

SEEKING EDUCATION FOR LIBERATION:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF BLACK SCHOOLS IN ATHENS, GEORGIA
FROM EMANCIPATION THROUGH DESEGREGATION

by

MONICA DELLENBERGER KNIGHT

(Under the Direction of Judith Preissle)

ABSTRACT

Long before emancipation, black Americans recognized the paramount role that education would play in ameliorating their subjugation. From the beginning of U.S. history, black communities including the city of Athens, Georgia, banded together in the face of murder, torture, and relentless social oppression to create and maintain schools that were communal hubs and a highly valued source of education as a means of social reformation. This dissertation examines the development of the black schools of Athens from emancipation through school desegregation and depicts the roles that its private and public schools played in the social and economic progress of black Athenians. It uses historical ethnography to study the efforts of students, administrators, and educators such as Samuel F. Harris who have contributed to the landscape of Athens's black schools. The interviews of alumni of Athens's black schools, ranging from 1938 (Athens High and Industrial) to 1974 (Athens's integrated schools) indicate a significant decline in the role of schools as centers of the community, which lessens schools' impact on students' overall educational achievement. Finally, these contributors suggest how black communities built effective community schools despite the overwhelming adversity of reconstruction and the Jim Crow era. Their testimony shows how citizens and educators can work together to recreate the powerful and positive attributes of those black schools while avoiding the pitfalls that developed in many segregated schools.

INDEX WORDS: African American Education; African American Teachers; Segregation; African American Community; Athens, Georgia; Georgia History

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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DEDICATION

One of the many “dissertation for dummies” books advises that a writer should never open her dissertation with a quote. However, when I read the quotation below, it touched me so deeply that I had to include it as a way to express the sincere gratitude that I have to all of the community members who spent endless hours passing on their memories to me so that I could pass them on to the children of our community.

Every man [woman] in this life has a part to play, and, leaves a footprint, seen and followed by--some other. How well that part is played depends very largely on the man [woman]. It may be played loosely--carelessly--without a thought of anything but the NOW, the present; without any thought of its scope in reaching, touching, or influencing another's life. It is a footprint, nevertheless, and some one follows in it and is stunted in life, perhaps for life.

On the other hand that part may be played with great care as to every detail, with much toil in preparation, with the thought ever in view that "no man lives to himself alone," but that we are building character and making men [and women], how careful, then must one be in the CHOICE and USE of the material that tends to the "making" men [and women]. He, therefore, solves the problem of real living, learns the lesson of true success, and thus plants such footprints on "the sands of time" that observing ones are impressed thereby, and encouraged to follow them, seeing they lead to service and to honor.

It is highly fitting, then, that we should have before our youth in particular, and ourselves in general, the histories and biographies of men [and women] who have risen from the depths of ordinary life, beset with hardship, prejudice and ostracism, and in spite of all this, with perseverance and strong determination, have risen to the heights in the various positions in the affairs of this life; and that we may note the HOW they have risen, and the WHY they have attained these goals. These incentives can only be had in the spoken or written narration of this progression (Cooper, 1928, pp. 10-11).

With these thoughts in mind, I write this work for my son, Noble Jedediah Dellenberger Knight, and all of the other children in our community who with our support can *rise from the depths of ordinary life* to have his/herstories written about how they collaboratively fought against the oppression and disenfranchisement of the “other” and for the betterment of the “all.”

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I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the following individuals for their support throughout my graduate work. Without them, I would have never survived working full time, taking care of a baby, now toddler, and completing this work. Thank you loved ones.

John Knight, JD, LLM – I would like to acknowledge my wonderful husband who spent days reading over my work and giving me quality feedback and who spent countless nights and weekends cleaning the house, doing laundry and dishes, and taking our son to special places so that I could keep on working.

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Judith Preissle – I would like to acknowledge my major professor whose kind words kept me focused and on track.

Farris Johnson, Sr. – I would like to acknowledge my friend, who made me write all of his stories down by hand so that I would not only hear what he was saying, but also feel it.

Angie Moon de Avila – I would like to acknowledge my colleague and transcriber who worked diligently to capture each word from my interview tapes so that I could tell the whole story.

My Participants – Each one of the men and women who took time out of their own lives to bring this work to light, telling me your stories of success and sorrow, I thank you. I have learned so much from each of you and now our community can learn from you also.

I have included what I am calling a *Cast of Participants* in Table I, pp. xiv-xvi. This table of information on those interviewed for this study will help guide readers through the text.

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Table 1
CAST OF PARTICIPANTS

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Year Born</i>	<i>Church Affiliation</i>	<i>Family Home</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Education Completed</i>
Farris Johnson, Sr.: (F. Johnson)	1921	Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church	Mother: Athens. Father: Athens.	F. Johnson: Teacher; principal; assistant to the superintendent. Father: Insurance	F. Johnson: Atlanta University (MEd.)
Howard B. Stroud: (H. Stroud) parents married; six children; Husband of Moore and Brother of Melvin, George, and Charles <i>Deceased</i>	1930	Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church	Mother: Athens. Father: Athens.	Stroud: Teacher; principal; superintendent; board member of Athens Regional Medical Center; steering committee member of Partnership for a Prosperous Athens Father: Barber in Hot Corner; self employed; bus driver for Clarke County; Insurance sales. Mother: Teacher; homemaker.	H. Stroud: Union 1948; Morehouse College (MEd.) Mother: college graduate Father: did not finish high school.
Ileane Nesbit Nunnally: (Nunnally) parents married; two children.	1930	Ebenezer Baptist West	Mother: Athens. Father: Athens.	Nunnally: Teacher (AHIS/BHHS, Cedar Shoals, Lyons) Mother: Seamstress Father: Chauffer	Nunnally: AHIS 1947; Clarke Atlanta graduate. Mother: Morris Brown College
Fanny Frances Neely Nesbit: (Nesbit) parents separated; eight children	1934	Billups Grove Hill First Baptist		Nesbit: Teacher (Timothy); Dietitian; College Teacher; Director of Dorm (Clark) Mother: Teacher (Billups)	Nesbit: AHIS around 1950; Clark College Mother: 8 th grade. Father: 7 th grade.
Harold Horton: (Horton) parents deceased; raised by grandmother with sister and two cousins	Mid 1930s	Baptist	Mother: Putnam; raised in Athens. Father: Athens	Horton: Teacher and Principal (Athens). Grandmother: Housekeeper.	Horton: AHIS 1950; college graduate. Grandmother: 6 th – 7 th grade.

Participant	Year Born	Church Affiliation	Family Home	Occupation	Education Completed
Bennett Johnson: (B. Johnson) parents divorced, three children.	1936	Grady Bethel Ebenezer Baptist West	Father: Athens.	Johnson: Teacher (BHHS); musician. Mother: Head of household; singer.	Johnson: AHIS 1952; Morris Brown College Mother: 9 th grade.
Bettye Moore Stroud: (Moore) mother passed when she was five; raised by aunt and uncle	1937	Chestnut Grove		Moore: Teacher; author. Father: Army; railroad. Uncle: Preacher	Moore: Union 1955; college graduate Aunt: did not finish school. Uncle: did not finish school.
George Stroud: (G. Stroud) brother of Howard, Melvin, and Charles	1938	Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church	Mother: Athens. Father: Athens.	G. Stroud: Minister of Music (Mt. Pleasant)	G. Stroud: Union 1956; three years of college
Charles Stroud: (C. Stroud) brother of Howard, Melvin, and George	1940	Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church	Mother: Athens. Father: Athens.	C. Stroud: Teacher (Athens).	C. Stroud: Union 1958; University of Georgia (MEd.)
Lee Linston III: (Linston) parents married; five children	1940	Greater Bethel AME	Mother: Athens. Father: Athens.	Linston: Manager (Georgia Power) Wife: Teacher (Athens) Daughter: Teacher (Athens)	Linston: AHIS 1960 Mother: AHIS 1937 Father: AHIS 1933 Wife: AHIS 1961; Oakwood College, Huntsville, AL; University of Georgia (MEd)
Mack Sewell: (Sewell); parents married; two children	1940	Hill Chapel Baptist Church		Sewell: Associate Judge (GA Dept of Juvenile Justice, retired 2001)	Sewell: AHIS 1958; college Mother: 5 th grade Father: 8 th grade
Melvin Stroud: (M. Stroud) brother of Howard, Charles, and George	1942	Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church	Mother: Athens. Father: Athens.	M. Stroud: Custodian (Mt. Pleasant)	M. Stroud: AHIS 1960; two years of college
Charles Maddox: (Maddox) parents divorced; brother to Alberta (Lay) Maddox.	1946	Twin Oaks Baptist Church, Washington	Mother: Athens. Father: Oglethorpe.	Maddox: Pastor; District Director State Labor Department; chairman of the Athens Housing Authority's board of directors.	C. Maddox: AHIS 1964; 2 years University of Georgia Mother: 9 th or 10 th grade. Father: 9 th or 10 th grade.

Participant	Year Born	Church Affiliation	Family Home	Occupation	Education Completed
Elizabeth Smith Platt: (Smith) raised by grandmother; five children	1949	Chestnut Grove		Smith: University of Georgia Administrative Assistant	Smith: BHHS 1967; Athens Technical College Mother: Judia C. Harris; probably around 8 th grade.
Alberta Lay Maddox: (Lay) parents divorced; five children; sister to Charles Maddox	1949	Chestnut Grove	Mother: Athens. Father: Oglethorpe.	Lay: Civil Service	Lay: BHHS 1967; Athens Technical College
Agnes Green: (Green) parents married, two children.	1951	Hill Chapel Ebenezer Baptist West	Mother: Oglethorpe. Father: Athens.	Smith: Anesthesiologist. Mother: Atlanta Insurance. Father: Pharmacist.	Smith: BHHS 1969; Tuskegee University (undergraduate) and University of Alabama (medical school). Mother: 2-3 years of college.
Jeff Foster: (Foster) parents married; seven children.	1957	Springfield Baptist Church	Father: Athens	Foster: Custodian for Clarke County Schools Mother: Seaboard Farms Father: St. James Church	Foster: 1974 (Clarke Central High School) Father: Union Baptist 1949

CHAPTER 1 STUDYING BLACK EDUCATION IN ATHENS, GEORGIA

As students walked down the halls of Athens High and Industrial School (AHIS) in the 1950s and 1960s, Farris Thomas Johnson, Sr., a 1938 graduate of the school who later became a teacher and administrator, admonished them, “You follow the rules, now,” and “You finish your lessons.” These were common themes heard in the hallways and classrooms of the black schools of Athens, Georgia, from the opening of Athens’s first black school in 1868 through the closing of Athens’s last black school in 1970. Students who attended these community schools suggest that they were built on the philosophy of pride, hope, and high expectations with a special focus on leadership, graduation, and community development. The teachers in them were known to be so strict that they scared some of their students but so loving that those same students remember their names 40 years later. Even under the heaviness of the racist political and social practices of the town, the unforgettable and motivating teachers in these schools diligently worked to pass on these values to their students and help them becoming contributing members of the Athens community (Johnson, July 17, 2006, Interview; Smith (Platt), December 31, 2006, Interview).

Little time was spent at these schools worrying about what black students¹ lacked compared to the white students in the schools down the street. One 1969 graduate said that she knew that even in a school with cast-off books and few supplies she could learn, and she certainly did (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview). Even though virtually everything about the separate system of black schools was considered by many black Americans and even the federal government to be inferior to the white schools, the students attending Athens’s black schools did not consider the education that they received or their teachers or schools to be inferior to those of the white students (Thurmond in BHL Middle School, 2004). “You couldn’t fail,” claimed a 1958 graduate of AHIS, “because everyone in the community played a role in raising you and

was pulling for your success.” A later generation’s caution that “it takes a village” formed a sound educational platform on which Athens’s early black community² was built (Sewell, July 11, 2006, Field notes).

In 1917, when AHIS opened as the first accredited black school in the state of Georgia, the black community³ of Athens had already successfully opened and operated numerous private and community schools throughout the city and county. Much time and energy were put into these schools by black Athenians, and, like other black southern communities, Athens considered education the key to the economic and social uplift of the black community. This core value remained central to the development of the schools until school integration in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Several community members have suggested that, when black schools were desegregated, the newly integrated schools lacked the “caring” environment prevalent in all-black schools. Two 1967 graduates of Burney Harris High School (BHHS), previously AHIS, said that they were glad that they did not choose to participate in school integration, which was a choice for high school students when it began in 1964. “School there was different than school was here. Why should we have to move away from all our friends and caring teachers? No white folks came to us to go to school” (Maddox (Lay), July 11, 2006, Interview; Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview). A 1969 graduate of BHHS said that the black school was the hub of the community. If they left it, he queried, what would happen to that community (Campbell in DeMao, 2006)?

An analysis of one hundred years of archival data and numerous interviews of graduates, teachers, and administrators of Athens’s black schools suggests that “something happened when the schools were integrated.” Black Athenians “lost something.” The sense of fellowship and

alliance grounded in the schools was lost following integration. “We were expected to integrate into *their* schools. We lost our community school. We lost our heritage” (Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview). The vision and drive that embodied Athens’s black educational movements from emancipation through the 1960s has yet to be regained 30 years following the closing of Athens’s last black school. This dissertation tells the history of the development of the black schools of Athens from emancipation through school desegregation and considers the role that the schools played in the social and economic progress of black Athenians.

The History

Throughout the age of slavery, black thirst for education could not be quenched. Some scholars have claimed that during this era black efforts for educational development were more important to blacks than white educational efforts were to whites. Despite laws prohibiting black literacy, five percent of freed blacks and slaves became literate in the 1860s (Anderson, 1988; Genovese, 1974). Heard, an exslave who opened a school in Athens following emancipation said, “Any slave caught writing” would suffer “the penalty of having his forefinger cut from his right hand” (Heard, 1928, p. 31). This was no small danger, of course, to a group of people who depended on their hands to eke out a subsistence in a cruel, unforgiving society. Many risked this punishment and more as they secretly studied and passed their learning onto others (Genovese, 1974).

Prior to the Civil War, black slave labor was the driving force of southern economic growth. Blacks were regarded as the backbone of southern farming and agricultural development, so whites in states like Georgia used black illiteracy to retain control of them (Litwack, 1998a). Religious education and slave etiquette were provided by the slave master if they were thought to increase the “economic value”⁴ of a slave (Genovese, 1974; Gutman, 1977;

Levine, 1977; Schwartz, 2000; Woodson, 1919). Only a few masters provided their servants with formal literacy opportunities because most feared prosecution or they believed that the learning would result in slave revolts or runaways. In the Georgia town of Athens, where slave insurrections were often rumored, “incendiary literature”⁵ discussing abolition frightened local slave owners and, as a result, formal training in reading and writing remained a white privilege well beyond emancipation (Coleman, 1968; Genovese, 1974).

However, southern blacks understood that social power, influence, and wealth would only be gained through formal studies (Litwack, 1998a). Even with the threat of severe consequences, many blacks sought literacy through self-teaching or secret lessons with literate slaves or white mistresses and schoolchildren (Schwartz, 2000). At least two large plantation owners in Athens are known to have paid for northern schoolmarms to help their slave communities become literate. Informal education was also very common within slave communities as culture was passed from generation to generation through traditional songs, ceremonies, and survival techniques (Levine, 1977).

Immediately following their emancipation in 1865, black Athenians began vigorously searching for ways to secure their new freedoms through education. The struggle for formal education gave this community a unifying goal and a sense of identity, similar to the struggle for abolition. This group-struggle brought about increased communal involvement, political action, and fundraising in the black community, especially in churches and lodges (Litwack, 1998a). By 1868 with the help of the Freedmen’s Bureau and local black churches, the black community of Athens opened several private black schools to meet their educational needs (O'Brien, 1999; Thurmond, 1978).

With Athens's black community providing the labor for Athens's business and industrial development throughout Reconstruction, the teaching of freed blacks soon became a central concern of white Athenians. Many whites believed that losing control of black education would inevitably jeopardize white superiority and the southern political economy. In an effort to retain control of the black schools, whites joined blacks in 1885 to vote for a \$20,000 bond issue to start the segregated Athens public school system (McGregor, 1901a). Right from the start, the white Athens City School Board made certain that the black schools were substandard by providing them with inadequate funding, dilapidated buildings, less qualified teachers, and minimal supplies (Flanigen, April 20, 1908, December 16, 1907a, February 17, 1908, March 23, 1908; Fultz, 1995a, 1995b).

Throughout the next 30 years, black community members fought for localized control of their schools and better accommodations for black students. As was common throughout the South, Athens's black teachers were paid less than one half the salary of most white teachers, and they were assigned to teach two to three times the number of students.⁶ Yet even with massive community support, black schools remained severely overcrowded and generally insufficient for meeting the needs of the growing black population.

Some of Athens's black educators and community activists sought other financial support for their schools, outside of local taxes, so that they did not have to be controlled by the school board. Judia Jackson Harris, for example, left teaching in Athens's public school system to open a rural industrial school that would accommodate blacks who because of distance or work obligations were unable to attend the city schools. Another well-known educator, Samuel F. Harris (Judia Jackson Harris's husband), diligently collected funds from wealthy northern

industrialists at the turn of the century so that he could open his own school focused on classical studies and industrial training (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

Hard working educators like Jackson Harris and Harris modeled what schools could look like, and by 1917, as I have mentioned previously, Athens had opened one of the first accredited black high schools in the state of Georgia. Some black Athenians viewed Athens High and Industrial School with trepidation because the curriculum seemed focused on service work instead of intellectual endeavors. This concern added to an ongoing controversy about what was best educationally for black children – the historic classical versus industrial education debate. During these debates, vocal black community members took the opportunity to confront the Athens City School Board about the continued decaying state of, and insufficient resources provided for, Athens’s black schools. They also addressed the lack of curriculum options and inferior pedagogical methods provided to Athens’s black students (Flanigen, December 16, 1907a, December 16, 1907b, February 17, 1908, March 23, 1908).

Throughout the transition from informal slave education to the Freedmen’s Schools to the development of the Athens public school system, Athens’s black community continuously sought more educational opportunities and improved resources for its children. Rooted deeply in their communal values, black Athenians have historically viewed education as valuable cultural capital⁷ that can benefit the community as a whole, not just those in school (Anderson, 1988). For over eighty years the strong desire for and belief in education have remained ingrained in Athens’s black community in the “face of enormous obstacles” and through the veil of segregation (O'Brien, 1999, p. 5). Throughout this history, public and private black schools became recognized as central hubs of the black community, and black teachers and administrators became known as community leaders and advocates. For over a century, these

schools produced masses of citizens who purchased their own homes, opened local businesses, won local and state elections, raised productive children, and became integral figures in the economic and social development of Athens (Thurmond, March 19, 1978; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

The Problem

However, following the 1970 federally ordered desegregation⁸ of Athens's public schools, the black community that had developed around Athens's black schools began to dissolve. School desegregation resulted in the firing or transferring of Athens's black teachers, many of whom had been raised and educated in Athens. In addition, most black administrators lost their previous political and social status and were demoted, placed back into the classroom, or pushed out of the profession altogether (Thurmond & Hester, 2001).

Athens's black schools were closed, some sitting unused for years, while black students were bused across town to less convenient white schools.⁹ Newly integrated schools refused to welcome or sponsor black communal functions,¹⁰ causing further divisiveness between black Athenians and the local school system (Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview). Over time, these frustrations seemed to cause the black community of Athens to stop relying on schools to educate and support their children.

Today, many black parents and guardians no longer view Athens's schools as community hubs, social arenas, or family-like settings where their children can acquire the necessary tools to become productive citizens. Once sites of cultural and community development, these schools are now isolated and unsupported institutions that once again have become racially identifiable through de facto segregation. Since integration, the gap between white and black students has

remained wide, and the loss of black community support for the schools has threatened if not deflected many of the educational initiatives to increase student achievement.

The Purpose

Historically, Athens's black schools have played a central role in the development of the wider black community. The black schools have been the community "safety nest" that prepared "black youths in leadership roles for higher endeavors in life." Black schools were considered the "centers of the black community," and everything else revolved around them (Campbell in DeMao, 2006, p. A3).

The overall purpose of this research (see p. 242 for guiding research questions) has been to provide a (re)conceptualization of Athens's black education roots, which were grounded in community development and racial uplift, so that school systems like those of Athens with large numbers of minority students can revision their schools as community centers. This dissertation was written to gather the memories of Athens's black schools so that those memories can remind Athenians about how important schools used to be to the community. Research shows that community-supported schools are necessary for all students and families to reach their highest potential, and I believe that Athens can reinvent those schools by being reminded of its roots (Dempsey & Noblit, 1993; Fleming, 1986; Harkavy & Blank, 2001; hooks, 2003; Morris, 1999; Siddle Walker, 1996; Stroer, April 3, 2001). Like the children say, "Been there, done that." Now, we just have to remember how it was done.

In the next chapter, I present a review of the literature on black education in the South as it relates to the national black freedom movement, specifically the control, content, and focus of black education. This and what I have presented in the first chapter provide a framework for understanding the sociopolitical environment surrounding black education. Discussions about the

impact of *Brown*, black teachers, and culturally relevant pedagogy are also central in this chapter.

In Chapters 3-8, I present an in-depth analysis of archival and interview data, highlighting the real voices of those individuals who participated as students, teachers, and administrators in Athens's black schools. Chapter 3 focuses on the history, dating back to preemancipation, of black Athenians seeking education through private endeavors. Chapter 4 then takes the reader to the fight for education through public endeavors, focusing on the 19th century, and how these related to the educational and social uplift for all black Athenians. Chapter 5 continues with the plight of black public education, but the focus shifts from simple educational uplift to economic uplift as well. This chapter details the work of Samuel F. Harris and the classical and industrial education debate that brewed in Athens's black schools at the turn of the century.

Chapter 6 returns the reader to education in the private domain, churches, schools, and lodges and clubs, after the turn of the century through the 1950s. This chapter details the prominent and often widely recognized black private schools that put Athens's black schools on the state and national map. Chapter 7 then discusses the development of Athens's black public schools from the start of the 20th century to integration. Interview data included in this chapter help to explain why black schools were considered centers of the community and how these schools affected the lives of the students who attended them. Finally in Chapter 8, details about the process of school integration in Athens are given, as well as an analysis of how the newly desegregated schools lost the community feeling previously grounded in the all-black schools of Athens.

Even though I do analysis throughout the work, Chapter 9 is the first place when my voice begins to dominate the conversation with a discussion of possible solutions and next steps to improve the education of black people in Athens. In this section, I discuss my ideas about reunifying community efforts, developing transformational leadership in the schools, and most importantly redeveloping schools as “community hubs.” Chapter 10 describes my methodology, the “methods of my madness,” while completing this work. This chapter provides the reader with information about the theoretical framework and research design I used to compose this work.

The concluding Chapter 11 ends the work with my thoughts as a cultural anthropologist and an educator. The chapter discusses how we can use research to improve education for those children who are currently being “miseducted.” As a white cultural anthropologist-educator striving to understand how to use this work to help change the current status of Athens’s schools, I am compelled to propose next steps for what I have learned.

CHAPTER 2 AFRICAN AMERICAN EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

Understanding how essential black schools were to the development of black communities requires understanding what was taught within those black schools. The work in these schools was often grounded in the racial uplift ideology of the era that rejected the notion that blacks were biologically inferior to whites. Differences between blacks and whites were attributed to the lack of power and resources that were the legacy of 200 years of slavery. This thinking, often stemming from the work of bourgeois black leaders, focused on the moral, intellectual, and physical uplift of blacks. Intellectual uplift, respectability, and the development of black community and cultural literacy ended up being the fundamental themes in black education throughout the 20th century (Gaines, 1996; Jarrett, 2004 ; V. W. Wolcott, 2001).

The following literature review discusses the “control, content, and focus” of black education in the United States. This chapter begins with a discussion of the groups and individuals who were perceived to have control over black education. Later parts of the chapter relay the types of instruction that were allowed and were promoted in the schools and the types of teachers who would provide such instruction. Debates about the underlying ideology of black education became central in conversations on racial uplift,¹¹ and black teachers became key figures in the advancement of black people in the United States. The examination of the historical foundations of black education starts here, but continues to be woven throughout subsequent chapters to link the issues within the black schools of Athens to the larger black freedom movement.

Control, Content, and Focus of Black Education

Throughout the past century, the struggle of African Americans for freedom began and remains inextricably connected to the struggle for black literacy and educational equity. Long

before the “so-called” modern Civil Rights Movement, black Americans considered quality schooling a *basic human right* (Shujaa, 1996). From the time that black people were bound by the chains of slavery, they expressed their desire for learning, self-improvement, and universal education. Following emancipation, blacks began to make it clear that they were “committed to training their young for futures that prefigured full equality and autonomy” (Anderson, 1988, p. 281; see also Fleming, 1986).¹² Even before the 1865 establishment of the Freedmen’s Bureau to provide education for the newly freed slaves, black communities were “self teaching” and opening their own “native” and “Sabbath” schools.¹³ Starting as early as Reconstruction, tensions were building around the question of who would control black schools and the “content and focus” within them (Anderson, 1988; Bullock, 1967; Butchart, 1980; Caliver, 1970; Lee & Slaughter-Defor, 2001; Litwack, 1998a; Woodson, 1919).

Following the turn of the century, black educators like W.E.B. Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, Mary McLeod Bethune, Ida B. Wells, William Monroe Trotter, Anna Julia Cooper, and Carter G. Woodson began to critically assess the issues of *control*, *content*, and *focus* within black education (Anderson, 1988). They determined that the role of black educational institutions was to provide black youth with a sense of “racial pride” and to prepare them for “movement into the mainstream of American political and economic life”¹⁴ (Anderson & Moss, 1999, p. 5; Franklin & Anderson, 1978). Building on the work of those educators, mid-century activists like Martin Luther King, Jr., and Thurgood Marshall began fighting for an equitable education that focused on the “utility” of the learning and the “culture”¹⁵ of the learner. With this model in mind, groups like the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) began opening “freedom schools” within segregated communities that linked black cultural history with personal, social, and academic development (Carson, 1991; Chilcoat & Ligon, 1999; King, 1948,

March 14, 1964; Williams, 1987). Following in the footsteps of these programs, less publicized grassroots community groups, churches, and public schools also began to provide this type of instruction ("Liberation school," June 21, 1970).

After the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling and the dismantling of the U.S. segregated educational system, black communities lost much of the educational control gained during the first half of the century. As black schools throughout the country closed, more than seventy-five thousand black educators lost their jobs. The loss of these “inspirational role models” resulted in “dramatic” changes in the “institutional structures of the black community” (Irvine & Irvine, 1983, p. 412). As a result, many blacks became even more involved with the content and focus of the curricula within the newly integrated schools, specifically the infusion of black and ethnic studies, out of concern for a loss of the black cultural development that had been a key component of black schools.

Today’s scholars, like Gloria Ladson-Billings, Jacqueline Jordan Irvine, Robert Moses, Lisa Delpit, and Michele Foster, continue to discuss this loss of cultural development. The work of these educational scholars and others supports the alignment of today’s curriculum standards and instructional practices to students’ life experiences through the use of materials and patterns of language that are culturally and linguistically familiar (Delpit, 1995; Foster, 1997; Irvine, 2002a; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Moses & Cobb, 2001). These scholars believe that this type of “interpersonal” culturally relevant teaching, a tradition found in all-black schools prior to school desegregation, can help to dispel the societal myths of racial inferiority and help to increase the academic and social achievements of black youth (Foster, 2001, p. 575; see also, Siddle Walker, 1993).

In the next section I focus on the curriculum debates among black educators from 1900 through the historic 1954 *Brown* decision, the impact that desegregation had on black educators and all-black schools, and how these developments have affected current theories of culturally relevant curriculum and instruction. By examining the history of and necessity for culturally relevant curriculum through a deep review of the control, content, and focus of black education before 1956, I show how schools became integral locations, what many call “community hubs,” in the historic Black Freedom Struggle.

Historical Foundations of Black Education: 1890s-1920s

At the turn of the 20th century, around three and a half million black children lived in the United States. However, only 31% of them were enrolled in school.¹⁶ By 1910, black school enrollment had increased by more than 500,000 students, and by 1930, more than 80% of all school-aged black children were attending school.¹⁷ With more black children attending school, black literacy rates leapt from 50 to 80% over that 30 year period (Anderson & Moss, 1999; Anderson, 1988; Harlan, 1958).

Even though black school attendance was increasing during those three decades, lower numbers of black students than white students per capita were attending school, especially in the South.¹⁸ In many states, especially agricultural ones like Georgia, economic and family pressures resulted in irregular school attendance for poor black children, and a lack of school finances meant that schools could stay open only a few months each year (Banks & Lynch, 1986; O'Brien, 1999). When schools were available to blacks, they were segregated, overcrowded, and often miles away from their homes. In addition to these problems, the school buildings were extremely dilapidated and lacked basic resources like chairs and books (Anderson, 1988; Banks & Lynch, 1986; Morgan, 1995). However, in the face of these obstacles, with the help of black

churches, northern philanthropies, and communal collaboration, black communities were able to establish a network of black educational institutions throughout the South (O'Brien, 1999).¹⁹

As these schools developed, ideological struggles among black educators began to emerge about what an “appropriate” black education should look like, who should have access to it, and who should control it (Anderson, 1988).²⁰ This dialogue became central in the growing Black Freedom Struggle, and over time, these debates became the platform on which the basic ideology of the Civil Rights Movement was built.

During these early debates, black educational scholars discussed three key curriculum models focusing on black literacy, citizenship, and work ethic. These models, the liberal classic, industrial education, and self-reliance education models, were the start of systematic changes in the content and focus of black schools. No matter which model was used, the ultimate goal of black education during this era was to build a “responsible leadership class” that would mobilize black people and lead them toward citizenship and equality (Anderson, 1978; Lee & Slaughter-Defor, 2001).²¹

Starting in the 1860s, northern missionary societies, white liberals, and some blacks pushed for a *liberal classics curriculum* based on “euro-classic traditions” and “democratic citizenship” (Lee & Slaughter-Defor, 2001, p. 352). In classical elementary schools, black students received instruction in “reading, spelling, writing, grammar, diction, history, geography, arithmetic, and music” (Anderson, 1988, p. 28). Using tools like the *McGuffey’s Readers* and the Webster blue-back speller in the primary grades, black students were taught a “common set of moral and patriotic precepts” through “moral tales, uplifting aphorisms, religious admonitions, and childlike rhymes” (Litwack, 1998a, p. 69).

Immediately following emancipation, some of the more conservative missionaries attempted to superimpose on the black schools a set of readers they sponsored that were designed specifically for exslave children. These readers, like the *Freedmen's Primer*, fostered social values designed to teach exslaves to accept their "economic and racial subordination" by portraying blacks in the stories as "subservient" or "morally and mentally inferior." All of these texts were designed to teach black students "proper English" so that they could discard any remaining "slave dialect" and to promote "habits of thrift, cleanliness, and temperance," so that they could live a "moral, virtuous, Christian" life (Litwack, 1998a, p. 70).

Black educators who adopted the New England classical liberal curriculum did not view it as a "mere imitation of white schooling." Instead, they viewed it as a way to ensure black youth "access to the best intellectual traditions of their era" so that they could understand the "historical development and sociological uniqueness" of their community and their own inherent right to equality in the Western world. By the turn of the century, most black land grant colleges, normal schools, and missionary colleges offered this type of curriculum through course offerings such as standard English, orthography, map drawing, physiology, algebra, geometry, theory and the practice of teaching, Latin, Greek, science, and philosophy (Anderson, 1988, p. 29).

Du Bois disagreed with this curricular model because he said that it inadequately focused on the economic development of blacks by training them to "cluster in white-collar jobs" that did not allow for the building of "business and independent institutions within African American communities" (Lee & Slaughter-Defor, 2001, p. 351). Like Du Bois, Woodson was also concerned that black colleges like Howard, Fisk, and Atlanta University were excessively valuing white ways of thinking and acting.²² Although some educators viewed the euro-curriculum as a means for blacks to "rise," these black educators explained that the design

merely replicated the curriculum and social organization found within white educational institutions (Lee & Slaughter-Defor, 2001).

Although Du Bois thought that the popularity of athletics, fraternities, and sororities in these classical schools was problematic, he recognized that these institutions attracted large enrollments. His work acknowledges that the schools would, at a minimum, produce leaders capable of coping with the “white world on its own ground and in its own thought, method, and language” (Du Bois, 1973a, p. 66). This was, actually, the original idea that led the missionary vanguard, a group of black leaders from missionary organizations like the American Baptist Home Mission Society and the American Missionary Association (AMA), to develop this type of classical curriculum. This group believed that black progress depended on the development of leaders with “noble and powerful minds” who could be “raised up from their own ranks” to deal with the politics and hierarchy of white society (Morgan in Anderson, 1988, p. 69). Because the intellectual development of black people was assumed to follow the “same laws” as the white man, these black leaders decided to design black school curriculum to match that of white schools (MacVicar in Anderson, 1988).

However, many northern philanthropists and southern whites believed that blacks would not be able to meet the expectations of this type of learning because they were members of a “child race” that was 2000 years behind white development. Using their wealth and power to obstruct the growing liberal education curriculum, these white leaders began to financially and politically support *industrial education programs* that would teach black students how to work, submit to authority, and “respect their superiors” (Anderson, 1988; Spivey, 1978). Industrial education included technical and vocational courses to prepare blacks for practical duties and skilled trades such as bakers, barbers, seamstresses, carpenters, masons, plasterers, cooks, maids,

janitors, as well as unskilled laborers. Spivey suggests that industrial education was designed by northern industrialists and white southerners to solve the “race problem” and make “lazy people” (blacks, immigrants, and working class people) “good for something” (1978).

In deference to the economic backing that it would provide for their schools, many black educators latched onto this ideology. However, others expressed concern that the industrial model was designed only to reinforce the existing social order of the country. Tension soon developed between the black supporters and opponents of industrial education. This tension, well documented in early 1900s black literature, became the central theme in the so-called “great debates” between scholars like Washington and Du Bois.

On one side of these debates, Booker T. Washington,²³ nicknamed the “Wizard of Tuskegee,” developed an educational philosophy from his work at the Hampton Normal and Industrial School that he believed would provide black students with an “*education for life*,” through “learning by doing” (Wish, 1964). Washington, a slave born in 1856, believed that the “moral uplift” of blacks could be achieved through labor if they were taught how to work productively (Bullock, 1967; Gibson, 1978; Woodson, 1919). Following in the footsteps of Civil War General Samuel Chapman Armstrong, the white founder of the Hampton school, Washington developed a curriculum that taught black students the skills, discipline, social graces, dress, demeanor, and gentility asserted to be necessary to become successful in the white world (Litwack, 1998a; Peabody, 1919).

Washington’s model had a major influence on other vocational curriculum development throughout the country. Following his lead, industrial schools began focusing on practical skills like sewing, washing, shoemaking, and carpentry. Even though these schools also had a minor emphasis on elementary academics like reading, mathematics, history, and moral science, the

curriculum was nothing like the material provided in the traditional classical schools. In addition, the industrial programs had very stringent rules and strict discipline routines that resulted in “severe punishment” for students who failed to follow them (Anderson, 1988; Spivey, 1978).

Black industrial educators asserted that, although a liberal classical curriculum could produce intellectuals who could recite Grecian history and geometry, those same students would not have the skills needed to work on a farm. Under Armstrong’s watchful eye, Washington developed the “Tuskegee Machine” that encouraged black people to remain in the good graces of the white community by training them for industrial jobs to add “wealth and comfort” to their communities without threatening the white-dominated social order. He noted that an “individual who can do something that the world wants done will, in the end, make his way regardless of his race” (Washington, 1899, p. 225). Washington’s philosophy, in many ways, seemed to stress that blacks should trust southern white paternalistic practices and accept white economic and social supremacy. He alleged that blacks would gain their due rights if they remained in the South, sought “useful” skills, and used those skills to “work hard” and save money so that they could purchase their own homes (Gibson, 1978).

Du Bois, on the other hand, believed that the industrial model put too much emphasis on manual and practical labor (Kliebard, 1986). Trotter, another dissenter, claimed that industrial education was based on the belief that blacks were innately inferior to whites and could do nothing other than manual work (Anderson, 1988; Lee & Slaughter-Defor, 2001). This assumption of black inferiority among industrial school leaders may be reflected in their neglect of black voting rights and black political participation; they believed that black people had enough issues to deal with outside of politics. This type of attitude, asserted publicly by Washington and other black industrial educators,²⁴ seemed to endorse the southern white racist

hierarchy instead of promoting the economic and political uplift of the black race (Anderson, 1988; Fredrickson, 1987).

In opposition to both the euro-classical and industrial curriculum models, educators like Trotter, Wells, Delaney, Woodson, Bethune, and Du Bois developed a curriculum based on a combination of classics and practical education that would help educate laborers for the workforce and the “talented tenth.”²⁵ These scholars wanted to develop institutions that prepared teachers and leaders to fight the illiteracy rate by providing courses that taught labor skills, Western knowledge, and community development to promote economic and social change in black communities (Fleming, 1986). This educative model, termed black *self-reliance education* by modern scholars, was designed and controlled by blacks and emphasized black values and traditions (Lee & Slaughter-Defor, 2001).

This early version of a “culturally relevant curriculum” helped to preserve and promote black culture by teaching black communities how to deal with systematic discrimination and racial prejudice (Fleming, 1986). The model was designed to infuse black educators and leaders with a “social consciousness” and knowledge of the history of the “American Negro,” to challenge existing “political and cultural norms,” enhance black community pride, and promote political and economic empowerment (Du Bois, 1961).²⁶

As the self-reliance model gained support and the industrial model came under attack, an undercurrent of negative sentiment about industrial education flooded the country. The Hampton-Tuskegee model finally faltered when the Niagara Movement²⁷ drove a wedge between the philanthropists and the “northern white neoabolitionists” (Anderson, 1988). In the end, the Du Bois and Trotter team won the ideological industrial-classical debate by keeping the industrial model from full infusion in U.S. schools. However, the educational struggle did not

stop there. The development of black training institutions and the curricula endemic to them remained central in the Black Freedom Struggle as concerns over financial sustainability kept many black southern schools under the economic thumb of northern industrialists.²⁸

Black Teachers, Black Schools, and the Black Freedom Movement: 1920s-1950s

The 1920s saw the dying off of black educators who were taught how to read and write secretly in slave cabins or openly in community-sponsored freedmen's schools. Most of the new school leaders had been trained in the industrial tradition, with a few attending classical institutions like Harvard. Following the rise of the "standardized test,"²⁹ which for many whites justified the claim of intellectual inferiority of black people, a strategic national campaign was started in the 1930s to improve the training of elementary and secondary black educators.³⁰ During this campaign many black institutions, previously industrial, began to reduce their vocational focus and broaden their courses to include academics beyond the elementary level.³¹

Believing that black schools could offer instruction equal to that provided by white schools, black teachers worked diligently with the American Teachers Association (ATA)³² from the 1930s through the 1960s to get their schools accredited by the same accrediting agencies as the white institutions. During this era, this type of "resistance" by black educators was common. Black educator debates for and against the industrial model, fights for accreditation, and the struggle for a sound, relevant, and rigorous curriculum soon became crucial points within the larger Black Freedom Struggle (Fairclough, 2001).

Following the "Great Migration" of the 1920s and 1930s, when black people throughout the South moved north for jobs in industry, many black students, by law or by residential patterns, became fully segregated into their own schools.³³ Even though the debates among classical, industrial, and self-reliance curricula resulted in curricular gains in these schools, the

per capita spending, teacher salaries, books, equipment, buildings, and length of school terms remained inequitable between black and white schools. Black educational disparities, especially in the South were the widest from the 1930s through the 1960s, and, as a result, black educators became important advocates in discussions on this growing divide.

Over time, black teachers became recognized as community members with the ability to change the face of black uplift and black educational institutions. Educators like Samuel F. Harris, a graduate of Morris Brown in the 1890s, Judia Jackson Harris, a graduate of Atlanta University in the mid 1890s, Homer T. Edwards, Sr., a graduate of Savannah State University in 1938, and Farris Johnson, Sr., a graduate of Morehouse in 1943, found themselves serving the black community as teachers, principals, and administrators in Athens's black schools. These men and women were recognized as "great leaders" in the black community whose activity extended well beyond the schoolhouse (Bowen, 2006). Lack of access to other professions seemed to result in increasing the number of black teachers, while also increasing their competency level and qualifications.³⁴ During this era, it was not uncommon for black educators to hold higher degrees than did their white counterparts, especially at the secondary level.³⁵ This professionalization of teaching resulted in black communities requesting that school boards hire all-black staffs³⁶ for black schools (Franklin & Anderson, 1978; Roberts-Bailey, 2006, Field notes; Siddle Walker, 1993).

Debates among black educators about "access to knowledge" came to the forefront during the pre-*Brown* years as black communities discussed whether access to white schools was as important as access to all-black schools with equal funding, respect, and resources. Concerned with black Americans being taught solely about white ideals, values, and norms, many black educators began discussions about how to make visible black achievements and contributions

and how to reduce instruction based primarily in white, Western philosophy. These discussions prompted scholars like Woodson to develop black or ethnic studies programs to teach the roles that black visionaries played in areas like history, literature, science, politics, economics, and music (Jackson, 2001). This black studies movement, directly connected to the self-reliance curriculum previously designed by Du Bois, Bond, and Bethune, reintroduced the concept of relevant curriculum as a means to teach “social consciousness, commitment, and action” within and around black community uplift (Lee & Slaughter-Defor, 2001, p. 356).

In addition to developing curriculum and working with students in black schools, black teachers also played activist roles in state and local affairs, serving on political and social committees and boards.³⁷ These community activists fought alongside the NAACP over pay inequities,³⁸ and they struggled with educational institutions for not providing enough graduate courses for black scholars (Fairclough, 2001; Gordon, 2000). In addition, they educated and helped others through their service and “self-help efforts” in black churches, social clubs, and other civic associations.³⁹ By reaching out to students and families with a common racial background, black teachers were recognized to be highly valuable leaders who held one of the most significant professions in the community.⁴⁰ They had the important task of providing the next generation with the “educational tools” and “ammunition” to successfully resist “negative messages” and “survive” in a racist society (Dougherty, 1998; Slevin & Wingrove, 1998).

Black schools, as well as black churches, were also accorded a great deal of respect during this era. As black teachers and black students became more segregated within all-black schools, these schools became the “central pillars” of the black communities they served (Lee & Slaughter-Defor, 2001). Soon, it became the black teachers’ role to promote racial pride in these schools and keep black children from being harmed by the white superintendents and school

boards⁴¹ that monitored the schools. In addition to religious activities, rural churches were also typically used as the hubs of educational and social activities. These church-schools were used as schoolhouses during the week and for large social gatherings on the weekends (Anderson, 1988; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

Many black teachers promoted an “all-black school philosophy,” and these schools quickly became recognized as community hubs where black history and values⁴² were taught to increase student self-esteem and racial-community solidarity (Siddle Walker, 1996). In these all-black schools, with the help of black teachers, the most significant student achievement gains were made in the history of blacks in the U.S. (Anderson, 1988; Franklin & Joint Center for Political Studies (U.S.). Committee on Policy for Racial Justice, 1989). Whether these gains would have been made if schools had been integrated is uncertain. Regardless, many black community members felt that all-black schools, even in their dilapidated state, lacking the supplies and resources of the white schools, were the most meaningful component of the community, outside of the family and church (Siddle Walker, 1996).

The Impact of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*

The *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* 1954 ruling overturned the doctrine of “separate but equal” that had divided black and white communities since the time of *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896. The decision set in motion “countless social changes” that affected both white and black communities. It was a key turning point in the history of race relations in the U.S., and its ripple effect reached many arenas outside the field of education (Hampton, Fayer, & Flynn, 1990). Many black Americans viewed the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision that separate educational facilities were “inherently unequal” as a sign of hope (Williams, 1987). Although

Brown spurred the desegregation of other public facilities and the passing of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, school desegregation entailed a very long struggle to come (Faltz & Leake, 1996).

By 1964, only four hundred and twenty-three southern schools out of more than two thousand, less than 20%, had fully desegregated. Ninety-eight percent of black children in the South and 70% of black children in the North remained in all-black schools. Not until 1974, after the murder of Dr. King, the explosion of the urban ghetto, and the ongoing angry tactics of white segregationists and black separatists, had most schools around the country completed their desegregation battles (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Martin, 1998).⁴³

During the struggle, the burdens of integration fell on the black community more than the white community. The results of school desegregation were the closing of black schools, the center of many black communities, and the release from their posts of black teachers who were key community advocates (Foster, 1997; Glickman, 1998; Southern Regional Council, 1960). As a result, the care, concern, and support provided by black educators to black students were lost. In addition, the occupation of teaching was devalued as black teachers, solidifiers of the black community and crucial components to black communal development and racial uplift, were discarded (Siddle Walker, 1993, 1996).

