political values of the organizations that shaped Jeanes Teachers' lives.

Valinda Littlefield's dissertation, 'I Am Only One, But I Am One': Southern African-American Women Schoolteachers, 1884-1954, uses a biographical approach to describe the Jeanes Teachers' work. She focuses on the lives of Annie Wealthy Holland and Justine Wilkinson Washington, arguing that Jeanes Teachers had far more power in shaping black schools than was apparent on the surface. Littlefield makes a much sharper distinction than I do between the first and second generation of Jeanes Teachers, arguing that the second generation abandoned industrial supervision for curricular development. In contrast, I have chosen to stress the continuity between Jeanes Teachers' pedagogical techniques over generations to demonstrate that, well into the second generation, Jeanes Teachers repurposed industrial education activities for an empowering purpose through the life-related movement. I see curricular development as an addition to or expansion of first-generation Jeanes Teachers' work, rather than a substitution.

Finally, the history of educators in the civil rights movement was crucial to my argument. Katherine Mellen Charron's Freedom's Teacher: The Life of Septima Clark was a major influence on my own thinking. Because Charron describes Clark's pedagogical approach in such detail, I was able to draw parallels between the educational movement Clark pioneered through the Citizenship Schools, and Jeanes Teachers' philosophy of citizenship, community responsibility, and life-related teaching. Barbara Ransby's Ella Baker & the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision argues that, although Baker was not formally a teacher, she used progressive educational techniques as an organizer and youth mentor in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Both authors argue that Clark's and Baker's

pedagogical techniques were necessary foundations for the civil rights movement's success, in key areas like political mobilization and voter registration. I believe that the striking similarities between the Jeanes Teachers' pedagogy and that of Baker and Clark reveal the subversive and egalitarian political nature of Jeanes Supervisors' educational movement.

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