With the lack of black role models to nurture “black cultural values” in black youth and the lack of what Irvine and Irvine (1983) call the “collective whole, the collective struggle, the collective will,” the newly integrated schools seemed to erode the *cultural strength* that was previously grounded in black community schools (Hine & American Historical Association., 1986; Shujaa, 1996). As a result, black teachers have become a “dying species,” and black student achievement has declined (James & Phi Delta Kappa. Center on Evaluation Development and Research., 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

The mixed results of studies on student achievement after desegregation have prompted many researchers to begin looking at how black educators increased student achievement and community development prior to school integration. As early as 1935, Du Bois claimed that what black children needed was an “**education**,” not “separate” or “mixed schools.” He concluded that the newly integrated schools with “unsympathetic teachers, hostile public opinion, and no teaching of the truth concerning black folks” were equally as harmful to the black community as segregated schools (1935). In the end, school desegregation resulted in a lack of “cultural synchronization” among teachers, students, and the community because these groups no longer shared a common understanding of culture, beliefs and values, verbal and nonverbal language, personal presentation, or ways of processing information and knowledge (Irvine, 1990).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

In the years since desegregation, educators have begun to struggle once again about the “content and focus” of black education (Cooper, 2002). To address the lack of cultural understanding in schools, black scholars and educators have begun to discuss the use of “culturally relevant pedagogy”.⁴⁴ In the frame of Du Bois’s “self-reliance” curriculum, this new culturally relevant teaching has three main components: rigor, relevance in both curriculum and instruction, and a political-cultural ideology such as Afrocentrism.⁴⁵ Even though funding inequities, building space and resources, teacher distribution, parent-guardian-community involvement in school, biased assessment measures, socioeconomic status, family structure, disabilities, and a plethora of other issues are currently negatively affecting black student achievement, research shows that access to good teaching is what matters most when predicting black student success (Darling-Hammond, 2001).

Good teaching in classrooms that are “communal places” full of “excitement” about learning and new ideas provides an education that becomes a true “practice of freedom.” With this type of teaching, using strategies like Gordon’s liberatory pedagogy, all students are educable no matter their background (Alridge, 2002; Gordon, 1994; hooks, 1994). A necessary component of school success is to have access to critical, progressive, holistic, engaging, pertinent, active, and problem-posing instruction, especially for students who have been historically underserved and educationally disenfranchised⁴⁶ (Freire, 2000/1970; hooks, 1994).

To develop this type of curriculum and instruction, researchers believe that teachers must be able to understand multiple worldviews and then they need to connect the academic content to children’s experiences within the frame of those often differing worldviews. Cross, Strauss, and Phagen-Smith term this type of teaching as “bridging,” which allows black students and their teachers to immerse themselves in one another’s cultural experiences without needing to give up or suppress their “own identity” (Cross, 1999).⁴⁷

Henry suggests that a culturally centered education for blacks, that allows teachers to make visible the struggles within the social, political, and economic arenas of life, can positively influence black community development by providing everyone a better understanding of the world (1998). Alridge adds to this idea by emphasizing that the use of “rigorous and critical” liberatory education techniques⁴⁸ allows students an opportunity to move beyond traditional textbook knowledge based on white, Western values so that they can learn to “critique the gaps,” “unmask” hidden meaning and omissions, and begin to construct their own interpretations of the historical and social world instead of taking the teacher’s word or textbooks at face value (2002).

This type of curriculum is not a new idea. Starting as early as the summer of 1961, groups like SNCC and the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) opened Freedom

Schools⁴⁹ designed to *bridge* the black community culture into school culture. As a significant component of the larger Civil Rights Movement, alongside voter registration drives, mock elections, and the development of community centers, these summer programs were designed to offer black students an “intellectually stimulating” education⁵⁰ that would teach the tools of political organization so that they could begin to “transform the South’s segregated society” (Perlstein, 1990, p. 297). These programs were “student-oriented” and focused on problem-solving skills, discussions about equality, liberation, agency, and dialogue as means of attaining a “new society” (Chilcoat & Ligon, 1999). Charles Cobb, a fieldworker for SNCC, said that these schools were developed to fight the “war against academic poverty.” He noted that the programs were designed and implemented in communities with segregated school systems to compensate for the “intellectual wasteland” of the regular school year, where little academic freedom by teachers resulted in little intellectual curiosity by students (Chilcoat & Ligon, 1999, p. 108).

The Freedom School teachers⁵¹ gave their students opportunities to learn how to think for themselves, take control of their lives, embrace a desire for equity, justice, and social change, and develop respect for all human diversity. They accomplished this by providing the students with curriculum in citizenship, arts and crafts, drama, music (writing, playing, and singing), black history, writing and journalism, and mimeographing. This holistic curriculum was designed to help the students enhance their own self-identity and become “agents of social change” by understanding the roots of their oppression culled from their personal and group experience and from black history case studies (Chilcoat & Ligon, 1999; Cobb, 1999, p. 127).

With large numbers of participants, many of the Freedom Schools quickly became sites of ongoing resistance. In Mississippi alone, over 2000 students participated in the Freedom

Schools in the summer of 1961. In 1964, in recognition of the 10th anniversary of *Brown*, students and teachers boycotted their regular schools in cities like Milwaukee, Boston, Chicago, and New York and spent the day at their local Freedom Schools, which were held in community centers and churches (Dougherty, 2004).

In the southern town of Athens, Georgia, a similar program cropped up during the post-*Brown* era. During the summer of 1970, black college students opened a “Liberation School” to combat Athens’s “racist school system” that was depriving black youth of access to a “relevant education.” As was the goal of other self-reliance and culturally relevant programs, the Liberation School was created to build a sense of “racial pride and dignity” in black Athenians, develop a black “political consciousness” within the city, and provide black youth with the tools to aid them in dealing with economic, social, and political issues. The large program was held at numerous community sites and local churches. One document notes that between 80 and 120 students participated in the two-month program. The ultimate goal of the program was to get enough attendees that would merit turning the short summer program into one that lasted all year long⁵² (“The black experience,” August 16, 1970; “Liberation school,” 1970; “Liberation school,” June 21, 1970).

The Liberation School offered many courses that would never have been accepted by the Athens-Clarke County School District, which was embroiled in battles about desegregation and educational equity at that time (Thurmond, 1978). Classes like black sociology, black literature, children’s literature, African history, black history in America, black involvement in war, discussions on black experience, and chemistry were regular parts of the daily curriculum at the Liberation School. Students attended the program for at least four hours each day, and they

received free lunches and transportation from a local feed-a-kid program and the University of Georgia.

People visiting the program observed the “renewed rigor and enthusiasm” that the program inspired in the participating students. In the end, the program was recognized as one of the first educational freedom movements in the area designed to help black youth build their self-image through cultural and history lessons. Because the founders of the school believed that “a mis-educated person was susceptible to enslavement,” the school attempted to “break the shackles of supposed mental inferiority” and dispel the myths about blacks’ inability to learn so that black Athenians could gain the freedoms that were denied to them for so many years (Blackwell, June 1, 1970; “Liberation school,” 1970; “Liberation school,” June 21, 1970).

The struggles for culturally relevant curricula, like that found at the Liberation School of Athens, took place throughout the U.S. from the 1950s through the 1970s and continue through today (Chilcoat & Ligon, 1999; Cobb, 1999). Current researchers suggest that when students have a chance to participate in collaborative learning environments that promoted high expectations and positive self-images, students will behave like members of a family or community by assisting and supporting others so that all members of the group are successful (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Siddle Walker, 1993). Some suggest that this style of teaching is simply “good practice,” while others suggest that it is difficult: the success of this strategy is “contingent” on an educator’s ability to critically reflect about the impact of race and culture on learning (Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Because this type of teaching is not universal practice, its possible transformative and emancipatory possibilities are limited by the number of teachers who apply the theories in their work (Asante, 1991/1992; Erickson, 1987; Gay, 2000; Hollins, 1994).

The Role of the Black Teacher in the Success of the Black Schools

Educational scholars have more recently become aware of the important role that black teachers and culturally relevant studies (like those in the Freedom and Liberation schools) have played in the struggle for equality in the United States. Historically, black educators have viewed the field of education as a calling that required them to nurture and demand excellence from their students (Irvine, 2002a; Sewell, July 11, 2006, Field notes; Smith (Platt), December 31, 2006, Interview). These teachers are constantly “givin’ something back” to their communities, and, through their work in schools, these black educators traditionally have been and remain the community members that have helped black students and families continue with the struggle for uplift (Dougherty, 1998; Henry, 1998; Johnson, July 13, 2006, Field notes). Anderson and other critical historians recognize that, even when black schools resounded with overtones of domination and despair, black educators helped black communities unify their efforts to support the education of their youth. Many scholars and locals have suggested that the support and “caring” of black educators resulted in black communities taking more of an interest in their schools than did whites (Anderson, 1988; Foster, 2001; Sewell, July 11, 2006, Field notes; Siddle Walker, 1993; Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview).

This type of advocacy work by many black teachers remains crucial in the continued Black Freedom Struggle today. In her book *In Search of Wholeness*, Irvine discusses how many of today’s black teachers introspectively conceptualize their educator-roles within the context of their unique “cultural and historical” perspectives to adjust their pedagogical practices to best meet the needs of their students (Lee & Slaughter-Defor, 2001). Many of these educators, like so many black educators before them, are invigorated by the realization that they can use their

culturally specific, individual insight to develop a liberating and engaging curriculum that inspires their students to achieve (Irvine, 2002a).

Scholars like Fairclough, Siddle Walker, and Dougherty, deliver nonlinear stories about black teachers and black education. These stories go from good to bad to good again, like the long, amorphous movement of a river that is rough in some areas and smooth in others.⁵³ Historians have not yet reached consensus on whether the history of black education is a success story, but most suggest that black teachers were a positive force in the black schools and communities. Even though black education has gone through many trials and tribulations, it has always remained central in the overall Black Freedom Struggle. Access to education has always been associated with liberation and has been a vital component of the struggle since the time of slavery when blacks “wanted larnin’ so bad dey would slip out at night [sic]” and study by the light of the torches (see also Fairclough, 2001; Harding, 1981; Litwack, 1998a; Raboteau, 1978, p. 239).

Black Education and the Black Freedom Struggle

Following their release from bondage, blacks viewed education as something tangible that could help them obtain economic security. Even though some of the black educational curricula seemed oppressive and monocultural, like industrial education and euro-classical studies, the grounding philosophy behind black education in all of its forms was to heighten black consciousness and improve the quality of life for all black Americans (Fairclough, 2001; Gordon, 2001).

When Du Bois claimed that black education in the South was “enforced ignorance,” he did not decide to stop the educative process altogether. Instead, he sought other ways to educate black people that would add to their ability to make social and economic gains (Litwack, 1998a).

Even Washington's industrial model denied white efforts to create a "true caste system" because it allowed teaching focused on "individual worth" and personal "attainment." In the end, despite white efforts to curtail and control it, black education has remained well-grounded in and supportive of the Black Freedom Struggle. Some suggest that the success of one was and remains dependant on the success of the other (Cobb, 1999; Fairclough, 2001; Lee & Slaughter-Defor, 2001). The next chapters illustrate these patterns.

The following chapter presents the economic and educational advancement of black Athenians as it relates to the development of Athens's black schools and the struggle for black freedoms. The chapter, full of rich archival data and some life stories, is intended to read like a piece of woven tapestry. When the archival information is provided separately, it gives only part of the historical picture, but when it is merged with the oral histories, they show how Athens's black schools, like other historically black institutions in the South, became the central community hubs where the struggles against white supremacy and racial equality were fought.

CHAPTER 3 PRIVATE ENDEAVORS IN ATHENS'S BLACK EDUCATION

Athens's black history, whether passed down by community storytellers or written down by scribes, relays the "personal drama of illiterate blacks" urging their youth to work toward obtaining that "priceless thing" called education that they had themselves been barred from possessing (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978, p. 61). One local historian quotes a grandmother telling her kin, "What's in your head can't no man take away... You got to git an education cause dat's gon' be the only way out for ya" (Burton in Thurmond & Sparer, 1978, p. 62). This chapter details the drama of black Athenians as they began to establish the economic and educational structures that helped them "escape" the debilitating condition of "mental and physical dependency on whites" and allowed them to build a future of freedom and prosperity (Litwack, 1998a, p. 56).

The chapter discusses how black Athenians began to overcome economic and political subordination by becoming a literate community through formal and informal private endeavors. These steps toward educational advancement began prior to emancipation when slaves met secretly in small "prayer meetings" to practice reading the bible. The endeavors continued after Jubilee⁵⁴ with the opening of at least six prestigious private black academies in the town by 1915 (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978). These schools laid the foundation for the opening of Athens's black public schools, which are discussed in Chapter IV.

The Economic and Educational Development of Black Athenians, 1800-1885

In 1801, Clarke County, the home of Athens, was created by an act of the Georgia Assembly. Clarke County had previously been the homeland of Cherokee and Creek tribes, who were removed by cavalry companies lead by Elijah Clarke in 1774 to make way for new white educational and business growth.⁵⁵ Soon after, George Walton and Abraham Baldwin selected

Athens as the future site for Georgia's first state university, the University of Georgia.⁵⁶ One source suggested that, before the university was established, there were "practically no white inhabitants" on the northeast side of Georgia. The "tone of the town" was quickly set by the supposedly "socially superior" whites coming to Athens in search of rich schooling and business opportunities (Hynds, 1974).

As the population of Athens grew and the cotton crops around it flourished, the town's slave population was taught to take their place as "respected elements in [this new] industrial life." These black workers, the economic labor force of the town, worked in cotton, brickworks, textile making, railroad development, and domestic service (Woofter, 1912, p. 7). Between 1829 and 1840, Athens opened three major cotton factories along the Oconee River, employing over two hundred workers. This industrial growth prompted the addition of more slave labor to increase cotton yields and the development of a railroad system to move the cotton from Athens to other regional towns like Augusta (Hynds, June 15, 2001; Nelson, June 15, 2001).

During the late 1850s, schools for white children and white adults were established throughout Athens. A free school system for whites was opened in 1859, funded partly by the state's Poor School Fund.⁵⁷ This venture, however, was abandoned in 1860 because of the tremendous additional cost to the city.⁵⁸ As a result, highly renowned, expensive private, semiprivate, and public schools for whites opened throughout the city. These schools, the Lucy Cobb Institute, the Center Hill Classical Academy, R.P. Adams's School, the Cobbham Academy, University High School and Collegiate Institute, the University of Georgia, the State Agricultural Institute, and the State Normal School, were endowed as the principal institutions⁵⁹ of the state. From that point, Athens became recognized as "the Classic City," or the "educational center" of Georgia (Coleman, 1968; Mell, 1964; Tate, Marshall, & Marshall, 1996).

However, although education for the wealthy white community prospered, the education of local slaves was almost nonexistent.⁶⁰

Most slaveholders living in the city of Athens had comparatively few slaves at any one time, averaging fewer than four. By the 1830s, 70 rural landowners alone held over half of Clarke County's slave population in the most rural parts of the county (Hynds, 1974). Athens's rural slaves provided manual labor and farming on large cotton-producing plantations. The vast majority of city slaves were domestic and service workers in the homes of prominent and wealthy families that had moved to Athens for education and business purposes.⁶¹ Most of the others worked in Athens's paper and textile mills⁶² (Coleman, 1968).

Some local historians suggest that slavery wore a "mild mask" in Athens, because slaves were allowed relative mobility and the slave laws were generally "half-heartedly enforced" by local officials. However, the rights of whites, especially educational rights, were vehemently denied to most enslaved Athenians⁶³ (Thurmond, March 19, 1978). Biblical teachings and bible studies were an acceptable form of education to most of the slave masters, as long as basic complacency, servitude, and respect for whites and the "southern social order" permeated the lessons (Chambliss, 1934; Schwartz, 2000; Woodson, 1919). Some slaveholders even believed that it was their Christian duty to teach their slaves how to read the Bible (Genovese, 1974; Schwartz, 2000). In Athens, however, the black church became the location for most of these teachings. It held a special significance and remained deeply rooted within the slave community because it was not only a place of worship, but also a place to train youth with Sunday School lessons, hold bible classes for adults, provide prayers for the sick and weary, and hold weddings and funeral services (Hynds, October 29, 2001). One famous black freedwoman from Athens named Harriet Powers is said to have used her quilt-making skill to make visual representations

of biblical tales so that she could retell them to other community members who were unable to read⁶⁴ (Georgia Humanities, 2004-2006d; Perry, 1994).

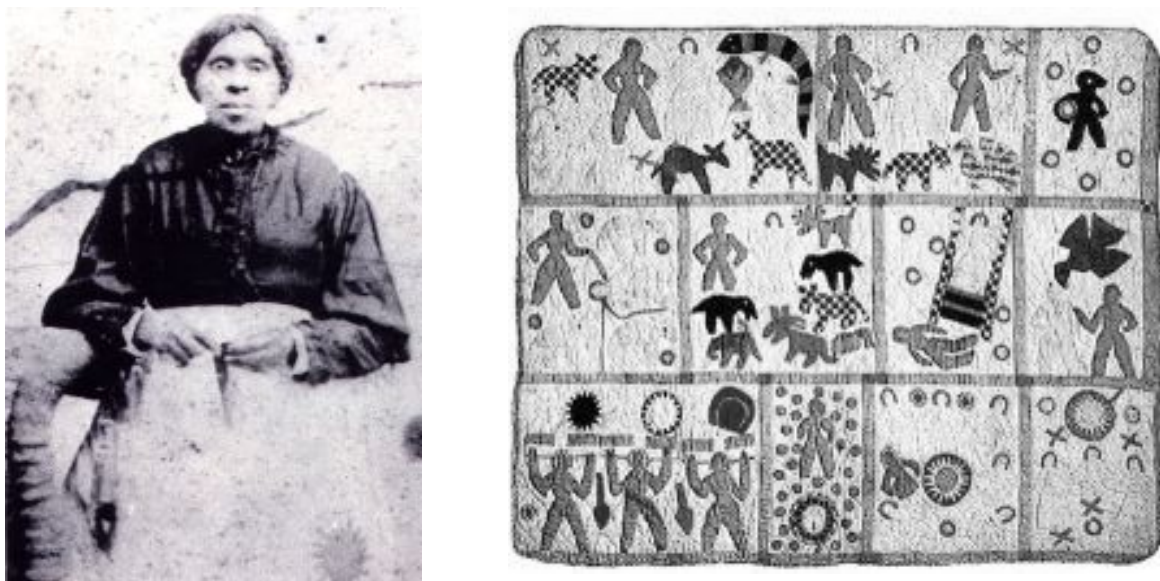


Figure 1: Harriett Powers and Biblical Quilt
Photo courtesy of Athens Banner-Herald.⁶⁵

Beyond religious teachings, most locals feared slave education because the black population in Athens was growing exponentially. By 1810, approximately 31% of the local Athens population was black. This number rose to over 50% by 1850 (Johnson, 1916). The continued rise of abolition in the North that resulted in the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1861 was troubling to these slaveholders (Blassingame, 1979; Fredrickson, 1987; Litwack, 1998a). In the year of Lincoln's election, town authorities called a special meeting on November 10 to develop a more "efficient organization" of the local police because of spreading abolitionist sentiments and rumors about possible slave revolts (Coleman, 1968).

Whites throughout the South were afraid that literacy would expose slaves to abolitionist literature, and wealthy white Athenians believed that the loss of slave labor from abolition could crush the agricultural and industrial-based economy of Athens and most of the South (Bullock, 1967; Woodson, 1919). Many white southerners believed that educating the slaves would result

in “slave insurrections,” like the successful revolt in San Domingo and those in Virginia led by Nat Turner. Jefferson Davis once suggested that slave literacy would not be objectionable to these white Southerners if they could be certain that incendiary publications discussing emancipation would never cross the hands of the “inferior negro” (Bond, 1934; Litwack, 1998a).

Despite laws forbidding formal literacy education for the enslaved, some black Athenians learned basic reading, writing, and arithmetic from their slaveholders, like Colonel Barrow⁶⁶ (future Chancellor of the University) and Olivia Cobb⁶⁷ (Anderson, 1988; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978). Throughout the South, mulatto slaves and house servants were more often given access to white “educational facilities” because of their higher status in the social order of blacks. Many white mistresses and schoolchildren scoffed at the laws prohibiting slave education, which were for the most part unenforceable on plantations, and taught reading and writing to their slaves with few worries and little punishment (Genovese, 1974; Schwartz, 2000; Woodson, 1919).

The forbidden fruit of literacy appealed to many slaves because reading and writing stood for all that they lacked, especially social and economic power. Often at the risk of “life or limb,” many slaves took any learning acquired and immediately passed it on to others (Schwartz, 2000; Spring, 1997; Woodson, 1919). In oral storytelling and folktales, interwoven with chants, songs, mimicry, proverbs, rhymes, verbal games, and dancing, slave communities provided informal education⁶⁸ in their immediate communities to develop community “values and solidarity,” preserve communal culture and traditions, and pass on ideas about creation, morality, and survival (Abrahams, 1992; Levine, 1977).

On May 4, 1865, following the April end of the Civil War, five thousand Athenian slaves were freed, and the town’s dynamics began to change dramatically. After the loss of what was considered to be their “social heritage” during the slave years, black Athenians diligently worked

to bind their community together and forge a new social, political, and economic life with the highest priority being educational attainment (Du Bois, 1973b). By 1866, Athens's "social pyramid" began to be redesigned by the freedmen, who opened their first formal black church,⁶⁹ fire station, and lodge⁷⁰ that same year (Coleman, 1968).⁷¹ In 1867, following Congress's passing of the Reconstruction Acts to rebuild the South, former slaves Alfred Richardson and Madison Davis⁷² were elected⁷³ to represent Athens as the first black state legislators. During that same year, more than 70 black families purchased homes in the Athens area (Thurmond, March 19, 1978; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

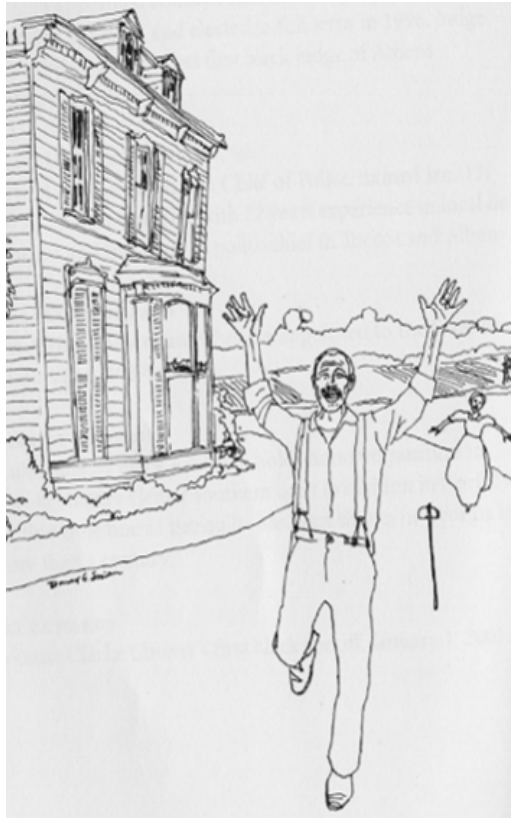


Figure 2: Jubilee

Print courtesy of Michael L. Thurmond, *A Story Untold: Black Men and Women of Athens*.

Soon, black codes and other state laws were enacted throughout the South to curtail the rights of black citizens by restricting their ability to use and own land, their voting rights, and their use of public facilities and by denying them access to certain jobs (Ogbu, 1978; Thurmond

& Sparer, 1978). Bitter hostility and prejudice from white Athenians grew as black Athenians resisted these structures and began to organize their own “structured family units” and religious, economic, social, and educational institutions (Fordham, 2004). While whites fought against the solidification and development of Athens’s black community, black Athenians worked hard to develop survival strategies to overcome the white oppression.

Athens’s first black paper, the *Athens Blade*,⁷⁴ suggested in 1879 that the continued prejudice of whites following emancipation and throughout Reconstruction was the cause of **persistent poverty** and **low educational attainment** by local blacks. One owner of the paper, William A. Pledger, attributed the hostility to the “spirit of slavery” and the doctrine that “the black man has no rights which the white man is bound to respect”⁷⁵ (Heard & Pledger, 1879, pp. 2-3). The resolution to this hostility, he added, was to “raise the standard of education” for blacks because having the ability to read and write was a direct “contradiction of oppression.” Black Athenians firmly believed that literacy and formal education would be their means of reaching true “*liberation* and *freedom* [italics added]” (Anderson, 1988; Pledger, 1879b; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978). As soon as two years following emancipation, black Athenians were diligently pursuing options to expand their access to education by opening many small private schools and even several public city schools by the turn of the century. In the remainder of the chapter I consider the many private efforts that black Athenians made to provide education for their community once education was no longer illegal.

Athens’s Black Private Schools 1868-1956

Immediately following emancipation, black Athenians made the city aware that they desired education and would fight for the privilege if necessary. In 1867, a crew of “dusky educational warriors” demonstrated these efforts by going onto the University of Georgia

campus and heckling several white students about their educational advantages. Town marshals were unable to control the situation, and in the end several of the students suppressed the hecklers by shooting into the crowd. Later that year, the thirst for education gained ascendance again as blacks armed themselves with sticks, clubs, and other weapons in an effort to try to seize control of the University of Georgia. The white students, armed with guns remaining from the Civil War, huddled together ready to defend their alma mater's whiteness with deadly force. Violence was averted when Professor Patrick Hues Mell, the university's vice-chancellor, was able to relieve the tension by convincing the freed persons to leave the campus (Thomas, 1992; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

Black community members decided that their cause would be better served by trying to open their own schools instead of fighting with whites over the inequitable opportunities available to them. Historian Michael Thurmond, a graduate of Athens's black schools, suggests that it appeared that "the entire race wanted to go to school" (BHL Middle School, 2004). Lucius Henry Holsey, the black Athenian who was born a slave and grew up to be the founder of Paine College in Augusta, said that from the early age of fourteen he felt an "insatiable craving for some knowledge of books" (Holsey, 1898, p. 16.).

By refocusing their efforts and responding to the expanding desires of black adults who wanted their children to attend school, these black citizens, with the aid of the Freedmen's Bureau⁷⁶ and local black churches, opened several private black schools in Athens in the late 1860s (Rowe & Barrow, 1923; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978). The desire was so strong that students like Alonzo C. Powers,⁷⁷ age 10 at the time of emancipation, would walk up to 14 miles from their homes to reach the schools each day (Hester, 2001). Records suggest that at least six

private black academies existed in Athens prior to 1915. The most well-known of those schools was the Knox Institute and Industrial School.

The Knox School

Though black Athenians, like most black Southerners, preferred teaching and operating their own schools with little external control, they accepted support from the American Missionary Association (AMA)⁷⁸ and the Freedmen's Bureau⁷⁹ in 1868 to open Athens's first black school. The *Knox School*, later renamed Knox Institute and Industrial School, was named in honor of a Freedmen's Bureau Agent named Major John J. Knox, who became famous after shooting an ex-Confederate soldier in the leg after a heated discussion about southern Reconstruction (George Peabody College for Teachers. Division of Surveys and Field Services. & McClurkin, 1969a, 1969b; Jones, 1980, 1992; Rabinowitz, 1974).

Although one 1869 teacher record from the school opines that the "public sentiment toward the colored school was 'favorable,'" historians suggest that southern white communities did not welcome the opening of schools like Knox because of their direct connection to the Freedmen's Bureau and the AMA (Bond, 1934; Sawtell, 1869). Whites were distrustful of these schools because they believed that the teachers in them taught blacks Republicanism and black political participation (Schinkel, 1971). Rowe claimed that groups like the Freedmen's Bureau "upheld the negro in any contention with his former master," making whites feel disenfranchised (1923). Bond suggests that whites believed the bureau was sending "alien teachers" to the South to teach "social and political equality, intermarriage of the races, [and] hatred and distrust of Southern whites" (1994). However, more current works suggest that the Freedmen's Bureau more often sided with white communities than with the blacks that they served (Gutman, 1977).

The first teachers at Knox, E. C. Ayers, M. E. Dyer, E. F. Fitch, and Sara Vannest, were white, northern schoolmarms⁸⁰ known to many white Athenians as “nigger teachers” who were dangerous and untrustworthy (Thurmond, March 19, 1978). These “pious young females of the Puritan persuasion” were viewed by white locals as dangling an educational utopia in front of black Athenians, spurring desires for aspirations that could not be achieved (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978, p. 63). These teachers met stiff resistance from the white community who believed that educating blacks would make them “dangerous political enemies” (Fleming, June 19, 1906).

The Athens newspapers and those from surrounding communities expressed the distrust that whites had of the school and the teachers. In 1872, one Athens paper read, “It is to our interest to educate those who have grown up among us and not leave it to outsiders who labor to arouse prejudices against the white race” (“Education,” March 12, 1872). Another southern paper denied that the South was opposed to “the education of the freedmen.” Instead, it suggested that the South was opposed to freedmen being educated by northerners:

The Negroes must be taught, and if not taught by your own people, will be placed under the control of men and women imported from the Northern States, almost invariable [sic] of a class of people destitute either of money, character, or virtue, merely adventurers in search of the means of sustaining life with little or no regard to the mode or manner in which it is obtained (Bond, 1934, p. 33).

On a few occasions, the white resistance against the school became physical. In 1867, several white locals entered the school and forcibly removed students and teachers from the school and refused to allow them to return until the next day (Thurmond, March 19, 1978; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978). On May 11, 1868, a black resident of Athens named Nancy Finley was struck in the head with a rock because she chose to send her children to school⁸¹ (Christine's Genealogy Websites, 2000).

Despite ongoing resistance, black students attended the new Knox School, believing that the reading and writing skills that they would obtain would bring them “inestimable advantage” (Fleming, 1906). By the mid 1870s, the Athens black community, with the help of the Georgia Educational Association,⁸² established control of the school and began to hire black teachers trained at Atlanta and Fisk Universities⁸³ (Hurt, 2003; Long, 1919; Woofter, 1912; Wyatt-Brown, 1994).

The Knox Institute first opened in a large, two-story brick building with four rooms⁸⁴ on the corner of Pope and Reese, which was later turned into a dormitory for out-of-town female students (Roy, June, 1882). The original building was probably purchased by the Freedmen’s Bureau (Vannest, 1869a, 1869b). As the school grew rapidly over the next 60 years, a boys’ dormitory and a building for classrooms were both added (Branson, Unknown; Long, 1919). The latter building, paid for by Andrew Carnegie in 1911, held 21 classrooms on three floors and was furnished with the most current modern equipment and conveniences, steam-heating, and electric lights (Clark, 1925; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

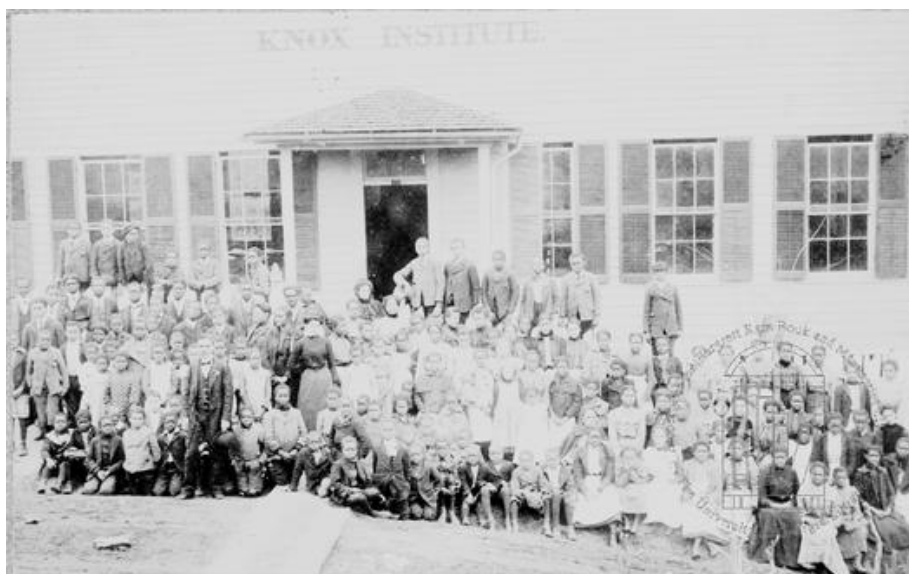


Figure 3. Knox Institute students and faculty, ca. 1900.

Photo courtesy of Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library / University of Georgia Libraries

The enrollment⁸⁵ of the school was around 120 students, and the average daily attendance for the school was around 100 students.⁸⁶ Around 80-90% of the students paid tuition to attend the school. Most of the students were black males under the age of 16.⁸⁷ The school was open five days a week, for six hours a day, and teachers taught five hours a day and worked approximately 20 days each month (Carrie J., 1869; Sawtell, 1869; Vannest, 1869a, 1869b).

Knox, the only secondary black school in the region, was highly regarded by the black community of Athens because it focused on educating the “head, heart, and hands” of each student and prepared them for college by covering ten grades. Several monthly teacher reports from the spring of 1869 suggest that the school focused on both grammar and intermediate education.⁸⁸ However, the total academic curriculum of the school went well beyond that by offering the classics, Latin, Greek, science, civil government, physics, arithmetic, geometry, geography, and teaching methods. The school also provided industrial training in carpentry, typing, printing, and sewing. A 1901 advertisement in the *Athens Clipper*, the local black paper mentioned previously, claimed that no other institution for blacks in northeast Georgia could surpass the Literary Department at Knox (Clark, August 31, 1901). Teacher records from 1869 suggest that the school had large numbers of extremely advanced readers (Carrie J., 1869; Sawtell, 1869; Vannest, 1869a, 1869b).

Singing, music,⁸⁹ and spiritual guidance and welfare were also taught by the “competent” Knox instructors (Clark, August 31, 1901). Every effort was made by the corps of “able Christian teachers” to “lead our students to Christ” through a “well laid course of study” and “knowledge of the Bible” (Clark, 1925; Clark, August 31, 1901). In addition to providing a sound education to the students during the week, the school served as a worship place⁹⁰ for the community on nonschool days (American Missionary Association, March, 1887).

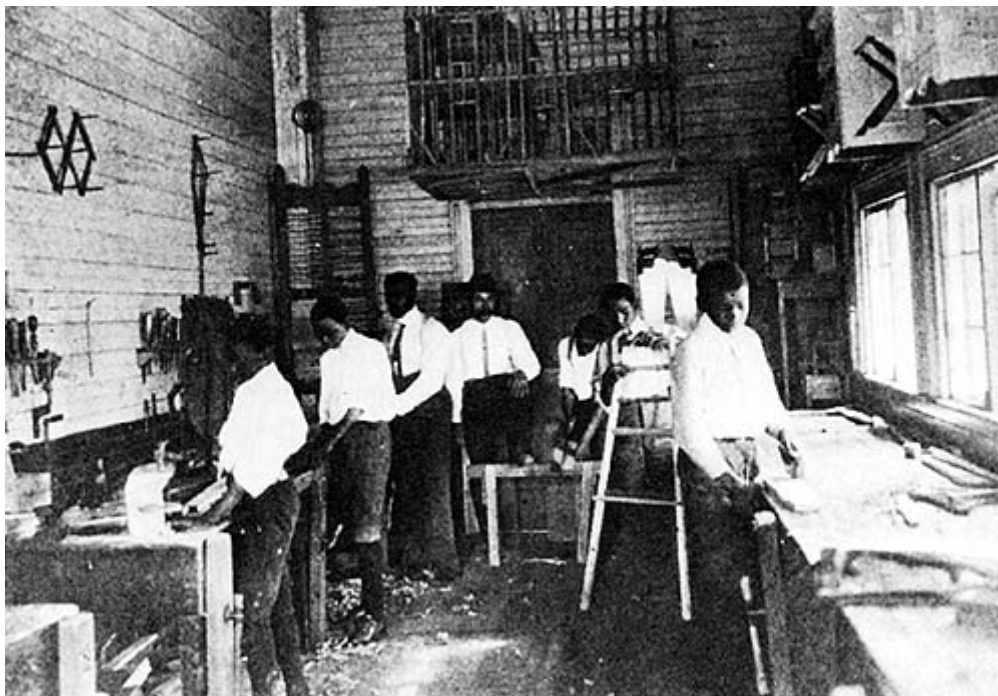


Figure 4: Knox Institute Carpentry Shop, 1910

Photo courtesy of Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library / University of Georgia Libraries and reprinted from Athens Banner-Herald.⁹¹

By 1913, the school had expanded the curriculum to cover 12 grades, and by 1921 it had earned the distinction of being the “first high school for Negroes ever accredited by the Accrediting Commission of the University of Georgia.” By 1925, 339 students were enrolled at Knox from five states, 28 counties, and 38 cities and towns (Clark, 1925).

School advertisements claimed that the now “accredited” college preparatory school could prepare young blacks to “make a life” for themselves through elementary teacher training, domestic science and art, and industrial and manual training. The principal, L.S. Clark, motivated Knox students by scheduling “public rhetoricals” of nationally recognized figures like Dr. J.L. Blanchard of the executive committee of the AMA and Miss Julia O. Derricotte from the New York National Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). Other big school attractions that Clark was able to provide his students included viewings of stereopticons about Japan, pageants about “Hiawatha” Indians, and entertainment from “Whistling Pete” (1925).

Knox students were expected to participate in activities that demonstrated school spirit, such as playing on the basketball team or football team or attending athletic events. One record demands that each Knox student support the school's athletic teams because Knox is "always the best" in "everything." Graduation was another area demonstrating school spirit. This grand event at Knox lasted seven days starting with a reception at Carnegie Hall on Friday evening, a commencement sermon on Sunday morning and Vesper Address Sunday night, a "Visitors Day" on Monday morning and a declamatory contest Monday night, operettas Tuesday and Wednesday nights, and finally the commencement exercise at the Carnegie Chapel on Thursday (Clark, 1925).

At least 900 people came to participate in the 1897 Knox graduation ceremony, some from as far away as 60 miles. During the weeklong celebration full of sermons, presentations of work from the sewing and carpentry industrial labs, music and literary performances, and addresses by community leaders, one man exclaimed that all that "you are doing has not been told." An 81-year-old visitor, who was an exslave, remarked that she had "seen so much cruelty and meanness on these grounds [meaning the grounds on which the Knox Institute stood] in dark slavery days" that she was now delighted to come "to see the great good [the school was] doing here for our children." She assured the other visitors that "she felt more like shouting than speaking," and she added that it filled her with joy to see the "young people risin [sic]." The work of the students in the school was so reputable that one record notes that in no other city in the state do "colored people manifest interest in the closing work of our [black] schools more than they do in Athens" (American Missionary Association, September, 1898, pp. 129-130).

The school graduated many highly regarded blacks: Hall Johnson, a professional choral director and violinist who produced folk operas on Broadway; Beulah Rucker Oliver, an

educator who opened an industrial school in Gainesville, Georgia, so highly regarded that a black heritage museum was later opened in her name; John Brother Cade, a University Dean and Archivist of Louisiana Southern University and A&M College; Styles L. Hutchins, the first black attorney admitted to the Georgia Bar Association; Dr. Ida Mae Hiram, the first black woman to pass the Georgia Dental Exam (Georgia Humanities, 2004-2006c; Renew, 2000; Southern University and A&M College, 2006; Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture, 1998). Even after the public schools of Athens and Clarke County opened in 1886, many black Athenians continued to send their children to Knox because it was viewed as a “major status symbol” for “higher income blacks” at the time (“Black Athens: In Quest of a Heritage ” August 16, 1975). By 1913, most of the funds to run the school were paid through tuition⁹² and small AMA sponsorships (Long, 1919). However, because of financial difficulties and other issues surrounding the Great Depression, the Knox School closed in 1928, and the school buildings were leased to the Athens City Schools in 1933⁹³ (BHL Middle School, 2004; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

At least five other privately run black schools opened in Athens between 1876 and 1915. During that time, Athens’s black private academies became the hub of black secondary education for the entire state of Georgia and a fundamental arena for Athens’s black community development (Thurmond, March 19, 1978). One of these schools was the Methodist School, which opened in 1877. As was often the case for southern black schools following emancipation, black churches were a central location for black education and literacy development—through weekly school classes that focused on reading and writing instruction and Sunday school lessons that focused on religious matters.⁹⁴

The Methodist School

The Methodist School was founded by William Henry Heard, who later cofounded the *Athens Blade*. Heard, an exslave,⁹⁵ was hired in 1856 at the age of 10 to plow for a white man named W. H. Heard, for whom he was later named. He was paid \$5 a month for his work, and he was given “recitation”⁹⁶ support at night. In his autobiography, he commented that he worked from “kin to cant,” from daylight to dark, to complete his lessons with his teacher-employer (Heard, 1928).

During the summer of 1856, W. Heard was allowed to attend a school for 6 weeks at the Elberton County Court House where he studied spelling, reading, writing, arithmetic, and geography. He was later hired by another farmer named Clay Hulmes and worked for him until he began attending Mrs. Hankinson’s school. This was an additional six weeks of schooling that prepared him to pass the public school teaching exam, and around 1873 he began teaching school. At the close of his first 3 months of work, he was paid \$1 per month per student for a total of \$300. Because of his love of school, W. Heard continued his grammar, mathematics, history, algebra, and Latin studies, and in 1876 he was offered a scholarship to attend college at the University of South Carolina. However, he was soon kicked out of the school by the Democratic-led state legislature (Heard, 1928).

Sometime between 1876 and 1877, W. Heard moved to Athens and opened the Methodist School. Records suggest that the school was located on Hancock Avenue in the basement of the Negro Methodist Church (Heard, 1928). Little is known about the school’s curriculum or design. W. Heard may have opened the school to ensure that black Athenians were educated by other black people. This interpretation comes out of his writings in the *Athens Blade*, which focused on

the prejudice of white men who “do all they can against schools” so that they can “cheat the ignorant colored man out of his wages” and “keep him ignorant so that they can keep him poor” (Heard & Pledger, 1879, p. 2).

W. Heard ran the school for several years until he turned it over to Principal Carrie Pledger. Pledger ran the school until 1912 when it closed for unknown reasons. The school might have closed because of the fierce competition among the black private educational institutions of the area, such as the Knox school (previously discussed) and the Jeruel Academy. Like the Methodist School, Jeruel was also led by highly educated, prominent black Athenians. However, unlike the Methodist School, Jeruel outlasted all other academies of the time, ending up a “pioneer institution for Negro Education in North East Georgia [sic]” (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978, p. 68).

Jeruel Academy and Union Baptist

The Jeruel Academy,⁹⁷ later called Union Baptist, was another church-sponsored college preparatory school, founded in Athens around 1881 by Reverends Collins Lyons,⁹⁸ E. D. Jennings, and A. R. Davenport (Clarke County), H. M. Smith (Oglethorpe County), Jesse R. Calloway and J. Y. Fambro (Greene County), and M. Belle (Oconee County). The academy was the first school in Athens to be established by Negro Baptists. The school was originally opened in the Landrum Baptist Church, which later became the location of the Central Railroad Depot.⁹⁹ In 1886, the school was relocated to the corner of Baxter and Pope Streets allowing students access to the electric trolley cars that ran every 15 minutes approximately 200 yards from the school (Brown & W.H. Harris M.D., 1918-1919; Underwood, August 4, 1985, January 29, 1978, November 15, 1987). The school was located across the street from the white public school in a white area of the community. However, no “racial unfriendliness” has been recorded from the

schools' juxtaposition ("Athens' Colored Educational Institutions: Jeruel Baptist Association of Georgia Doing Splendid Work - Information on source is incomplete," Unknown).

In the early years, the classes at the academy were dubbed “Prayer Meetings,” and individuals from distant black Baptist churches were transported to the school by wagons. At that time, most of the students were farmers, and many of them arrived at the school unable to read or write. The local white newspaper, the *Athens Daily News*, suggested that the opening of the school was a “bold stroke” by the “unlearned and poor.” However, the article praised the school for being wisely built, probably “wiser than they knew” ("Athens' Colored Educational Institutions: Jeruel Baptist Association of Georgia Doing Splendid Work - Information on source is incomplete," Unknown).

As the school grew, its aim became focused on the community demand for “higher studies” that were not provided in the “common schools.” The founders wanted to build an institution that would provide an “uplift of the race” by preparing young black men and women for “the higher callings in life” so they could spread their influence throughout the community ("Athens' Colored Educational Institutions: Jeruel Baptist Association of Georgia Doing Splendid Work - Information on source is incomplete," Unknown; Brown & W.H. Harris M.D., 1918-1919, p. 47). Once students completed their studies, they returned home as established farmers,¹⁰⁰ teachers and college professors, doctors, lawyers, ministers and pastors, trained nurses, insurance agents, government employees, grocers, and housekeepers. The founders believed that school and church would put a “spirit of peacefulness and community uplift” into the student body to help students become the “light and inspiration” of their communities ("Athens' Colored Educational Institutions: Jeruel Baptist Association of Georgia Doing Splendid Work - Information on source is incomplete," Unknown).

The Baptist Associations of Northern Georgia and churches from at least six counties came together to make the Jeruel Baptist Association, which helped to make the school's opening possible. Eleven of the churches in the association were located in Athens. The school property, valued at \$6000, was provided by this group, along with running expenses of approximately \$3000 each year ("Economic Co-operation among Negro Americans," 1907; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978). From its inception, the school was owned, operated, and supported financially "wholly by negroes," except for small appropriations from the American Missionary Baptist Home Mission Society of New York, the Woman's Home Mission Society of Chicago, and the Baptist Convention of Georgia. The institute had no endowment fund to meet yearly expenses, so to keep the school running the founders depended on these organizations, the Jeruel Baptist Association, and the tuition fees of students (Brown & W.H. Harris M.D., 1918-1919; Underwood, August 4, 1985, January 29, 1978, November 15, 1987).

Jeruel students were required to pay numerous fees to attend the school. A daily fee was required for students at each level, along with tuition every four weeks. These costs ranged from 75¢ to \$1.50 per student depending on the child's age. Each student also had to pay an entry fee of \$1.00 per year and for those students who boarded at the school an additional \$11.00 per month for room and board and \$1.00 a month for doctor visits (Shearer, August 8, 1985). Laboratory or domestic sciences, sewing, and music classes, along with graduation requirements, also required additional fees (Brown & W.H. Harris M.D., 1918-1919). In addition to paying their fees, all students were expected to work a few acres of land or do housework for private families after school hours ("Athens' Colored Educational Institutions: Jeruel Baptist Association of Georgia Doing Splendid Work - Information on source is incomplete," Unknown). Boarding students were also required to bring supplies with them, like quilts, sheets,

pillow cases, and clothing, and to work one hour each day to keep the buildings or the grounds in proper condition (Brown & W.H. Harris M.D., 1918-1919).

A Jeruel student who started at the school in 1901 recalled that many parents wanted their children to have a Jeruel education. However, without the support of the local churches and dedicated individuals, most of the families would not have been able to afford to send their children to school (Shearer, August 8, 1985). Some families who were unable to pay the full tuition contributed cornmeal or other food to support their child's enrollment. If families did not pay the tuition, their children would be suspended until a settlement on the fees was made (Brown & W.H. Harris M.D., 1918-1919; Stroer, April 3, 2001). One source noted that in 1906 the Jeruel Baptist Association raised \$10,500 so that the school could serve 168 students. Approximately 57% (\$19,112) of the school's overhead cost (\$33,318) was paid for with student tuition, and the rest was raised by the association or through student labor (see William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, 1907).

Part of the overhead cost went to maintaining the large campus. The Jeruel-Union Baptist School was described as having two main buildings, Lyons Hall and an adjoining two-story building. Lyons Hall was a three-story wooden structure that housed a chemical laboratory, printing room, seven recitation halls, an office, the 26-room boys' dormitory (eight rooms on the second floor and eighteen rooms on the third floor), a 600-seat chapel, and the 75-seat auditorium. The adjoining two-story building held the 16- to 20-room girls' dormitory,¹⁰¹ a reception room, the kitchen and dining hall, an office, and the domestic science department. In addition, the school had a large library filled with books and papers donated from Morehouse College and Spelman Seminary (Brown & W.H. Harris M.D., 1918-1919).

The students who were admitted to Jeruel Academy had to meet stringently satisfactory examinations. They also had to supply testimonials and recommendations of good character to be accepted into the school. The students were provided with a comprehensive curriculum that included five major departments: primary, elementary, academic, industrial, and musical. The Primary Department taught the fundamental basics to children in kindergarten through fourth grade. The Elementary Department covered four years of standard grade-school work. The Academic Department included courses in mathematics (arithmetic, algebra, and geometry), Latin (beginners Latin, the *Books of Caesar*, Cicero's *Operations*, and Virgil's *Aeneid*), French, Greek (elementary Greek, composition, and *The Anabasis*), history and civics (Greek and Roman history, English history, American government), English (English composition and rhetoric, technical grammar, sentence and paragraph structures, discourse, the history of American literature, and the history of English literature and classics), science (physics, chemistry, botany, biology, and general sciences), geography, public speaking, domestic sciences, and agriculture. The Industrial Department focused its courses on the domestic sciences,¹⁰² sewing, and printing, and the Department of Music,¹⁰³ recognized as the "most thorough" in all of northeast Georgia, focused on students' vocal and instrumental (specifically piano) competencies (Brown, 1914; Brown & W.H. Harris M.D., 1918-1919; McConnell, April 4, 2001; Underwood, August 4, 1985). Louis Barnett, a student at the school, said that he would never forget how pictures of Booker T. Washington were displayed throughout the building to remind students of "Washington's doctrine of success through manual and intellectual labor" (Underwood, August 4, 1985).

Of course, religious lessons were also an important part of the school. Students were expected to participate in twice-weekly prayer meetings, and Sundays were full of religious

activities, starting with Sunday School in the morning, Baptist Peoples' Union in the afternoon, and a prayer meeting in the evening. In addition, an international Sunday school lesson was taught each Friday evening. Outside of academic and religious requirements, students were also expected to further their intellectual and spiritual development by participating in one of the six societies connected with the school: Social Purity,¹⁰⁴ Sisters of Love,¹⁰⁵ Young Men's Model Association, Jeruel Literati, Lincoltonian, and Ciceronian,¹⁰⁶ (Brown & W.H. Harris M.D., 1918-1919).

The school was coeducational, admitting both female and male students. Regulations on proper relationships and "civil conduct" were strictly enforced, and students were separated by gender for class, assembly, and chapel. The school rules for appropriate conduct included completing required work on time, eschewing weapons, tobacco, or alcoholic beverages, keeping the rooms, grounds, and buildings in order, attending class and prayer sessions, being courteous, polite and respectful to classmates and staff, not studying after 9:00 PM, and not corresponding with or receiving company from the opposite sex. Breaches of any of these rules resulted in punishment, suspension, or dismissal by the school administration (Brown & W.H. Harris M.D., 1918-1919).

The school was managed by the principal¹⁰⁷ and a seven-to-eight member board of trustees. Most of the trustees were reverends or deacons in the Athens community or nearby towns like Winterville, Greensboro, Comer, Crawford, Carlton, and Bishop (Brown & W.H. Harris M.D., 1918-1919). The school principal and teachers were highly regarded in the Athens community. The "competent" college-educated staff, educated at southern and northern colleges, were well-known for their keen ability for preparing their students for "college entrance" requirements (Brown, 1914).

The school management was recognized as being “parental.” Staff emphasized that the students understand the importance of “self-control” because they believed that people who cannot govern themselves “cannot govern others” (Union Baptist Institute Press, 1926). However, the teachers were still considered quite “stern” and “strict.” One school catalogue explained that the aim of the teachers was to deal with students in the “Christian spirit” characterizing a “well-governed home.” As in a family, these teachers worked hard to build relationships with their students by becoming acquainted with their “habits and dispositions,” while providing them a structured and supportive environment based on high expectations (Brown & W.H. Harris M.D., 1918-1919).

Professor J. H. Brown, a renowned principal of the institute, said that he worked “every minute to inspire the members of his race with a pride in what they do” (“Black Athens: In Quest of a Heritage ” August 16, 1975). Brown, who served as principal of the school from 1886 until 1918, was a strong advocate for “racial cooperation.” He believed that “blacks needed the help of white people in order to carry out their educational pursuits.” Many times, Brown invited white speakers for his graduations, conferences, or other ceremonies to allow black Athenians a chance to engage whites in positive settings (Brown, 1914).

Another way Brown modeled racial cooperation was in his development of the Annual Negro Farmer’s Conference. Beginning in 1902, Brown initiated the yearly conference¹⁰⁸ to bring together black farmers from surrounding counties to Athens to learn how to improve their farming methods¹⁰⁹ (Brown, 1914; Brown & W.H. Harris M.D., 1918-1919). One of the biggest attractions of the conference was the large number of white and black agricultural experts who came to present ways to increase production on black farms. One record suggests that, after attending the conference, the average farmer would increase his gross yield by two bales of

cotton and seventy-five bushels of corn ("Athens' Colored Educational Institutions: Jeruel Baptist Association of Georgia Doing Splendid Work - Information on source is incomplete," Unknown; Brown & W.H. Harris M.D., 1918-1919). In addition to farming, the conference had sessions on childrearing, housekeeping, and the influences of the public school on the "life and conditions" of black communities (Brown, 1914; Brown & W.H. Harris M.D., 1918-1919).

Some time after 1910, Charles H. Lyons, Sr., took over the principalship from Brown. After graduating in 1900 from Jeruel Academy, Lyons continued his education at the Atlanta Baptist College, where he received his teaching credentials. In 1908, he returned to Athens to teach at Jeruel and later become the school's principal¹¹⁰ (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978; Underwood, January 29, 1978; Union Baptist Institute Press, 1926). By 1912, under Lyons's leadership, Jeruel became the second largest private black school in Athens, next to Knox. The student enrollment that year was almost 200 (Underwood, January 29, 1978).

In 1924, Jeruel combined with at least three other black private schools and associations-- Union Middle River, Northwestern No.1, and Madison--to form Union Baptist Institute ("Athens' Colored Educational Institutions: Jeruel Baptist Association of Georgia Doing Splendid Work - Information on source is incomplete," Unknown; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978; Underwood, January 29, 1978). During the mid 1930s, the trustees of the school removed *Baptist* from the school name because they wanted to open the doors to students of all denominations, backgrounds, and creeds (Thurmond & Hester, 2001). However, the school maintained prayer as a part of the daily routine¹¹¹ (H. Stroud in McConnell, April 4, 2001).

The teachers at Union held their students to the highest possible behavioral and academic standards. Students of the school recalled Union teachers saying things like "if you're going to survive, you gotta do it" and "you can't expect to go out into the world being a dummy - you got

to get something in your head” (Moore (Stroud), July 18, 2006, Interview; G. E. Stroud, Jr., July 18, 2006, Interview). They loved their students, but they also expected them to “come and learn.” The teachers had this “determination that they were going to teach you,” and as a result “you were going to learn” (M. Stroud, July 18, 2006, Interview). One student acknowledged that the education he received at the school was “excellent” because of the “small classes” and the individual attention provided to him by Union teachers (McConnell, April 4, 2001; C. W. Stroud, July 18, 2006, Interview).

Farris Johnson, Sr., an English teacher and administrator for the school and later an administrator in the public schools, affirmed that the school was an institution that blacks could “point to with pride.” In 2001, a historical marker¹¹² was placed on the site of the school with the help of State Representative Keith Heard, whose mother attended Union. At the dedication, Heard recognized the school as a “pillar” of Athens’s black community. Reverend Winfred Hope added that the school was the hub of where “minds were taught” and “lives were shaped” (McConnell, April 4, 2001; Stroer, April 3, 2001). The president of the University of Georgia, Michael Adams, also attended the dedication. He emphasized that it is important that people learn from the rich cultural history of the school. He said it is important for the Athens community to learn from the lessons that the school taught, but also the spirit the school invoked of “moving forward” in a “united fashion” (McConnell, April 4, 2001).

Before closing in 1956, Jeruel Academy-Union Baptist became the longest running black private school in Athens. Thurmond wrote that it became a “very expensive proposition” to maintain black private schools. He asserted that the school lasted as long as it did because parents realized that the primarily responsibility for the education of their children rested with them (Stroer, April 3, 2001). In the end, the school dissolved and merged¹¹³ its efforts with those

of the Athens's black public high school, Athens High and Industrial School, when the city and county schools of Athens-Clarke County consolidated (Shearer, August 8, 1985; Stroer, April 3, 2001; Underwood, January 29, 1978).

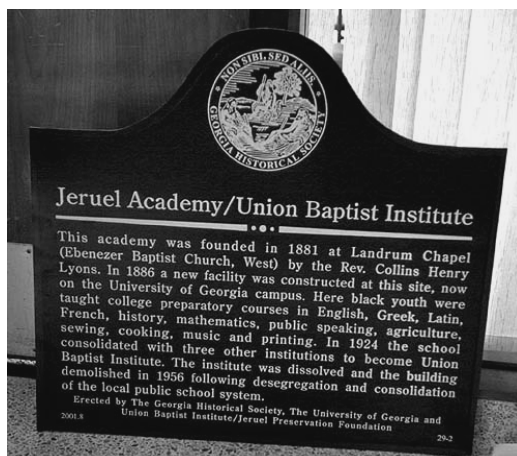


Figure 5: Jeruel Academy/Union Baptist Institute Historic Marker
Photo courtesy of Athens Banner-Herald.¹¹⁴

Before the public schools became the central educational institutions for black Athenians in the 1930s-1950s, several other smaller black private schools opened in the Athens area. Similar to Jeruel and Knox, at least one of these schools was known to be intricately affiliated with a local church. Unlike Jeruel and Knox, all of these schools served only a small number of students, which may be why they were unable to stay remain open as long as the other institutions.

Other Private Schools for Blacks

Little is known about the development of several smaller black private schools in Athens. Records suggest that the Hyman Liana School, Heard University, and the Rosa Smith Normal School opened after the turn of the century, but these records do not suggest how long the schools remained open. However, even if these schools were short lived, their presence is

important in the timeline of events that led to the “educational self- sufficiency” of black Athenians (Anderson, 1988).

Sometime between 1907 and 1915 the Rosa Smith Normal School was established by Anne Smith Derricotte.¹¹⁵ The school, named after the mother of the school’s founder, was located in “Lyndon Town” on or near Lyndon Avenue on the northwest side of Athens. Like the founders of the other black schools in Athens, “Miss Anne,” as Derricotte’s students fondly called her, graduated from the impressive Atlanta University. Before opening her own school and possibly after, Derricotte acquired teaching experience by working at the Knox Institute and Heard University.

Derricotte’s school was special though, because it was designed to provide educational training for children in the rural section of town not covered by the public schools. The school had flexible hours to meet the needs of students who had to work in agriculture or industry to help support their families. Miss Anne used a high school curriculum focused on “practical and fundamental” learning, and she provided very individualized teaching methods to help meet the needs of all of her students. This type of teaching required her to maintain small class sizes of no more than 35 students so that each student could progress at his or her own speed (“Black Athens: In Quest of a Heritage ” August 16, 1975; Killian, 1941; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

Similar to the Rosa Smith School, Heard University was designed to meet the needs of working students. Classes at the school were held during the day as well as in the evening for those students who held day jobs. The school, founded in 1912 by J. Thomas Heard, a local black attorney, served 78 students in four grades. T. Heard taught half of the students, and his wife taught the others (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

T. Heard named the school a university in hopes that one day it could grow into one and “be a factor in the uplift of his race” (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978, p. 66). Little is known about the school’s curriculum. The school sat adjacent to Knox Institute on the corner of Finley and Reese (Linston, July 25, 2006). The school’s location so close to Knox caused strain and competition between the schools and probably contributed to Heard University’s demise (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978; Woofter, 1912).

Like the Rosa Smith Normal School and Heard University, the Hyman Liana School was also designed for a special population of students. Records suggest that it was opened to serve the poorest black families of Athens. The school, founded in 1915, was one of the smallest black schools in the city, enrolling only 30 students at a time.

The school was located in a small building donated by the white Presbyterian Church. It is likely that the church paid the salary and room and board of the school’s teacher. State of Georgia Poor School Funds may have also helped to support the school (Joiner et al., 1979; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

Whether because of their size, their restriction to special populations, or their affiliations to certain people or groups, none of these small schools survived more than a few years. However, the success of Athens’s black schools should not be judged by the length of time that any one school was able to stay open. Instead, the success should be judged on the contribution that these schools and teachers made to the educational advancements of Athens’s black community.

The next section considers how the private and semiprivate black schools discussed in this chapter became central in helping to make “universal education” a reality for black Athenians. These schools provoked excitement in the black community and fear in the white

community. Although blacks were becoming even more conscious of the benefits of being a literate culture, whites were frightened because they believed that the more “mental work” being made more available to blacks would certainly make their manual labor less appealing (Anderson, 1988).

The Success of Athens’s Black Private Schools

Each of these private black schools,¹¹⁶ founded and operated by black Athenians, seemed keenly attuned to the needs of Athens’s black youth. Most of these schools offered spiritual guidance, literacy training, boarding for students from other towns or states, vocational training, and college preparation (Reap, 1985; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978; Wells, 1951). Schools like Knox and Union also participated in men’s and women’s athletics, playing against many prominent black schools in the South including Paine, Morehouse, and Atlanta (Thurmond, 1978). In addition to solid academic and industrial curricula and extracurricular activities, several of these schools also had flexible operating hours so students could work during the day. Perhaps the most important commonality among the schools was that their founders viewed black education as the primary means of gaining black social and economic mobility.

By 1870, around 1% of black Athenians had access to Athens’s private black schools, and by 1912, 33% of Athens’s black students were attending these private black schools. Records suggest that these schools were a highly successful component of Athens’s black community. Even though the Knox and Jeruel academies had smaller student populations than did the local public schools, they had similar numbers of students graduating with certificates in teaching, housekeeping, nursing, and medicine. Both Knox and Jeruel were also making significant gains in industrial schooling, with Knox having the most industrial training equipment in the city and Jeruel holding a yearly farmers’ conference where the Chancellor of

the University of Georgia and its Deans of the Department of Agriculture regularly spoke (Woofter, 1912).

As with most primary and grammar schools of the era, these schools were largely founded, designed, and financially supported by blacks themselves. In many cases as the schools were started, the black community built the school building, while the religious organizations or other supporting entity paid for the materials and paid the salary of the teachers ("Economic Co-operation among Negro Americans," 1907). The founding and maintenance of these schools *by blacks for blacks* in the face of massive systemic oppression proved that there was of course no "native deficiency of intellect, on the part of the black man [or woman]." In fact, these black schools proved that "the only mental and moral difference between the two races [was] that of education" (Stearns, 1872). However, as a result of the growing public school movement, the "long-standing tradition of private education" began to systematically fold by the 1890s, though at least five privately funded, tuition-based black schools remained open through the 1950s (Thurmond & Hester, 2001).

CHAPTER 4 DEVELOPING BLACK PUBLIC EDUCATION IN ATHENS

Believing that education, the pulpit, and the press were the only “means of redemption” for their plight, black Athenians were frustrated by the small percentage of their community that had access to Athens’s private or endowed black schools (“Education of Negroes in the South - Information on source is incomplete,” August 31, 1901; “Letter to Editor,” April 23, 1880; “Negroes and Public Schools,” April 3, 1901). Because education was the “highest priority” of freed slaves, next to owning land, black Athenians banded together to resolve this problem by seeking other educational options for the remaining youth (Litwack, 1998a). Many white Athenians were also showing interest in the public school movement¹¹⁷ because they desired local white control of black schools and they were concerned about blacks being taught by northern outsiders. Some whites, one historian suggests, were simply envious of the local black private schools, because they were nearly free and there were no free white schools in all of Clarke County (Schinkel, 1971).

“Let us not be behind in the race for knowledge,” an article in the *Southern Watchman* pleaded as the author explained the need for public city and county schools. The paper added that the costs of tuition in Athens’s private schools were “an average of three times” more than the costs of public schools of Savannah, Atlanta, and Brunswick. In a town of more than 5,000 residents, the paper noted, Athens could and should “establish a splendid system of free schools” (January 9, 1867).

Public County Schools

Even though the public school movement began in Clarke County around 1859, it did not officially take shape until 1871 when several public county schools opened.¹¹⁸ These schools were scattered throughout the rural community, mainly near black churches. They were

considered “invaluable” to the children who lived near them because they provided them access to an education that was reasonably priced and close to their homes ("Economic Co-operation among Negro Americans," 1907; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

An 1884 Consolidated Report of the Clarke County Schools specified that there were 27 white and 34 colored schools in county.¹¹⁹ The total number of students in the county schools at that time was over 2000 (1,452 black and 703 white). These schools were established and maintained using some state Poor School funds, state funds, and student tuition and fees. The average tuition cost was \$1.20 per pupil per month.¹²⁰ The state supported 98¢ of the total tuition (Rice, October 29, 2001). Another record suggests that the tuition averaged up to \$2.40 per white student and 73¢ per black student (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

A county school commissioner was hired at an annual salary of \$222 to supervise the schools. This was a large salary considering that the combined costs of all of the teachers' salaries was \$3640, probably averaging around \$60 per teacher, per year (Rice, October 29, 2001). During that era, white male and female teachers made \$70.00 and \$48.20 respectively, while black male and female teachers made \$24.00 and \$23.45 respectively (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

By 1916, there were 14 black county schools in rural Clarke County. Equal in number to the white county schools, but unequal in access to materials, funds for teachers, and facilities, these schools were run by the Clarke County Board of Education. This board, different than the board that ran the public city schools, sought funding for these schools from the State of Georgia and private philanthropies such as the Slater, Rosenwald, Phelps Stokes, and the Jeanes funds for model and training schools, schools like the Judia Jackson Harris school. All of these schools were multiaged one-room school houses, except for the Harris and Midway schools. Most of the

schools, including Billups Grove, Timothy, Allenville, Chestnut Grove, Morton Chapel, and Brooklyn were housed in buildings provided by black churches of the same name ("Rural Survey of Clarke County, Georgia," 1915).

Mary Willingham, a county school student who later became a practical nurse, said that she attended Morton's Chapel for elementary school. She noted that it was a regular church house and the students were expected to be present at the school during the week and then to attend church and Sunday school at the chapel at the week's end. "That's the way colored folks done in them days," she commented, but "now they's got a reg'lar schoolhouse." Like many other rural students, she was not able to attend school after second grade. Disappointed in that, she added, "I did not have 'nough schoolin.' That's how come I can't talk proper now" (Hester, 2001, p. 37).¹²¹

Fanny Francis Neely Nesbit, a student at Billups Grove School in the late 1930s and early 1940s, recalled black schools of that era being "traditionally run by black churches." She said that, like other black schools in the county, Billups Grove went all the way up to the seventh grade. Then, students would enter the workforce or attend Reese Street High School.¹²² Like other black county schools, Billups Grove was open only for a few months at a time, and all of them lacked the necessary materials and facilities to meet the needs of the growing black population.

In addition to the lack of sufficient or quality materials, Billups Grove and most of the other county schools were staffed with young and underqualified teachers. Mrs. Nesbit's mother, Susie Bell Johnson Neely,¹²³ was one of the teachers at the Billups Grove School. A certificate that Mrs. Nesbit still holds states that her mother was certified to teach at the age of 17 following

her completion of the eighth grade. She taught at the school until she married and began having children (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview).



Figure 6. Billups Grove School
Photo courtesy of Athens Banner-Herald.¹²⁴

In addition to the lack of materials and reliance on underqualified teachers, one record notes that the county church schools, as unattractive on the outside as on the inside, were the poorest facilities of all the schools in the county. Students in all of the schools were required to sit on long benches and write on their laps because there were no desks. Blackboards were “wrenched,” and the walls had no pictures or maps. Most of the schools were heated with “unjacketed stoves” that were dangerous because of the poor ventilation of the schools and because sparks flew from the open flames (“Rural Survey of Clarke County, Georgia,” 1915).

As it is today, poverty was a persistent problem for black Athenians. This problem was perpetuated by the lack of necessary resources for the schools. The norm was for students to have after-school jobs at home, on farms, in others’ homes, or in local businesses. Mary Williamson recalled that all her “chillun worked ever’ day after school was out, soon as they was big ‘nough and could git the work to do.” She added that they also worked during school vacations and throughout the summer. These jobs allowed the children to bring home an additional \$1.50 to add to the household income. Williamson, working as a nurse when jobs became available, recalled keeping one dollar of her earnings each week and spending it on her

children's school supplies and clothing. "I took the money and bought books, tablets, pencils, and shoes and clothes." She added, "School supplies wasn't furnished by the state then, and by the time I paid out for all them things, there never was enough left to dress 'em right" (Hornsby, 2001, pp. 44-45). She noted in a 1939 interview that "if things was done just like our President wants 'em done," there would be "no hongry folks, or no folks sufferin' for lack of fire to warm by in cold weather, and no little chillun stayin, out of school, 'cause they ain't got no clothes to wear to the schoolhouse in winter weather" (Hornsby, 2001, p. 47).

A 1915 inventory of the schools found that, although nine of the fourteen county schools were considered as being in fair condition, only six of them were painted. Nine schools were also described as having good play areas for students' recreation. Seven of the facilities were said to be housed in a good location. However, they were still viewed by most as being in "poor condition" and "generally ill-equipped." Thurmond suggests these schools were in "poor physical condition" because they were only in their "first decades of existence" and because they were "crippled by discriminatory appropriations of educational funds under the 'separate but equal' doctrine." A prime example of this phenomenon was when 33% of the educational funding for 1916 was awarded to the black schools though approximately 63% of the students served in the public schools were black. Sadly, new roofs, uncontaminated water sources, and used books with missing pages and covers were determined by black educators to be "solid accomplishments" in the fight for educational opportunities (Thurmond & Hester, 2001).

Rural areas, where the majority of black southerners resided, had difficulty securing teachers with high school, normal school, or college training. Black private schools, like those discussed previously, produced the largest number of secondary, normal school and college graduates, which still supplied only a fraction of the black teaching force needed to support

southern black schools. Until the 1930s, cities like Athens were like large vacuums pulling all of the highest quality teachers from the rural communities. Northern philanthropists, like a white Quaker named Miss Anna T. Jeanes, recognized this and began to design the Jeanes teacher program to fill the gaps in the staffing of rural schools (Anderson, 1988).

Around 1907, the Jeanes program brought teachers and supervisors to work in the black county schools of Georgia. The Jeanes program was designed to open one-teacher demonstration schools in rural areas of the South focused on industrial and manual training education (Caliver, 1933; Sessoms, 1975). Considered to be among the most influential philanthropic agencies on the development of rural black educational opportunities, the Anna T. Jeanes Foundation, otherwise termed the Negro Rural School Fund, cooperated with school administrations like the Clarke County Board of Education to hire supervisors to oversee the work of industrial education teachers.

These supervisors, under the direct oversight of the superintendent, were considered members of the “regular corps” of Clarke County teachers. In the early years of the program, approximately 84% of these teachers were paid from the Negro Rural School Fund. Their central roles included teaching and supervising elementary industrial work, promoting school and community clubs, and raising money for new schoolhouses, school equipment, and extended school term (Anderson & Moss, 1999; Anderson, 1988).

One record notes that the first of these schools opened in Clarke County in 1932. Mrs. Quinton Jones is recognized as the first Jeanes supervisor in Clarke County, followed by Miss Mammie Sapp Dye, Mrs. Mary Trawick, and Miss Madie Kincy. Judia Jackson Harris was most likely also a Jeanes teacher (Thurmond & Hester, 2001; Underwood, August 19, 1987). Timothy church school, one of the last operational one-room schoolhouses in Athens, was supervised by

Mrs. Ella Billups and later her sister Mrs. Fanny Francis Neely Nesbit, who were both Jeanes teachers as well (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview).

Chestnut Grove School

Chestnut Grove School, another one-room Clarke County schoolhouse, was built a few miles away from Timothy School on Epps Bridge Road. It was built in 1896 on land purchased by the school system from a local black farmer named Floyd Kennedy. Most of the students who attended the school walked a good distance from their homes to get there.¹²⁵ One record suggests that the building was constructed with tongue and groove pine boards for approximately \$200. One hundred dollars of the building fund was provided by the school system, and the rest was raised by local black sharecroppers (Kissane, 1999).

One of the 14 county schools running at the time, the school was a tiny 24 x 36 foot room that lacked both indoor lighting and plumbing.¹²⁶ The six windows, three on each side, provided the light under which students and teachers worked. During the winter, heat was provided for the school by a single pot-bellied stove vented through a chimney (Kissane, 1999). The school did have a kitchen in the back where food could be prepared. However, the kitchen did not have a stove for cooking. Like many of the local black schools, oil¹²⁷ was kept on the floor to keep the dust level down (Moore (Stroud), July 18, 2006, Interview). Overall, the school was considered well maintained by the Chestnut Grove Baptist Church, which was located on the same property (Kissane, 1999).

When the school first opened, teachers were brought in from other communities. When they arrived in Athens, they moved in with a family already living near the school. The teacher's room and board were provided by that family as part of the compensation for working at the school (Moore (Stroud), July 18, 2006, Interview).

Bettye Moore (Stroud) started first grade at Chestnut Grove in 1943 and remained there until around 1950. She recalled the school serving students from the first through seventh grades. Moore, the second wife of Howard Stroud Sr., was one of many of the Chestnut Grove students who transferred at the end of the seventh grade to Union Baptist Institute or AHI because Chestnut Grove had only seven grades (Kissane, 1999; Moore (Stroud), July 18, 2006, Interview).

Because few black schools were available in the rural areas of Clarke County, the school was often overcrowded. Most of the students attending the school were related to each other in some way. Moore remembers the school feeling like an extended family, or a “close knit group” who really cared about each other. The “camaraderie” between the students and the teachers at Chestnut Grove was one of her fondest memory of the school (Moore (Stroud), July 18, 2006, Interview).

Moore recalled that the school had three teachers during the time that she attended. She fondly remembered Eva Howard and one other female teacher as “people who really took an interest in the kids.” In her opinion, the third teacher named Jenny Davenport was “not as dedicated as everybody else.” However, she added that “most of us who went there” thought that the school gave them a “good start” to their education (Moore (Stroud), July 18, 2006, Interview).

The teachers “really taught us,” she said. Like the educators at the other black schools in the community, the expectations of the teachers at Chestnut Grove were very high. They believed that the “only way you going to make it in this world” was to have a sound education. They told the students, “You have to learn, you have to do, you have to excel” (Moore (Stroud), July 18, 2006, Interview).

The chalkboard at the school was created by painting parts of the walls black. During this time, student desks were hard to come by, so students sat on simple benches for most of the school's existence (Kissane, 1999). The students were provided with a few books that were usually hand-me-downs from other schools. However, even with only a few books and handmade desks, Moore remembered that the teachers worked hard to help make sure that the students were successful in school (Moore (Stroud), July 18, 2006, Interview).

The teachers focused much of their efforts on teaching reading and math. They "dwelled" on those much more than they did science. Moore did not recall the school having additional classes like social science, industrial training, or domestic sciences. "I don't recall the extras," Moore said, "all those extras came along a lot later." The teachers, she recalled, "took so much pride" in the success of their students. They would prepare for months for things like the county-wide spelling bee and field days so that their students could demonstrate their achievements to the community (Moore (Stroud), July 18, 2006, Interview).

During the 1949-1950, Chestnut Grove was closed by the county school system because they determined that there was no more need for one-room schools. At that time, the school was purchased by the Chestnut Grove Baptist Church for \$550. The church, founded in 1885, had a long relationship with the school even though it was a public institution. Many of its members had attended the school, and they thought it was important to save the school for future generations to see. After sitting for almost 20 years without any restoration, the school became severely dilapidated. In the late 1970s, the church and local community members joined forces to restore the school and add it to the National Register of Historic Places. In 1999, the school was finally completely restored, and it is now filled with photographs and other memorabilia of Athens's black history (Kissane, 1999).

Judia Jackson Harris Model and Industrial School

During this era, one of the largest and most recognized Clarke County schools, locally and nationally, was the Judia Jackson Harris Model and Industrial School. Judia Jackson,¹²⁸ later Judia C. Jackson Harris after becoming Samuel Harris's second wife in 1912, opened the semiprivate industrial training school in 1903. Following her graduation from Atlanta University at the young age of 19, Jackson returned to her native home of Athens to teach. Quickly becoming frustrated by inadequate funding and insufficient access to public schools for rural students, she left the city schools in the early 1900s to open her own rural school on Danielsville Highway. The campus included a three-room wooden building for the main classrooms and a two-room home economics building (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978; Underwood, September, 1987). The school was built on land that she inherited and donated for the building of the school and a community center (Shaw, 1996). One record asserts that the training school was the only black school in the county with a clean and neat appearance, well-kept and gardened grounds, and buildings in good condition (Johnson, 1916).

Jackson Harris designed her school to focus on "self-help and economic independence." The school was run by three teachers including Jackson Harris, who offered elementary and secondary instruction focused on basic grammar and math courses, as well as music, art, and drama (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978, p. 83; see also Underwood, September, 1987). Records suggest that Jackson Harris built the school to "destroy ignorance and crime" and "keep the youth in the community." With these focal points, Jackson Harris believed that the school could cultivate "desirable" and "efficient" citizens on whom "the race and the nation" could depend (Shaw, 1996, p. 175).

In and out of school, Jackson Harris was known for providing her students with learning opportunities that would help them, and the community as a whole, prosper. One way that Jackson Harris demonstrated the success of her school and students was to hold annual agricultural fairs. During these fairs, canned goods, livestock, quilts, and other farm goods were exhibited. Prizes were awarded for the goods of the highest quality. The fairs were highly regarded in the community, drawing large crowds from Clarke and many other rural counties.

In addition to preparing for these fairs, Jackson Harris's students presented yearly musical pageants at the Morton Opera House, now called the Morton Theater.¹²⁹ Jackson Harris wrote and produced all of the pageants, all of which had racial, historical, and religious themes, to demonstrate the good work being done at the school (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978; Underwood, September, 1987). Funds raised at the fairs and the pageants most likely went to support the efforts of the school (Shaw, 1996).

The school was financially supported by the Slater Fund, the Rosenwald Fund,¹³⁰ private donations, local taxes, and the Clarke County Board of Education. One record suggests that the largest financial contribution to renovating the school structures came from the Julius Rosenwald Fund¹³¹ (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978). During this era, the Julius Rosenwald Fund "came to symbolize the crusade for black common schools in the rural South" (Anderson, 1988, p. 153). However, even though the Rosenwald school building program was crucial in the development of rural black schools during this time, it was unlikely that the fund covered more than half the costs of the Jackson Harris school building and materials.¹³² Historians suggest that Rosenwald Funds typically contributed only around one-sixth of the total costs for the buildings, grounds, and equipment of rural common schools (Anderson, 1988).

So, when communities wanted to build a community school, they would have had to collect private contributions or public tax funds. Archives suggest that these same locals probably also contributed labor and building materials to help with the school's construction. Since most southern public school authorities were diverting school taxes, paid by both blacks and whites, into the development or enhancement of local white schools, blacks had few options but to pay direct taxes on goods and property and indirect taxes (labor and materials) to ensure that black youth had access to schools (Anderson, 1988).

In 1913, the Clarke County Board of Education took total control of the Jackson Harris school and land. Most likely, the land was deeded to the school district by Mrs. Jackson Harris herself. The value of the building and the land of the Judia Jackson Harris School came to less than \$2000 at the time (Anderson, 1988; Orr, 1950; Thurmond & Hester, 2001).

In 1926, a fire destroyed the three-room building of the school (Thurmond & Hester, 2001). However, the teachers continued to teach their classes in Jackson Harris's home and in the home economics building across the street until enough funds were raised to replace the school's main structure. By 1929, the new Jackson Harris brick school building was completed with four rooms, including a classroom, auditorium, principal's office, and library (Underwood, September, 1987).

In addition to running the school for youth and adults, Jackson Harris provided a 4-week institute for teachers from surrounding communities to get educational training. The purpose of the program was to give convenient access to advanced training to rural teachers so that they did not have to go long distances and pay large lodging and tuition fees at distant colleges and universities. Her training, most likely done with the help of her husband Samuel F. Harris, was

so highly regarded that the Clarke County Board of Education required all of their black teachers to attend the summer institutes (MacLean, 1994; Shaw, 1996).

In addition to opening the school and providing this training, Jackson Harris also organized Land Owner or Corn Clubs. These clubs were designed to “improve the Negro home life” and help in the establishment of community schools that would be “the center of all [community] activities” (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978, p. 83). One of these clubs was the Mutual Benefit Association discussed in more detail in Chapter 6 “Lodges and Clubs” (Du Bois, 1907). With Jackson Harris’s help, local blacks were able to purchase more than 2000 acres through these clubs. Basically, the club members would combine their resources to purchase large pieces of land, and then they would divide the land among the members. In addition to purchasing land, the clubs cooperatively opened the Jackson Harris School and purchased a community saw mill, a cotton gin, and a threshing machine (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

Throughout the time that Jackson was establishing her school, corn clubs, and teacher institutes, she was also completing postgraduate work at Harvard College, the University of Chicago, and the University of Pennsylvania. Mrs. Jackson Harris was a well-known educator throughout the state of Georgia, holding local, state, and national leadership positions in black political, economic, and religious organizations. Records show that she won numerous educational honors, including a Teacher’s Life Certificate and a lithograph from the governor of Georgia for her dedicated services to Athens’s black youth (Athens-Clarke County Government, 1995; Hester, 2001; Ruiz & DuBois, 2000; Smith, 2003).

She is recognized as playing a central role in the development of the Athens Teacher Training and Industrial Institute and the local Interracial Committee (MacLean, 1994; Shaw, 1996). In addition to all of those accomplishments, Jackson wrote a book called *Race Relations*

in 1925. Numerous history texts list Jackson Harris as a prominent welfare reformist, social work activist, and a successful “architect of learning” who was central to the establishment of “reputable” black educational institutions in Athens (Athens-Clarke County Government, 1995; Hester, 2001; Ruiz & DuBois, 2000; Smith, 2003).

Judia Jackson Harris continued her work in the Clarke County schools until she retired in 1950 because of health issues at the age of 77. The school that she founded remained open, funded by Slater, Phelps-Stokes, and private donations, until 1956 when the city and county schools of Athens-Clarke County merged (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978; Underwood, September, 1987). After a long career dedicated to the improvement of the Athens black community, Jackson Harris died in 1960 (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

Jackson Harris’s work “definitely” had a resounding impact on the rural community of Athens, Clarke County (Underwood, September, 1987). One record suggests that her work stimulated such a sense of competition among the county schools that their relationship “bordered on mutual contempt.” Woofter claimed that, in 1912, the contention got so bad that at least three county school principals were not speaking to each other (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978, p. 83).

This type of fierce school rivalry did not exist just among the county schools of that era. Rivalry also occurred among Athens’s black city schools. The next section discusses the development of Athens’s black public city schools and how those schools compared in staffing, resources, funding, and community support to other schools in the surrounding area.

Public City Schools

By the mid 1880s, blacks and whites living in the city of Athens joined forces to secure a *free*, locally controlled public city school system.¹³³ This effort was started over a decade after

the surrounding Clarke County School System opened (Rice, December 3, 2001; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978). Many white Athenians were angered by the surge of public school support because they did not want the city to finance black public education. These adversaries believed that public schools would lead to “serious consequences for the social system which white Athenians wished to preserve” (Gamble in Thurmond & Sparer, 1978, p. 84). These public school opponents proclaimed that the schools would cause an increased tax burden on whites and that the education of blacks would change the social order of the town. One local white man, angered by the efforts, charged that public schools were “a Massachusetts’ invention and we [Athenians] were becoming Yankeeized fast enough” (Hull in Thurmond & Sparer, 1978, p. 84).

However, Thurmond noted that both black and white community members supported the opening of public city schools. These influential community members believed that the development of “free schools for everyone” would help the future prosperity of Athens (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978, p. 84). White backers of the movement included attorney Emory Speer¹³⁴ and the owners of the local white newspaper. Black support for the initiative came from prominent black leaders like Madison Davis.¹³⁵ Davis exalted the importance of public education throughout his career as a legislator. His support was vital in the passing of legislation that set aside funds for free public education for all of Georgia’s children (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978). By the 1880s, Athens had become a commercial center for all of Northeast Georgia. With community leadership behind the opening of public schools and the need for a more educated workforce increasing, most Athenians joined the efforts to establish a free black and white public school system by 1885 (Branson, 1886; Rucker, 1886).

On October 15, 1885, the General Assembly of Georgia¹³⁶ authorized the development of a public city school system. In November of the same year, black and white Athenians voted for a \$20,000 bond issue¹³⁷ to support the building of two public schools, one on Baxter Street for black students and one on Washington Street for white students. These schools, both two-story, ten-room buildings, opened in 1886 (Branson, 1886; Rowe & Barrow, 1923; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).



Figure 7: Baxter Street School for blacks

Print courtesy of Michael L. Thurmond, *A Story Untold: Black Men and Women of Athens*.

The attitude of black citizens toward the opening of Baxter Street School was favorable. They flocked to the school in greater numbers than did whites to the Washington Street School. Both schools were quite crowded from the start. Because of the continuing growth of the city and Athens's high "per capita wealth" of approximately one "thousand dollars per inhabitant," the city school board sought out three additional temporary buildings in June of 1885. One of the new schools on Foundry Street (previously the Methodist School) would house black students, and two additional schools were acquired for whites.¹³⁸ These schools served over 1000 students in their first year. The Foundry Street School¹³⁹ had four teachers who served students in grades 1 and 2, while the Baxter Street School had six teachers who served students in grades 2 through 5 (Branson, 1886; Rice, December 3, 2001; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

In the First Annual Report by the Athens City Schools, Superintendent E.C. Branson complimented the progress of the black teachers in educating black youth in the appropriate "habits of mind – punctuality, promptness, orderliness, tidiness, painstakingness, work, and preservation of property." This statement assumed that blacks were lazy and ignorant (Branson, Unknown). However, his comments were consistent with the Old South rhetoric of bigotry and oppression. Branson also claimed that the South had "the right to shape the education of the negro as to protect and preserve *her* best interest." He continued by saying that the schools were teaching blacks the "nature and results of contracts" so that they could be honestly self-supporting and finally "get out of a condition of *ignorance* and *superstition* [italics added]" (Branson, 1886, pp. 8-9).

With this focus on low-level learning, the Athens Board of Education had few concerns about purchasing books or supplies for the black schools. Records suggest that, while the white teachers' classrooms were stocked with physics apparatuses, globes, maps, and reading, number,

and music charts, black teachers saved “every scrap of paper and every pencil”¹⁴⁰ they could find to have enough supplies for their students (See also Branson, 1886; Hill in Hester, 2001, p. 104). Even with few supplies and overcrowded, understaffed classrooms, one newspaper article noted that black pupils were making “rapid progress” under the “direction of well trained Negro teachers.” The article noted that outstanding work was being done at the schools in the areas of moral conduct, music, and penmanship (Branson, Unknown).

Historical records note that black students in the city schools slightly outnumbered white students, which was significant since whites were beginning to outnumber blacks in the general population of the town. The records also suggest that black students had better attendance at the start of the city schools than did whites. During this time, attendance for blacks was also higher in the county schools. Surprisingly, Superintendent Branson refuted this data in his first annual report by suggesting that the attendance at the black schools was steadily decreasing. His comments give the impression that blacks had low attendance and low enrollment, both in direct contradiction to other data given in the same report (Branson, 1886, Unknown).

Possibly as a result of this misperception, one of the black schools, Baxter Street, was remodeled and given to the white students sometime between 1892 and 1893 (Branson, 1886; Mell, 1964). The closing of the Baxter school resulted in two smaller black schools opening. One of these schools was located on the east side of Athens. This school was named the East Athens School and was first supervised by Principal John R. Mack.¹⁴¹ The school had three teachers, including Mack, and it served students in the lower elementary grades. The other school was located on the west side of Athens and was named the West Athens School. That school had five

teachers who served students in seven grades. In 1894, the school was expanded to nine grades. West Athens School was led by Principal A. J. Carey¹⁴² (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

In the early 1900s,¹⁴³ newly opened white businesses and factories in Athens required a larger, cheaper source of labor, and blacks began filling these jobs. Many rural blacks were soon moving to Athens to attain stable work. These blacks were quickly hired for work that was often refused by whites. The areas of work included skilled trades (bakers, barbers, blacksmiths, seamstresses, carpenters, masons, and plasterers), domestic and hotel services (cooks, maids, janitors, and washerwomen), and unskilled labor (fertilizer hands, ditchers, drivers, railroad gangs, and cotton mill hands).¹⁴⁴

Almost 94% of black Athenians over the age of 16 were working in these areas at the turn of the century.¹⁴⁵ As more of these positions became available, centralized training for these jobs became necessary and industrial education became a key curricular component in both the public and private schools of Athens (Woofter, 1912). The white city school board believed that black children were destined to these occupations in the “social and industrial scheme” of Athens, so they redesigned the curriculum in black public schools to provide appropriate training for these jobs (Chambliss, 1934). Educators like Samuel F. Harris took on the role of leading the schools in the changes needed to prepare black Athenians for those jobs. The next chapter details how Harris almost single handedly brought industrial education to Athens’s black schools.

CHAPTER 5

SAMUEL F. HARRIS AND THE CLASSICAL-INDUSTRIAL DEBATE IN ATHENS

Anderson and other black education scholars suggest that bitter ideological struggles among supporters of black schools transpired throughout the southern states between the 1860s and the 1930s (Anderson, 1988; Du Bois, 1969; Du Bois et al., 1997; Spivey, 1978; Washington, 1900). Some of these supporters desired simple industrial education programs¹⁴⁶ for blacks, while others hoped that classical education¹⁴⁷ would help black schools contribute to the black freedom struggle for social and economic stability. However, regardless of its preferred form, education continued to be considered the route for blacks to be able to transcend past oppressions and move forward with their newfound lives (Newey & Tyack, 1972).

Many black southerners accepted industrial education because they believed that there was no other viable educational option. Most northern philanthropists and white southerners financially and politically supported industrial education for blacks at the turn of the century because they worried that classical education would persuade freedmen to desire more than their manual labor jobs—work that was sustaining the economic superiority of southern whites. In the eyes of most white southerners, industrial education was seen as an acceptable paternalistic model that would save inferior blacks from their own ignorance (see Fredrickson, 1987).

Supporters of classical studies from both white and black communities, however, expressed concerns that the industrial educational model was designed to reinforce the existing social order of the South instead of facilitating racial uplift. These supporters of classical studies believed that building schools with a simple focus on manual labor skills would deny students access to the skills needed to challenge the oppressive southern political economy. Tension soon developed between the supporters and opponents of industrial education. As I summarized in

Chapter 2, this well documented tension became the central theme in the so-called “great debates” between scholars like Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois and it played out in concrete events in southern towns like Athens ("Athens commercial agricultural-industrial education interest " December 21,1906; William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, 1907; Du Bois, 1910; Du Bois, 1935, 1961, 1969, 1973a, 1973b, 1983; Du Bois et al., 1997; Hanus, 1908; Spivey, 1978; Washington, 1900; Washington & Andrews, 1995).

Some of the black private schools of Athens offered industrial training for nominal fees immediately following the Civil War, and when the public schools of Athens opened, many of the black teachers who had attended these private schools decided to continue these traditions in the public sphere. They believed that the schools needed to train their students for a practical future in the social and economic order of the town. Studies of southern black teachers of this era have found that these teachers entered into higher education for two main reasons: to serve their people and to “keep the peace between the races” (Chambliss, 1934, p. 99). These overworked, underpaid teachers soon found out that their poorly funded and understaffed schools would serve their people, but only in those disenfranchising ways condoned by the white school board and city council (Flanigen, September 26,1910; Fultz, 1995a).

Samuel F. Harris, however, used white support for industrial training to secure more resources and provide better facilities for Athens’s black students. Unlike others in the black educational community, he decided early to push back on the disenfranchising institutional structures found in Athens’s black schools. He envisioned a plan to use the strength and political power of the white elite and the general industrial education model to produce one of the first accredited black schools (Athens High and Industrial School) in the state of Georgia (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

Samuel F. Harris¹⁴⁸ was born February 23, 1875, in Athens, Georgia, and he spent his entire life, except for a few years of college, living in Athens. One record suggests that prior to Harris's leaving Athens to attend school at Atlanta University, he sat in on courses at the University of Georgia. While working as a teaching assistant or in maintenance and custodial services, Harris is said to have listened in on many lectures from the door or hallway. It has been suggested that the university's sympathetic teachers soon allowed Harris to come in and sit in their classes, and by 1890 these same white university professors were seeking a degree for Harris (Shipp, 1988).



Figure 8: Samuel F. Harris

Print courtesy of Michael L. Thurmond, *A Story Untold: Black Men and Women of Athens*.

Athens Board of Education records confirm that Harris received some private lessons from several of Athens's most notable white educators, including Professors Hooper, White, and McWhorter from the University of Georgia and Professor D. L. Earnest of the State Normal School in Athens (Hood et al., 1910c; Jones, 2007; Thurmond, 1978). Writings by Mrs. John Moss also support this notion when she described Harris's support of Professor D.L. Earnest's summer school courses at the State Normal School. Moss's writings suggest that Harris made his

“presence essential” in the class because of his “ingenuity” and demonstration of “strong purpose” while assisting in the use of the “stereopticon.”¹⁴⁹ His presence, she added, kept the participating students and staff from “presenting any possibility of prejudice” (Moss, 1910, p. 6). No records, however, indicate that Harris was ever awarded any credits from either the University of Georgia or the State Normal School. It seems that white school officials refused to officially enroll him and accept his course work because of his race.¹⁵⁰

Around 1892, Harris completed his public schooling and left for Atlanta University and Morris Brown College. Morris Brown College¹⁵¹ accepted some of Harris’s unrecognized course work and “service rendered” in the field of educational and in 1903, they awarded him a Master of Arts Degree. At some point in his career, Harris also continued his studies at the University of Chicago, the University of Pennsylvania, and later at Harvard University.¹⁵² In addition to this training, Harris went to numerous northern and southern education conferences, which gave him insight about vocational and industrial training that could economically benefit black Athenians (Hood et al., 1910c; Jones, 2007; Shipp, 1988; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

After his studies were complete, Harris returned to his native home to promote black education and social advancement. In 1896, the same year the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case legalized the separate but equal doctrine,¹⁵³ Harris began teaching second grade in the Athens city school system. He remained in the system for almost 40 years, moving from classroom teacher, to principal, to director and superintendent of Athens’s colored schools¹⁵⁴ (Flanigen, 1896-1897, 1898-1899).

Only 2 years after he was hired, he was chosen as the new principal of the East Athens Colored School. He was paid \$315.00 per year for the principalship, \$45.00 more than he had made when teaching. However, in addition to his principal duties, Harris was required to teach

40 to 60 fourth and fifth graders each day. Meanwhile, Athens's white principals were making \$255.00 to \$585.00 more than Harris without teaching any additional courses. Even as one of the two highest paid black administrators in the city, Harris's salary¹⁵⁵ remained \$15.00 per year less than that of the lowest paid white teacher (Flanigen, 1896-1897, 1897, 1898-1899).

One of the reasons that Harris became so popular with both the black and white community was that he was a strong proponent for education that taught the "practical duties of life" (Hood et al., 1910a, p. 3). Harris understood that many white Athenians believed that they were under an "obligation to help" the "inferior [black] race" ("GA YMCA studying negro," March 6, 1912). So, early in his career, Harris began to pursue an educational philosophy that could be the key to social, political, and economic success for Athens's black community without threatening the white community. Industrial education became one of the fundamental components of Harris's educational philosophy. Moss noted that "at the inception of his industrial work, many difficulties were encountered," including lack of sympathy and funds. However, Harris's persistence and knowledge about vocational education allowed him to quickly become well-known throughout Athens, and donations and funding for his efforts quickly followed (Moss, 1910, p. 6).

By 1903, Harris had designed a series of technical and vocational courses in Athens's city schools. He claimed that these courses would enable black students to remain the dedicated workforce on which Athens's industrial and business arenas were built. They would provide "industriousness" training that would develop initiative and citizenship skills in Athens's black youth (Burke, 1946; Gardner, 1975). Harris's early school vision included programs that focused on academic development, training in domestic services, and vocational studies ("The Black

Mammy Institute," August 30, 1911). Harris recognized that these areas could be taught without upsetting the social structure of the town (Burke, 1946; Gardner, 1975).

Like Booker T. Washington, Harris believed that literacy education alone would result in an "exaggerated estimate" of children's importance in the world and an "increase of wants" which education might not prepare them to fulfill (Harlan, 1958; Washington, 1969). Both black and white Athenians agreed that Harris's industrial education model would ensure that blacks were more vocationally efficient and ready for local industrial work (Bond, 1934). However, it is likely that some blacks still questioned whether Harris was simply building an accommodationist program that would perpetuate the social and economic status of black Athenians.

Harris's Industrial Education Plan to Improve Athens's Black Schools

Industrial education¹⁵⁶ took the South by storm in the late 1880s because many black southerners believed that any education provided for them, even if it reproduced the existing repressive social order, was better than no education at all. The rise of the Hampton-Tuskegee model helped to develop and promote "negro inferiority," pushing young blacks to "curb their ambitions" and "adapt themselves" to the limiting life allowed to them (Fredrickson, 1987). This pedagogical framework was derived from General Samuel Chapman Armstrong's industrial program, "*Education for Life*."¹⁵⁷ Students were to acquire the "gentility" and "social graces" needed to succeed in the current society, while the program allowed them to become "breadwinners" and contributing members to the economy of their town. Support for these programs grew in Athens's black and white communities because each believed that blacks would more effectively contribute to the development of the community and "white profit making" if they were trained with practical, manual skills. White industrialists, like Armstrong, suggested that a practical black education that "fit" and prepared blacks for life was the only

hope for the future of the South (Litwack, 1998a; Peabody, 1919; "Practical Education in the Schools," October 9, 1909).

Booker T. Washington, an 1875 Hampton Institute graduate and follower of Armstrong, noted that just as the country was not safe with ignorant slaves, it was also not safe with ignorant freedmen. Like many other black educators of the time, Samuel Harris's school vision was rooted to some extent in this philosophy. Like Washington, Harris believed that studying "actual things instead of mere books alone" would ensure that blacks would "prosper in proportion" (Washington, 1971, p. 126, 220).

Harris publicly conceded that on review of the city school's records the two black public elementary schools in Athens, which were solely providing literacy courses, had only around 5% of their students (12 out of 230) successfully complete the first grade. He believed that 90% of the black youth, whom the community was depending on to take charge of the "*all* the industrial spheres of labor," were not being "helped" into that direction by the black schools of Athens. Out of his studies, Harris determined that his school played an important role in the domestic and industrial problems of the town and if he did not help students gain "moral" and "industrial values" and a vocational direction, then the town would be without the needed "industrial helpers" to sustain the town's economic growth (Harris, 1910, p. 7).

Whites would commonly say, "What a negro needs is to be taught and shown that labor is his salvation—not books" and they would praise programs that educated blacks "*for* their environment and not *out* of it [*italics added*]" (Baldwin in Anderson, 1988, p. 91; Litwack, 1998b, p. 103). Even to Harris, some black people seemed to be underqualified and ill-prepared to work the jobs provided to them by white businessmen. He indicated as much when he said,

the lack of interest and devotion in this class of [Athens's] workers, I thought was due to lack of preparation and moral fitness. It seemed but natural that any class

of people who enter a sphere of labor, not from choice, but from force of individual circumstances, not with an idea and ideal of the dignity of the labor, but with a continuous and depressive feeling of drudgery, would from the least excuse desert their occupations (Harris, 1910, p. 7).¹⁵⁸

Because the economy of Athens relegated blacks to employment in vocational jobs, Harris determined that his students should be helped into an industrial direction during their schooling. However, Harris also desired more resources, supplies, better buildings for his students, and more funds to pay the black teachers in his school. He knew that he could receive support for these improvements if his school had an industrial training base because this type of school was less threatening to the white social order of the town (Harris, 1910).

By the turn of the century, southern black industrial training, funded by white philanthropists, was cropping up all over Athens. Northern philanthropy projects like the Peabody and Slater funds (both connected to the Southern Education Board) invested financial support into the ideology of industrial education (Anderson, 1988).¹⁵⁹ This trend began in the first black school of Athens, the Knox Industrial Institute (funded by the Freedmen's Bureau, local donations, and student tuition), through Athens's last black school, Athens High and Industrial School (supported by local taxes, vouchers, and donations) (Reap, 1985).

Word of Harris's educational efforts began to reach these philanthropic organizations through letters and newspaper articles, and in 1902, a committee appointed by the City of Athens Board of Education reported that George Foster Peabody was going to "equip an industrial and domestic arts school" at Harris's East Athens school (Hodgson, July 28, 1902). As was often the case with philanthropic donations, the school system had to match these funds in some way, so the board agreed to purchase the property adjoining the school and secured \$500.00 from the city council for a teacher (Hodgson, July 28, 1902; McGregor, 1901b). This philanthropic donation

helped get Harris's black industrial training program off to a successful start, while also acquiring more resources, a new building and an additional teacher for his students.¹⁶⁰

As principal of East Athens, Harris had access only to children between six and nine years old. Soon he decided that he wanted to focus on the older students so he transferred to West Athens Colored School (West Broad Street School) in January of 1903.¹⁶¹ Harris continued his industrial work at West Athens by starting an agricultural self-help program in 1904 and again in 1911. These programs focused on the development of a community garden. He believed that this agricultural endeavor would help feed local impoverished black children while also teaching them important life skills. He took one quarter of an acre of land and split it into one hundred plots, allotting one farming plot to each of his students. During the spring and fall harvest, food was gathered and distributed to Harris's students and sometimes it was sold in the community ("Black Athens: In Quest of a Heritage " August 16, 1975).

Superintendent G. Bond noted in his 1906-1907 yearly report that the program was worth the low cost of \$20 a year because the students were enthusiastic about the activities and they raised \$5.00 from crop sales to buy seeds for the following year (Athens City Schools Board of Education, 1905-1906; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978). The school board was so impressed with Harris's programming that they formed a committee to investigate manual training further because white Athenians "began complaining" that their white children were not being given the same training and opportunities as black children (Jones, 2007).

After receiving a support letter from the President of the Lucy Cobb Institute, Millie Rutherford,¹⁶² the board decided on January 23, 1905, that they would add the manual training program to the annual budget. Ms. Rutherford's letter stated that after...

talking with S.F. Harris, the principal of the Negro High School, in regards to his proposed scheme for establishing a department of the school, where a two years

course may be given in industrial training, cooking, washing and sewing – I think his idea most excellent, and I hope the Board may see its way clearly to aid this work (Rutherford, January 19, 1905).

The rationale for Rutherford's plea to the board was based on her idea that the social structure of the town would be greatly affected if blacks did not go into these domestic and industrial fields. She made this clear by adding to her letter that "the servant question" was a "most perplexing one," and unless something was done soon, "we the white people will be the sufferers" (LaCavera, 2001a; Rutherford, January 19, 1905).

In July of that year, Harris helped design cooking classes for students at both black schools. These courses were also approved by the board, as long as the cooking teachers taught other school courses and the cost did not exceed \$4.00 a month (Flanigen, January 23, 1905). In the 1905 annual report, Bonds was quite impressed with the industrial work¹⁶³ of Harris's school, and he suggested that the board allow the cooking school and the gardening to continue for an additional year (Athens City Schools Board of Education, 1905-1906).



Figure 9: Athens High and Industrial Cooking School (Harris, top center)
Photo courtesy of Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library / University of Georgia Libraries.

In August of that same year, the board of education was presented with a check for \$200 from George Peabody for the continued development of the manual training program at Harris's school (Athens City Schools Board of Education, 1905-1906; Flanigen, August 28, 1905). Harris was so successful with his first year gardens and other industrial work that he decided to use these funds to rent 10 additional acres and buy a horse and tools to continue his project. The board approved these purchases and also gave him enough funds to hire a graduate of agriculture from the Tuskegee Institute to help with the expansion of the program (Flanigen, September 1, 1905).

In addition to the daytime manual training schools, a night industrial training school that offered "cooking, housework, needlework and school gardening" was opened by Harris. This flexible scheduling of classes allowed young men and women¹⁶⁴ who had to work during the day a chance to attend school. By 1906, the *Athens Banner* added the self-help gardening program, the night school, and Harris's other industrial training programs to their list of highlights of the Athens public school system. One reporter wrote that these schools were really "showing up well" and the community support for black vocational training was growing (Flanigen, April 21, 1905).

By 1908, Harris's *Cooking Extension School*¹⁶⁵ had 98 black women enrolled. Harris designed the school so that it could serve the real needs of black mothers and Athens's black women who would make cooking their occupation. These classes were held two afternoons a week over a 6-week period (Harris, 1910). The students were taught how to prepare food and how to understand the protein values and other health benefits of it (Flanigen, April 21, 1905; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978). At the close of each session, talks were held on the "different phases

of moral obligation involved in service” to ensure that all graduates of the program would have the cooking and service skills required to be sound domestic helpers (Harris, 1910).

Over the next few years, many articles were written discussing community exhibitions of the products made or produced in these programs. Proceeds of these exhibits were divided among departments to purchase resources to continue their efforts. Prizes were also given at these exhibitions for the students producing the best cakes and clothing.¹⁶⁶ These exhibitions became a natural social arena for the black community that continued for many generations ("Dr. H. C. White to Cooking Extension Scholars: Exhibition," April 6, 1912; Harris, 1906, 1910). Some of the exhibitions even became internationally recognized as the “evidence” of the successful industrial training work being done by southern black teachers ("Exhibit of Industrial Work of Colored Students of Clarke Co. Is to Be Sent to Germany Soon," March 1, 1912).

Although these agricultural projects were a success, severe overcrowding at both of Athens’s black schools limited their progress and disappointed Harris. In addition, the industrial courses in these black schools had to be self-supporting because the local monies were not allowed to be “diverted to industrial lines.” Harris quickly realized that the bake sales, garment bazaars, and small philanthropic donations¹⁶⁷ would never raise enough to pay for the school equipment, buildings, or additional teachers needed to improve Athens’s black schools (Flanigen, March 27, 1911).

Pressure from the Athens community to include more classical studies in the black school curriculum also strained Harris’s efforts. In a letter to George Peabody in 1906, Harris claimed that Athens was “committed wholly to higher education for all the negroes, even the academically talented ones.” In the July 16th letter, Harris discussed the merit of teaching

spirituals as a way to teach the classics without eroding the industrial component of the school (Anderson, 1975, p. 222).

Another one of Harris's writings spoke of educating the "other nine hundred and ninety and nine." This idea, though not mathematically congruent to Du Bois's *Talented Tenth*, fell along the same lines that there were black scholars, intellectuals, and leaders who needed a different educational program than did average blacks ("Editorial: Training of the Average Negro," 1910, p. 4; Harris, 1910, p. 8; Johnson, 2000). These academically sound students needed both classical and industrial training in Harris's high school program so that they could enter college and begin to dismantle the southern ideology that "an educated Negro was a dangerous Negro" (Carroll, 2006, p. 32; W. E. B. Du Bois, 1907; Du Bois et al., 1997; Gardner, 1975, pp. 505, 509).

Harris, a classically educated person himself, seemed to tread the line between the Du Bois and Washington debate¹⁶⁸ because he firmly stood behind the belief that southern blacks could gain economic and social standing if they became skilled laborers (Foner & Pacheco, 1984). This is, of course, how he focused most of his school program planning because it cunningly kept whites believing that blacks were content with the status quo. However, Harris's writings also retained an academic component that a future teacher or leader, like himself, could have an opportunity also to prepare him or herself for life (Hood et al., 1910c).

Although some may believe that Harris showed signs of academic schizophrenia in his dual schooling emphasis, he used it to accomplish his ends. Harris, an educator who seemed to have the foresight for the need of both Washington's educated masses and DuBois's educated few, was able to play both sides of the industrial education coin so well that few in the black or white community could disagree with his motives.

Over a 20-year span from 1890 through 1910, Athens's black public school enrollment continuously increased, though attendance often fluctuated because of working students and other community obligations. Even with the population changes, the local board of education refused to increase the number of black teachers (totaling only fourteen) or the number of black schools (two). The white students, whose population doubled, went from two buildings in 1886 to ten buildings in 1908. Over the same period of time, the average class size for black students was 60 for high school and over 100 for elementary classes, while the white classes remained in the 30s and 40s. As was common in other areas, the overworked and underpaid teachers of the black schools made less than half of the salary¹⁶⁹ of the teachers in the white schools (Woofter, 1912).

In addition to insufficient staffing and salaries, neither of the city's black public schools had the basic necessities, supplies, equipment, or books to keep up with the large number of students attending them. Both schools were slowly deteriorating from the overcrowded conditions, and the school board refused to make the needed improvements. The minutes from at least four Athens City School Meetings between 1907 and 1908 discussed the bad buildings, roofs with holes, inadequate heating and water, poor drainage, unpainted walls, broken fences, and insufficient supplies in the two black schools (Flanigen, April 20, 1908, December 16, 1907a, February 17, 1908, January 19, 1907, March 23, 1908).

Even though these characteristics were the norm for southern black education, Harris diligently harried the school board to address these needs. He understood how the pervasive disrepair of the schools would potentially undermine the delivery of instruction that his teachers were trying to provide. Harris claimed that the lack of "proper environment" in programs like the Cooking Extension School resulted in a lack of "moral growth" necessary for successful

schooling. He added that manual training could be given in such environments, but the teaching of “real industrial values and vocational direction” needed to be provided in an environment where work was the “constant ideal.” He insisted that it was impossible to “cultivate the vocational and moral idea... under such limited conditions” (Commission on Interracial Cooperation Inc., 1942; Flanigen, April 20, 1908, December 16, 1907a, February 17, 1908, March 23, 1908; Fultz, 1995a).

Even though the local paper claimed that industrial education had “proved its value” in Athens, Harris believed that the low level of support from the school board for the issues of overcrowding, low pay, lack of supplies, and poor buildings hindered his goals of racial improvement. As a result, Harris began actively pursuing financial support in 1906 for the development of his own private school. This school would be aimed at the “moral, industrial and spiritual” uplift of black Athenians (Rowe, August 30, 1911, p. 59). He believed this was the only option for him to gain the optimal environment for the training of his students (Fultz, 1995b).

Harris began his new pursuit by traveling to industrial exhibition and manual training conferences throughout the South to find out more about industrial education schools and how they retained their funding (Flanigen, April 20, 1908; Rowe, August 30, 1911). While he was visiting these black belt¹⁷⁰ exhibitions, he found that many black educators sought financial support for their industrial training schools from northern industrialists¹⁷¹ (Enck, 1976; Litwack, 1998a). Several philanthropic groups like the Georgia Peabody Fund, the Anna T. Jeanes Fund,¹⁷² the Rockefeller’s General Education Fund, the John J. Slater Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, and the Julius Rosenwald Fund provided black industrial schools with buildings, school equipment, teacher salaries, and supplies.

These northern philanthropic campaigns were quite laborious and inventive. Black schools in need of funding tried to advertise their needs through house-to-house fundraising and articles in popular magazines. Performances by traveling school quartettes and formal speeches by black school leaders at summer and winter resorts for whites were also common fundraising methods as early as the 1880s. Many black industrial school leaders relayed in their school letters and brochures hopes that whites would focus their donations into black industrial education. If they did, the literature touted that the “Southern Problem” would be resolved (Anderson, 1978; Bond, 1934, 1939; Fultz, 1995b; Peeps, 1981; Underwood, August 19, 1987).

Harris, a master musician himself, thought that a black Athens city school quartette might be the key to solving the financial problems of Athens’s black schools (Moss, 1910). Receiving approval from the school board and agreement that he would be reimbursed for some of his expenses, Harris left Athens sometime in the summer of 1908 to advertise Athens’s black schools to “a class of people who would possibly not otherwise be reached.” One Athens paper wrote highly of Harris's quartette, claiming that Harris’s group was “one of the best quartettes... that ever went out of a city” (“Grandchildren of the black mammy will work for memorial for her,” March 7, 1912). While traveling through New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York, the group preached about how white “friends of Negroes needed to unite” to give black people the opportunity for education (Moss, 1910, p. 7). Except for the promise of a donation for a \$5000 agricultural building, the group met with discouragement throughout their tour. In the end, Harris’s music endeavor did not raise enough money to fund more teachers, more equipment and supplies, or a new school.

While the white schools were getting tennis courts and new gymnasiums added to their campuses, Athens’s black schools continued to deteriorate horribly (“Grandchildren of the black

mammy will work for memorial of her," March 7, 1912; Moss, 1910). The black schools also continued to be deplorably overcrowded. At least one black first grade had to run double sessions,¹⁷³ one in the morning and one in the afternoon, because several of the teachers were serving more than 150 students a day (Flanigen, November 28, 1910). As a result of this overcrowding, thorough instruction could not take place with most students. In addition, many students were turned away because of the lack of room in the schoolhouses (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

At last, exhausted by his struggles with the school board, fund-raising travels, and teaching-principal duties, Harris decided to turn to Athens's white business leaders and the privileged for the financial and political support needed to open his own industrial school. After what he described as a 6-year study-experiment¹⁷⁴ in his schools that began in 1903, he concluded that he needed to lead an effort to open a "practical school for the training of the workers. He called these students "the nine hundred and ninety and nine who are not to be leaders, but industrial helpers of the race" (Harris, 1910, p. 8).

Immediately, Harris focused his conversations with both black and white business and community leaders. With these men, he discussed the need for industrial schooling to help blacks to become more prepared to work and support Athens's growing economy. One white community member compared Harris's efforts to the Black Prince of Wales with the motto of *Ich dien*, meaning "I serve." She noted that the "fair-minded thoughtful people" of Athens who knew of Harris would believe in his "honesty and sincerity of purpose" when he said, "I want to help my people *into* work, not *out* of it. I want to teach the dignity of work [so that] one can take charge of a kitchen, or farm, and conduct that kitchen or farm honestly, with credit to oneself and advantage to those who are served" (Moss, 1910, p. 7). With Harris's influence, white and black

leaders alike agreed that Athens needed a new black industrial training school, and in 1909, they began helping Harris with his fundraising efforts.

The Black Mammy Memorial Institute: 1909 – 1912

In September of 1909, Harris met four established, local black skilled mechanics and workmen: W.A. Gilham, Simon Pope, Moses G. Gilham, and David Hawkins, at Mr. Hawkins's East Athens's home. Each of these men was successful in his personal job and career, and they all owned their own homes. The purpose of their meeting was to study the educational needs of black Athenians "at close range." Although these men themselves had a very limited exposure to classical studies, each of them maintained that education was central to the success of their children (Harris, 1910).

During the session, they all agreed that the type of education that their children were receiving was "not of a useful character." They relayed "noble sentiments" about wanting to "save the great number of idle boys and girls from crime and ruined lives." They insisted that they did not want to leave this world "without having done something helpful for someone else" (Harris, 1910, p. 8).

Having met with these men numerous times over the previous year, Harris and the men collaboratively discussed the changes that would need to be made in Athens's black schools. They decided that Athens needed a black technical-based school that would help black workers gain skills to allow them to become economically stable. Their plan emphasized practical education over classics. The men believed that such a school would promote good relations with Athens's white community. Out of the meeting a general plan for the new, private industrial school was envisioned, and the first \$350 was donated for its development (Harris, 1910; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

Soon after this meeting with black community leaders, Harris went to a meeting of the “most prominent educators” and white businessmen of Athens. The meeting was held in the offices of Judge John J. Strickland in the Southern Mutual Insurance Building. During the Sept 19, 1910, meeting, David Crenshaw Barrow,¹⁷⁵ Edward Reginald Hodgson,¹⁷⁶ William T. Bryan,¹⁷⁷ H.S. West,¹⁷⁸ Billups Phinizy,¹⁷⁹ John E. Talmadge, T.P Vincent,¹⁸⁰ John D. Moss, and Judge John J. Strickland¹⁸¹ petitioned the Superior Court of Clarke County to charter a black vocational studies school in Athens (Harris, 1910). The petition also requested approval to open a boarding facility at the school and authorization to collect tuition and donations to maintain and run the school (Hood et al., 1910a).

The Black Mammy Memorial Institute, as it was to be called, was designed under the industrial education model to train the “normal” and “common” every-day laborer, instead of the elite, academically oriented one (Hood et al., 1910b, p. 5). The high-status group requesting the charter wished to “establish and maintain a school to prepare colored boys... and colored girls... for the practical duties of life by training them for domestic service and for service in the arts and trades.” The influential men also requested under the charter that black students be given “academic training” that would “best fit them for carrying out the main object of the school.” The logistical planning and fund raising for the school began immediately after the school’s charter was approved and certified for 20 years by John J. Strickland and E.J. Crawford, judge and clerk of the Superior Court of Clarke County (Hood et al., 1910a, p. 3).

With the charter approved, the incorporators of the school moved forward with their plans. The school’s charter mandated that the incorporators name one governing body of the school, called the board of *trustees*. The charter noted that the governing body would consist of “six white capable business men.” Once selected, the board of trustees would be the main

governing body of the school with the authority to supervise all school functions including the subjects or lessons taught, the textbooks and materials used, the rules and regulations required of students and staff, and the development and implementation of employment practices¹⁸² (Hood et al., 1910a).

The school's charter required that at least three of the trustees be Athens residents. The three local businessmen selected for those positions were William T. Bryan, president of Athens Electric Railway Company and president of the board of trustees; John E. Talmage, Sr., president of Talmage Mills and Wholesale Grocery Company; and John D. Moss, president of Moss Cotton Company. The three businessmen selected from outside Athens were C. J. Hood, president of Northeastern Bank of Commerce; H. H. Dean, an attorney from Gainesville; and Robert F. Maddox, the former mayor of Atlanta (Harris, 1910; Hood et al., 1910c).

As they made school decisions, the trustees relied on three sources of advice: Samuel F. Harris, selected by the trustees as the institute's *principal* because of the innovative industrial education techniques used throughout his teaching career in Athens public schools; a board of *advisors*, composed of twelve white men "noted for their interest in the education and the advancement of the negro race"; and a board of *directors*, composed of nine black men who had the communal skills and understanding to "advise the faculty" of the school. Although the board of advisors seemed to be given great latitude by the trustees in the length of their term and the breadth of their job duties, the board of directors and the principal were closely scrutinized by the three trustees living in Athens. All acts by the directors and principal were subject to revision and approval by the trustees. The "board of colored directors," David Hawkins, S. Pope, A.T. Chunn, Moses Milner, W.A. Gilham, M.G. Gilham, L. Hunt, Jackson Spalding, and Harris, included many of the black men who helped Harris raise the first \$350 for the institute. Other

officers, like Edward Reginald Hodgson, the Black Mammy Institute's treasurer, were chosen by the trustees when deemed appropriate (Harris, 1910; Hood et al., 1910c).

To gather financial support for the new institute, the white trustees and Harris formed the Black Mammy Memorial Association, a part of the Southern Black Mammy Memorial Movement. At some point in the planning process, the school's name was finalized as *The Black Mammy Institute and Peace Memorial*,¹⁸³ to signify peace and friendship between blacks and whites, while immortalizing the "o' black mammy" who protected, consoled, and cared for many southern white families (Hood et al., 1910c). Harris wrote that character traits like "unselfishness, honor and honesty, personal affection and refined feeling, industrial stability and skill" endeared black mammies and uncles to their "white master and mistress of former generations." These characteristics made it befitting that the school memorialize the mammy's "fidelity and worth to both races" (Harris, 1910, p. 8).

He added that "gracious and friendly personality and spirit characteristic of that fine type of the Southern white man" and the "spirit of gentleness and docility" of black men, along with the character traits previously mentioned, "formed a basis of agreement in the days of yore." The school would be designed so that those traits would continue to be encouraged and provide "a basis of *peace and friendship* for both races." In his writings, he relayed that the "Black Mammy Memorial," built as a "*peace monument*," would offer a "medium of hope and cooperation" for all to see (emphasis his, Harris, 1910, p. 8).

Prominent white Athenians seemed to respond to Harris in his quest for a school because the school supposedly reinforced the skills of the mammy. One of the school's supporters, Dr. Robert E. Williams, noted the old black mammy would never be forgotten by "Dixie." The mammy, he said, "set the example of as high a conception of service as the world has ever seen"

through her faithfulness, eloquence, and “indomitable will” (Williams, 1910). Another supporter, H.M. Clarkson from Virginia, added that his mammy’s faithfulness was so strong that, in 1861 when the northerners came to set her free, she “burnished up ‘Old Marster’s gun’ and swore she would not leave.” And when Clarkson went to volunteer for the war, his mammy hugged him close and said, “My dear, go kill de Yankees, all you can” (Clarkson, 1910, p. 12).

The Use of the Black Mammy Idea

The common use of the *black mammy idea* by these white supporters and Harris in the early 1900s centered on the intersecting societal problems of race, gender, sexuality, and class festering in the socially underdeveloped South. Harris’s school was given this name for several reasons. First, the image of the black mammy aroused nostalgia for the Old South in the white community. The members of the Black Mammy Memorial Association believed that this nostalgia would persuade white Southerners to give money to the school in memory of their faithful mammies.¹⁸⁴ The mammy, who always respected her master and understood her social position, was a sign to white Athenians that the school’s teachings would focus on servitude as opposed to racial and economic uplift (Collins, 1991). Second, the association believed that the black community would view the memorial of the mammy as a sign of good faith by white leaders who were finally recognizing black women or mammies¹⁸⁵ as “good, self-respecting, independent, [and] loyal” (Harris, 1982, p. 35-36; Litwack, 1998a, p. 186-193). A past Georgia governor, William J. Norten, recognized the institute as a “worthy tribute to the deserving Mammies” who helped to make successful “the generation before the civil war” (Northen, 1910, p. 10).

Many historians looking back on the use of mammy imagery suggest that these descriptions were often political ploys, playing on stereotypical black, maternalistic behaviors.¹⁸⁶

Patten suggests that, during Reconstruction, many white southern towns immortalized the *black mammy* by honoring these women with monuments of endearment (1980). The Black Mammy Memorial Institute was to be the largest monument to date. No doubt the white supporters of the institute wanted to “paint slavery in the brightest possible colors” by using the name of the “o’ black mammy” to promote peace between blacks and whites, when, in reality, the school’s philosophy and design would most likely have perpetuated the disenfranchisement and underdevelopment of black Athenians by focusing on the development of domestic and industrial workers and not black economic and social uplift (Patton, 1980, p. 149).

Community Support for the Institute

Gaining community support was one of the first efforts after the charter was approved and financial backing was sought. One way to gain the support of the community was to broadcast the school’s focus on the production of black laborers as widely as possible. Harris tried to do this by elaborating on the history of black life in North America in his talks and fundraising brochures.

Harris believed that the “civilization” of the American black man began when the slave traders landed Africans in Virginia in 1619. He claimed that blacks came to the continent “without the fundamentals of industrial skill and moral intelligence” and, through the “discipline of slavery,” blacks developed into skilled artisans, culinary artists, and agriculturalists. Most importantly, he argued that black women had become the “*trustee[s]* of Southern aristocracy” because most of the “South’s greatest characters” were raised by the honorable “Black Mammy”¹⁸⁷ (Harris, 1910, p. 8). Like Washington, Harris seemed to be able to massage “all the ingredients” into a “nice sounding” plan that would appeal to many “social classes and racial

grouping.” This allowed him to build a coalition of support across the lines of race and class (Vernon Johns Society, 2003).

Most black Athenians seemed to appreciate Harris’s industrial model because it at least got them an education, though perhaps not the education they sought. However, given their dire circumstances, many rural, poor blacks during this era may not have realized precisely what it was that they were seeking, so they looked to a locally raised, highly regarded, traditionally and classically trained black man like Harris to lead them in the right direction. White liberals most likely also supported Harris’s industrial ideas because they believed that industrial training would allow for positive change in the black southern condition. Most white industrialists, businessmen, and northerners probably also supported this school vision because it assumed “an inferior position for blacks.” Everyone seemed to champion Harris’s work. Reminiscent of Washington, Harris’s vision simply “fit the spirit” of the era (Vernon Johns Society, 2003).

In 1910, Harris began to actively solicit funds from wealthy white families to build the school. With the help of the white members of the Black Mammy Memorial Association, a fundraising brochure was designed and distributed to persuade white families and local legislators to support local funding of the school. Local leaders and community groups added comments to the brochure to denote their approval of the institute. William J. Northen¹⁸⁸ and Joseph M. Brown¹⁸⁹, past governors of Georgia, Robert E. Park, Mrs. R. M. Fletcher Berry, the City Council of Athens, and the First Baptist and the First Methodist Churches, all publicly supported the development of the Black Mammy project (Hood et al., 1910c).

In commending the institute, Northen noted that the school was a “promising training school for the younger negroes of this day who desire to make themselves useful in our community life.” He added that, because the highly organized institution, petitioned and led by

renowned community leaders, was in “one of the most cultured communities in the state,” it had much promise to better the relations between the whites and blacks. In the school’s 1910 fundraising brochure, Northen commented,

These two peoples, white folks and negroes, whether through individual preference or the force of circumstances, must dwell together in the same community life for many generations yet to come, and the peace and prosperity of the commonwealth will be greatly enhanced if they can become mutually helpful through proper service rendered on the part of both. I am quite sure the best white people at the south are fully ready to hold wide open for the negroes, all economic and industrial opportunities that the negroes make themselves fitted to fill. It is equally gratifying to see the disposition on the part of the leaders among the negroes to have their people made capable, efficient and trustworthy for useful service. Neither race can adjust these relations alone, but both together in coöperation can (p. 10).

Robert E. Park, a local white business leader, added that the “solution to the so called ‘Negro Problem’” required the work of a school like the Black Mammy Institute because the problem required the collaboration between and involvement of both blacks and whites. Governor Brown added that he could not believe that the plan for this type of industrial training institution could fail (Hood et al., 1910c, p. 10).



Figure 10: Black Mammy Memorial Institute (as planned)

Photo courtesy of Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library / University of Georgia Libraries and Michael L. Thurmond, *A Story Untold: Black Men and Women of Athens*.

Mrs. Berry, another white Athenian, seemed very interested in the development of a school that would focus on “practical training for negroes (in cooking and housework)” as a solution to the growing housekeeper problems. She asked, though, that the school also train black teachers. She said that she was comfortable with the school training both teachers and workers, but not solely teachers because that would only perpetuate the existing gap in the service workforce (Fletcher Berry, 1910).

Mrs. Mary Ann Rutherford Lipscomb,¹⁹⁰ former principal of the prestigious Lucy Cobb Institute for girls, wrote a two-page tribute in the fundraising brochure that noted that a room in the new school must be set up in memory of her “Aunt Dot,” the “faithful old servant” who with “native refinement” served the “white folks” at Lucy Cobb loyally for 25 years. On a visit from New York, the well-known banker, philanthropist, and art collector George Ingraham Seney met Aunt Dot at the Lucy Cobb school and was so taken by her that he sent for an artist to come and paint her picture for his gallery. The mother of 10 was only one example, Lipscomb said, of all of the kind and gentle mammies that served white Athenians in their youth and “such a monument will be the ‘Black Mammy Memorial Institute’ where the boys and girls will be industrially trained, where the dignity of labor is to be taught, and where the principles of honesty and righteous living are to be instilled and enforced” (Lipscomb, 1910, p. 11).

Two local white churches also endorsed the school’s charter by writing letters of support. Reverend Millard Alfred Jenkins, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Athens, wrote that he knew no better way for the “white sons and daughters of the South” to “treasure the memory” of the black women who loved and nursed them than the development of the school. Pastor M.L. Troutman of Athens First Methodist Church wrote a letter that paralleled Jenkins’s thoughts, adding that “it is an honor to ourselves to remember those faithful and tender women who

crooned their lullabies to our fathers and mothers out of love for them that never dimmed” (Hood et al., 1910c, p. 10).

Numerous newspaper and magazine editors and writers also supported the school’s mission through advertisements and editorials for the school. An *Atlanta Constitution* editorial affirmed that it was the “Old Black Mammy” that “crooned over the cradles of some of the South’s worthiest men of yesterday” and in the spirit of that history the Mammy Institute would be built to solve the southern race problem (“Editorial: The Old Black Mammy,” 1910). Henry W. Grady, a native of Athens and editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, printed a tribute to the school that demanded that the educational methods used for blacks focus on the average ones, not the intellectual ones. Grady rallied white supporters in the article by telling a story of a black man bending over the face of his fallen master killed in the war and “praying with all of his humble heart that God will lift his master up.” And though his master “fought against his freedom,” he stood mute and motionless at his graveside until his master was taken with mercy and honor. Then, and only then, the black man turned from his former master’s grave “with downcast eyes and uncertain steps” to start out in the “new and strange fields.” As he walked “faltering and struggling” away, he heard his former master call from beneath the earth to all white folks, “Follow him! Put your arms about him [the negro] in his need, even as he puts his arms about me. Be his friend as he was mine.” Demanding that other white community members join in the support of the school’s opening, Grady added, “May God forget my people -- when they forget these” (Grady, 1910, p. 13).

An *Atlantic Monthly* publication “heartily” approved the plan to “erect a monument” so worthy of the character of black mammies and uncles. The local *Athens Banner* noted that the South would benefit from a “unique institution” that would memorialize the “peculiar Southern

character” of these negroes, “famous in [both] song and story” (Hood et al., 1910c, p. 10). The *Athens Daily Herald* also endorsed the school, avowing that “no institution for the uplift of the Negro race and for his education in proper channels has more thorough sympathy on the part of the white people of the state than this [one]” (“The Black Mammy Institute,” August 30, 1911).

The founders and trustees of the institute anticipated that other Georgia towns would follow along with their own planning for schools like the Black Mammy Institute because schools of this variety would serve the country at large by focusing on the development of agricultural and domestic workers who could continue to support the southern economy (“The Black Mammy Institute,” August 30, 1911). As expected, support for the institute came from all over the community and surrounding areas. The *Industrial Index of Georgia and Alabama*¹⁹¹ encouraged Harris and offered their services when needed. Many of the supporters contributed to the development and construction of the institute in the form of funds, land, or letters. As the trustees predicted, many white supporters agreed to financially support the institute because they desired blacks to have only a “rudimentary education” focused on basic literacy skills that would perpetuate the “subservient status” of black Athenians and retain the “political and social system” of the South (Hood et al., 1910c; Johnson, 2000). Harris reassured white supporters that the school would not focus on the black elite who wished to be leaders. Instead, he led them to believe that the school would focus on average, hardworking blacks, “the nine hundred and ninety nine” who would become the vocational base of Athens.¹⁹² By the summer of 1910, the association had enough financial support to purchase a large farm outside the city limits.¹⁹³ However, fund raising continued over the next few years for the construction of the \$25,000 Memorial Industrial Hall and two dormitories (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

Harris's Vision

The Black Mammy Institute was Harris's dream for securing social and economic freedom for his fellow black Athenians. He did not believe that he was developing a school that would restrict African American students to menial labor and unskilled trades. Instead, he believed that he was designing a school that would help positively socialize the races by supporting the dual intellectual and industrial development of Athens's black youth.

Even though Harris touted that the school was focused on vocational training, records suggest otherwise. School documents note that the curriculum of the school was designed to offer students courses in two major fields of study, industrial and academic. The industrial education courses would include housekeeping, cooking, sewing, nurse training, laundering, dairying, care of poultry, agriculture, and trades. These skills would give blacks the knowledge and skills possessed by the faithful old black mammy of the antebellum South (Hood et al., 1910c). In addition, all students would participate in academic and social courses¹⁹⁴ that included English, common school studies, the Bible, hygiene, chemistry, and morals ("Athens, Georgia... In 1914," 1914). Harris may have claimed allegiance to the industrial model when talking with white philanthropists, but in the end he supported schools that focused on a combination of classical and industrial training.

The Demise of the Black Mammy Memorial Institute

When the institute first opened as a vocational night school, almost 70 students were enrolled. The male teachers taught mechanics, carpentry, brick laying, and plastering, while the female teachers taught domestic sciences. Because Memorial Hall was not yet built, the public school system allowed for these courses to run consecutively with the regular night classes held at Harris's school. Harris remained principal at the Reese Street Athens Industrial High School

throughout the planning of the Black Mammy Institute. Many of the members of the Black Mammy Memorial Association were also members of the Athens City Council or the Athens City School Board, so they did not disapprove of Harris's behavior.

Surprisingly, nothing ever became of the Black Mammy Memorial Institute except for the night courses and cooking classes originally offered. The Memorial Hall and the dormitories were never completed, and the school oddly vanished from the Athens scene around 1912. Though no one today fully understands why the school was never completed, the cooking school and technical courses and other industrial efforts started by Harris were offered for many more years in the Athens public schools. Even though funds and land were set aside for the institute between 1906 -1912, the school's construction was never fully completed. As a result of the direct relationship among Harris, the school board, and the Black Mammy Memorial Association, these funds may have been dispersed within the public schools over the next few years.

Few documents exist that discuss the school's demise, except city records that mention how the land was returned several years later to the city of Athens to be used for other facilities. The city gave 10 acres of the land to the Clarke County School District in 1950 to build a new East Athens Elementary School, and in the 1970s the East Athens Community Center was built on the rest of the property (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

Some locals believe that the downfall of the school began when black Athenians like William A. Pledger, a local lawyer and journalist,¹⁹⁵ demanded that blacks attain a true education so that they could begin to "seek economic parity." This assertion indicates that the black community of Athens wanted more for their children than the industrial training that the Mammy school or industrial education programs could provide (Pledger, 1879a, 1879b). Just the name of

the industrial school suggested to some that it was a place designed to promote, rather than end, the old southern traditions of black oppression and disenfranchisement. Therefore, it is possible that the school folded because the black community of Athens did not approve of the school's communal or educational philosophies.

Historian Kelly Miller theorizes that rhetoric surrounding industrial schools like this one would have been “hooted off the stage” a generation or two later, which suggests that after the turn of the century black racial thought began to appreciate education as something more than just vocational and work training (Bay, 2000, p. 194). Classic education, combined with some industrial practice, became the pathway for black communities to overcome injustice and seek economic and social stability.

However, I believe that Harris might have achieved a primary goal¹⁹⁶ he desired. He wanted people to know about the horrible conditions of the schools—about the inequitable pay, about the dilapidated buildings, and about the lack of resources—and though his dream of the Mammy institute did not come to fruition, change did take place in the city schools of Athens. My theory is that the demise of the institute began when Samuel Harris redirected his efforts back into the Athens public school system.

By 1911, Harris had developed and begun to implement an “agricultural self help” program at West Broad Street School. His efforts to improve black schools began to pay off as the Athens Board of Education began to focus attention on the needs of Athens's black schools—the overcrowding and lack of resources and the nevertheless strong curricula. One record observed that, even under the dire conditions in the black schools, where it would be difficult to “do any work of merit,” “several unexpected visits” by school board members

“showed that the children were learning very well what was put before them” (Woofter, 1912, p. 62).

That year and again in 1913, the school board decided to open two new black schools, reducing the pupil-teacher ratio in black classrooms across the system. This occurred after Harris had spent years asking for major improvements to the two original black schools. Finally, the chairman of the school board building committee, M.G. Michael, wrote a 6-page report about the rapidly decaying black schools. Michael noted that the schools had broken blinds and windows, leaky roofs, and unsafe water. He suggested that Harris’s school was in “horrible condition... sloppy and [full of] offensive odors.” One person commented that the schools were “unfit for a dog.” The committee agreed that it was “a crime against humanity” to keep 500 students enrolled in that six-room school (Michaels, April 22, 1911). The board decided that major changes would have to be made to improve the schools, and the committee gradually found new buildings for one of the schools and supplies to improve the others (Athens City Schools Board of Education, 1913-1914; Flanigen, August 27, 1912, August 27, 1913, March 27, 1911; Lumpkin, 1917; Woofter, 1912).

In addition to new school and improvements to existing schools, black teachers’ salaries began to increase at the same rate as the white teachers’ salaries—though white teachers still made twice as much as the black teachers did. Industrial education had spread to all black schools by the summer of 1912, and the Board of Education began to increase funding to the black industrial school departments. An allocation of \$100,000 in bonds was also undertaken by the school system in 1913, some of which was used to improve black school facilities (Athens City Schools Board of Education, 1913-1914; Flanigen, August 27, 1912, August 27, 1913; Lumpkin, 1917).

After working in the school system for 20 years, Harris was appointed as the city supervisor of Athens's black schools and the principal at the newly built *Reese High School - Athens High and Industrial School (AHIS)*, which under Harris's direction became one of the first accredited black high schools in the state in 1922.¹⁹⁷ Harris remained with the school system until his death in 1935.¹⁹⁸ In the end, he was recognized as a "bridge builder" because of his keen ability "to bring together not only the black community, but the white community as well, to support him in his efforts to advance blacks in their education" (Goodson, 2007).

Harris's Vision Continued by Others

For many of the final years of his career, Harris was supported by his assistant principal, Mrs. Annie M. Burney (AHIS/BHHS Alumni Association, 2006a). Burney took over the AHIS principalship in 1934 when Harris became too sick to continue (Linston, July 25, 2006). In 1935, Professor Aaron Brown, later elected as the first vice-president of the Association of Negro Colleges, took over Harris's position as the head of Athens's black schools and principal of AHIS. During his tenure, he added numerous departments to the black schools including athletic associations, debating clubs, drama, a Glee club, and the Try-Hi-Y club (to enhance Christian values) (AHIS/BHHS Alumni Association, 2006a).

In 1938, Professor Charles Westley Duval became the AHIS principal. He remained until 1945, when Professor Homer T. Edwards, Sr., took over the principalship. Three years after AHIS was renamed Burney Harris High School, "Fess" Edwards left his post and Mr. Ernest T. Roberson took over. Robertson served the school for one year until 1970 when AHIS-BHHS integrated¹⁹⁹ with Athens High School (AHIS/BHHS Alumni Association, 2006a). Like Harris, all of these black leaders were highly regarded community members focused on improving the

lives of the black Athenians. Industrial education, mixed with classical components, remained firmly embedded in the AHIS-BHHS model until the school closed in 1970.

For more than a century the Athens black community and its churches and lodges supported the educational improvements advocated and provided by such respected school reformers as S. F. Harris and others. Because of this support, graduates of AHIS-BHHS have become established and thriving members of the Athens community in fields such as law, medicine, education, music, politics, and business. Many of these individuals regard their experiences at the black schools as central to their personal and career achievements ("Black Athens: In Quest of a Heritage " August 16, 1975).

The following two chapters allow some of these successful community members to tell personal tales of how Athens's black community, especially the schools and educators in it, supported their intellectual and social development.²⁰⁰ As a continuation of this chapter, Chapters 6 and 7 highlight life and oral his-herstories contributed to this research study so that others may better understand the experience of Athens's black public and private schools. As when history was passed on during slavery through oral storytelling, these stories continue to weave the tapestry that explains how Athens's black schools became central components in the development of Athens's black community.

CHAPTER 6 ATHENS'S BLACK EDUCATION IN THE PRIVATE DOMAIN: LODGES AND CLUBS, CHURCHES, AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

This chapter begins with a discussion of education in the private domain, especially how the black lodges and clubs, churches, and schools developed into community hubs focused on black social and economic progress. These locations, especially schools, were considered fundamental parts of the community's black freedom struggle. Black schools, "where teachers commanded respect, and where parents supported the teachers," became places where people worked collaboratively toward the betterment of the community. The teachers, students, and parents of the schools "formed an organic community" that was focused on "schooling" as a "collective responsibility" (Fairclough, 2004, p. 91).

Life in Black Lodges and Clubs

Farris F. Johnson, Sr.,²⁰¹ a black Athenian born in 1921, remarked that after the turn of the century there were three key locations in the Athens community for blacks to bind together toward advancement—the lodge, the church, and the school. These "benevolent organizations" were all intricately connected. Each of them played an important role in the progress of Athens's black community (Johnson, July 17, 2006).

Thurmond suggests that the lodges were an apparent "outgrowth" of the black churches in Athens and Clarke County, as were many of the schools (1978). These institutions became valuable places of refuge, safe harbors where black businessmen and workers could collaborate without threat of white community pressure. These men's clubs²⁰² were locations to discuss politics, "self-help," education, and community advancement (Davis, 2006; Johnson, July 26, 2006).

The lodges intrigued locals through their rituals and uniforms, fancy social events and funerals, and their ability to provide black families with needed insurance (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978). F. Johnson noted that his father, a secretary of one of the organizations in Athens, often spoke of the elaborate community development and social functions put on by his lodge. As secretary of his lodge, he was proud to be the lodge member who sold the lodge's "death and burial insurance" to families. This was a very important lodge benefit because it allowed black families to remain financially stable after the loss of a loved one (Johnson, July 26, 2006).

These insurance plans were viewed as "principal recruiting tools" of the organizations. As a part of lodge membership, a participant would expect that during a time of illness lodge members would visit and provide care. Following a death, the lodge also provided ongoing financial and mentoring support to the family (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978). Families typically paid a small percentage of their weekly income for the service (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

By 1912, there were 29 black lodges and clubs in Clarke County, representing eight orders. These lodges included the Good Samaritans, Odd Fellows, Masons, Knights of Pythias, Gospel Pilgrim, Ancient Knights, Independent Benevolent Order, and the Magnolias. Almost 75% of black Athenians participated in some manner in these organizations (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

The Mutual Benefit Association was one of the benevolent clubs founded in the city of Athens. The purpose of the association was to give blacks a place for "practical talk" and to collaborate in the "buying of land, the building and improvement of homes, and the construction of a model community school." Judia Jackson Harris, founder of the Judia C. Jackson Harris School, went to the Hampton Industrial Conference in 1903 to talk about the progress of this

Athens's association. She explained how the club's cooperative behavior allowed members to raise \$100 to start a purchase of "40 acres of frontage along the public highway" and a "serviceable" house. The total cost of the "very desirable tract of land" was \$350. Within 2 years, she noted, the farmers had paid off the entire debt on the property, and by the third year, they had raised enough to purchase the adjoining land (William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, 1907, p. 172).

The land purchased by the Mutual Benefit Association or Land Owners Club at the edge of Danielsville Road, almost in Madison County, was divided among the 10 members for agricultural and educational use. By 1915, Jackson Harris had helped the group acquire a total of 440 acres of land, valued at over \$3000. The students in Jackson Harris's school and their families were cooperatively using the land, as well as a community saw mill, cotton gin, and threshing machine. Jackson Harris's underlying teaching theme of "self-help," "economic independence," and relevant curriculum helped these black Athenians and hundreds more to be self-sufficient, own their own land, and understand how to use that land to provide for their families (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978). Although she was most likely not considered an initiated member of the club because she was a female, Jackson Harris certainly played a fundamental role in the founding of this organization.²⁰³

As other lodges and clubs were formed throughout Athens's black history, many played central roles in dealing with other areas of disenfranchisement outside of restricted access to land purchase and insurance. Many prominent educators like the renowned H.T. Edwards, Sr.,²⁰⁴ used the lodges as platforms for dealing with "inequities endemic" to the black community, such as substandard housing and hospital accommodations, unsafe and unpaved roads, the lack of clean water and sewage lines, lack of educational resources, and other inconveniences and hazards that

“retarded” the development of the children and adults of the community (William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, 1907; Du Bois, 1910; Linston, July 25, 2006).

Du Bois had noted that economic cooperation established in these clubs was believed to be a “conscious effort” by blacks to support each other through *economic lines*. These were not just individual efforts, but communal efforts toward “mutual aid” and “group co-operation.” This history is significant because the great strides of blacks in “religious development, in political life and in efforts at education” have often overshadowed the economic efforts of blacks. Indeed, the members of these black clubs were often the most fundamental players in the development of churches and schools at the turn of the twentieth century (William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, 1907; Du Bois, 1910). The next section describes how the institutional development of black churches became the platform on which most other activities in Athens’s black community were built, especially in the area of education.

Life in Black Churches

Black religious institutions, the second crucial component in the development of Athens black community, have been vibrant throughout Athens’s history, as I discussed in Chapter 3. These churches have been recognized as the “center of all social, education, and religious activity” (BHL Middle School, 2004). Next to schools, the black churches were the “most important institutions” in the black communities of Athens and rural Clarke County. It was these churches that provided blacks with needed “religious and moral guidance” and “hope” for “a better life” (Schinkel, 1971).

Black churches were also central in the development of black educational opportunities. By 1869, black churches in the South enrolled over 100,000 students in weekday schools. This number rose to more than 200,000 by 1885 (Wyatt-Brown, 1994). As black church membership

increased in Athens and Clarke County, the black church and its leaders “gained a great deal of power and influence in the black community” (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978, p. 52).

Before and during the Civil War, blacks congregated with whites in the four white denominations of Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians. When the membership of blacks exceeded the white membership in a church, whites and blacks typically worked together to seek out resources for separate churches and pastors. While the Presbyterians and Episcopalians allowed blacks to participate in services in separate galleries, the Methodists and the Baptists both maintained an additional chapel for their black parishioners (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

However, this perceived camaraderie between blacks and whites over religion did not overshadow the “nature and ultimate purpose of so-called slave Christianity” (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978, p. 45). Many slaves revolted from the fire and brimstone talks about what would happen if they stole from their master. To get away from this talk, many blacks held their own private and often secret services in the plantation fields at risk of being whipped. Future names of many of Athens’s black churches, New Grove, Chestnut Grove, and Billups Grove, probably rose out of these shade tree sessions. The understanding of white control through black religion was understood by most blacks, and immediately following Emancipation, the speed of blacks starting their own religious communities intensified (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

The first of these churches was Pierce’s Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church,²⁰⁵ which opened in 1866 with 254 members. In 1867, the Hill First Baptist Church²⁰⁶ opened. Soon factions within these churches and other groups began to organize and establish other religious institutions (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

By 1912, there were 12 black churches in Athens: five Baptist, four Methodist, one Congregational, one Episcopalian, and one Sanctified (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978). All but one of these churches were housed in wood-framed buildings. As memberships in the churches increased and church schools were founded, the churches became both economically and politically powerful. Soon, the churches became the community center of black Athens (Schinkel, 1971).

Many of the churches quickly became economically stable through the implementation of the table method of tithing.²⁰⁷ This means of collection, still used in some black congregations today, required the giver to place a financial donation to the church on a collector's table in front of all of the parishioners. This steady flow of money allowed many of the churches to gain influence over the black community. This power often crossed from the religious realm into the political and social realm, as church leaders became elected officials of "state and national prominence" (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

As a result of the success of the churches, many became intricately affiliated with the local black schools through financial support of them or by allowing them to run in church buildings during nonworshiping hours (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978). The reasoning for the support of the schools by the churches was twofold. The church was a stable place for ongoing school fundraising, and the school was a stable place to reinforce the church teachings.

By 1915, 17 black churches were located in Athens, 14 of them being Baptist. Of that 14, 11 of the black Baptist churches were members of the Jeruel Association that contributed to the establishment of the Jeruel Academy-Union Baptist School.²⁰⁸ The other three Baptist churches contributed funds to another black industrial school in Monroe (Brown & W.H. Harris M.D., 1918-1919; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978). The Knox Institute was also strongly supported by a

religious sect of Congregationalists who held their sermons in the Knox Institute school for ten years before their church was built, while the basement of Pierce's Chapel housed the Foundry School,²⁰⁹ which is considered to be one of the forerunners in the development of Athens public schools in 1885 (Branson, 1886; Carl Vinson Institute of Government, 2006; Rice, December 3, 2001; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

Many of the small rural churches also maintained a strong church and school connection. Thurmond notes that these churches were not only the location for religious learning, but they were also the hubs of social and educational development. By 1915, at least seven of the small rural churches housed a school in the church or on the same property as the church. These churches included Shiloh, Morton's Chapel, St. James, Billups Grove, Timothy, Chestnut Grove, and Mt. Sinai ("Rural Survey of Clarke County, Georgia," 1915).

A 1916 school survey recorded that at least four of the twelve rural black schools were located in the actual church buildings (Rice, October 29, 2001). These churches were typically used as schoolhouses during the week, religious meeting places several evenings and on the weekends, and for large social gatherings²¹⁰ several times each month (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

Fanny Francis Neely Nesbit²¹¹ says that it was a common to use of churches to sponsor black schools during her childhood. Nesbit, a past student at the Billups Grove church school and teacher at the Timothy church school (both discussed in Chapter 4), explains that people considered it a natural facet of the church to support education and schooling in some manner because of the belief that education was central to the uplift of black people. She talked in detail about her family church of Billups Grove, named after one of her ancestors who donated the church property, and how the school connected to the church where her mother taught and her

sisters attended through the seventh grade. She said that the “church kids met in the church building and were taught in that building” through the week and then went to religious services on Saturday and Sunday (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview). Because people wanted to learn to read the Bible more than anything else, reading instruction first took place in the churches (Thurmond in BHL Middle School, 2004).

The church school was quite appealing to most who attended, she said. Indeed, it sparked an interest in her sister that was so strong that she gained “a yearning to teach herself.” She added that her sister used to sit on the front porch watching the cars pass and say that if she became a teacher maybe one day she could own her own car. She worked so hard at school that she left Albany State with a master’s degree, at the time, Nesbit added, that “you could go two years and get a normal certificate and then start teaching.” My sister was “really good,” Nesbit said. She taught in Hartwell and then in Athens at Timothy Baptist Church School. After she retired, Nesbit took her place as the teacher in the Timothy Church one-room schoolhouse (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview).

Lee Linston,²¹² considered by many black Athenians to be the local historian of Athens’s black history, suggested that the reason that Athens’s black churches were so intricately involved in the black schools was the desire of the whole community to remain “closely knit.”

Everybody attended school and attended church...it was just a big family thing. Everybody knew everybody and if a student had a problem they had to deal with the teacher as well as the parent. If the grade was low, they would contact the parent. They would see you at church anyway, you couldn’t hide (Linston, July 25, 2006).

At least three generations of the Stroud family, a prominent black family in Athens, attended Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church. Charles Stroud, one of the Stroud children who attended the church with his other 5 siblings and continues at the same church today, emphasized that Athens and the rural areas of Clarke County have historically been “church communities.” People went to the

churches not only to socialize, but also to support each other. His brother Melvin, also a long term member of the church, added that the his family was at the church “every time the doors opened” because their grandmother wanted to keep them out of the “devil’s work” (C. W. Stroud, July 18, 2006, Interview; M. Stroud, July 18, 2006, Interview).

The church, lodge, and finally the school became extensions of Athens’s black homes. Parents did not have to go to school to check on their children because they saw the teachers from the school in church, at a service organization, or in the neighborhood (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview). To survive, following emancipation, blacks had to organize in groups as much as possible. Churches, lodges, and clubs became safe havens (community hubs) where conversations about personal and community progress could be held without threat of whites or outsiders trying to stifle the advancement of black Athenians.

Black private schools, often housed in these churches or affiliated in some manner with the lodges or clubs, became another place of refuge for blacks seeking economic, social, political, and educational progress. The next two sections discuss life in three different black private schools, two preschools and one high school. These sections demonstrate how community members used the schools to develop leaders, beginning at the earliest ages, who eventually influenced the growth and prosperity of Athens’s black community. The community members whom these schools trained and developed, like Charles Maddox, past mayoral candidate and chair of the Athens Housing Authority Board of Commissioners, Howard Stroud, past superintendent of Clarke County School District and past chair of the Health Subcommittee for the Partners for a Prosperous Athens, and Dr. Agnes Green, one of the first black Athenians to integrate Clarke County Schools and an established physician, became “true leaders of Athens” who have helped people unite people toward the common goal of making life better for

all Athenians (Maddox, July 20, 2006, Interview; "Stroud was a true leader for Athens," April 3, 2007). The following section describes life in two private preschool programs in the mid 1950s, as narrated by several of these prominent Athenians.

Life in Athens's Black Private Preschools

In the early 1950s, Miss Mattie Eberhart and Ms. Alice Hiram Wimberly²¹³ ran small prekindergarten and kindergarten schools for students who were not quite old enough or ready to attend elementary schools. Miss Eberhart's school was located on the corner of Chase and Meigs Streets, and Ms. Wimberly's school was located at the Hiram House²¹⁴ at 635 West Hancock Avenue (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview; Maddox, July 20, 2006, Interview; Renew, 2000). It is likely that the schools were very crowded because one picture of Ms. Wimberly's school from 1955 shows a collection of 43 students (Yellow Jacket Staff, 1967).

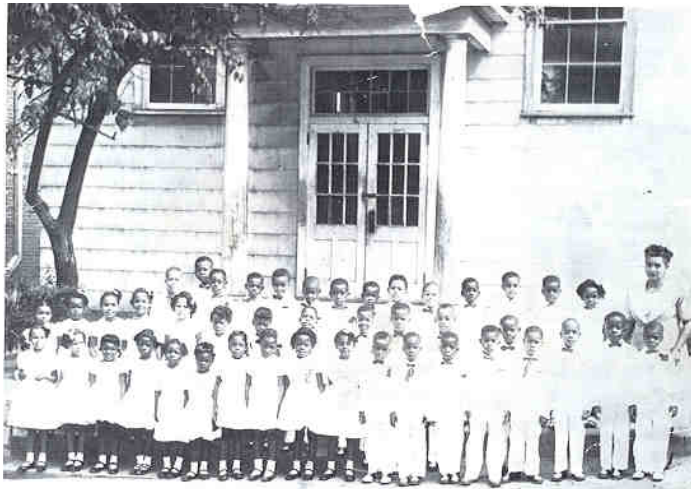


Figure 11: Ms. Wimberly's School, 1955

Photo courtesy of Dr. Robert E. Harrison, ICOD, Inc., www.theyellowjacket.com.²¹⁵

Charles Maddox has wonderful memories of his early learning experiences at these private schools. Maddox says that many people do not realize that Athens's black community had excellent preschool programs in the 1950s. He remembers attending Miss Eberhart's school first, at the age of 3, and then moving to Ms. Wimberly's school at the age of 4. He recalls his

parents paying a “meager” fee for him to attend the programs (Maddox, July 20, 2006, Interview).

Maddox remembers cutting through a path by his home on Glynn Street over to Miss Eberhart’s school each morning. The school was housed in a little building right next to her home. Maddox would bring his lunch each morning, and he would store it in his cubby when he arrived. One of his older brother’s responsibilities was to get him to school each day and to stop back by after school to pick him up (Maddox, July 20, 2006, Interview).

Agnes Green also has fond memories of her prekindergarten class with Miss Eberhart. She does not recall Eberhart having any formal education as a teacher. However, the community had a need for a school for young students, and Miss Eberhart took it on herself to start one. Green clearly remembers learning to read and write from this untraditionally trained educator (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

During this time, even though homes and schools did not have very many books, they did have the Bible, and learning to read it was considered to be essential. Reading was regarded as very important in the Athens black community. As a result, many black students learned to read and write from these types of kindergarten schools or from their family, neighbors, or Sunday School teachers before they entered school (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview; H. B. Stroud, Sr., July 18, 2006, Interview). Those students who arrived at school without reading skills were at a disadvantage from the start. However, Maddox notes that Eberhart and Wimberly did exert much effort in trying to catch those students up to the others before they started elementary school²¹⁶ (Maddox, July 20, 2006, Interview).

While in Eberhart’s class, Maddox remembers students working on some reading and writing skills. However, Maddox believes that it was when he moved over to Wimberly’s class

that he really learned to read. He recalls Ms. Wimberly using special books with the students to teach them basic skills, including the alphabet and counting. He specifically recalls Wimberly having a projector screen and reels of movies and students reading along while watching the short stories (Maddox, July 20, 2006, Interview). Several years later, Ms. Wimberly became the AHIS physical education teacher and taught Charles's sister Alberta (Yellow Jacket Staff, 1967).

Students who attended kindergarten and prekindergarten left those programs to go into a public city school, like West Broad Street School, or a private school. Some of the students at these preschools transitioned directly into the largest and longest running private school of Athens, Union Baptist. It was common and almost necessary for Union Baptist students to start school reading, so having them come from a private preschool would have been to their benefit. However, it was not a requirement and it is likely that not all students who attended Union went to these or other preschool programs. The following section details life at Union Baptist from the mid 1930s through the closing of the school in mid 1950s.

Life in a Private School for Blacks in Athens

The Union Baptist private school was always an educational leader in Athens. At first, the curriculum at Union emphasized agricultural training. In its early years, Union was widely known for its ability to train students in "every phase of farming." Most of the classes were focused on cotton, peanuts, and watermelon production, cattle raising, and print shop training. Many students came to Union from families of farmers with an expectation that the students would return to their farms with improved agricultural skills that would increase yields and profit making. Some of these students actually paid their tuition by bringing back crops they had grown during the off season (Union Baptist Institute Press, 1926).

In addition to a strong agricultural curriculum the school also offered students a chance to develop their technical schools. The printing department was one of the schools most successful industrial departments. Several local agencies, churches and lodges, used the department to print their materials and booklets (Johnson, July 12, 2006, Field notes). The domestic sciences and sewing department²¹⁷ were also widely recognized in the community and beyond (Union Baptist Institute Press, 1926).

In addition to the vocational training, Union had a very “strenuous” academic curriculum (H. Stroud in BHL Middle School, 2004). Even with the flourishing vocational programs in the school, Union had a very demanding classical program that included offering students foreign languages, history, mathematics, public speaking, writing, chemistry, physics, and music.²¹⁸ Essentially, the school focused on preparing students for their future in higher education or work (Union Baptist Institute Press, 1926). The school also had many extracurricular clubs and athletic opportunities (H. B. Stroud, Sr., July 18, 2006, Interview).

Howard T. Stroud, a 1948 graduate of Union who later became a legendary educator in the public schools of Athens, fondly recalled the structured classes and ongoing support provided to him and the other students by Union teachers and administrators (Barnes, 2000; “Stroud was a true leader for Athens,” April 3, 2007). Following chapel every morning, students went to classes with teachers who expected the best of all of their students. Attending the school from first to twelfth grade²¹⁹ and later teaching at the school, Stroud had the “strict rules” of the school committed to memory. The high expectations for behavior and work completion set by the Union staff was essential, he explained, to the success of the school and the students in it (H. Stroud in BHL Middle School, 2004).

Howard Stroud started at Union Baptist in 1936 at the age of 6. As the first child in his family to attend school, he was “a little bit timid” about “venturing out from home.” He recalled his father taking him to school on the first day. He had to carry crying Howard the entire way to the classroom from his car. Even though he had a rough start, Stroud’s teacher Miss Henry had him settled and content by the end of the third school day by engaging him in the process of making glue²²⁰ (H. B. Stroud, Sr., July 18, 2006, Interview).

Charles, another Stroud child who went to Union for 10 years,²²¹ recalled attending a Union preprimary class with Miss Henry 10 years after Howard.²²² He recalled Henry being very “stern” and “strict.” One of his most vivid memories was of her morning ritual of expecting all of her students to stand up and say “good morning to you” when she entered the classroom. One day, C. Stroud and his cousin were being defiant, and they stood up and said, “no good morning to you.” Of course, Henry did not think that the comment was very funny and she immediately gave both boys a quick and swift strap on their sides (C. W. Stroud, July 18, 2006, Interview).

George Stroud, Howard and Charles’s brother, started first grade at Union in 1942 and graduated from the school in 1956. He remembered his first teacher, Ruth Gibbs, teaching him reading, writing, and “arithmetic-math” from first through fourth grades (G. E. Stroud, Jr., July 18, 2006, Interview). George’s brother Melvin took second- and third-grade classes with Gibbs. He recalled her being quite “a booger,” and he remembered being scared of the “little strap” that she carried around (M. Stroud, July 18, 2006, Interview). He said that when you entered her room, she would say, “Sit down, Boy,” and then she would pace around the room with a belt in her left hand until everyone was seated. If students were misbehaving, she would bring the belt up and say, “You see this,... what will it do?” (C. W. Stroud, July 18, 2006, Interview).

During spelling, Gibbs would make students stand up and remain standing until they learned how to spell each word (G. E. Stroud, Jr., July 18, 2006, Interview). In that class, “You couldn’t miss a word.” If you did, she would drill you on that word until you got it correct (C. W. Stroud, July 18, 2006, Interview). Although her students thought that she was “tough,” they worked hard in her class because she expected them to work hard. They wanted to prove to her that they could meet her expectations (C. W. Stroud, July 18, 2006, Interview; G. E. Stroud, Jr., July 18, 2006, Interview; M. Stroud, July 18, 2006, Interview).

Drilling students when they missed a word or problem was not uncommon for Union teachers. Miss Lula Henry, George Stroud’s fifth-grade teacher, had a daily “question and answer period” and “If you missed the answer, then you had to stay [in the classroom] until you found that answer.” George knew many of the answers because of his nightly practice with his mother. With this extra help, he recalls spending a great deal of class time correcting others. Because Henry tolerated little foolishness, this type of behavior often resulted in his getting a strap on the hand (G. E. Stroud, Jr., July 18, 2006, Interview).

Melvin, the youngest Stroud who attended the school from first to eighth grade before transferring to AHIS, remembered all of his teachers having high academic and behavioral expectations. He recalled the empathy given to him by his fourth-grade teacher, Miss Hellen Neal. However, he added that, although she demonstrated concern for her students, she refused to “take any junk off us” (M. Stroud, July 18, 2006, Interview).

Melvin also clearly remembered his seventh-grade teacher Miss Agnes Wingfield. She was known as the “slave driver.” He recalls that “you couldn’t miss anything” in her class because she “instilled in you” a belief that “you must learn.” She would say things like “you [are] gonna learn while you’re here.” If you missed an answer or failed to comply, she would go

around and knock you on top of the head and “drill you” until you learned it (M. Stroud, July 18, 2006, Interview).

The high expectations set by the teachers for their students started with the school’s vision set by the school’s leadership. H. Stroud remembered clearly the expectations of his Union principal, Professor Charles H.S. Lyons.²²³ He was a very strict and visionary leader who people often say “lived before his day” (H. B. Stroud, Sr., July 18, 2006, Interview).

Lyons was a short man with a wobbly walk, whom some called a “busy body.”²²⁴ He often greeted his students by saying “sssss sssss comme here, ssss hhhhh fellla, I wwanna too ssee yoou.” Stroud recalls that, when students heard this request from Lyons, they knew that they were in trouble. He remembered one incident where he secretly slid down the banister in the center of the school once the hallway had cleared of students following chapel. Surprisingly, when he reached the bottom, Lyons was there. Stroud recalled that Lyons always seemed to be there when you didn’t expect him.²²⁵ He said, “sss fella, come with me,” and H. Stroud immediately knew that he was going to be disciplined. When he went into Lyons’s office that day, he recalls that the short man changed Howard’s personality “for the rest of that day at least” with a swift paddling and a stern speech (H. Stroud in BHL Middle School, 2004).

However, even though he was a strong, “very strict,” “very consistent,” disciplinarian, everyone believed that he was “fair.” Stroud remembered an encounter with Lyons when he had not followed school rules. Lyons had him move a large load of sand from one area of the school to another.

I worked and worked, and went to get him when I'd accomplished the task. He smiled, and said, “Now put it back.” I learned a lesson in discipline I will never forgot. That had a lot to do with my not making serious mistakes [later] because I learned that consequences could be very costly (H. Stroud in Barnes, 2000; H. B. Stroud, Sr., July 18, 2006).

On another occasion, Stroud remembered his father dropping him off at the school and Lyons waiting for him at the front door.²²⁶ He asked, “Did you notice anything when you came up the street that you hadn’t seen the day before?” Stroud responded that he had not noticed anything but the stores and building that he normally saw. Lyons responded, “A young man like you needs to be more observant. Did you notice the flowers blooming? Did you see all the beautiful blossoms down there as you came up the street? Did you notice the trees changing...?” Stroud explained that he had not paid them any attention, and Lyons scolded, “Well from now on, you need to notice things like this. You need to pay more attention” (H. Stroud in BHL Middle School, 2004).

H. Stroud laughs about it now, but remarks that small teachable moments like those affected his life forever. He said that Lyons was always expecting that students should be learning and taking everything in so that they could become stronger and more productive community members.²²⁷ Lyons insisted that Union students attend class and behave. He was very serious about boys treating girls with respect, and he did not tolerate boys going around “grabbing on the girls, even though sometimes we did” (H. B. Stroud, Sr., July 18, 2006, Interview). Lyons’s actions demonstrated how much he cared about his students and his teachers by paying attention to them. He walked around during the day, visiting classrooms and checking on each student and teacher. He was a “very good principal” (H. B. Stroud, Sr., July 18, 2006, Interview).

In addition to Union teachers and Union principals like Lyons setting lofty expectations, the black parents sending their children to Union also set high educational goals for their children. At night, the Stroud children were expected to come home from school and explain to their parents what they had learned and accomplished that day. “I always had to have learned

something,” H. Stroud remarked, “otherwise I could get the disfavor of the parents.” They did not punish the children if they did not produce a great report, but they did let them know that they were not very proud of them if they did not learn something at school that day (H. B. Stroud, Sr., July 18, 2006, Interview).

The results of high expectations set forth by black teachers, parents, and other community members could clearly be seen in the friendly rivalry that developed early on between Athens’s black public and private schools. Union and AHIS tried to “out play” each other by adding more and more technical departments, courses, and school programs and by holding community competitions to show off and demonstrate the success of their programs (H. B. Stroud, Sr., July 18, 2006, Interview). Alberta Lee Rakestraw, a Union student, recalled that, when the students walked from Hull Street to the Morton Theatre to perform their yearly closing plays, they were told to act like they were high society. “We thought we were going somewhere.” Teachers would say, “Get lined up two [by] two and you better not talk too loud either” because we are “goin’ to the Morton theater” (Rakestraw in BHL Middle School, 2004).

Nesbit recalled a “tremendous rivalry” between Union and AHIS (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview). Whether it was sports, school performances, products from the vocational classes, or placement of alumni, Union and AHIS fought to be the best in Athens (Horton, July 14, 2006, Interview). Some say that there were some “fairly serious fights between the two” (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview). However, Linston suggests that it was a positive rivalry and everyone remained “home folks.” He remembered little physical friction between the schools, except when the two played each other in football, which often became vicious (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview).

Harold Horton,²²⁸ native Athenian who attended the rival public school (Athens High and Industrial) in the late 1940s, noted that many of his friends, his relatives, and some of his younger siblings all had the privilege of attending Union. Even though Horton attended the public city schools, his grandmother,²²⁹ who raised him after his mother passed away, decided that some of the clan needed to attend Union. He remembered the tuition of the school straining their finances.²³⁰ With only a seventh- or eighth- grade education, his grandmother anticipated that the future might bring difficult struggles, and she wanted to ensure that Horton's three brothers, cousin, and sister were prepared (Horton, July 14, 2006, Interview).

Her reasoning for sending her children to Jeruel-Union was two-fold. She was a "big worker in the Baptist Church," and she believed that the spiritual component²³¹ of the school was central to the success of her children and grandchildren. Her second reason for sending her offspring to the school was that she understood the leaders of the school were also closely affiliated with the church (Johnson, July 12, 2006, Interview). Charles H. Lyons, one of the school's principals, was a deacon at Ebenezer Baptist Church, and his father was a well-known minister. Lyons's successor, E.C. Geer was also a minister (Gardner, 2006). These individuals were some of the "most influential people" in the community and the Baptist Association (Horton, July 14, 2006, Interview).

Throughout its history, the school was deeply affiliated with the Baptist churches of Athens, specifically Hill Chapel and Ebenezer West (Johnson, July 26, 2006, Interview; Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview). The churches regularly raised funds for the school's maintenance, and occasionally the churches and community raised funds for certain talented students who were unable to afford the school's tuition. Fundraising for these school scholarships showed up in

papers and school catalogues, asking community members to be Union Benefactors by donating to the “Student’s Loan Fund.”

In most of our communities there are boys and girls of such Talent and Ambition who would make good and serve well the people. They are handicapped by conditions for which they are not responsible. The door of opportunity is closed to them because they have not the money to get an education.

Were you ever in such circumstance? Does it concern you if your child succeeds? What of your neighbor’s children. Why not be broad enough [sic] to help and sympathize with those beyond your family. Make a contribution of what ever you desire to a loan fund in this Institution. Said funds are used only for worthy needy students and to be applied on schooling. **Invest your surplus money and means in Brains and Character** (Emphasis theirs, Union Baptist Institute Press, 1926).

By 1952, it became very apparent that there was little necessity to continue to maintain a black private²³² school, like Union, when the vast majority of the community felt confident in the work of Athens High and Industrial School. A 25-year contract was signed between the Clarke County School Board and the Athens City Board of Education for Union students to merge with AHIS students and attend the new Athens High and Industrial School on Dearing Street.

The merger of the two seemed to bring the community closer together, and in 1956 the two community hubs became one. Because many of the students attending the two schools lived near each other and socialized outside of school in church or in the community at places like the Harlem Theatre,²³³ the merger did not seem to cause a rift in either community (H. B. Stroud, Sr., July 18, 2006, Interview). The faculties at the schools successfully merged into one and continued to offer a solid educational experience until the closing of the school in 1970 when Athens’s schools desegregated (Rice, December 3, 2001).

The following chapter on the development of public schools in Athens from the late 1880s through school integration builds on the broader tapestry of the historical growth of Athens’s black educational institutions. In the next chapter, as I have done in this chapter, I draw

on the community members connected to these schools and their personal stories to relay what they believed were the educational expectations of their families, teachers, and community and how these expectations unified black Athenians toward social, political, economic, and educational uplift. Themes that emerged from education in the private domain, Chapter 6, and the public domain, Chapter 7 and 8, are discussed in more detail in Chapter 9.

CHAPTER 7 ATHENS'S BLACK EDUCATION IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN:

ELEMENTARY, INTERMEDIATE, AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Since the time of slavery and then emancipation, black Athenians have striven to obtain high quality education in all of its forms for their youth. The story of the efforts of freed slaves to better their lives through education is one of the most moving chapters in the social history of the United States (Branson, Unknown). Whether they were seeking specialized private school training or fighting for access to public schools, black Athenians believed that “learnin’” was the key to their social and economic uplift (Johnson, July 26, 2006, Interview).

Bennett F. Johnson,²³⁴ a student and teacher in Athens’s black schools from the 1930s through the 1960s, agreed that black community members firmly believed that education was “the key to succeeding.” He said that they were always pushing the youth to get an education “because a lot of them were not educated themselves.” They showed their support for education by doing “everything in their power” to see that black children went to and were successful in school. Even without a traditional education, Johnson believed that most black community members had “a knack and a knowledge” to realize that, for black children to “get further than they got,” they needed to be traditionally educated (July 13, 2006, Interview).

As I have documented in Ch. 3, following emancipation, tuition-based private schools sponsored the first formal education for blacks, though these schools tended to reach the wealthy and established blacks first. However, many small one-room, mainly church-based schools also existed in the city of Athens and in rural parts of Clarke County (Nesbit, July 25, 2006). By 1886, public city schools had been established, but private schools remained vibrant in Athens through the 1950s (Genovese, 1974).²³⁵

From their inception the curriculum in both the public and private schools contained both classical and vocational programming. Vocational preparation was believed crucial for blacks seeking employment in local economies. Between the time of the Civil War and the early 1920s, cotton was the prime crop in Athens. “Virtually every available acre” of land was put into cotton production. This overload of planting resulted in a major loss of land fertility, which in turn resulted in larger amounts of fertilizer being required to grow the cotton. Jobs quickly transferred from agricultural farming to fertilizer manufacturing and suppliers (“Athens Album: When Cotton was King,” February 20, 1987). By the mid 1920s, industrial education in the city’s public and private schools provided blacks with the necessary training to get access to the new jobs.

As a result of these job shifts, many blacks began to push more for even more industrial training opportunities in Athens’s public schools to ensure that their children had the skills to obtain jobs after graduation. However, as I have discussed in Chapter 2, opponents of industrial training continued to believe that a lack of classical training in these schools would stifle the progress of black Athenians (Litwack, 1998a). These opposing groups, both battling for the advancement of black people, eventually compromised and developed local public and private schools that encompassed both academic and industrial training. Private schools like Union Baptist and public schools like AHIS became central in the development of the “head, heart, and hands” (Clark, August 31, 1901).

Athens’s black private and public schools seemed to have common goals at the start of the 20th century. Their founders and supporters wanted to prepare more black children with the intellectual, religious, and industrial schooling that would help them overcome the segregation and discrimination of the racist South. As described by those who worked and attended these

schools, the ideas about racial and economic equity taught in these schools went well beyond the accommodationist school structure for economic independence or the Du Boisian radical strategies for sociopolitical equality. In spite of political and fiscal pressures, the schools taught a mixed classical and industrial curriculum, while building relationships and reinforcing a community sense of citizenship and belonging.

These schools were hubs of the community before “schools as community hubs” was a catch phrase. It was widely believed by the parents who sent their children to these schools and the teachers who taught in them that education was the central component for the “uplift of the race.” Teachers, community elders, and parents provided the necessary spiritual, mental, and industrial instruction to ensure the development of “young men and women for the higher callings of life” (Union Baptist Institute Press, 1926). The respectful and trusting relationships built among the students, the staff of the schools, and members of the community were based on the assumption that racial equality could be gained only if everyone became responsible for the education of community youth and if everyone helped the schools teach what was necessary for students to find economic and social success (Fairclough, 2004). The leaders of these schools often crossed both the public and private domains, building collaborative relationships between different segments of the black community. Leaders like Howard Stroud, Sr, Samuel Harris, and Homer T. Edwards all became known as “pillars” of Athens’s black community that lead the people toward the “right thing,” not the black or white thing (Whitfield, 2007).

This collaborative effort was taught and modeled in the schools and as a result, the schools produced droves of students who were known as being “wonderful orators, good musicians, well-equipped artists, marvelous songsters, splendid debaters,” outstanding athletes, and dedicated community servants (*Union Baptist Yearbook* 1956 - Information on source is

incomplete). Furthermore almost all the students who started at schools like Union and AHIS who remained through the seventh grade had a very high chance of finishing high school and attending an institution of higher education. These schools had track records of producing an established, highly educated black citizenry.

Juliette A. Derricotte is one example of a successful black Athenian who graduated from these schools. Derricotte, a 1914 graduate of AHIS, left Athens after graduation to attend Talladega College for undergraduate studies and Columbia University for graduate studies. By 1928, she was named a trustee at Talladega College, and in 1929 she became the Dean of Women at Fisk University (Howell, 1936).

Several locals who have worked in and attended Athens's black schools have claimed that these schools put out "more doctors, more schoolteachers, [and] more responsible people, than the school system we have now" (Johnson, March 14, 2007, Interview; Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview). These schools graduated students who attended Spelman College, Clark University, Atlanta University, Morris Brown College, and Morehouse College. After college graduation, many of them returned to Athens or surrounding communities as teachers, physicians, lawyers, dentists, nurses, homemakers, farmers, postmasters, pastors, pharmacists, and small business owners. Those who did not attend college were able to use their skills to find good jobs and become satisfied church-attending people and members of stable families (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview).

The two sections in this chapter on life in Athens's black public schools constitute the heart of the oral histories collected for this project. Each section uses real community voices to detail how Athens's black schools have influenced the lives of the students who attended them. Like Siddle Walker's work, each part focuses on the importance of the dedicated black educators

who made the schools what they were by extending their work well “beyond the classroom,” as well as the participation of parents, students, and community members who reinforced the community belief that the work done in the schools was central in the uplift of Athens’s black community (Siddle Walker, 1996). These stories, not complete by any means, provide examples of how Athens’s historically black schools and Athens’s black community were “mutually dependent” on each other. The stories also support Irvine’s research that suggests that, when teaching and learning are contextualized using people’s “cultural framework, beliefs, and worldview,” all students can achieve at “their highest potential” (Irvine, 2002a, p. 146; Siddle Walker, 1996).

Some scholars might object that these “anecdotal” stories simply reinforce a “nostalgic myth” that there was an “idyllic relationship” between black schools and black communities. However, I emphasize that community members interviewed for this work ought to be permitted to voice *their* thoughts about *their* black schools and that readers ought not to pass judgment on *their* perspectives. This work is not about being right or wrong about what happened or what is perceived to have happened in Athens’s black schools, it is about voice. The task of educational researchers is not only to introduce new ideas to the field, but, as I have sought in this endeavor, it is also about digging up old ones.

Oral history has gained “interpretive ground” over the past few years, and educational researchers need to “reorient” themselves about how they gather, look at, and use educational history. “Not only has educational history expanded beyond the realm of formal institutions and elite perspectives, ...[it] has grown more interdisciplinary, drawing insights from the related fields of qualitative social science and literary theory” (Dougherty, 1999). As a result, individual stories about life in historically black schools provide insight on what worked and what did not,

while validating a group who achieved many extraordinary things while in an oppressive and segregated environment. Dorn notes that even today, as the government demands that states create their own centralized accountability systems, the historic idea of “school as community” continues to survive. I believe that these stories provide some ideas as to why the concept of schools as community hubs remains central in the larger educational debate, while raising questions about the current realities of who has access to and control of education and who decides what are best practices in the education of historically marginalized populations (Dorn, 2006).

Life in Athens’s Black Public Elementary and Intermediate Schools

The following section is divided into three parts: Little Knox, a public preschool in the late 1930s; West Broad Street School,²³⁶ one of two public elementary schools for blacks dating back to the turn of the century; and Reese Street Junior High, originally the black high school until AHIS opened in 1916 when it became the junior high. Each of these schools was unique because of its size, location, and grades served. However, similarities among the “expectation of excellence” from the teachers in them is a common thread that runs throughout the narrative (Johnson, July 17, 2006, Field notes).

Little Knox

Harold Horton, introduced in Chapter 6, believes that the community progress of the time was a direct result of the support provided to him by the strong teachers and administrators in Athens’s black schools. His first experience with this type of support, outside of his own home, was when he started kindergarten around 1938 at the Little Knox School. The school, previously the private school Knox Institute, sat across the street from the original AHIS

building (Horton, July 14, 2006, Interview). Fanny Francis Neely Nesbit, also introduced in Chapter 6, started school at Little Knox around the same time (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview).

Little Knox was located in a two-story frame building at the east intersection of Pope and Reese Street.²³⁷ After being used for several years as a preschool, the building was turned into a library for blacks and finally the location of the wood-working shop²³⁸ for AHIS (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview). Nesbit did not remember the school charging tuition, saying if they did that her mother would have never been able to afford it. Even though it does not show up on the school registry, it was likely that it was the unofficial preschool of Athens's black city school system.²³⁹

Like many of the people interviewed for this study, Horton and Nesbit remembered the names, personalities, and compassion exhibited by their teachers. Horton clearly remembered Mrs. Rosa Bell Strickland, his teacher at Little Knox, with whom he later taught in the Clarke County Schools (Horton, July 14, 2006, Interview; Nesbit, March 22, 2007, Interview). Mrs. Nesbit also fondly recalled Mrs. Strickland and another teacher at the school by the name of Mrs. F. Johnson. Nesbit remembered having a vibrant, happy, and satisfying preschool experience where her teachers took time to "individually work" with her and the other children in the class, as well as doing group activities.

I think that was a real plus for me... Even though the chairs were small, [my teacher] was down at my level... I can't even remember what kinds of things we did but I can remember [how] often my teacher sat next to me for something... You just sort of learn[ed] by osmosis because so much [was] going on around you at so many different levels (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview).

The Little Knox teachers had taught her how to count from one to ten in French, as well as many of the "rudiments of reading," well before she entered elementary school. However, she added that, because she was raised in a large family with lots of siblings, she already knew how

to read on entering Little Knox.²⁴⁰ Looking back, and as an educator herself, Nesbit noted that she learned a great deal in that one preschool year. At five, she was expected by her teachers to “line up for certain things” and have a “snack at certain times.” At Little Knox she remembered learning the “rituals” of school that helped her be successful in the next stages of her education (Nesbit, July 25, 2006).

When students left Little Knox in the late 1930s and early 1940s, they started at either the West Broad School or the East Athens School. Of course, many students did not have a chance to attend preschool and simply started their education at one of these schools in the first grade around the age of six. Both of the east and west side schools opened around 1893 offering grades first through ninth. However, after additional schools were built at the turn of the century, the schools changed their focus to the elementary grades. The next section details life at the West Broad Street School starting in the mid 1930s. More details on the history of West Broad Street School, prior to the 1930s, can be found in Chapter 4.

West Broad Street School

Both Horton and Nesbit began attending West Broad Street School²⁴¹ sometime in the mid to late 1930s. During that era, students attended West Broad until the sixth grade and then went to Reese Street School for seventh grade, which was originally the black school for upper grades. When Athens High and Industrial (AHIS) was opened, Reese became the intermediate or junior high school (Horton, July 14, 2006, Interview; Nesbit, March 22, 2007, Interview).

At that time, eighth-grade through eleventh-grade classes were housed at AHIS. During his initial interview, Horton looked back on AHIS going only through eleventh grade with “disdain.” The students who attended Union received schooling through the twelfth grade and, though not certain, he believed that white students were also able to go all the way through the

twelfth grade (Horton, July 14, 2006, Interview). AHIS did not begin to offer twelfth grade until 1956 when the school merged with Union Baptist (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview).

Both Nesbit and Horton relayed fond memories of West Broad Street School.²⁴² One of their classmates, Ileane LaBelle Nesbit (Nunnally),²⁴³ also recalled the school being a wonderful place where people expected children to do “big things.” Like Nesbit and Horton, Nunnally believed that the school was a place where all students could learn because it was both a cheerful and supportive environment. At West Broad, “we learned how to read and we learned how to write.... We learned just as well as the people are doing now; sometimes I think better.” Then she added, outside of the church, West Broad Street School was the center of Athens’s black community (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

Athens’s black schools had always been a central part of Nunnally’s family. She noted that her parents “instilled education” into every one of the children. She was raised hearing stories about the expectations of Professor Samuel F. Harris, who was the principal when her mother, father, and aunts attended AHIS. Like those of her parents, the educational expectations for her and her brother were high. Her mother had attended some college classes at Morris Brown College in Atlanta, and both of her parents had very good jobs. Her family was so successful that they also owned their own home. All of those indicators demonstrated family progress, and she was expected to exceed that success²⁴⁴ (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview; March 14, 2007, Interview).

When Nunnally began school at West Broad in 1936, she recalled the structure looking very similar to the way it does today, except that it now has a few additions and the road leading up to the school is paved. Nunnally remembered wearing galoshes to school because of the overwhelming amount of mud on the road after a hard rain. Her mother customarily wrapped her

books with paper bags to assure that they remained dry in wet or snowy weather. She recalled that in the winter it was quite a cold and windy walk down the hill to the school from her family's home on Rocksprings Street where she still resides with her husband. On cold days, all of the students stood around the pot-bellied stove in one of the classrooms to warm up when they arrived at school. In the summer, the teachers had to open all of the windows to cool down the building. However, no matter the weather, Nunnally concluded, "We still learned" (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006).

Another student, Fanny Francis Neely Nesbit, remembered having to leave home very early to get to school on time, which was of course expected by her teachers. Nesbit, who had siblings running "the whole strata" of ages, said there was always somebody to walk her to school. She mainly remembered her sisters, who were attending AHIS, walking with her to school each morning, often through the rain, cold, and severe heat (Nesbit, July 25, 2006).

Walking to school was torturous for some of the students. Many had to walk several miles to and from school. Others had to cross a "branch" or stream or trek through long wooded distances before they reached their school houses (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview; Moore (Stroud), July 18, 2006, Interview). Being late for school was unacceptable at places like Little Knox or any other of the black schools. This was clearly noted by Callie Elder,²⁴⁵ who told the Federal Writer's Project staff in 1938, "Scuse me please, I can't talk 'til I gits my grandboy off so he won't be late to school at Little Knox" (Hornsby, 1938).

When Nesbit, Nunnally, and Horton attended West Broad, their principal's name was Miss Julia Reid. Reid, an "unusual looking woman," was also the first-grade teacher. She was very focused on having the students learn the routines of school. Reid was quit stern, but her

“rules and expectations were fair” and she treated everyone the same (Horton, March 12, 2007, Interview; Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview).

Lee Linston, first introduced in Chapter 6, also attended West Broad in the early 1940s. When asked about Reid, who was also his principal, he said that she “meant business.” He relayed that the one or two times that he was disciplined by her, she gave him a stern talking to and a hard “strap on the hand” (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview). At that time, Nunnally explained that most teachers in the black schools had leather straps in their desks for disciplining students (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview). Sometimes they took students out of the classroom to strap them, and sometimes they did it right in front of the other students (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview).

At this time, students who were academically successful and did not get in trouble often skipped grades at West Broad. Both Nesbit and Horton, for example, achieved so much in first grade that they both skipped the second grade with Miss Maude Morton²⁴⁶ and moved directly into the third grade with Miss Minnie Diggs. Nesbit, only 6 when starting the third grade, said the “powers that be”²⁴⁷ determined that she needed to skip a grade. Miss Diggs required her students to “copy” work from the board and then required the work to be recited back to her at the end of each day. Nesbit recalled her teaching the same students for both third and fourth grades (July 25, 2006, Interview).

Linston, also taught by Miss Diggs when he was in the third grade, remembered her being very demanding about students’ completing their work—she accepted no excuses. “Miss Diggs was strict, you had to do your work, no foolishness” (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview). Nunnally, who also had Miss Diggs²⁴⁸ in third grade remembered her mother very clearly saying,

“Now just because she is our friend, don’t think she is not going to give you the strap when you are talking [during her lesson]” (July 17, 2006, Interview).

Following fourth grade, Nesbit and Horton had Mrs. Mamie Brown, and then before leaving West Broad they both had Mrs. Virginia Eberhart Roberts for sixth grade. Roberts also taught them when they attended AHIS (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview; March 22, 2007, Interview). Nesbit remembered Mrs. Roberts as a very compassionate teacher. At one point, she noted that Mrs. Reid had accused Mrs. Robert’s sixth graders of writing on the walls. Mrs. Roberts vehemently denied that her students would do such a thing. Nesbit said Mrs. Roberts sat at her desk all afternoon crying because she knew the class had been wrongly accused. The experience, she said, helped her and the rest of the class see how much “faith and trust” that their teacher had in them and “how much she cared” for them (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview).

Teachers at West Broad never underestimated their students, whether it was behavior or academics. They were, as Bennett Johnson put it, simply “interested in you learning what you [were] supposed to learn” and that included academic and social instruction. B. Johnson, who went to West Broad a few years after Nesbit, suggested that his teachers were “patient” and really seemed to enjoy teaching. They bent over backward to see that students got the information necessary to complete the grade and be successful later in life (Johnson, July 13, 2006, Interview). Teachers at West Broad provided their students with a sequence of lessons so that they could learn “whatever was expected at that level” and then at the start of the next year, the teacher would give them the sequence to start the next level. Lessons were paced based on the needs of the student, but all students were expected to get through the entire sequence before the end of the year (Johnson, July 26, 2006, Interview; Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview).

Nesbit, Nunnally, and Linston all remembered the West Broad teachers having to teach their lessons with used textbooks. These books, often in poor condition and full of outdated information, were discards from the white school. Although Nunnally recalled that she always had books for her elementary, junior high, and high school classes, she knew that those books were not “up to par” with the books used at the white schools (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview; Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview). This did not matter, however, because the teachers still did “an outstanding job using whatever materials they had” (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview).

Many times, because the school lacked resources, the teachers made the materials, flash cards, and other resources that were used by the students. Because the schools had no formal policies on field trips at that time (and likely no funds for excursions to distant locations), teachers, on their own initiatives, took students on hikes and walking tours to discuss important curriculum points. Nesbit remembered one sixth-grade trip where the class hiked miles through the woods to a bridge, discussing important landmarks, natural habitats, and geography along the way (July 25, 2006, Interview).

The students at West Broad had not only their academic needs met by the school, but also many of their physical needs. B. Johnson recalls that the school had a very good lunch program. All students had the opportunity to receive a school lunch,²⁴⁹ whether or not the student could afford it (Johnson, July 13, 2006, Interview). Nunnally recalled her fourth-grade teacher, Miss Sandy Freeman, going to the storage closet each day and getting out canned milk, peanut butter, and saltine crackers for the students to have for snack time. She remembered her teacher having to stretch the milk by adding water so that all students could have some, and she recalled the

teacher asking the students to bring a cup or a bowl from home for the cold days when they were given canned soup for their snack or lunch (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

West Broad students also regularly went outside for recreation, and they, like the high school, had annual plays and performances that had academic, character development, and religious themes²⁵⁰ (Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview). At the close of each year, most of Athens's black schools held lavish concerts at the Morton Theatre downtown on Hot Corner. Nunnally recalled these elementary and high school programs as the most memorable events of the year. Students practiced for months at their schools, and then the teachers walked the students to the Morton for seven o'clock community performances. The free programs were usually an "interesting" mix of dance, plays, oratory, singing, and live music. The programs attracted hundreds of community members. "Everyone was there," not just the parents of the students. It was always "real crowded." Nunnally described the yearly event as something that everyone in the community looked forward to all year (July 17, 2006, Interview).

Another West Broad event designed to celebrate the success of the year was the raising and wrapping of the maypole. One evening in each May, all of the black public schools would come together to wrap the May pole. Students wore the best clothing they had that matched the color of the ribbon with which they were going to wrap the pole that evening. The year that Nunnally was selected to wrap the pole, her mother made her a yellow dress and tied her hair with a yellow ribbon to match the one she would use. Nunnally said her teachers had already trained the students on how to dance and "plant"²⁵¹ the ribbon around the maypole during the weeks prior to the event. They also taught lessons on the symbolism of the event (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

The collaborative efforts seen in events like the yearly concerts at the Morton and the planting of the maypole were examples of how teachers taught students to work together toward a common goal. Teachers believed that students could achieve more if they supported one another. It was not unusual at West Broad to see one child struggling with a task and another child coming over to help who had already successfully completed the assigned work.

During those days, teachers expected their students to “obey, to do their work as best as they could, to ask for help if they needed it, [and] to help each other.” When Nesbit finished her work, it was expected that she help others with their work until everyone was finished. She recalled this as a very “forward thinking” teaching practice for the time. It was this type of collaborative teaching style that helped her learn so much in elementary school, including the capitals of the fifty states and long division all before she completed the fifth grade (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview).

Up to the 1950s most, if not all, of the teachers at West Broad were unmarried females.²⁵² Even though they had no children of their own, some of them acted like mothers,²⁵³ disciplining out of love and caring like family. Linston noted that his fondest memories of West Broad elementary were of his teachers. They were “somewhat like our parents,” he said. They were an extension of their families in those days; “That is how close we was” (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview). It was in the early 1950s when Elizabeth Beauty Vee Smith (Platt)²⁵⁴ and Alberta Maddox (Lay)²⁵⁵ began attending school at West Broad Street School. Like the earlier students, Platt and Lay recalled the times spent at West Broad as happy ones where teachers were closer to mothers than not (Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview).

They both vividly remembered their first-grade teacher, Miss Vera Jones, as the “prettiest person” that they had ever seen. Like others previously mentioned, they both got stuck with

“old” Miss Morton, the unmarried sister of Pinky Morton, for second grade (Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview). However, unlike the others, Lay stated that she liked Miss Morton, calling her a “very good teacher” who, along with other teachers at the school, always told her how smart she was even though she did not perceive herself to be. Lay said, it wasn’t that she was smart, she just went to school to get her lessons because that is what her mother told her that “going to school for” (Maddox (Lay), July 11, 2006, Interview).

While Platt had strict Miss Diggs for third grade, Lay spent her third-grade year with Mrs. Cora Edwards, who was the wife of the prominent Professor Homer Theodore Edwards, the principal of AHIS, discussed in the next section. Lay was particularly fond of Mrs. Edwards because she allowed her to “ring the bell” at the start and close of lunchtime and go on errands to the office. Lay recalled also receiving special attention from her fourth-grade teacher, Miss Hazel Terrell. Miss Terrell told her that she enjoyed spoiling her because she always completed her work and acted so “ladylike.” Lay claimed that she did not let the compliments give her a “big head,” but she certainly always responded with a “well, thank you” when they came (Maddox (Lay), July 11, 2006, Interview).

In fifth grade, the content of the classes seemed to get more difficult for Lay and Maddox and the teachers seemed to become more authoritarian. Lay remembered that her fifth-grade teacher, Miss Brantley, was a bit different than the others. She was stricter than her previous teachers, but students were still able to learn from her. Even though Lay’s chattering in classes occasionally got her in trouble, she finished her work successfully and brought home report cards full of A’s (Maddox (Lay), July 11, 2006, Interview).

In sixth grade, Lay and Platt were together again in Miss Helen Neal’s class. They agreed that all of the students loved Miss Neal because she was “like a mother” to them. She was “real

easy with us,” Lay stated. She let the class have parties and allowed familiarities like brushing her hair. However, they knew that Miss Neal was still focused on teaching and learning, and even though they were having fun, they were still expected to “get their lessons” completed and correct (Maddox (Lay), July 11, 2006, Interview).

Platt was very special to Miss Neal and was considered her teacher’s pet. Raised mainly by her grandmother and a first cousin who called her sister, Platt thought of Miss Neal as a member of her extended family. She remembered ways that Miss Neal demonstrated love for her. She said that Neal always treated her with sweet and nurturing ways. Miss Neal often visited Platt at home, and at some point during that sixth-grade year, she bought Platt her first doll (Smith (Platt), December 31, 2006, Interview). During one summer, she asked Platt to work at the West Broad Street School answering phones.²⁵⁶ This was a great honor for Platt, and she was delighted to do it (Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview).

Lay and Platt were again separated when they entered the seventh grade, which was then housed at West Broad because the Reese Street School had officially closed. That year, Lay took class from Miss Eileen Alford. She called Alford’s class the “smart class” and considered herself Alford’s class pet. Miss Alford was a very austere, but “good,” teacher, says Lay. Her high expectations for her students resulted in the class producing several plays and meeting all of the grade-level expectations. Students enjoyed her so much that at the close of the year, many cried about leaving her class (Maddox (Lay), July 11, 2006, Interview).

When Platt and Lay talked about attending West Broad, they spent a lot of time discussing the black community’s expectation about the completion of school “lessons.” The West Broad teachers and the parents of West Broad students would say things like, “You need to go complete your lessons.” Lay recalled students’ studying their math, spelling, or English

lessons for days and then being required to pass a test over that material. If they were unsuccessful, they would be asked to spend additional time on their lessons with their teacher after school (Maddox (Lay), July 11, 2006, Interview). Although teachers at the West Broad expected students to complete whatever “lessons” they assigned, they also expected the students to have enough “home training” that they behaved appropriately while at school. In return for this conformity, the students and their families expected that their teachers would care, nurture, and love them like they were kin (Maddox (Lay), July 11, 2006, Interview; Smith (Platt), December 31, 2006, Interview; July 11, 2006, Interview).

The memories of West Broad for all participants interviewed were very positive. Students genuinely enjoyed going to school. There was no need for strict absentee and attendance policies because those problems did not exist. Students came to school because they cared about learning, and teachers taught because they cared about the future of the students. The teachers did not view their work as simply a “job” and a “check.” They were passionate about working with children (Johnson, July 13, 2006, Interview).

Everyone interviewed about West Broad explicitly recalled the high expectations set in the school by the teachers. Nunnally suggested that the teachers’ high expectations were grounded in the community’s high expectations for education. She said the teachers would say things like “I know your parents and... they expect big things” from you (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview). To demonstrate their achievements and to prove that they had met the teachers’ expectations, students at West Broad presented “exhibits” to their parents and teachers several times each year (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview). These exhibits, such as clay replica or dough maps, demonstrated their progress in their classes because to complete them the student had to know every detail about the topic being studied. One year, Mack

Sewell²⁵⁷ was asked to build a clay replica of a pueblo. He knew that he had to know everything about pueblos, there was no faking the information, because if he did not then the replica would be built incorrectly and his teacher would know that he did not learn his lessons (July 11, 2006, Field notes).

All of the West Broad students interviewed agreed that their teachers expected to see them behaving in school and out of school. These expectations were taught through regular classes and through what Nunnally called “civics,” which included students’ behavior in class, in the hall, outside, and in the community. Sometimes, the interviewees used the words “tough,” “strict,” and “unkind” when describing their teachers, but they never failed to also recognize the supportive and inspiring attributes of their teachers. Nesbit, for example, described her fifth-grade teacher Mrs. Brown as a “very unkind person.” However, Nesbit contended that she still taught her a great deal. Indeed, she has colorful memories of Mrs. Brown expecting the class to cut out cardboard squares with all of the states on one side and their capitals on the other. This method, though tedious and laborious, resulted in Nesbit learning the assigned material (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview).

Students who did not learn the required material would be “punished in one way or another” (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview). Sometimes, it was a whack of the leather strap on the hand. The teachers typically did not strike the students anywhere else, but no one wanted the “sting” of the strap. Other times, students were either required to stay after school to work on their assignments or a teacher would visit their homes to tell their parents about the situation (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview; Sewell, July 11, 2006, Field notes).

Home visits typically included long conversations between the parents and the teacher in which the teacher would say things like, “This has to be done” by this date. Most of the time, the

parents followed through with the teacher's request. During that age of schooling, "If you gave trouble in school, you got double trouble at home." In most cases, "from day one" black parents stressed "the importance of education." Nesbit recalled her mother saying things like, you are "expected to 'behave'" and "give no trouble at all" at that school. This is one of the reasons that Nesbit was very diligent, "careful," and "made good decisions" (July 25, 2006, Interview).

Nunnally said that her fear of the strap and of her parents finding out that she had misbehaved helped her to remember to "stay of her P's and Q's" (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

Many of Nesbit's teachers went to Hill First Baptist Church, where her family also attended (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview). This was the same for Linston, who attended Greater Bethel AME. Indeed, about 80% of the teachers at West Broad, Reese Street, and AHIS lived within a five-block radius of the schools, and most attended the community churches. Because of the compact size of the city and the close proximity of the homes, community churches, and schools, information about misbehavior or lack of motivation at school quickly reached parents (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview).

Although the West Broad teachers were very firm, most were also regarded by their students as fun. For example, Linston recalled how he enjoyed Miss Ellington making the students march to recess every day to piano music. When the recess bell rang, he stated, they would line back up and marched back inside. Linston also recalls the teachers' expecting their students to say the "Pledge of Allegiance" outside every morning and then marching inside to a cadence-like song. These memories, along with his daily lunch of a peanut butter sandwich and apple eaten outside in the sun, were happy ones (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview).

At West Broad, students did whatever they were told to do, especially when they were told something by the a teacher or principal. Miss Freeman, the principal who took over for Miss Reid, simply terrified her students into submission. Platt relayed that “you just didn’t mess with [Freeman]. I mean you just didn’t.” Students did whatever the teachers and administrators told them to do, and they did not ask questions. Even when they had free time in the yard at the end of the day, they knew that they were not allowed to leave the yard until the bell rang. Platt, who lived directly across from the school, would not leave until she was told it was time to do so. She claims that the students “knew that whatever they [the teachers] said was correct” and they followed it (Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview).

Platt recalls being frightened by her seventh-grade teacher Miss Agnes Wingfield²⁵⁸ who, instead of popping her with a ruler, verbally put her down in front of the class when Platt refused to stand up and discuss a recent play²⁵⁹ in which she had performed.

She made fun of the way I was telling it in front of the entire class and embarrassed me so bad that to this day I have a fear of speaking in front of a group of people. You do not even know when people, teachers, do things...[that] might impact them [children] for the rest of their lives. She traumatized me (Smith (Platt), December 31, 2006).

Even after relating this disturbing experience, Platt followed up with a comment about how her teachers cared about her. Several interviewees note that, even though many of the West Broad teachers were stern and their expectations were lofty, “we knew that they loved us” and that they were doing “the best that they could with what they had” to make us successful (Maddox (Lay), July 11, 2006, Interview; Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview).

The teachers, like the parents, “expected us to do what we were supposed to do” (Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview). When students failed to comply with requests, teachers would pull out rulers to paddle the student on the hand, and then parents would be called on the phone or visited in person. And in these situations the discipline did not end at the school house. Once

the parents were notified that the misbehavior had taken place, they would give additional consequences to their misbehaving children when they arrived home from school (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

Most students who attended West Broad ended up attending at least one year at Reese Street School. Students at the school came from all over the city because Reese was the only black school that offered seventh grade. Though the students came from several different elementary schools, the expectations were consistent from school to school and were very similar to the expectations at West Broad. Students were to maintain good behavior and successfully complete their lessons.

Reese Street Junior High School

In the early years of Athens black city schools, at the end of fifth grade, families and teachers watched their students move from West Broad Street School to Reese Street Junior High School and later to AHIS.²⁶⁰ Reese Street was a two-story modern-framed schoolhouse that opened in 1914. It was built in a typical turn-of-the-century urban school horizontal design, with two columns in the front and four classrooms on each of the two floors. Unlike other black schools of that era, Reese had been built with steam heating and a basement²⁶¹ that housed a manual training shop and the bathrooms (Linston, March 19, 2007, Interview; Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview).

Nesbit and Nunnally remember Reese Street quite fondly. It was at Reese that they had their first experiences having different teachers for different subjects (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview). Nunnally attended the school for two years, sixth and seventh grades, and then moved on to AHIS (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview). A few years later, the

gradespans adjusted and sixth grade was held at West Broad, which meant that Nesbit did not go to Reese Street until she was in the seventh grade (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview).²⁶²

Mrs. Ella Gilbert Brown was the Reese Street principal. Like many black principals of the time, she was required to teach in addition to administering the school. Brown was known to be “very, very strict,”²⁶³ and she rarely smiled (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview). Students, like Nunnally, knew that Brown “didn’t take any foolishness.” However, they still believed that she was a good principal and math teacher (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

Nunnally remembers taking English, mathematics, and geography from the several “really good” teachers at Reese Street (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview). Nesbit recalls having Mrs. Cordelila Brown for homeroom and social studies, Miss Julia Hawkins for language arts, and Miss Mammie Freeman for science. In contrast to later years, these teachers moved from class to class to teach,²⁶⁴ and students remained in the same room throughout the day (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview).

“You were expected to do your work” because “school was your job.” If students did not complete their work, they would get a consequence from the teacher. The penalty often included using a strap to the hand, a stern private talk, and maybe even a visit home (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview). Linston and his friends always made sure that teachers were not around when they played on the school’s fire escape because they did not want to get into trouble. They would slide “veruppp” down the fire escape just for fun. Unlike when he was at West Broad, Linston recalls being “just a little older” when attending Reese Street so he and his friends got into “a little more devilment” than before (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview). Other Reese Street activities that the students enjoyed included walking to the “dust bowl,”²⁶⁵ where Reese and AHIS students practiced football on the corner of Finley Street and Hancock Avenue, and

attending after-school chorus practice (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview; Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

It was expected that during school hours, children were at their respective schools. If children did not show up at Reese Street, or any other school, and adults saw them out wandering around town, they would immediately tell the parents. “Community folk” were like “neighborhood watchers” who would “make sure that you did and be where you are supposed to be.” These community watchers helped make the black youth of Athens become more conscious and careful about what they did and where they did it because someone might see them and tell their family. “Even though most homes did not have telephones at that time, before you got home your parents knew what you had done” (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview). “Showing out” or misbehaving demonstrated disrespect for your own family and most families “didn’t play that” (Johnson, July 13, 2006, Interview).

Community members believe that times were different then. During those days, Nunnally suggested that the black community of Athens was not a neighborhood, but instead was a “parenthood.” Everyone, especially the teachers, considered themselves parents of all of the community children, and everyone had the joint responsibility to help all children understand the community norms and expectations so that the community as a whole could move forward together. A belief in education was “instilled” into every child. Back then, children were expected to “go to school and be something” (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

If a child “did wrong,” any adult could “whip you and send you home, and your mother and father would whip you again. That’s the way it was.” B. Johnson, a student at West Broad who later became a respected teacher at AHIS, felt that many of the male community members and teachers that followed through with their threats were the role models he needed to reach his

potential. They acted as his “father-figures” because his father and mother divorced when he was young, and he was raised solely by his mother (July 13, 2006, Interview).

Athens’ black community had an “ethic of caring” focused on “communal care” instead of personal care (Ware, 2002). The “good, positive community” pressure put onto the children by “model citizens” built a desire in the black youth to want to grow up and be “a part of them.” B. Johnson, who grew up on North and South Rocksprings Street, said that the “community life” in his neighborhood was “real life,” and he was grateful for the support of the neighbors around him. He believes that the elders around him, including his teachers, helped to enable him to “live a better life” today (Johnson, July 13, 2006, Interview).

Stories like these demonstrate how schools like West Broad and Reese Street helped to make Athens a tightly knit black community. “It was really a community” where “everybody knew everybody” and “you went to school with the kids you grew up with” (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview). The adults of the community were highly respected by the children because respect was taught in the home, churches, and schools. The parents respected the teachers so much that they accepted teacher comments as fact. “Whatever they said, is what you did. Any adults [especially teachers] could speak to you, and you’d better do what they suggested.” This provided a sense of “community control” over the black youth of Athens, while also giving the children a feeling of safety and security (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview).

As Athens’s black youth matured into teenagers and young adults, the structured and strict rules of elementary and junior high ended and students moved into to a more democratic type of schooling at the local black high school. As students transitioned from West Broad to Reese Street to Athens High and Industrial, later Burney Harris High, the notion that teachers

and administrators were making students get educated for their own good transformed into students being self motivated to get an education because they understood its worth.

One of the high school principals, Professor Homer T. Edwards, discussed in the next section, said that AHIS was a place where students would learn to develop their mind, their body, and their spirit. Like the great black administrators and teachers before him, Edwards used the skills of his admired teaching staff to “steer” AHIS students in “noble direction[s].” He believed that AHIS was “a place where teachers and peoples work[ed] together and attain[ed] learning and experience” that would “prepare them for doing well the work of life” (Edwards in Linston, July 25, 2006, quote from undated material; Taylor, Unknown). The next section relays some of the history of how the work of the teachers and administrators of AHIS altered the worldview of AHIS students, setting them on a course for bright and successful futures.

Life in Athens’s Black Public High School

In 1935, following in the footsteps of Professor Samuel F. Harris and before the legacy of Professor Edwards began, Professor Aaron Brown became the supervisor-superintendent of Athens’s black (Negro) schools. At the close of his first year, Brown began to publicly relay the crucially “important role” that Athens’s black schools were playing in the development of Athens’s black community. He stated that the “nobler purpose” of these schools and education in general was to enable the black community to “think wisely, love sincerely, [and] act justly,” so that people in the community could move forward together. It was believed that, if the schools could help community members “exhibit a reverent attitude” toward one another, then the community would be better able to deal with the struggles of economic and social oppression (Brown, 1936). This type of attitude by the black educational leaders of the time was crucial to the continued success of Athens’s black public schools.

The residual problems of the Great Depression had been especially hard on black Americans. By 1932, almost half of African Americans were unemployed. In many areas, whites were calling for blacks to be fired so that whites could take their places. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, whites began to outnumber black Athenians in both the city and the state, as blacks moved north for more job and educational opportunities (Litwack, 1998a). Violence against blacks was also escalating during this era. Lynchings in the South rose from 8 in 1932 to 28 in 1933. Even though Athens had not seen a lynching since 1921,²⁶⁶ the tension did result in an escalated division between blacks and whites (Wilkes, 1997).

To his students, Brown denounced the rise in violence and emphasized that he believed that “what life in the long run does *to* us, depends [on] what life finds *in* us [italics added]” (Brown, 1936). In his 1936 address to Athens High and Industrial’s 94 graduates, he explained his quote through a story about two young men, one being self-indulgent and the other instilled with strong character, each going to the city to seek their future. He said of both men that they

See the same things, deal with the same people and are played on by the same circumstance. BUT HOW DIFFERENT IS THE RESULT? One carries into that situation the spirit of the debauchee so that he catches filth from everything he touches, while the other carries the spirit of a savior so that he depends [on] his care for men, his pity for their weakness, his shame for their sins, his passion for their redemption. Remember young people. WHAT ALL THINGS DO TO US WILL DEPEND ON WHAT THEY FIND IN US. THIS MAKES THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PEOPLE (emphasis his, Brown, 1936).

Athens High and Industrial School and Burney-Harris High School

Despite the struggles of that era black students from AHIS were demonstrating signs of progress, and the schools remained central in the fight for communal uplift. Examples of this fight are seen in artifacts like the cover of a 1936 AHIS Highlight magazine that depicted a disheveled black man with no shoes, torn and low hung pants, and no shirt. The picture gives the impression that the man has seen many struggles, but he is drawn walking away from chains of

slavery toward a brighter future. The torch in his hand seems to symbolize the light (highlight) of education that is illuminating his path toward a new, more hopeful day (Howell, 1936).

The passed the Georgia Assembly of the 1945 Compulsory Attendance Law and the 1946 Child Labor Act were certainly steps in moving black communities toward a brighter future. Their passing influenced school districts like Athens to allot more resources to black schools because of the resulting rise in student enrollment.²⁶⁷ At that point, Charles Duval who had successfully lead AHIS from 1938 until 1945 tapped Professor H.T. Edwards to take over the school leadership. By 1954, Edwards had successfully negotiated plans to close the original AHIS building and merge the school with Union in a new AHIS building on Waddell-Dearing Extension, located a block off the Atlanta Highway (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview).

Linston, an AHIS 1959 graduate and local historian, remembered the old AHIS building vividly. Even though the school was known to have rats, poor ventilation, no air conditioning, and other dilapidated features, Linston recalled it with admiration (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview; Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview). The main AHIS building was on Pope and Reese Streets, across from the Reese Street School where the Knox Institute previously had stood. The school was set up like a small college. In addition to the main building, there was a mathematics building, an industrial arts building, a home economics building, a building for the band room, and another for the lunch room²⁶⁸ (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

With the help of H.T. Edwards and many other community members, the new AHIS was built in 1956-57. The new location, only a few blocks west of the original school, engendered a great deal of excitement throughout the community. Linston recalled being enthusiastic about the new school because it was a much closer walk from his home on South Rocksprings Street²⁶⁹ (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview).

Charles Stroud, on the other hand, was “bitter” at first about the closing of Union and having to finish his high school years at the merged AHIS. He recalled many of the AHIS students claiming that the new AHIS was “their school” because it was located in the city. He even remembers some of the students at Union dropping out the summer before the merger because they did not want to attend the new school. However, after he met and got to know the other boys in the new school, he was accepted as “part of the group” (C. W. Stroud, July 18, 2006, Interview).

The new AHIS, like at the old school, offered students the standard array of mathematics, science, social science, and English course. In addition to taking those courses, it was also an expectation that each AHIS student took a foreign language, physical education, and several vocational courses like industrial arts, home economics, and printing. Dating back as early as the 1930s, the school also had numerous extracurricular activities such as Student Council, Highlight Magazine Staff, Glee Club, Dramatic Club, High Y Club, and TriHigh Y Club (Howell, 1936).

One of the biggest benefits of the merged schools was the unification and increase of extracurricular programs offered to Athens’s black high school students. The new AHIS had a diverse array of academic and nonacademic activities for students: Yellow Jacket Annual Staff, School Safety Patrol, Future Secretaries of America, Senior, Junior, and Tri Y (YMCA) Clubs, PE Club, Historical Society, Business Managers of the Senior Class, Industrial Arts Club (boys only), Future Homemakers of America (girls only), French Club, First Aid Club, Speech Club, Library Staff, and Choir (Yellow Jacket Staff, 1957). Once Union and AHIS merged, it was almost expected that all students participate in one or more of these groups so that they would become well-rounded individuals (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview). In addition to those clubs and organizations, the school held several major dances like Homecoming and Prom,²⁷⁰ prep

rallies,²⁷¹ and productions and honors nights²⁷² each year. Finally, at the close of each year, the school had baccalaureate and commencement for the senior class to honor their achievements (Maddox (Lay), July 11, 2006, Interview; Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview).

An additional benefit of the new location of the school was that it was still close to many of the AHIS teachers' homes. Doc Holmes, the AHIS head football coach, lived two houses down from the school. Mr. Troutman, the industrial arts teacher, lived on Billups Street, Mrs. C.B. Smith, the English teacher, lived on Reese Street, and Professor Edwards lived next to the funeral home a few blocks up from the school on Broad Street²⁷³ (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

In 1964, after the new AHIS building had been open for 8 years, a community coalition of black parents, students, and community members supported a movement to have Athens High and Industrial School's name changed to *Burney-Harris High School*,²⁷⁴ in remembrance of the honored Samuel F. Harris and Annie M. Burney. In the 1965 yearbook, Principal Edwards commented that there was a "swell" of community support for the change of the name of the school. Edwards hoped that the new name would "inspire the youth" who pass through the school's doors "for generations to come" (Edwards in Yellow Jacket Staff, 1965).

Nunnally recalled that the strong support for the name came from all of the community members who recognized how all of the community's children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren had been touched so deeply by the work of Burney and Harris. As many as three and four generations of black Athenians had built relationships with Burney, as a teacher, assistant principal, and principal, and with Harris, as a teacher, principal, and county director-superintendent.²⁷⁵ The minds of AHIS-BHHS alumni remain filled with cherished memories of the dedicated work of those two individuals (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

Burney and Harris were only two of the many memorable staff members at AHIS-BHHS who helped the students to “train” their minds “carefully and expediently” so that they might never have to meet with “adverse circumstances”(Combs, 1957). The teachers and staff of the school were central to this life training, and the result of their efforts was hundreds of students graduating from the school and becoming successful members of their community. Many AHIS students watched their own teachers model the ideals of service and, as a result, many of them also proceeded into service fields such as education and government. Like Farris Johnson, Sr., remarked, “If you feed them long enough, they [begin] to look and act like you” (Johnson, July 17, 2006, Field notes). He continued by emphasizing, like it says in scripture, if you “train a child the way he should go,” when he is older “he will not depart” from the path that is taught to him (Johnson, July 12, 2006, Field notes).

Parents and other people in the community believed that the staff at AHIS-BHHS and other black community schools were skilled enough to help their children learn enough to be able to take care of themselves, their families, and their communities.²⁷⁶ Many of the parents visited the school regularly or at a minimum kept up with the progress of their children by talking with the teachers in community settings. Even as early as the 1940s, parent-teacher organizations²⁷⁷ existed at AHIS-BHHS (Yellow Jacket Staff, 1947).

AHIS-BHHS students loved their school, their principal, and their teachers because together they developed an atmosphere that was “pleasant” and “friendly.” Like other black schools of the era, the structures were dilapidated and the materials used were worn out and scarce, but the relationship among the students, parents, and teachers was strong. Those relationships are what they consider to define AHIS-BHHS, not the material things.

When AHIS alumni are asked about the “highlight” or most memorable thing about their alma mater, they do not talk about football and basketball games, prom and homecoming, or graduation. Instead, they tell rich and cheerful stories about the teachers and principals who lead them through their high school careers. The change of the name of the school from AHIS to Burney Harris High School (BHHS) demonstrated the love that the students and the community had for teachers. Every AHIS-BHHS student interviewed gave deeply moving stories about how the “caring” and “respect” provided to them by the teachers helped guide them safely through their turbulent teen years in a segregation society and helped to prepare them with the tools to participate in the process of community uplift.²⁷⁸

The next section focuses on life at AHIS-BHHS through the character and work of the school’s teaching staff as they were viewed by their students and the community. This section is about teachers who placed their students at the center of the fight for political, social, economic, and educational uplift. These teachers helped their students develop and build their hopes, dreams, and aspirations atop a platform of academic and cultural excellence that was then reinforced in the Athens’s black homes, churches, and community.

Memorable Secondary Teachers and Coaches

The teachers, coaches, and administrators at AHIS-BHHS had high expectations of their students, whether the class was world or American history, algebra, biology, physical education, band, or industrial arts. Even though the school’s equipment, chairs, desks, and books were hand-me-downs²⁷⁹ from the white schools, the teachers still expected the students to excel and do well (Johnson, July 13, 2006, Interview). Teachers took the “hand-me-down texts and taught us with those textbooks” (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

Several people who attended the school stated that students who started at the school were typically very successful (Johnson, July 13, 2006, Interview; Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview; Sewell, July 11, 2006, Field notes). Platt noted that “by the time we got to high school, we knew what to expect.” She recalled that,

When teachers gave us assignments, we didn’t ask questions. We just did what we were told to do. Our teachers expected us to do it well, so we did—at least most of us did.

Linston said the teachers “expected us to do our work” and, if we didn’t, “they would not give us a grade.”²⁸⁰ Teachers commonly would call the parents of those students not meeting their expectations. Then, they would know that the parents would quickly “put a fire under us” and the situation would soon be resolved (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview).

Linston suggested that the community was so unified that teachers were “just like our parents” (July 25, 2006, Interview). Because students lived in the same neighborhoods as their teachers, the teachers were viewed as a second set of guardians who monitored a child’s behavior to help “mold,” “grow,” “sow” the child into a successful adult. Even when these teachers were disciplining their students, they were always believed to be doing it out of love (Smith (Platt), December 31, 2006, Interview).

Platt said that she would not trade her high school experience at AHIS-BHHS for anything in the world. She relayed that she had “the best teachers” around who cared for her dearly. She compares her high school education to today’s college education because the teachers had the highest possible expectations. They “made us learn,” she stated, and they cared about whether their students were successful (Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview).



Figure 12: Mrs. Elizabeth Smith Platt, BHHS 1967

Photo courtesy of Dr. Robert E. Harrison, ICOD, Inc., www.theyellowjacket.com

The “untiring ambitions” of the AHIS-BHHS teachers made them crucial community leaders. These individuals are believed to have been the “beacon lights” that pointed thousands of successful black Athenians toward “happy and useful lives of service” in their immediate and outlying communities (Combs, 1957). In the following sections I summarize some of their students’ recollections of those they regarded as the AHIS-BHHS greatest educators.

Mr. Homer Theodore Edwards, Sr. Just like at West Broad and Reese Street, all of the AHIS staff were “sharp,” professional, and well-respected community members. Professor H.T. Edwards, principal and leader of the staff, set the tone for all of the teachers in his building. A “debonair and well dressed” man himself, he expected the same of his students and his teachers. He was definitely “something else” (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview).

The students and the staff of AHIS-BHHS called him “Fess” because of his amazing intelligence. He could enter any classroom in the school and immediately begin teaching the material to the students, no matter the subject. Whether the class was Algebra I or II, French, or history, Fess knew it all and could teach it all (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview). He was musically gifted also, serving as the chorus director and teaching students to play and read music (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).



Figure 13: Homer T. Edwards, 1947 staff picture

Photo courtesy of Dr. Robert E. Harrison, ICOD, Inc., www.theyellowjacket.com

Nunnally remembered Edwards from her first year at AHIS. She recalled being exceptionally close to him because he taught her Sunday School class at Ebenezer Baptist West church. Edwards was also very close to her brother Eugene Nesbit, Jr. When Edwards first began at the school, he was Nunnally's English teacher and her principal. When he was first hired, he was not allocated a secretary so sometimes he would ask her to type letters and reports for him. Nunnally, whose maiden name is Nesbit, noted that sometimes he would call out from his office to say, "Nesbit, I want you to type a business letter for me," and she would walk across the hall from her typing class and take care of it for him²⁸¹ (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

Edwards had high expectations for his students, believing that all students needed to finish all of their school work before they graduated. He would say things like "Alright now, you need to do better. You don't want me to call your mamma, do ya?" That threat seemed to have kept most of his students in line (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview). The extremely high expectations he set seemed to make a difference in the lives of most of the students at AHIS. The 1959 AHIS promotion data report that 89%²⁸² of AHIS students that year were promoted to the next grade (Yellow Jacket Staff).

Edward's high expectations were based on those taught in his own home. He was the youngest child of Frank Edwards, a truck driver, and Willie Grimes, a domestic worker. He was raised by maternal grandparents after both of his parents died an early death. His upbringing helped him remain mindful of the positive consequences of education (Taylor, Unknown).

Edwards was the valedictorian of the 1931 graduating class of the Georgia State Industrial College for Colored Youths, now known as Savannah State University. Quite bright, Edwards graduated with a Bachelors of Science and Agricultural Education with a double minor in English and music. A few years later, he received a Masters of Education degree from Atlanta University (Yellow Jacket Staff, 1947).

Before he came to Athens, he was the principal of and a teacher in the Jefferson County Vocational Training School from 1931-1938 and then the principal of the McDuffie County Training School from 1938-1945. He began his principalship at Athens High and Industrial School-Burney-Harris High School in 1945. He remained at the school for 24 years until he retired on November 1, 1969 (Taylor, Unknown; Yellow Jacket Staff, 1969).

During his successful career, Edwards played the roles of counselor, social worker, teacher, preacher, father, leader, and friend to those he interacted with at his school. The social and political turbulence inside and outside of Athens's black community made the relationships built within the school walls even more important to Fess. When students graduated from the school, "Fess" Edwards would remind them about the "crucial times" in which they lived.

This age demands strong minds, intelligent decisions and wide awake and prepared individuals if you are to survive the perils of the times. This you must accept and believe with all your heart and soul if you are to be the kind of women [or men] who will be a credit to yourself and your country.... *Keep your aspirations high and your thoughts and actions noble* [italics added].

He would warn his students that they were now “mature enough to think logically and with noble purpose” so that they could act courageously against those things that they believed were wrong in the world (Edwards in Yellow Jacket Staff, 1964).

Throughout his career, Edwards was active in local, state, and national educational organizations that helped him to maintain a broader vision of the purpose and mission to be attained by Athens’s black schools. He served as president of the Georgia Teachers Education Association (GTEA) and as a delegate to the National Education Association (NEA) for the 1951 national convention in San Francisco. His visionary understanding of how AHIS could support community development brought him both local and national fame (Taylor, Unknown).

The 1966 Yellow Jacket yearbook was dedicated to Edwards for his lifetime of dedicated service to the school and the community. The following student poem was published in the yearbook in his honor to commemorate how his work touched the “hearts and minds of literally thousands” of black Athenians (Taylor, Unknown).

A short span of uncertainty lies between the boundaries of the remarkable beginning and the equivocal ending. This short uncertain span is called life, and the manipulation of its mechanisms is the determinant of destiny. So the populace lives; it travels many different and vastly varied courses; nevertheless, it lives. *As it lives, it grows, and as it grows it affects in some manner, every being with which it associates* [italics added].

What is the ultimate aim of so much living? It is the search for and the discovery of the rewarding life.... His life is one from which pours and flows the “milk” of human kindness, the “bread” of integrity and foresight, and the “honey” of character, leadership, and service (Huff, 1966).

The 1969 Yellow Jacket yearbook was also dedicated to Edwards. His words of wisdom and kind support were recognized on the dedication page that stated that “Fess” believed in the “worth of each individual” and he evidenced that characteristic in his fair and caring treatment of all of his students (Yellow Jacket Staff, 1969).

Edwards was famous for his poetic quotes about high expectations for both self and others. Once he declared, “As you go forth from the responsibilities and challenges which await you, remember that responsibility is like a string,.... we can only see the middle, both ends are out of sight”(Yellow Jacket Staff, 1968). Fess always reminded students that they should “think of and reflect on the socio-economic and political and educational revolutions” afforded to them. He believed that “no greater challenge or opportunities” had been given to “any other ethnic group,” and he was confident that each of his students was prepared to “rise to the occasion” and “face the greatest issues” that the future might bring (Yellow Jacket Staff, 1965).

Edwards was and continues to be recognized by the AHIS-BHHS alumni and staff to be a “great person.” He thought that the “development of talents and faculties of mind, body, and spirit” could and would make the difference in the future of each of his students. He also believed that his school was the place where people “work[ed] together” to gain the “learning and experience” that would prepare them for doing well in “the work of life” (Taylor, Unknown). Edwards²⁸³ untiringly shared “the abundant returns of his life” with the students and families that he served, and as a result he is still highly esteemed and loved by all today (Huff, 1966). The only other individual, outside of Fess Edwards, that was given the highest level of respect by both students and parents was Ms. Annie Mack Burney. Like Edwards, she always expected the best from her students and she “didn’t take any foolishness” (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

Ms. Annie Mack Burney. AHIS teachers were known to hold exceptionally high expectations for the behavior and academic performance of their students. Ms. Burney was no exception. Burney, a graduate of Atlanta University in 1903, dedicated her entire life to the growth and development of Athens’s black schools. Of the 50 years she devoted to education, 42

of those years she worked at AHIS. Burney spent her career instilling into her students the “ideals and principles” that would allow them to become “successful men and women” so that they could go into the world and make “noteworthy contributions” toward “universal progress” (Yellow Jacket Staff, 1947).



Figure 14: 1936 AHIS Faculty (Annie M. Burney, second row, center)
Photo courtesy of Dr. Robert E. Harrison, ICOD, Inc., www.theyellowjacket.com

Ms. Burney was the school’s algebra teacher. Lenore Turner recalled her class being “hard” and quite difficult for some students. Burney did not teach mathematics, Turner stressed, she taught algebra. She expected that the students could do more than just simple mathematics. Indeed, she *demand*ed that the students do more than just mathematics (Turner in BHL Middle School, 2004).

Some of the AHIS students were frightened of Burney. When Burney stood in the hall and “worked her shoulder”,²⁸⁴ students would instantly “get into place” (Turner and Allen in

BHL Middle School, 2004). Nunnally was one of the AHIS students who feared Ms. Burney.

She never forgot one very terrifying experience when Burney called her to the front of the class to complete a geometry problem on the board. Nunnally recalls,

I loved my shined shoes and I never shall forget [when] I went to the board and I just couldn't get that geometry right for nothing, so I was scared. I was nervous... I was at the board and I just wasn't getting it and she said... "Nesbit," and I had to turn around and look, and she said "if you spent as much time on your geometry as you do on your shined shoes, you would get something." Nobody laughed 'cause you didn't laugh in that class. But anyway after class she was talking to me, and she just said "Nesbit, what is your problem?" and I said, "Ms. Burney, I am just scared." And then she said, "I'm not going to hurt you. I didn't hurt your mama and I taught her. I taught your daddy, I taught all your aunts, I taught your brother and I didn't hurt them."

Even though Nunnally was frightened of Ms. Burney, she knew how much Burney cared for her and her family. As a result, Nunnally recalled Ms. Burney as one of her favorite teachers at AHIS (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

Even though she was a challenging and even a ruthless teacher, Burney is remembered as being an "excellent motivator." When "she called on you and you were not sure, she had a way of giving you that confidence in yourself and believin' in yourself" to answer even if students were not always correct. One of her students, Walter Jackson, said that he was "especially appreciative" of the support she gave her students. He noted that the confidence that she gave him "made a difference" in his "entire life" (Jackson in BHL Middle School, 2004).

Burney's students remember her as a "great," but "firm" teacher (Turner in BHL Middle School, 2004). Everyone seemed to know Ms. Burney, and "everyone held high admiration for her." She ended up working at the school for so long that she became a school legend. Like many other teachers at the school, Burney had the ability to persuade students to use their energy and positive attributes to become more successful (Turner and Allen in BHL Middle School, 2004).

Teachers like Burney helped the students and the community believe that the school was the place where all children could reach their potential (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

Mr. John W. Roberts. In addition to Ms. Burney, AHIS-BHHS had another well-liked mathematics teacher named Mr. John W. Roberts. Roberts was married to Mary Roberts who also taught in Athens's black elementary and high schools. Like Burney, J. Roberts was a "very strict math teacher" who did not rest until his students understood their math lessons (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

Roberts is remembered as a teacher who would call parents of students who were not succeeding academically in his class. He would then persuade them to follow-up with their children about their lack of progress in the class. This typically resulted in the student getting into "big trouble" at home and immediately demonstrating more effort to their studies (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview). It was not uncommon for AHIS teachers, like Roberts, to "show up at the door" of the home of students that he felt were not giving school 100%. The treat of the home visit though was often enough to get students back in line (Johnson, July 12, 2006, Interview).

Mr. Eugene Holmes. The recreational experiences of AHIS are still vivid in the minds of Lee Linston and Charlie Maddox who graduated from the school. What stood out for them in their high school careers was the chance to play ball for Eugene T. Holmes. Some said that the white high school, Athens High, might have had new athletic uniforms each year and good facilities for football and basketball, but they did not have one key thing. They did not have "Doc" Holmes as their head coach (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview; Maddox, July 20, 2006, Interview).

Holmes is considered to be one of the most influential people in the success of many students at AHIS. Otherwise known as “Doc” Holmes, Eugene was the head of athletics at AHIS, and he taught biology. A 1933 graduate of Benedict State College, Columbia, South Carolina,²⁸⁵ Holmes came to the Athens straight from his career in the U.S. Army. Nunnally recalled the first time she saw Holmes in 1944. She said that he came to visit the school and meet with Professor Edwards about a job. She recalled that he was wearing his army attire and chewing relentlessly on the end of a cigar²⁸⁶ (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).



Figure 15: AHIS basketball and football coaches (Holmes at far left)
Photo courtesy of Dr. Robert E. Harrison, ICOD, Inc., www.theyellowjacket.com

Holmes was a second father to many black youth in the Athens community. He kept children out of trouble by playing basketball with them in the AHIS gym when they were as young as 8 years old. Holmes was the constant role model in their lives. “We saw each other every day” in that gym and that constant contact kept many kids “off the street and in school,” said Champion, one of Holmes’s star players. Champion, a local football and basketball celebrity known for his quick hands and feet, called Holmes the “greatest coaching influence” and role model in his life (Shepard, 2003).

One of Holmes's biggest supporters was his "real good friend" Mr. Vincent Dooley of the University of Georgia Athletic Department. Since AHIS could not afford new equipment and uniforms each year, Dooley would donate old University of Georgia equipment. The family and friends of AHIS students would repaint the old helmets and cleats and piece together uniforms from the hand-me downs. Everyone got to wear the infamous Yellow Jacket blue and gold. However, some first stringers would wear blue tops and gold pants, others would wear yellow tops and blue bottoms, and others would wear blue tops and bottoms with yellow streaks (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview).

The lack of new equipment and uniforms did not seem to deter the infamous "Doc" Holmes from victory on and off the field. He expected his players to succeed, and he was always looking out for his own. For example, Doc Holmes always found a way to charter Greyhound buses for trips to Atlanta and Macon games, which allowed the players to lay back and enjoy the rides. He also was able to get the University of Georgia to allow AHIS homecoming games to take place at Sanford Stadium. He was "a man with pull" in Athens (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview).

When visiting teams came to Athens, it was traditional to offer them a meal after football and basketball games. Unlike teams in other towns, Holmes expected that his team would also eat the "top of the line" food provided by the school's cafeteria staff. After one game, a visitor inquired, "You mean ya'll eat with the visiting team," and Holmes heard it. He quickly responded, "They played, didn't they" and moved on. His players all remember him "going to bat for anybody who played for him" (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview).

Holmes was known to take his AHIS team all over the South to play tough schools like Hudson, Archer High, Washington High, Turner High, Price High, Woodvere High, and Lucy

Laney. Each of those schools was much bigger than AHIS, and they all had enough financial support to purchase new uniforms and equipment regularly. Doc Holmes's teams may not have had new uniforms, but Holmes had trained his players to believe in each other. They became such a close-knit family that they were believed to be able to beat any team around (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview; March 19, 2007, Interview).

Although many of his players recall their admiration of Holmes, they also recall his harsh side. "You'd be a fool," Linston recalled, "to not have your helmet on" at halftime if AHIS was losing the game (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview). Maddox remembered one out-of-town game at Carver High School in south Georgia when an AHIS graduate living there had been bragging to all of his friends and family that his Yellow Jacket "homeboys" had come down there to win. By halftime, the AHIS players were "fearing for their lives" because they were losing 0 to 19. During the halftime, the AHIS graduate visited the locker room and cried, telling the team how embarrassed he was of their playing. Coach Holmes immediately went on a rampage, challenging the team's "manhood" and calling them "cry babies" (Maddox and Sewell in BHL Middle School, 2004).

The team quickly decided that whoever got in their way during that game was in trouble. One AHIS player is said to have actually broken his leg during the second half of the game, but he refused to tell Doc Holmes and continued to play despite the injury. As a result of their new attitude, AHIS won the game 24 to 19. Holmes taught his student-players "character, team work, togetherness" and the idea that in the last mile "you could pull out a little more." He is still remembered today as one of AHIS's greatest "molders of men" (Maddox and Sewell in BHL Middle School, 2004).

Ms. Elizabeth King. Male coaches were not the only ones dearly remembered by their AHIS students and players. Ms. Elizabeth King, a graduate of AHIS and Spelman (1943), was the head girl's basketball coach, along with being a “beloved” social sciences teacher, director of the majorettes, homeroom teacher for the senior class, and a Sunday School teacher. King's female Yellow Jacket basketball teams remember her talking about the importance of excelling on the court²⁸⁷ in games and practice and off the court in academics (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).



Figure 16: 1948 Yellow Jackets Girls Basketball Team (King, far right)
Photo courtesy of Dr. Robert E. Harrison, ICOD, Inc., www.theyellowjacket.com

AHIS teachers, like Holmes and King, were commonly expected not only to teach in the classroom, but also to participate in extracurricular programs with their students to build relationships with them and help them apply their learning to the real world. The 1964 yearbook, dedicated to Ms. King, noted that she was devoted to “helping young people” inside and outside of school. It added that former students of the school believed that her “warm and affectionate” ways allowed them to depend on her for “advice” and for “sharing secrets” (Yellow Jacket Staff, 1963). Ms. King is now known as a “totally amazing person” who continues to be an active

member of the community today²⁸⁸ (AHIS/BHHS Alumni Association, 2004; Smith (Platt), December 31, 2006, Interview).

Dr. Walter Allen. While some AHIS students recalled their athletic coaches being the most memorable educators during high school, Bennett Johnson remembers his band director, Dr. Walter Allen, as the most motivating and supportive staff member at AHIS. B. Johnson was raised in a musical family, and though his mother—educated through the ninth grade—could not read music, she was an expert musician by ear. Her talent inspired B. Johnson to start formal music training at a very young age.²⁸⁹ Johnson remembers several music teachers during his schooling, but he vividly remembers being in the band under the direction of Dr. Allen. It was Allen, he stated, that who introduced him to jazz and prompted him to become a schoolteacher (Johnson, July 13, 2006, Interview).

Before becoming a band director, Allen gained a great deal of experience as a musician in numerous Army jazz bands. He was a “very wise” teacher because of the way that he taught musical theory by bringing in recordings of the masters for his classes to learn from and enjoy. The first jazz record he shared with B. Johnson was Dizzy Gillespie’s *Salt Peanuts* (Johnson, July 13, 2006, Interview).



Figures 17: Dr. Walter Allen and Mr. Bennett Johnson, Band Directors
Photo courtesy of Dr. Robert E. Harrison, ICOD, Inc., www.theyellowjacket.com

Dr. Allen wanted his students to succeed, so he took them many different places to perform, like colleges, music festivals, and theatres. His students believe that he “took money out of his own pocket” to provide these opportunities. As a result of this in-depth teaching,²⁹⁰ B. Johnson gained a “thorough knowledge” of music at AHIS before he left for college. Allen’s teaching helped him gain confidence in his ability to compose his own music, play numerous instruments, and lead music groups (Johnson, July 13, 2006, Interview).

Allen was regarded as an “excellent musician” who was able to help many AHIS students finish high school and continue their musical training into college. Because of his expertise and knowledge of the field, many colleges looked at Allen’s graduates as viable candidates for their music programs and offered them scholarships. B. Johnson stated that Allen was crucial in the development of his own personal musical talents, and he credited much of his personal music ability to the support provided to him by this master teacher (Johnson, July 13, 2006, Interview).

Mr. Bennett Johnson. While Allen was the key to the success of the band during the AHIS era, Bennett Johnson was known as the success factor during the BHHS era (Linston, July 25, 2006). After his high school band experience, Allen helped B. Johnson get a music scholarship to Morris Brown College. During college, Bennett started a band called Bennett Johnson and the Meadowlarks, considered one of the “finest bands around.” A few years later, he started a second band called Bennett Johnson and the Twisters (Johnson, July 13, 2006, Interview).

Once Johnson completed Morris Brown, he was offered a teaching job at the prestigious Washington High School in Atlanta. However, he had always desired to return home and “do something” for his community. So in 1961, he returned to Athens and started teaching at Lyons Middle School under Principal Farris Johnson, Sr. He remained at Lyons for 4 years until his old

band director, Dr. Allen, retired from AHIS-BHHS and he transferred into Allen's position (Johnson, July 13, 2006, Interview).

Johnson vividly remembered how much he enjoyed teaching and how much he loved his students. He said that they were all very dedicated and hungry for knowledge. As a very young teacher at the time, he believed he had "fresh ideas" for the development of a strong high school band. One of the first ideas that he brought to AHIS-BHHS was the marching concept of "high stepping" (Johnson, July 13, 2006, Interview).

Johnson believed that, as a teacher-director, he, like Allen, could have an "impact on other people's lives" by giving them the love of music. He started this influence early by developing a "feeder" band at West Broad Street Elementary School. The elementary school students came to his band room at BHHS in the afternoon and worked in preparation for being in the high school band (Johnson, July 13, 2006, Interview). Another way he affected his students was to help them get new band uniforms. When Johnson started at BHHS, his band had the same uniforms that they had worn when he had attended the school 10 years prior. Very early that year, he approached Principal Edwards with a request for new uniforms. He warned that the band would not go on the field during halftime of the football games and would instead play on the bleachers if they were not provided new uniforms (Johnson, July 13, 2006, Interview).

Edwards told Johnson that they would need to see the school superintendent about his request. Johnson said he will never forget going with Edwards to see Mr. Sam Wood, the Clarke County School District superintendent at the time. When Johnson explained that he needed 125 uniforms for his band, Woods responded, "the University of Georgia does not even have that many." After Johnson held his ground, they compromised by allowing the school to purchase 80 uniforms. The rest of the band, including the majorettes and baton twirlers, would continue to be

required to make their own uniforms. Finally, in 1966, B. Johnson marched his 125 band members out onto the field in their new uniforms. Students were delighted and proud of the new uniforms and the innovative high step moves that their teacher had helped them acquire (Johnson, July 13, 2006, Interview).

Even though Mr. Woods agreed to the purchase of new band uniforms at one point, most of the discrepancies between white and black school resources that existed through Allen's era also existed through Johnson's era. Being black, Johnson said, meant that he and his students had to "do a little more" to be treated equally. There were major disparities between the white and black school buildings, white and black school equipment, and, in his case, white and black school band instruments (Johnson, July 13, 2006, Interview).

As had been the case when he was a student himself, instruments for the black school band were passed on from the white schools after many years of use. However, even with those struggles, B. Johnson relayed that the AHIS-BHHS teachers he studied under and worked with were all professional and high quality. He recalled that the support that they provided to him meant a great deal more than any brand new instruments, new books, or new buildings could possibly mean (Johnson, July 13, 2006, Interview).

Mrs. Clara Bell Smith. The community, it seems, often grew their own educators. Students taking over for their teachers seemed to be fairly common, happening with Walter Allen and his student Bennett Johnson. A similar scenario took place with the also highly respected French teacher, Mrs. Clara Smith and her student Ileane Nunnally.

C.B. Smith, a 1934 graduate of Morris Brown College, was one of Fess's tough English and foreign language teachers who demanded excellence from her students every day (Yellow Jacket Staff, 1947). It was just "the type of teacher she was." She did not tolerate students who

did not speak well or who split infinitives. She expected everyone to speak and write correctly, and she expected all her students to complete their work in the designated time (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview).

C.B. Smith expected excellence. She insisted that her students speak the “King’s English” correctly, and she requested that her students greet one another when they entered a room. To this day, A. Green, one of her students, never enters a room without offering some type of “good morning” or good day greeting to those whom she encounters (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).



Figure 18: Clara Bell Smith, 1947 staff picture
Photo courtesy of Dr. Robert E. Harrison, ICOD, Inc., www.theyellowjacket.com

Mrs. C.B. Smith was a driving force in Ileane Nunnally’s love of French. Nunnally recalled French being an elective for juniors and seniors. She originally wanted to take French, but then she found out that Smith was going to teach it. At that point, she said, “I think I’ve had enough English literature..., I just can’t take her no more” (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

By not signing up for French, Nunnally had a “vacant period” in her class schedule. During these periods, students were required to go to the library for study hall. She recalls sitting

in the library after the start of the term, studying with some friends, when Smith walked in with her teacher roll book. Smith called out, “I want you, you, and you: come downstairs with me” (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

Once downstairs, Nunnally recalled telling her teacher that she did not want to take the French class. C.B. Smith responded by saying that she had openings in her French class and asked why she was not enrolled. Nunnally proceeded to tell her that she did not want to take French because she did not like it. Immediately, Smith responded, “How do you know you don’t like it [when] you never had it.” She then asked if Nunnally would at least try the class for a few weeks, and if Nunnally did not enjoy the class, then Smith would allow her to drop it from her schedule. Surprising to Nunnally, she not only enjoyed and excelled in the class, but she also decided to major in French in college. She returned to her high school a few years later to take Smith’s place teaching the class (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

Mrs. Ileana LaBelle Nesbit Nunnally. Like her mentor Smith, Ileana LaBelle Nesbit built a relationship with her students first and then taught them the skills of French. Nunnally was the educator who students called the “sweetest” and most understanding teacher around (Maddox (Lay), July 11, 2006, Interview). Nunnally, a native Athenian, started her schooling at West Broad elementary school in 1936 at the age of six (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview). Around 1942 she entered Reese Street Junior High, and in 1947 she graduated from AHIS at the age of 16. She then proceeded to Clark College in Atlanta where she majored in French and minored in English²⁹¹ (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

While in college, Nunnally would come home in the summer and tutor Athens’s students in English and French. When students failed to meet the expectations for Mrs. C.B. Smith’s class, Smith would give those students an “I” for incomplete and tell their parents that they

needed to take Nunnally's summer tutoring sessions. Nunnally would then help the students complete their lessons and show Smith their progress at the close of the summer. She stated that she told them that they could do it if they would just try and that she would help them every step of the way. All of her students passed by the end of the summer. Although Nunnally could have been paid for this service, she recalls not asking to be paid because the sessions were her contribution to the betterment of the community that had raised her (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

In 1951, at the age of 20, Nunnally returned to Athens to teach at the East Athens Elementary School. After 3 years, Nunnally was transferred to her alma mater AHIS-BHHS. In 1959, she married her husband, Reverend David H. Nunnally, Sr.,²⁹² also a native Athenian and educator (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview). She remained at BHHS until school integration when she was transferred to Cedar Shoals High School. All of Nunnally's 32 years of teaching have been in Athens's schools (AHIS/BHHS Alumni Association, 2006b).



Figure 19: Ileane Nunnally (staff picture, left; AHIS 1948 senior picture, right)
Photo courtesy of Dr. Robert E. Harrison, ICOD, Inc., www.theyellowjacket.com

Community service has always been central in the Nunnally household for Ileane, her husband, and her children and grandchildren. Partially motivated by a desire to demonstrate to her students the importance of community service, Mrs. Nunnally spent her life serving the

community through church work, by mentoring and tutoring, and by supporting service clubs like the Athens Area Human Relations Council, Inc., and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. This type of community service in addition to teaching was both common among and expected of Athens's black teachers.²⁹³ Community leaders like the Nunnallys have modeled their positive attributes of service above self in the classroom and in the community. Students' love for Mrs. Nunnally and her French class still reigns strong. During the summer of 2006, the AHIS-BHHS reunion committee dedicated their biennial reunion celebration to the service of Ileane Nunnally (AHIS/BHHS Alumni Association, 2006b; Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

Mr. Marvin F. Billups. Like Nunnally, Marvin F. Billups, Sr., was one of BHHS's most "affectionate and likable" teachers. Teaching American history, he is said to have devoted himself wholeheartedly to the students that he served. One record suggested that he inspired his students to remember that "a man is as high as he feels, as low as he looks, and as efficient as his work testifies." In 1965, the senior class dedicated their yearbook to "Mr. B" because of his "deep faith," integrity, and activity in religious, civic, and social activities in the community (Yellow Jacket Staff, 1965).

A native Athenian and graduate of AHIS and Fort Valley State University, Billups had a long history of serving black communities through education. Prior to returning to Athens to work at BHHS, he was the principal of Hilborough Elementary School in High Shoals, Georgia, and Rosenwald High School and Ed Stroud Combination School²⁹⁴ in Watkinsville, Georgia. Like many of the other AHIS-BHHS teachers, Billups attended the local church, Ebenezer Baptist Church West, with many of the students and families he served. As a long-time member of the congregation, Billups served on the church's Board of Deacons, the Trustee Board, Senior Choir, and as Clerk of Church (Yellow Jacket Staff, 1965).

Mr. Paul W.M. Troutman. Unlike today, gifted black males were often directed to the field of education because of the respect the field had, the community service it provided, and the impact that it made in the larger Black Freedom Struggle. Billups, Edwards, Holmes, Allen, and Johnson were just a few of Athens's highly educated and esteemed black males who dedicated their life to service through education. Another one of those dedicated males was Mr. Paul W.M. Troutman.



Figure 20: Paul Troutman, staff picture
Photo courtesy of Dr. Robert E. Harrison, ICOD, Inc., www.theyellowjacket.com

Troutman, a 1941 graduate of Fort Valley State University, was the industrial department teacher for AHIS-BHHS for many years (Yellow Jacket Staff, 1947). It was in his class that students linked the academics to the real world and learning became relevant. In his classroom, students learned to build chairs, tables, and bookshelves which required students to realize the both literacy, following the directions, and math, completing the construction calculations, were the “foundations of academic achievement” (Cooper, 2002, p. 51; Ladson-Billings, 1994). The AHIS-BHHS also had home economics, which was essentially cooking and sewing classes that covered the same lessons in a different way. Most of the male students in the school participated in industrial arts, while the female students took home economics. Students understood that, in

these classes, just like their academic classes, “you had to do it right before you got a grade.” As a result, students worked hard in the courses, and many learned a trade in the process (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview).

Like other educators at the school, Troutman demanded that his students achieve the expectations set for them. One of his students remembers him saying, “Let me tell ya’ll something. You must never think of yourself as being inferior. You can do just as well as a little blue [eyed] boy can.... All you have to do is put yourself to it, you can do it.” These words were neither racial nor disrespectful. They were “just the facts” of life at AHIS-BHHS. All teachers in the school, though they used different language, helped the students see that they could exceed in a racially segregated society where their race was perceived as lacking skills and character. The school itself became the center of character and skill development where students and teachers worked together to overcome the ideology that blacks were not as capable as whites in their business, social, religious, and economic lives (Linston, July 25, 2006).

Mrs. Alice Hiram Wimberly. Besides industrial arts and home economics, AHIS-BHHS had other nonacademic course like drama and music. One of those classes that remained vivid in the stories of one AHIS-BHHS student was physical education. During Platt’s time at AHIS-BHHS, she remembers physical education vividly. She found Friday the most fun because Ms. Alice Hiram Wimberly, the girls’ physical education teacher, would play records and allow the boys to come over and dance with the girls. Platt recalled that they were allowed to dance together, but “not close” (Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview).

Wimberly had a lifelong experience with many of the students that she taught. She began her career as a kindergarten teacher to renowned leaders in the community such as Charles Maddox, a local pastor and Athens’s mayoral candidate in 2006 (Maddox, July 20, 2006,

Interview). Teaching for her was life work, as she spent her personal time as a Sunday School teacher, a humanitarian, and a counselor (Williams, 1967).

In her gym class, she requested that all of her students wear blue gym suits that were cleaned and ironed and tennis shoes and socks that were “snow white.” Wimberly never asked her students to do something that she was not willing to do herself. As a result, she also wore a similar gym suit with a skirt and bloomers (Smith (Platt), December 31, 2006, Interview; July 11, 2006, Interview).

Wimberly was an icon in the black community because of her ability to “sow” the seeds brought to her from the black families of Athens. A tribute made in the 1967 Yellow Jacket yearbook compared Wimberly to a gardener who had “visions of quality reapeage.” With her knowledge of the “innate quality” of each “young and tender” seedling, Wimberly spent her career nurturing and coaxing her seeds, the students, to ensure that her harvest was “bountiful and beautiful.” She believed that each “bud” could become the “tall and elegant plant of his dreams” with her support and the support of others (Williams, 1967).

Summary

The teachers described in this chapter are only a few of the many educators that AHIS-BHHS alumni call their “family.” Platt relayed that her teachers “cared” about her in a way that is rare in today’s schools. They knew her, her family, her interests, her future goals, and they used all of that knowledge to get her “educated.” Her high school education was both rigorous and relevant. She says that the education she received was “equivalent to a college education now” (Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview).

AHIS-BHHS teachers expected their students to meet the expectations set by them and if they didn’t, the teachers would “deal with” the students without threat that the parents would

take the side of the student over the teacher. They were not “scared” of their students or what the community felt about them. They took their role as “educators” to heart, modeling successful life choices and teaching their students in both community and classroom settings. As a result, these professionals were given the highest level of community respect of any profession in the community, outside of the ministry (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview).

AHIS-BHHS is just one example of the many black community schools of Athens and Clarke County built on the communal values of high expectations, cooperation, honesty, respect, love, compassion, discipline, collaborative responsibility, excellence, diligence, and family. AHIS-BHHS and the other black schools were central in the development of a unified vision of how the black community of Athens would and could rise up from oppression and become an economically, socially, and politically stable and viable community where families were safe and satisfied (Johnson, July 13, 2006, Interview; Johnson, July 12, 2006, Interview; July 17, 2006, Interview; July 26, 2006, Interview; March 14, 2007, Interview; Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview; March 19, 2007, Interview; Maddox (Lay), July 11, 2006, Interview; Maddox, July 20, 2006, Interview; Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview; March 14, 2007, Interview; Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview; Smith (Platt), December 31, 2006, Interview; July 11, 2006, Interview; Thurmond, March 19, 1978; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

People said that the whole school came together like a “big family” (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview; Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview). “Everyone knew everybody” and “everybody loved everybody.” Everyone “rushed” to get to school everyday, and then when the day ended, no one wanted to leave. The school bell would ring at 4 o’clock, and everyone would “hang around” for an hour or two before heading home. School was the place to be. It was home (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview).

The spirit of the group, their *esprit de corps*, expressed in these memories of AHIS-BHHS are something that one teacher, Dr. Walter Allen, says he still misses. The camaraderie and devotion to the school and one another, he says, could be seen when masses of children stood at an event and recited the AHIS-BHHS Alma Mater together:

Oh AHI-BHH forever, our alma mater dear. We'll crown thee fairest mater, our school we love so dear. For thee we'll ever labor, to keep thee on thy throne. Oh AHI-BHH forever, they reigneth alone (Howell, 1936; Williams, 1967).

What our schools and communities now lack, he adds, is that type of community spirit, where everyone knows the school's alma mater and what it means, and everyone believes in it (Allen in BHL Middle School, 2004). As schools integrated, it became apparent that the white teachers did not have the same kind of "kinship, connectedness, and solidarity" found in Athens's all black schools.

It was as if the white teachers "did not seem to get [or understand]" the black children and the general "ethic of caring" that included "giving time to students outside of the classroom," "listening to their problems," setting high standards for performance, and building relationships with them; these qualities seemed to be set aside (Ware, 2002). Expectations got "lax," said Linston when the schools integrated. Teachers no longer believed that students can succeed (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview). His frustration, along with other black students who attended Athens's all black schools, are relayed in the next chapter that details the history of the desegregation of the Clarke County School District.

CHAPTER 8 THE DESEGREGATION OF THE CLARKE COUNTY SCHOOLS

As I reviewed in Chapter 2, in May of 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court determined that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. The decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* was divisive in communities like Athens where the black community and white community had seemed to coexist in their inequitable relationship without major clashes. Because Georgia's governor, Herman Talmadge, refused to accept the court's decision, most of Georgia's communities failed to take immediate action. The refusal to act on the court's decision continued when Governor Samuel Marvin Griffin took office in 1955, following Talmadge's election to the Senate. Griffin, who ran on a segregationist platform, stated that he would support segregated schools "come hell or high water." However, when the antiintegration activists continued to demand that he strictly oppose the start of integration, he responded that "being in jail kind of crimps a governor's style," and he retreated from his original stance. As a result, by the close of 1955, some Georgia communities had begun to develop some type of integration plan, and their schools very slowly began to desegregate (Georgia Humanities, 2004-2006f).

The following year, the court held that any laws permitting segregation must yield to integration, and the heads of Athens's public schools finally realized that a plan would have to be developed to abide by these laws. As a result, representatives Robert G. Stephens, Jr., and Chapelle Matthews introduced legislation in 1955-1956 to merge the Clarke County and Athens City School Systems. The legislation was approved by the General Assembly the same year.

Also that same year, the Superintendent of the Athens City Schools, Sam Wood, and the Superintendent of the Clarke County Schools, Rutherford Coile, met with Dr. O.C. Aderhold, President of the University of Georgia and former dean of its College of Education, to discuss an efficient and economically sound plan for the integration of Athens's schools. These men

decided that the first step toward integration was to fully support the plan to incorporate Athens and Clarke County. This plan, they anticipated, would bring together the rural and city school systems²⁹⁵ (Harvey, 1981). This idea invigorated the rural black community in particular because they had been voicing concerns for over 30 years about the dilapidated conditions of the black county schools, whose students were often housed in unsanitary, decaying one-room buildings with little equipment or modern features (Sheffer, 1982).

The struggle for desegregation started at a snail's pace. By 1956, only 1% of southern black children were going to desegregated schools. However, after major displays by people like Arkansas Governor Orval E. Faubus, who sent out the Arkansas National Guard to block nine black students from attending Central High School in Little Rock in 1957, responses by President Dwight Eisenhower and his federal troops quickened the pace.²⁹⁶ By the spring of 1958, more southern communities had resigned themselves to the idea that integration was the next stage for public schooling (Egerton & Southern Regional Council, 1976).

There had been rumors about the merging of the city and county school systems dating back as early as 1950. Before the merger, the Athens city school system for blacks included Athens High and Industrial School, grades 8-11, and four elementary and junior high schools – Reese Street, East Athens, West Broad, and Newtown. Plans for expansions at West Broad and the construction of AHIS's new building on Dearing Street for AHIS and Union students, as well as the construction of a new black school in North Athens, were already being prepared at the time of the consolidation. The county school system had a much larger number of schools before the merger, which included 12 mostly one- and two-room elementary schools. Even though the Clarke County system did not officially run a public high school for blacks at that time, they

allocated teachers to Union Baptist School, which served their students from eighth to twelfth grades (Rice, December 3, 2001).

Because the original consolidation legislation included a provision for the “equalization of the county tax digest” before the merger could be finalized, the systems had to remain separate until January 1, 1956. At that time, Athens City and Clarke County schools merged and were managed under the Clarke County Board of Education (Rice, December 3, 2001). At that point, the all-white Clarke County Board of Education began to implement what they believed were “equal educational opportunities” for black and white students, suggesting that they were going to pay particular attention to the rural black schools. In an effort to consolidate resources and reduce costs, the new board of education devised a plan to close of all the rural, one-room, black community and church schools, which had been established and run by local blacks, and to collapse them into larger schools, using facilities like the old Union Baptist building.²⁹⁷ By 1959, bus routes had been devised to get black students from their rural or city homes to the new *equalized* schools (Thurmond, 1933).

These schools, equal to white schools only in name, were large, neighborhood black schools positioned haphazardly throughout the county to begin the process of integration. This was seen by some as progress. However, the closing of small, communal church-based and semi-private schools with local black administration removed much of the control over education that black Athenians had spent years gaining. The requests for dialogue about discrimination in salaries, curriculum, facilities, and support seemed lost on the new Clarke County School District Board of Education.²⁹⁸ At that time, total school integration was still a fairly distant option to ensuring educational equality between the races. It took 3 more years before the first black students would have a chance to integrate a white school.

An 11-Year-Old Civil Rights Worker and Integration

In January, 1961, the University of Georgia became the first state-funded college in Georgia to integrate with the enrollment of students Hamilton Holmes and Charlayne Hunter. The following year, the “freedom of choice”²⁹⁹ integration plan was announced for Athens-Clarke County Schools. This plan allowed blacks and whites the freedom to choose their school.

In 1963, with the support of the local NAACP chapter, four black girls became the first black Athenians to attend Clarke County’s previously all white schools. As soon as discussions began to take place about how the girls would integrate the schools, mass protests and riots began throughout the city. These continued to occur regularly throughout that year in the city of Athens and at the University of Georgia (Sheffer, 1982).

The Clarke County Board of Education, though preferring the school system to remain segregated, understood the legal obligation to allow some students to freely choose to attend an integrated school. Even though seven black students applied, only four students were allowed to enter a white school in September, 1963. Of the four girls who started Athens’s school integration, two were sisters, Willusha Green and Margie Green. Their father was the first and only black physician in Athens at the time. M. Green, as well as Bonnie Hammond and Agnes Green (no relation), were all in elementary school at the time of the integration, while Willusha Green was in high school (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

Agnes Patricia Green, now a practicing anesthesiologist in Florida, recalled being selected as a good candidate to begin the integration of Clarke County Schools. Only two years before, in January, 1961, the federal court had determined that Hunter and Holmes were “fully qualified” students and should be allowed immediate admission³⁰⁰ into the University of Georgia. Many black Athenians believed that the lives of these civil rights workers were at stake.

As a result, the Killian family “opened their home” to Holmes, and community members like Reverend David Nunnally, Sr., “patrolled around the house” day and night “to observe traffic and identify anything that may be going on” that might cause trouble (“Facing the past: recollections from those who were there,” 2001). Hunter lived in Myers Hall, a University of Georgia dormitory close to where Union Baptist School was originally located. That neighborhood was also monitored regularly for her safety.

Holmes and Hunter had many struggles during their time at the university. Green sadly recalls the day that one of the UGA fraternities off Broad Street hung a black “human doll” outside of their window and burned a large cross. After that, following a basketball game,³⁰¹ several UGA students hurled bricks and bottles at Hunter’s dorm room. Green suggests that a fellow student in the dorm told all of the others in the building to turn off their lights that evening so that Holmes’s room was the only one that could be seen from the street. Even though the mob-like crowd was dispersed with tear gas, Holmes and Hunter had to be rushed back to Atlanta for “fear of their lives.” That evening, Green remembered hearing the sirens of the motorcade hastily rushing them out of town (August 12, 2006, Interview).

The UGA Dean of Students, J. A. Williams, told Hunter and Holmes that they had to withdraw from the school for their own “personal safety” and the “safety and welfare of more than 7,000 other students.” However, 400 faculty members petitioned to have the two black students returned to the school. The courts agreed, and Holmes and Hunter quickly returned to the university and resumed their classes (Craig et al., January 9, 2001).

The local black community had befriended Hunter and Holmes. The two were known as town heroes. They were both actively involved with locals like Rosa Buffington and Reverend Hudson who helped with the first steps of Clarke County school integration. The tension that

resulted from the first attempts to integrate UGA played a fundamental role in the planning for Green's experience integrating Clarke County Schools. It also helped her make a "conscious decision" to never attend the University of Georgia (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

Born in Athens on October 24, 1951, Agnes Green was raised by her father, a local pharmacist, and her mother who worked for Atlanta Life Insurance Company (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview). Green started school at West Broad Street elementary around 1956. She recalls being a smart and academically oriented student who thrived under the constant support of her family and her teachers. Although her teachers, most of whom she remembers by name, were very much disciplinarians, she recollected that the community that they built in the classroom and neighborhood was both "embracing and encouraging." Because she saw most of them in church, Hill Chapel and Ebenezer Baptist West, and because they lived near her, she grew up sharing life events with them, such as the loss of her father at an early age (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

Green vividly remembered the fright of entering the all-white school for the first time. Green said that she had never been called a "nigger" before and that really hurt. Living in a "segregated world" meant that she had not been around such hatred. Even though everyone had tried to prepare her for it, she still did not anticipate the severity of the hatred that would be spewed at her during that first year ("The Integration of Clarke County Schools: Forgotten Five," 1992).

Green integrated Athens-Clarke County Schools when she turned 11 years old and was in the sixth grade. She said that she was "hand-chosen" to integrate the schools by Reverend Hudson and the Athens NAACP. They selected her because she was academically strong and stable and they did not believe that she would "go and cause a confusion" at the school. Her

parents asked her if she wanted to attend Child's Street School. No one told her that she should not do it or that it was not a good idea, and her parents wanted her to do it, so she agreed. She recalled thinking that she "could excel anywhere" she went and that this step would "make a difference" in the lives of everyone around her (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

Several meetings took place to help her and her family understand "what to expect" and "what to anticipate" so that there would be few surprises in the fall of 1963 when she started at Childs Street. She understood that it was a "very dangerous time" and she was going to be a part of a very historic event that would change the future landscape of Clarke County schools. During the meetings, community leaders discussed safety measures in detail with her, the other girls, and their parents. The safety plan included girls being escorted to and from school each day throughout that first year. Green remembered everyone, the entire black community, rallying around the girls with all types of support to ensure their safety (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

She recalled the first day at Childs Street clearly. Her father was very ill and would later die that same year, so her mother agreed to go with her that morning. Before they left, her mother said, "Don't be scared, nothing is going to happen," and Green prepared for school with that in mind. Soon, Reverend Hudson picked up the others girls and her and drove them into school. When they arrived, there were large numbers of police officers with weapons surrounding the school building. To this day she is uncertain if it was the Federal Bureau of Investigation or the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, but she remembers that they were surrounded by security. Green could see that lots of people had lined the streets to see them drive up to the school (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

Once they arrived, they did not leave the car immediately. It seemed that everyone was making sure that it was safe before the girls exited the car. The media was there with cameras filming the entire event. When the girls got out of the car, Green immediately noticed all of the white children waiting at the entrance for them to come into the school. As she walked into the school with her mother, she heard the students whispering things like, “What are they doing here?” and “We don’t want you here.” She even heard some of them call out the “n-word.” Several white people in the crowd had paper balls in their hands, and they threw them at the black girls. And though it was difficult, no one in the crowd turned physically violent (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

Once she arrived and realized that she did not know anyone at the school, reality hit her. “Integration was the first time that I had been exposed to hatred.” Even though the building was nicer and cleaner than the schools she had attended and the books were new and undamaged, no one wanted to sit with her or talk to her. The teachers understood that it was not a dangerous situation, but certainly a “very new situation” for the girls, and they sought ways to make the black girls “part of the setting.” She quickly realized that the teachers were trying to be nice. The teachers did not treat her as poorly as the white students treated her and they did try to get her to participate in the lessons. However, from the start, Green felt that the Childs Street teachers were not as “embracing or caring” as her West Broad teachers (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

For weeks, there was extensive coverage in the media of the integration steps that had taken place. Green and the others were interviewed regularly. They were all asked how they were feeling in the new environment, as well as how they were being treated. To maintain the safety of the girls, security was regularly stationed around the school throughout each day. Green

recalled that there ended up being little fanfare after a few weeks (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

After a while, some of the white students began to acknowledge their new black classmates. It was a struggle, though, because they had had little experience being around black people. The white students, Green suggested, did not realize how badly the “n-word” made her feel. She thought that the word itself was “ugly and derogatory,” and because they had used it, she believed herself to be a better person than they were. When comparing her experience to that of Hunter and Holmes at UGA, she says that she was certain that it was more difficult for them because they were dealing with hatred from adults and “adults were a lot meaner” than the Childs Street students. She precociously understood that it was more difficult for adults to change their actions easily because they already had their “beliefs and behaviors in place” (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

Green did remember two girl and two boy friends that she made that year. The girls, Vicki and Linda, were very nice twin sisters, but they did not associate with Green outside of school. Even though the schools had started to integrate, the communities were still segregated. The two boys who befriended her, John McElhannon, whose father was a local doctor, and George Dean, whose father owned Dean’s clothing store, both reached out early. She believed this was easier for them because they were from highly educated and middle class families who had more exposure to different types of people. She tried hard to dress in Bass-Weejun loafers and somewhat expensive clothes so that she fit in, and it did get a little better for her as the year went on. She was, however, still quite surprised when several students took the time to come up to her after her father passed away to offer their condolences (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

As for the other black girls who integrated the Clarke County schools with her, Green most vividly recalled comments from Willusha Green. She would describe what it was like to walk down the halls of Athens High when all of the white students would try to “blend” into the wall to ignore her. She would enter the cafeteria, and the whole room would “shun away” from her. She was very isolated that year, and because the students were older, similar to those encountered by Hunter and Holmes, they would “act out” how they felt about integration right in front of her. However, she did remain at Athens High and was the school’s first black graduate (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

Childs Street Elementary School and Athens High offered the girls all of the same basic courses, English, history, social studies, as did Athens’s black schools. In addition, the schools offered them nice desks, new books, more resources, and a more aesthetically pleasing environment. However, they could not replace the relationships that the girls had developed in the all-black schools (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

At the close of that year, A. Green told her mother that she did not want to return to Childs Street. When asked about why she wanted to return to her previous school, she relays,

You know we had the material things [at Childs], the new books, etc. but it was just the whole idea of so much tension and so much hatred that I didn’t want to go back. I wanted to go to a place where I could be happy.... People did not want to mix with other races was the bottom line... They [whites] did not want you in their school system... As a sixth grader, I didn’t like feeling on the outside. I didn’t like feeling that I didn’t have friends [and] that I could not be with my friends after school.

Even though she understood that there was “*no such thing as separate but equal* [italics added],” Agnes Green did not want to remain in a place where people made her feel bad for being different than they were. She voiced concern that she had never experienced such loathing before attending Childs, and she wanted to be in a school where people respected and appreciated her.

She wanted to return to a place where she “knew people” and had friends (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

Green’s brother, a Morehouse College graduate and the owner of a computer company, was disappointed that Agnes did not want to return to Childs Street. He believed that one element that the predominately white school had over black schools was academic rigor, and he thought that his sister could benefit from the intellectual experience. Green agreed that the curriculum was a little more advanced at Childs, but she knew that her brother was disregarding the factor of personal motivation. She insisted that she would be successful no matter where she went to school, but she was more inspired in the segregated environment (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

She said, “I don’t know if they [the white Childs’ teachers] underestimated me or if they just did not know me.” She certainly did not know them on a personal level. She did not know where they lived, who their families were, where they attended church, or how they spent their free time. She did, however, know that they did not live in her community or attend her church, and that was a significant difference that she missed from her previous school (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

That spring, Green’s mother agreed that she would not make her return to Childs Street elementary the next year. Her experience as a “civil rights worker” was, of course, not a loss in the fight for integration. The following year brought even more black children to Childs Street, and the board of education continued working on more ways to facilitate school integration (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

In the fall of 1964, Green returned to Athens’s black schools as a student at Lyons Middle School. She remembered being very happy at the school because the bus picked her up

and carried her there and she knew all of her classmates. Unlike when she went to Childs, she was able to join activities on the weekend with her classmates and she was able to call them on the phone. School was “fun” again (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

However, although she regarded Lyons as fun, Green recalled it being a very regimented and disciplined environment. The teachers expected students to do well (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview). Students were expected to sit in class, copy from the board, recite the readings teachers gave them, and follow the rules. When students did not follow this routine, the teachers had parents’ permission to “tear your hide” with two or three smacks with a paddle or a strap. The Lyons staff knew that students could perform well, and they expected no less. They required their students to put the knowledge into their minds and “keep it in their minds” (Foster, August 13, 2006, Interview).

Green returned to an environment where she “felt that the teachers cared” about whether or not she was happy and succeeded. Her Childs Street experience “was just something that had to be.” Although the white teachers at Childs had been pleasant, Green stated that their work did not emulate the “deep caring type” of teaching that she had been exposed to her entire life (See more on black teachers and their way of “caring” in Collins, 1991; Foster, 1993; Green, August 12, 2006, Interview; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Siddle Walker, 1993, 1996). As for the environment³⁰² of the school, Childs was “not as embracing” as the environment where Green had come from at West Broad or returned to at Lyons (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

When Green arrived at Lyons, she was greeted by Principal Howard Stroud, who welcomed her with open arms. He immediately built a relationship with Green that continued into her adult life. Stroud, who recalled the era of integration a “trying time,” was known throughout the community to be a “soft-spoken” “voice of reason” and he helped Green once

again feel welcome in school (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview; Heard and Thurmond in "Stroud was a true leader for Athens," April 3, 2007).



Figure 21: Howard Stroud, Sr.

Photo courtesy of Dr. Robert E. Harrison, ICOD, Inc., www.theyellowjacket.com

When she received the hand-me-down seventh-grade textbooks from her teachers, she recalled the new ones that she had been given at Childs Street. However, she was not disappointed. She may have had used and worn-out books, but she knew that her Lyons teachers loved her and wanted to see her learn. After Lyons, Green moved into Burney-Harris High School. Like others interviewed, Green looks back on high school as a “happy time” where the teachers inspired their students to do well, excel in their studies, graduate, go to college, and find a productive future (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

Green recalled BHHS teachers not wanting their students to “just shuffle through school.” In fact, she notes that BHHS teachers would not stand for that type of behavior (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

Our teachers knew that we were smart kids, so they put a lot of energy into us.... They just always had those expectations. And because we knew the teachers, they lived in our communities, we didn’t want to fail them, so we wanted to do well.

The students that A. Green befriended at BHHS were all academically high-achieving students who attended college after high school graduation (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).



Figure 22: Agnes Green, BHHS 1969

Photo courtesy of Dr. Robert E. Harrison, ICOD, Inc., www.theyellowjacket.com

Green graduated in 1969 from Burney-Harris High School. She did not experience the final merger in 1970 of Athens High and Burney-Harris. Looking back, she now realizes that, even though integration was not successful for her, the black community understood that the concept of separate but equal could not ever be possible. Blacks realized that “separate but equal” was “inherently unequal,” and even though the law stated that blacks and whites were to have the same resources, the simple separation of the two educational systems fostered the belief that one educational setting was superior to the other, which in many ways it was (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview; Martin, 1998).

Like the black students today, who are seeking college seats at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Green desired a wholesome and fulfilling college life where the students were “close knit.” She left Athens in 1969 to attend Tuskegee University, called Tuskegee Institute at that time, where she graduated with a nursing degree. She then continued

her training at the University of Mississippi where she was the first black person to attend the nurse anesthetist school (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

Maintaining the expectations set by her teachers in Athens's black schools, she refused to be satisfied with training for the top position in the nursing field, and she decided that she would continue with her medical education. In the early 1980s, she returned to graduate school at Morehouse School of Medicine and the University of Alabama, Birmingham, and completed a medical degree. Now one of the few black anesthesiologists in the U.S., she believes that her internal drive to be the best is grounded in her experiences from life growing up in Athens's black community (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

Final Steps of Integration and the Demise of a Communal View of Education

Before Green graduated in 1969 and left Athens, many more steps toward school integration had taken place. By 1967, Athens had become known as the place "where busing works." Busing was the only clear way that the white board of education believed that they could achieve full integration. Slowly, the board began to close all of the black schools around the district ,and they sent the displaced students to newly integrated schools (Southern Regional Council, 1960; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

As the black schools closed, black teachers were released from their duties, demoted, or transferred to integrated schools under strict scrutiny. By the end of the 1967-1968 school year, almost 800 black students had enrolled in previously white schools (Rice, December 3, 2001). Not coincidentally, during this time several white, private academies³⁰³ opened their doors to offer local white Athenians refuge from the integrated public school system (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

The “freedom of choice” plans caused serious attendance problems in the newly integrated schools and still left many schools not integrated at all. Therefore, during the next school year, some students in outlying rural areas were required to attend specifically zoned schools, while students in the inner city would retain the freedom to choose their school. The inner city area included the black and white high schools and all junior high schools, and this alternative resulted in students mainly remaining at their previously segregated schools.

By April, 1969, a “geographical districting plan” or Integration Plan A, was developed by the Clarke County Board of Education. The plan was sent to Washington in May for approval from the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) (McClurkin, 1969). This plan was developed to allow as many students as possible to walk to the school closest to their home. Early projections suggested that the plan would allow half of the high school students to attend Athens High and the other half to attend Burney-Harris High. HEW rejected the plan in July and returned with a Plan B, which would allow all schools to remain majority white with a 20 to 40 % black population at each school. This plan required a new organizational model for elementary schools and was disfavored by the board (Rice, December 3, 2001).

Later that year, the school board decided on an official rejection of HEW’s Plan B and resubmitted a “Compromise Plan.” This plan used “pocket busing” to attain racial equality in the schools. With this plan, many students would take long bus rides to their schools, passing several closer schools on the way. However, it did address some of the busing issues, lower costs, and allow for an equal racial makeup for East Athens and West Broad schools. The plan also allowed for a redistribution of the students in the others schools with a possible outcome of each school gaining a 20 to 40% black student body (McClurkin, 1969).

The Compromise Plan upset both the black and white communities of Athens, and several community groups hired attorneys to fight the plan in court. However, the legal appeals to the plan did not stop its implementation, and on September 2, 1969, the newly integrated Clarke County Schools opened quietly with minimal riots or protests. All students, except for 525 black students at Burney-Harris High School, were sent to newly integrated schools. The schools ranged from 50% black and white to 30% black and 70 % white, depending on their location in town (Rice, December 3, 2001).

Once integration began, the black community was surprised by the immense improvements that were made to the previously all black schools when the “first white faces” finally appeared. However, while the elementary and junior high schools were dealing with the integration plan, the school board resisted the integration of the black and white high schools. They could not decide whether to close one of the schools, most likely the black Burney-Harris High School (an icon of the black community dating back to the Knox Institute in 1868), or whether to build a new integrated high school. In November, with the support and guidance of the University of Georgia Desegregation Center, a plan was developed to fully integrate the two high schools by closing Burney-Harris High and opening one integrated high school (Rice, December 3, 2001).

The high school integration plan evoked concern in both black and white neighborhoods, and racial tensions continued to rise. To deal with the tensions, Dr. Charles McDaniel, the Clarke County School District Superintendent, held several meetings with Burney-Harris High School students and local black pastors and community members about the new high school plan. During those meetings, the black community representatives requested that the Burney-Harris High School staff be secured positions at the integrated high school and that all clubs and

organizations in the school be open to all students regardless of their race. A local paper, called the *United Free Press*, printed its first edition during this turbulent period, possibly to encourage such discussions to take place in a more public arena (Blackwell, 1970).

Frustrated by the “deliberate speed” (see *Brown*) used by the board of education, several angry black students left Burney-Harris High School on April 16, 1970 (called “Rowdy Thursday” by the local newspapers), to protest the town’s integration practices in front of the previously all-white high school.³⁰⁴ One source suggests that this protest was a result of a newspaper article released that morning about local race relations (Blackwell, 1970). During “Rowdy Thursday,” police guards were posted at Athens High School, but several black students from Athens High and Burney-Harris High were still able to rush the school entrance to enter the mostly white high school.³⁰⁵

One report of the event suggests that several white and black students were injured and the white assistant principal was hit by a baseball bat. In addition to this violence, one record reported that a gun was pointed at a black student by an angry white father who had come to pick up his daughter from the school that day (Blackwell, 1970). An injunction was placed against more than 100 black students the following morning to keep them from causing more school disturbances. Throughout the month of April, except for a few community members who were tear-gassed for breaking windows or arrested for unlawful assembly, black and white students peacefully marched throughout Athens in protest of the integration problems.

On April 20th, several black students and three black pastors met again with Superintendent McDaniel about the growing integration issues and requested amnesty for students missing school because of the racial turmoil (Blackwell, 1970). On May 4, at a public rally in front of the Athens-Clarke County City Hall, black community members read their

integration plan demands to Mayor Julius Bishop. The complaints listed in the plan revolved around the “loss of black school identity” and, as a result, a loss of community identity that was taking place in the new integrated schools.

In May, a black buyer’s boycott was started in Athens to publicize the need for a community effort to ensure equality between the races and to place “economic pressure” on Athens’s businessmen to listen and act on the grievances of the Athens black community (Blackwell, 1970; Rice, December 3, 2001). “Rowdy Thursday” and the demonstrations that had occurred before and after had illuminated a cultural clash that had been brewing in Athens’s communities for over a decade on school desegregation and unequal educational opportunities. Following these months of racial unrest and for the remainder of that school year, disturbances and high absenteeism plagued Athens’s last black school.

To resolve some of the growing issues between the black and white communities, the Clarke County School Board continued to meet with black students and community leaders between 1969 and 1970 to discuss their plans and possible concessions. In the end, the school board decided to change the name of the previously white Athens High School to Clarke Central High School. One color from each of the white and black high school colors, Athens High School’s red and Burney-Harris’s gold, was used to form the new Clarke Central colors. These groups also decided that the principal of the new Burney-Harris (Lyons) Junior High would be black and the assistant football coach for Clarke Central would be black. Acceptance of all students into clubs and school activities was also discussed, along with minority teacher recruitment, diversity training for staff, multiethnic textbooks, diverse school curricula, mandatory black studies courses, and the addition of black community positions on the school

board (Rice, December 3, 2001; "School integration: Is the mountain moving? 5 years later," June 3, 1975).

Still concerned with some of the changes discussed by the school board, several local black Athenians worked together to open "Freedom Schools," discussed in Chapter 3, for disenfranchised black youth in local churches and lodges. They opened in the spring and summer of 1970. These schools frustrated city and school officials who were trying to develop concessions with black community leaders to ensure the success of the city desegregation plan. After the schools completely desegregated in the fall of 1970, the Liberation Schools closed their doors (Dougherty, 2004; "Liberation school," June 21, 1970; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

The Closing of Athens's Last Black School

In the fall of 1970, long after *Brown*, Burney-Harris High School (previously Athens High and Industrial School) was closed. The black students who had attended that school were sent to the old white high school, Athens High School, which was by then renamed Clarke Central High School. Following the closing of Athens's last black school, community activities typically planned at BHHS gradually declined, and black community involvement in the schools deteriorated ("Liberation school," June 21, 1970).

The closing of AHIS-BHHS was thought to be the final step in the integration of Athens's schools and the beginning of the equalization between Athens's black and white communities. One source even notes that Athens's integrated schools began as sites of hostility that gradually moved toward toleration and finally to "one-to-one" appreciation and acceptance (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978). However, immediately following integration, segregation of classes based on tracking, special education, and discipline became conventional parts of the Clarke

County school system, as they did in many southern communities ("School integration: Is the mountain moving? 5 years later," June 3, 1975).

The newly integrated school system seemed to lack the “community” previously felt in Athens’s black schools. One black student claimed that the new integrated schools were “choking and killing” Athens’s black students (Egerton & Southern Regional Council, 1976). Even after over 25 years have passed, Agnes Green and many others still have many unanswered questions about Athens’s school integration. In the integrated schools, did black students lose the people around them who cared about their lives and their future? Did they become “just another face” in the crowd? Did they lose “the hope and belief” that they could do well in school and life? Green called these items the “intangibles” that made all of the difference between her experience at the integrated Childs Street Elementary School and her experiences at West Broad Street, Lyons Middle School, and Burney-Harris High School. These intangibles led her to make a conscious decision to return to her segregated school after one year of integration and to remain in segregated educational settings through graduation and into college (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

Many people in Athens’s black community desired more for their schools and their children. They understood that separate was not truly equal. Homer Wilson³⁰⁶ noted that everyone simply understood that segregation was “just the way things were” at that time. “I can remember separate drinking fountains and bathrooms.” He said, “You thought about it; we talked about it,” and “My dad and momma always told me hopefully one day it's going to be better” (Lee, 2001). Agnes Green recalled black community members agreeing that their children should be entitled to the same resources, books, and buildings as white students, but she, as one of the

youngest civil rights workers in the state who started school integration in Athens, knew what was lost when the two groups merged.

We lost that *community feeling*. You know that old saying, “it takes a community to raise a child,” and I think that, back when I was growing up, we had *community* and I do not know if these kids now have a community.

An entire culture was lost because we had to incorporate ourselves into their culture. Whereas, when we had BHHS, it was our high school. That was our culture. It was ours, and we lost that when we had to go to another institution. Once they moved [us] to Athens High School, even though it might have been better, the material things, the main thing that was lost was the *love*, the *caring*, and the *embracing* that we got from our teachers [italics added] (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

Jeffrey Foster, a 1974 Clarke Central High School graduate who went through school during the turbulent years of desegregation, recalled several differences between his teachers at the all black schools and those at the integrated schools. When he attended East Athens Elementary, Lyons Middle School, and Burney-Harris High School, he said that the way his teachers talked and the “way they presented themselves” was unlike that of the white teachers at the integrated Hilsman Middle School and Clarke Central High School that he attended after school integration. The teachers at the black schools gave themselves to the students, “and then when you thought that was all you would get, they would give you more.” It seemed to Foster that the all-black school staff developed lessons and expectations that were “always a challenge” (Foster, August 13, 2006, Interview; March 12, 2007, Interview). Before integration, “We all strived for excellence” and “We didn’t have to struggle to know where we came from,” remembered A.R. Killian, Reverend at St. Mark A.M.E. (Lee, 2001).

Events throughout Athens’s history demonstrate how much the black community was concerned with excellence. However, in the past 30 years, black Athenians have not seen an increase in student achievement. Instead, many in the black community went from seeing progress and development in their black community-controlled schools to seeing over 50% of

black students dropping out or graduating with a poor education (Carolillano, January 21, 2003; Egerton & Southern Regional Council, 1976). Data suggest that the black community was originally divided fifty-fifty about integration. For many years following integration, some say even up to today, the black community has remained full of “distrust, resentment, and resignation” about the closing of black schools and the continuation of poor educational opportunities for Athens’s black youth (Egerton & Southern Regional Council, 1976).

The difference between Athens’s black schools and today’s schools are glaring, cries Linston. The overseers of the schools, the keepers of our children, aren’t “quite as diligent” as the ones in the “old system” (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview). What once was “one big family,” which was united, affectionate, accepting, and encouraging, is now pulling apart (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview). Even the school that housed AHIS-BHHS is threatened for possible demolition. The school that was once the “center of the black community,” where many community development activities “revolved,” is now what some call a “dumping ground” for students who have not met the district behavior standards, consigned to the Clarke County School District’s punitive alternative school³⁰⁷ (Campbell in DeMao, 2006).



Figure 23: James Campbell, BHHS 1969
Photo courtesy of Athens Banner-Herald.³⁰⁸

Today, these issues remain prominent as Clarke County schools discipline black students more often than white students and place more black students in special education courses and vocational, noncollege preparatory programming than they do white students. Some suggest that the “fear factor” and accountability in schools is so strong that teachers are afraid to deal with students at the level needed to move them forward. In the “old days,” teachers could “deal” with their students because they were like family. Once teachers got through handling students who were disruptive or unmotivated, their parents would “deal” with them and “that’s what made the difference.” There is no longer a relationship between the home and the school and, as a result, no trust between the parents and the teachers (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview; see also Ware, 2002).

Some suggest that black schools did not have the same discipline problems seen today because teachers knew the families of the students that they served and because of the encouraging and accommodating ways that the staff treated the students. Because students were raised in the same community as their teachers, they were expected to respect them and treat them like kin. Many children today have little respect for their teachers because they are from entirely different worlds (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

Current rezoning issues and school choice plans are now being blamed for their role in the *resegregation* of Athens’s schools. Many of Athens’s schools, especially the ones with the highest percentage of high poverty families, have once again become racially identifiable. Community initiatives like the Partners for a Prosperous Athens (PPA)³⁰⁹ are focusing their efforts on rebuilding “community schools” that allow teachers, students, and families to come together for the success of the children. They have reignited the concept of using schools as

“community centers” to help connect all the community’s resources holistically to serve the students (Partners for a Prosperous Athens, 2006).

The PPA has postulated that today’s schools “do not effectively teach children living in poverty,” of which a large percentage are black or Latino. Indeed, state assessment scores for Clarke County indicate that these schools are in the bottom quartile in every category when compared to other counties in the state. Athens’s graduation rate³¹⁰ for black students is approximately 53%, which is considered by most to be significantly lower than it was before school integration. The PPA has suggested that magnet or charter-like programs and workforce development programs are crucial to the future success of local schools. In addition, they note that mentors are an absolute necessity “at every juncture” of a child’s life to “broaden their vision” for their future and to help them “believe in themselves.” People moving into the workforce need mentors to teach them how to be good employees. The overall recommendation from PPA is that poverty is a community problem that can be solved only by working together as “OneAthens” and leveraging one another’s strengths to make systemic, communal change (Partners for a Prosperous Athens, 2006).

Another community group called the Clarke County School District Multicultural Taskforce³¹¹ has offered the school board numerous recommendations since the founding of the group in 2003. The group is the “designated advisory committee of the Clarke County School District” that helps to “foster meaningful relationships among the school district and the various populations it serves.” It was initiated by the current CCSD superintendent, Dr. Lewis Holloway, to develop a team of community members who could offer recommendations to the Superintendent and the Board of Education that address issues of “inequity in school achievement and success” (Multicultural Task Force, 2003, 2006).

In May, 2003, the group submitted a set of ten recommendations that included suggestions ranging from the adoption of a policy that would address “institutional diversity and equity,” to the development and implementation of a “comprehensive employee recruitment plan” focused on the hiring of highly qualified, minority teachers so that students have access to role models who look like them. The group has also recommended efforts to “develop closer ties between schools, parents and families” (Multicultural Task Force, 2003).

The group followed up those ideas in 2004 with the addition of a recommendation focused on creating a “rigorous and connected curriculum” that would be “culturally relevant” to all CCSD students. Two years later, the group revised some of the original recommendations and added six more focused on hiring staff at all schools to continue with the work of engaging families in their children’s education, developing and expanding partnerships with community agencies so that community groups can support school achievement efforts, and the hiring of grant writers to seek funds for such initiatives (Multicultural Task Force, 2006, p. 3).

In the original report, the group stated that the “development and maintenance of multicultural diversity and equity” requires the Clarke County School District to make “visible and aggressive... system changes” to include “compensatory resource allocations, specialized and focused educational activities and the establishment of operational priorities in relation to historical and traditional resistance to diversity” (Multicultural Task Force, 2003). The ultimate goal of the taskforce was and remains to develop recommendations to help the school system to prepare CCSD students to become “productive members of society” (Multicultural Task Force, 2006, p. 1). Although some of the group’s recommendations have been accepted and acted on, most of them have not. As an insider in this group who has worked for over a decade in the Clarke County School District, I believe that many of these have not been implemented for a

variety of reasons, including fiscal constraints, policy issues, apathy, and institutional classist and racist practices that have been allowed to exist for generations.

Few individuals or community groups assume responsibility for the serious decline in black communal involvement in the schools or the gap between black and white student achievement in Clarke County. However, some black leaders in the community decided long ago that they were going to spend their lives improving the lives of black Athenians, and Athenians in general, through strong communities and strong schools. Several of those individuals, Samuel Harris, Judia Jackson Harris, Homer T. Edwards, and Howard Stroud, Sr. have been discussed in detail in this dissertation. However, many other black transformational leaders have changed the scope and implementation of education in Athens deserve to be noted.

One of those leaders is Farris Johnson, Sr., who spent his life working in Athens's black and integrated schools. He was a key leader who helped to temper the waves of integration in his own community by explaining to others his belief that all children can learn in any setting if they are treated with dignity and their families are positively engaged in the schools. His insight may provide some direction for Clarke County School District's next steps (Johnson, July 17, 2006, Interview; March 14, 2007, Interview). The following chapter tells Johnson's story of transformational leadership. This continuation of the tapestry shows how one of Athens's finest black educators used his knowledge, understanding, and people-skills to educate black and white children alike.

Leaders like Johnson, who understand the history, culture, and community of those they serve, see the benefit of building relationships between schools and the community. They understand the importance and benefit of schools being the heart of the community. Johnson's life story has prompted me to suggest some possible solutions for the problems facing Clarke

County schools. One of the fundamental changes that transformational leaders might consider in today's schools would be to find some way to reignite the communal feeling of trust and caring previously found in all-black institutions (Dempsey & Noblit, 1993; Pellicer, 2003; Siddle Walker, 1993).

CHAPTER 9 POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Black schools have been embedded in the heart of black communities throughout U.S. history (Irvine & Irvine, 1983). Researchers like Morris have found that successful black schools historically have had a “shared history” with the community they serve. For the past several decades, educational researchers and historians have been examining the development of these successful black schools (Anderson, 1988; Bond, 1934, 1994; Butchart, 1980; Jones, 1937; Litwack, 1998a; Morris, 2004; Morris, 1999; Slim, Thomson, Bennett, & Cross, 1995; Vaughn, 1974). Morris suggests that any schools can play a central role in “promoting healthy urban and predominantly African American communities” if they are committed to reaching out to the families they serve and hiring and retaining excellent administrators and “committed teachers” who have a “love ethic for Black children” (Morris, 2004, pp. 103-104). While many researchers are discussing the development or redevelopment of these schools, relatively few have focused their investigation on the black teachers and leaders who have championed these institutions. This chapter serves as a continuation to works from scholars like Morris to help explain how schools with educators who value and affirm children of color, while challenging them and preparing them educationally can rebuild schools as “pillars” in their communities (Morris, 2004).

Dating back to emancipation, black educators have played a vital role in the development of these community institutions (Butchart, 1980). Even though whites have tried forcefully and maliciously to close these schools, black communities have continued to support them because of the caring teachers and leaders working in them who preached education as the means to “social and economic equality.” These teachers quickly became “well regarded and respected” role

models, community leaders, and political activists in the communities that they served (Dempsey & Noblit, 1993; Foster, 1997; Siddle Walker, 1993; Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview).

Throughout the history of black education, these educational leaders worked hard to unify their communities by providing them an educational focus that promoted both “individual” and “collective aspirations” (Jeffries, 1997; Morris, 1999; Sergiovanni, 2001). Clearly understanding both the power and the dangers of literacy development, many of these leaders set aside their own self-interests for the sake of others to ensure black educational advancement. As agents of social change, these educators diligently fought to provide their black communities with the skills to “think critically” so that they would never again be taken advantage of by the dominant white society that had previously enslaved them (Cooper, 1989; Fairclough, 2001; Foster, 1997; Foster, 2001; Irvine, 2002b; Johnson, 2000; Lomotey, 1989; Scott, 1980; Siddle Walker, 1993, 1996).

Through the work of outstanding educational leaders like Samuel F. Harris, Judia Jackson Harris, Homer T. Edwards, and others, Athens’s black community overcame the dilapidated state of, and inequitable resources provided in, Athens’s black schools. In this chapter, I will describe the educational career of Farris T. Johnson, Sr., another one of Athens’s black educational leaders who spent his career modeling equity and excellence to the students he taught, the teachers he supervised, and the community he served. The story demonstrates how the selfless work of leaders like Johnson resulted in Athens’s black schools becoming the “institutional anchors” of the black community (Blase & Kirby, 2000; Daniels, 2004; Foner & Pacheco, 1984; Gaines, 1996; Glickman, 1998; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2001; Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

F. Johnson, Sr., was born on January 1, 1921. Around 1926, he started school at East Athens with his brother Ralph and his cousin Mack.³¹² Unlike some other families that did not allow male children to attend school regularly because they were needed on the farm, F. Johnson's family permitted him to attend both elementary and secondary school in Athens's black public schools. It was in school, his mother would insist, that you can get the "learnin'" that you need to be successful in life (Johnson, July 26, 2006, Interview).

In 1938 F. Johnson graduated from AHIS and left for Morehouse College in Atlanta. In 1943, he graduated with a Bachelors of Art degree from Morehouse. That same year, he was drafted into the United States Navy and served three years in World War II as an aircraft technician (AHIS/BHHS Alumni Association, 2004; Daniels, 2004).



Figure 24: Farris Johnson, Sr., staff picture

Photo courtesy of Dr. Robert E. Harrison, ICOD, Inc., www.theyellowjacket.com

In these settings of home, school, military, and community the values of life and success were taught to F. Johnson. He quickly learned that "honesty" and "compassion" were just as essential to success as "hard work" and "dedication." These values and the idea that "knowledge was power" became embedded in Johnson's mind, and, through his work as a teacher and principal of Franklin County Junior High School, Johnson began to find positive ways to pass his

values and knowledge on to others, as it was passed on to him (Daniels, 2004; Johnson, July 12, 2006, Interview; July 17, 2006, Interview; July 26, 2006, Interview).

After marrying his beloved wife Mabel in 1947, F. Johnson became the principal of the Bowman School in Bowman, Georgia. In 1952, he returned to Athens to work at both Union Baptist Institute and the city and county public schools. Throughout his work, he continued his education at Atlanta University, where he received a Masters in Education in 1954. In 1956, Homer T. Edwards asked Johnson to become the assistant principal of AHIS, and the following year Johnson was named Georgia State Teacher of the Year (AHIS/BHHS Alumni Association, 2004; Daniels, 2004).

As a result of his successful teaching and leadership, F. Johnson was transferred to Lyons Junior High in 1958 as the new principal. It was at Lyons that F. Johnson probably made his biggest impact. At the black school Johnson built a “climate of expectation” that taught his students “the values of success,” along with “the values of life” (Daniels, 2004, p. 6). He also worked hard to engage families in the education of the children attending the school.

During his tenure at Lyons, he helped to develop “individualized programs” that allowed his students to plan their curriculum with the teaching staff. Each of the school programs required students to participate in vocational courses or home economics, as well as technical and mechanical trade classes, so that they would leave the school prepared with work and life skills. Johnson also networked with community businesses to help Lyons’ students get part-time jobs during school breaks and in the summer in the vocational fields taught to them (Daniels, 2004).

With Johnson’s help, the Lyons’s staff also figured out ways to modify the school’s curriculum for students with special needs to allow them to participate in more classes that were

relevant to their lives. These classes were designed to help the students build the social skills necessary to be successful in life and in work. In addition, Johnson was able to offer all of his students extra academic programs like foreign language classes, even though the school was not allocated funding for those types of courses. Johnson overcame the funding issue by asking Lyons teachers who held degree minors in foreign languages to teach the extra classes in addition to their regular class loads (Daniels, 2004).

Throughout his work at AHIS and Lyons, Johnson modeled the values of “honesty, compassion, hard work, and dedication” to the children he taught. If his students became discouraged, he recalls telling them that he would stick by them until they were successful. He also explained to the students that they could not and should not “make excuses” because they could succeed if they put forward their best efforts (Johnson, July 12, 2006, Interview; July 17, 2006, Interview; July 26, 2006, Interview).

An article praising Johnson for his lifetime dedication to children noted that he “passed the importance of education down” through generations of Athens’s children (Daniels, 2004, p. 6). When Johnson sees his students today, they say things to him like, “I worked hard like you told me, and now I am a doctor, preacher, teacher, [or] pharmacist.” They believe that Johnson played a role in their success, just as Johnson believes that his teachers in Athens’s black schools played a role in his success (Johnson, July 17, 2006, Interview).

Johnson not only modeled success for his students, but he also modeled it for the teachers that he supervised. He “orchestrated a vision” through his “personal philosophy and school policy,” which were “intertwined,”³¹³ that ended up influencing the “definitions teachers adopted” and the “community values” that they taught at Lyons Junior High School (Siddle Walker, 1996). One of the teachers at Lyons insisted that Johnson was the leader of the “best

faculty” in which he had ever worked (Horton, July 14, 2006, Interview). Johnson’s support for his staff helped them gain the confidence that, by working together, teachers and community members could make the difference in the lives of the children they served.

When talking about his personal success as a teacher and leader, Farris F. Johnson, Sr., suggested that the teachers in his all-black schools helped him to realize early that it was up to him to overcome the struggles of life and that education was the primary venue for overcoming those struggles. He explained that it was his teachers and the “old folks” in the community, those who were slaves or their direct descendents, who told the children about the lack of education offered to blacks in surrounding communities like Toccoa, Commerce, and Jefferson. These locals described how black Athenians were “privileged” because of their access to both public and private schools, and they demanded that Johnson and the other black youth take advantage of the education provided to them (Johnson, July 26, 2006, Field notes).

In 1965, F. Johnson was named the Clarke County Curriculum Director, a prestigious position that allowed him to continue modeling best educational practices to Clarke County teachers and continue to develop unique curricula that would meet the needs of Athens’s diverse students. To continue supporting the integration of Clarke County Schools, Johnson returned to a principalship in 1971 at West Broad Elementary School. During that same year, he completed a Specialist Degree in Education from the University of Georgia. Four years later, he was named the assistant to the superintendent of the consolidated school system, and he remained in that position until his retirement in 1980 (AHIS/BHHS Alumni Association, 2004).

During his leadership, the Clarke County schools were slowly being integrated, and it was part of Johnson’s responsibility to help make the transition smooth. When discussing the transition, Johnson maintained that he helped teachers and community members to understand

that it was a “community responsibility” to provide all children with what they needed to reach their potential. Even today, he suggested that “it does not make a difference what color or socioeconomic background” a child comes from, “as adults, we have the responsibility of helping every child to be the best they can be” (Daniels, 2004, p. 6).

Something Changed After Integration

Farris Johnson, Sr., believes that values like “honesty,” “compassion,” “hard work” and “dedication” can still be taught to black youth in desegregated schools where teachers and students no longer live in the same neighborhood or share the same background. However, he maintains that the teaching of those values did erode to some extent when the schools of Athens integrated. Something changed, he claimed in his interviews, after the black schools closed (Johnson, July 12, 2006, Field notes; July 17, 2006, Field notes; July 26, 2006, Field notes; March 14, 2007, Field notes).

Smith claimed that her happiest memories of childhood are from school. However, she firmly believes that the changes that took place after integration resulted in “black folks losing something.” In her interviews, she added that black Athenians lost both their community schools as well as the 100 years of heritage grounded in those schools (Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview). Smith and other students believe that most people in the black community of Athens wanted to be or have their children be a part of what the school had to offer. The school was the center of the community. In 21st century Clarke County schools the number of dropouts is high, and many families refuse to go to the schools unless their children are in trouble or danger (Maddox (Lay), July 11, 2006, Interview; Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview).

Even though Smith was scared of her elementary school principal, she knew that Miss. Freeman cared for her enough to teach her right from wrong. Even though some of her teachers

were very strict, she knew that those teachers simply expected the very best of her. “We had the kind of teacher[s] that you just didn’t mess with. I mean you just didn’t. But... we knew that they loved us” (Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview). C. Maddox recalled that his teachers always expected 100% of his classmates and took nothing less. High expectations were the norm, not the exception in Athens’s black schools (Maddox, July 20, 2006, Interview).

It was not just the location of the school or the materials in the buildings that these students recall so fondly. It was the relationships that these students built, the family that they found, and the support and care that they were provided that made the teachers in these schools honorable members of the community and made the schools into community centers. The teachers in these community hubs were not only educators, they were surrogate parents, counselors, and disciplinarians who believed that they were not only ethically, but “ethnically responsible,” to prepare black youth to assist in the “liberation” of and improved “quality of life” for all blacks. These community leaders, whose work was grounded in their “collective black identity,” understood that the success of the community depended on the success of the schools (Adair, 1984).

Siddle Walker and many others have written stories similar to this one where black schools were viewed as the heart of the community because of the caring, human relationships developed in and out of the school walls (Siddle Walker, 1996; Vasquez, 1988). Irvine suggests that the interactions in these schools allowed for a type of “cultural synchronization” that many believe was not and maybe cannot be replicated in integrated schools (Irvine, 1990). Several black Athenians noted that in Athens’s black schools, everyone cared for the children and everyone took an interest in their lives (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview; Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview; Roberts-Bailey, 2006, Field notes; Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview).

Sewell observed that, during his childhood, the black community of Athens really did “raise the village”³¹⁴ (July 11, 2006, Field notes). And several participants in the study added that this is a “far cry” from what the schools, the teachers, or the community is like in the new century (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview; Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview).

All of the individuals interviewed for this work discuss the deep sadness and emotional turmoil over the loss of community schools after integration. One example of the turmoil was seen in the story of Agnes Green. The relationship between Green and her “warm demanders,” those teachers who cared so much that they refused to take any foolishness, was so important to her that she gave up access to an “equal” education to return to a segregated school setting (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview; Vasquez, 1988). Green’s move would probably not have surprised Tony Brown, writer of *Black Lies, White Lies: The Truth According to Tony Brown*, who believes that the implementation of integration stifled many black Americans because, in one sweep, it removed thousands of black role models from their community leadership positions (Brown, 1995). Green believed that the integrated school offered her many material and superficial things, but it could not offer her the *caring relationships* that she craved to find school success (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

Even though the students in black schools were treated unjustly, legally oppressed, and victimized by poor resources, they had teachers and principals in their schools that created amazing environments of *teaching* and *learning* that excited and motivated their students to achieve at their highest level. These educators used their classrooms to negate the larger societal messages suggesting that blacks were incapable of academic, social, political, and economic success and reframed their pedagogy to help black youth believe that they could achieve. These teachers never underestimated what their children could do and who they could be, and, for that

and many other reasons, they were cherished and esteemed community members (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview; Siddle Walker, 1996).

While most history textbooks present segregated schools through photographs and statistics about the dilapidated state of the buildings and the inequity of resources provided for black students, more recent and growing research is discussing the positive characteristics of black education and schooling prior to integration. These scholars, including myself, believe that the information about the inequities ought to be included in the texts. Nevertheless, we hope that black schools not be remembered solely for these oppressive characteristics. Black schools should also be remembered for the communal feeling developed in them among teachers, students, parents, and the community. These stories also have their “rightful place” in educational history. It is a history, I believe, from which we can learn (Dempsey & Noblit, 1993; Dougherty, 1998, 1999, 2004; Fairclough, 2001, 2004, 2007; Foner & Pacheco, 1984; Irvine, 2002a, 2002b; Morris, 2004; Morris, 1999, 2001; Siddle Walker, 1993, 1996; Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004).

Reunifying Community Efforts

Farris Johnson, Sr., one of many black educational leaders who maneuvered through the turbulence of school integration, believes that Athens can once again unite for the purpose of educating its children—all its children. This section of the chapter is based on the ideas and themes drawn from those interviewed for this work who offered solutions to improve the Clarke County School District for all students. Of course these ideas are only a portion of many that could conceivably prompt larger universal educational changes that are needed at the local, state, and national level to rejuvenate education in high poverty and high minority communities like Clarke County and to maintain positive educational change in those communities.

To deal with all of the diverse realities of a changing community and the world, dramatic system changes are required. School systems are essentially large institutional environments that are intricately interconnected and codependent on numerous other community systems.

Piecemeal and band-aid attempts at changing components of the system may result in short-term gains, but not long-term change. Systemic change requires a model that includes inspirational leadership as well as dedicated community involvement.

Therefore, I believe that the Athens-Clarke County community can reunify its efforts for the development of successful schools for all children with these efforts:

1. developing more transformational teachers and leaders who, to the extent possible, match the demographics of the students that they serve, and
2. reinventing schools as community centers through a community-schools model.

Both of these solutions require the schools and the school system to engage the community so that all members of the system (e.g., students, parents, teachers, administrators, community members, and policy makers) can participate in and be responsible for improving schools. By modeling this type of change, other systems that are interlocked with the schools (e.g., businesses, political and governmental agencies) may also change to better meet the needs of the children and families of the community. With these components in place, I believe that the community can move the schools forward together.

Developing Transformational Teachers and Leaders

As I have summarized previously, before the Civil War, public schools were almost nonexistent for blacks. Soon thereafter, missionary schools with highly educated white teachers began to open throughout the South to address the needs of the uneducated black youth. After black students began graduating from these missionary schools, many opened their own private or public schools (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978). The development of these schools helped to

dramatically reduce the illiteracy rate for blacks in the United States from 95% in 1860 to 16% in 1930 (Anderson, 1988). Although credit for these gains was given to the highly educated white missionary teachers, most of these success stories came from black students who attended poorly built, run-down, unheated one-room schoolhouses with overworked, underpaid and often poorly trained black teachers (Caliver, 1970; Litwack, 1998a).

From these substandard schools came a surge of black educational leadership that unified for the collective purpose of securing adequate resources for the economic and political advancement of Athens's black community (Glickman et al., 2001). Like Du Bois, Cooper, Washington, and Wells, Athens's black educational activists like Samuel Harris, Eugene Holmes, Homer Edwards, Sr., Judia Jackson Harris, and Farris Johnson, Sr., persuaded the black Athenians toward "social action" (Goodrich, 1976; Hester, 2001; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978). These leaders developed grassroots, self-help initiatives that drastically improved the social, educational, and physical status of black Athenians. Understanding the need for both vertical and horizontal leadership development, these leaders each played a role in their local community, as well as at the state and national levels. In the end, these individuals became the beacons of light who helped the black community develop "problem-resolving strategies" to overcome white injustice (Hester, 2001).

The idea of "transformational leadership skills" did not become popular until the 1970s. However, if it had been an available term at the turn of the century through the 1950s, these leaders would have been recognized as epitomizing such skills because of their ability to *transcend* their personal beliefs and self interests for the betterment of the school and students. Siddle Walker suggests that this type of "degree of personal sacrifice" can partially be explained by the "shared cultural understandings about the needs of the race" among the teachers, the

students, and the communities (Siddle Walker, 1996, p. 205). As a result of these shared beliefs, black educators were recognized as community leaders who would help blacks to identify their “common core values” and develop the skills necessary for those values to be attained (Bolman & Deal, 2001; Edwards & Willie, 1998; Pellicer, 2003; Sergiovanni, 1992). Good teaching in black schools became synonymous with preparation of black youth for successfully negotiating the “white man’s world” (Siddle Walker, 1996).

Visionaries like Harris, Edwards, Sr., and F. Johnson had all of the characteristics required of highly successful leaders. They were *optimistic* about the future of Athens’s black community and its economic and political advancement. They were *honest*, truthful, open, and respectful to their students, and they were *considerate* to the less fortunate members of their community. In addition, they *modeled* successful behaviors for their students, and they were highly *visible*, making them natural community leaders in and out of the school setting (Blase & Anderson, 1995; Blase & Blase, 2001; Blase & Kirby, 2000; Blase & Blase, 1998, 2004; Bracey, 1993; Pellicer, 2003).

At a time when whites were threatened by growing literacy in Athens’s black community, these educational leaders pushed for more resources, higher salaries and training for black teachers, safer water and buildings, and equitable distributions of supplies. The leadership skills of these “defenders of freedom” made them central figures in the educational struggle that has freed many black Athenians from the grips of poverty and oppression (Foner & Pacheco, 1984). The schools that these leaders ran produced large numbers of black Athenians who were able to attend college, open their own businesses, win political races, establish faith-based institutions, and own their own homes (O'Brien, 1999; Thurmond, March 19, 1978).

Although the information in this dissertation on leaders like Samuel Harris, Jackson Harris, Edwards, and Holmes is mainly anecdotal, their stories corroborate the pattern that black educators have historically been recognized as activists who encouraged their students and families to challenge the status quo and succeed in the face of oppression. Athens's black schools were environments that allowed black teachers to develop close relationships with their students based on empathy, cultural affirmation, hope, high expectations, and an intimate knowledge and understanding of the black community (See Foster, 2001; Morris, 2004; Morris, 1999; Scott, 1980; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978). Their transformational leadership skills enabled them to inspire and motivate their students to move forward.

The transformational leadership in Athens's black schools could account for some of the "higher levels of personal commitment to organizational goals" found in those schools. Current researchers suggest that transformational teachers and leaders often transcend their "personal interest" in the interest of the whole and they build meaning and inspire their students and staff. Leaders like Edwards built schools with vision and goals that were focused on intellectual stimulation and individualized support. In addition, they consistently relayed their high expectations and their individual support for their teachers, students, and community (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999, p. 113). This is why they were deemed amazingly successful leaders who could engage students and "get them to do just about anything" (Johnson, July 17, 2006, Field notes).

It is often forgotten that prior to *Brown*, at least half of the black professionals in the United States were schoolteachers (James & Phi Delta Kappa. Center on Evaluation Development and Research., 1993). After *Brown* "dismantled" the discriminatory U.S. system of education, 30,000 black teachers in the South lost their jobs (Cooper, 1989; Foster, 1997). Prior to this time, the occupation of teaching was viewed by the black community as equally

prestigious to the ministry, medicine, or law. Black teachers and school leaders were seen as solidifiers of the black community who provided the focus for “individual and collective aspirations” (Morris, 2004; Morris, 1999, 2001). Today’s schools are failing everyone by not providing students with sufficient opportunities to work with minority individuals as teachers and administrators in “roles of authority” (Carrington & Skelton, 2003).

Research suggests that, without a representative number of minority educators, we distort the “social reality” of our pluralistic society for all children. Teachers matched to their students by gender and ethnicity can serve to “break down cultural stereotypes and the implicit messages inherent in the hidden curriculum” while also representing symbols of achievement (Carrington & Skelton, 2003, pp. 253-265). Black educators are needed in our schools to provide intrinsic understanding of the backgrounds, life experiences, and attitudes of black students. Some researchers suggest that the common social identity between black educators and their students allows black teachers first-hand knowledge and inherent understandings of the experiences of minority students. This alone makes them “crucial contributors” in the development of schools as community centers (Gordon, 2000; King, Summer, 1993; Lewis & ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education., 1996; Reed, 1985).

Reinventing Schools as Community Centers and Hubs

A large amount of research has been gathered on the effectiveness of schools serving as community hubs (Dempsey & Noblit, 1993; Morris, 1999; Siddle Walker, 1996; Siddle Walker, 2000). Designed by strong leaders, these schools are welcoming environments that allow their students, families, and communities access to school and community resources during the school day, before and after school hours, and in the summer months. The expectations grounded in these schools are high, because they are shared by the leader, the staff, the students, and the

community. The vision of the school is collaborative, and the decisions about the school are shared among all constituents. This section indicates how the work of Athens's educational leadership can help (re)develop a "climate of expectation" in the schools through a community schools model (Blase & Kirby, 2000; Gaines, 1996; Glickman et al., 2001; Scott, 1980).

In 2001, the Coalition of Community Schools developed a vision collaboratively with 170 organizations from diverse sectors that specified that community-centered schools should have "high standards" and *high expectations* for all students, hire highly "*qualified teachers*," and develop and implement a "*rigorous curriculum*." These schools should utilize the community as a resource to help "engage" students and their families in "learning and service," while helping them become "problem-solvers" in their neighborhoods and communities. This makes everyone responsible for the education of the community's children. This type of educational model requires that the students, school staff, families, and community to "decide together" how to best support community development and "student learning" (Harkavy & Blank, 2001).

As I have documented in this research study, I have found that these patterns have existed before in Athens's black schools. As for *expectations*, H. Stroud, a 1948 graduate of Union Baptist, said that "there was no question" whether or not he and his siblings were going to be successful in school because his parents, his teachers, and the community expected it (July 18, 2006, Interview). Linston stated that his teachers demanded success and reinforced it by telling black students that they could achieve as well as any white child. Nunnally recalled that the expectations of Athens's black community were lofty, but the teachers and community relayed to the children that they should never underestimate themselves because the Athens "parenthood" had their backs (July 25, 2006, Interview; July 17, 2006, Interview).

Athens's black schools were full of *highly qualified teachers* and administrators, many of them having numerous degrees and continuing their education after they started teaching. Attending prestigious schools like Morris Brown, Atlanta University, Savannah State University, and Morehouse, Athens's teachers were some of the most highly educated people in the community. But "traditional" training was not necessarily what these teachers had that made them quality educators. These teachers, Smith recognized, had a keen ability to demonstrate their "love" for their work and the students they served through structured and disciplined environments focused on student needs and high expectations (July 11, 2006, Interview). They had "faith" in their students, Nesbit added, and as a result, the community "trusted" them (July 25, 2006, Interview).

In addition to this research is a body of work on the compassionate, motivating, nurturing, and dedicated black teachers of the segregated South. While teaching the subject matter, these teachers were able to provide students with the confidence that they needed to meet the expectations of the school and the community (Dempsey & Noblit, 1993; Fairclough, 2001, 2004, 2007; Foster, 1997; Foster, 2001; Siddle Walker, 1996). Unlike today's schools, where many black children feel alienated or out of touch, the previously all-black schools were designed specifically by these qualified teachers with the black child in mind. However, Turner suggests that any interested teachers today, no matter their background, can "model their interaction with black students on these lessons from the past" and find success (Turner, 2003, pp. 218-219).

As for a *rigorous curriculum*, it is apparent from several of the people interviewed for this work that the expectations of meeting high academic standards existed in the "hard" and "tough" classes they took in Athens's black schools. Many of the students claim to have already

learned to read prior to entering first grade because students who could not read would be immediately behind other students. No matter the costs, parents either sat with their children in the evenings, drilling them on reading skills, or they scrimped together the funds to send their children to Little Knox or Ms. Wimberly's prekindergarten classes so that youngsters would be prepared with the skills necessary to start school (Maddox, July 20, 2006, Interview; C. W. Stroud, July 18, 2006, Interview; H. B. Stroud, Sr., July 18, 2006, Interview).

In many cases, students were persuaded to enter academically challenging classes, like foreign languages, because the teachers believed that they could take the classes and be successful (Johnson, July 12, 2006, Field notes; Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview; C. W. Stroud, July 18, 2006, Interview). Some teachers even went so far as to manipulate students into standing in front of the room to talk or complete a problem on the board because they wanted the students to give more effort than they were demonstrating (Maddox, July 20, 2006, Interview; Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview; Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview). C. Maddox suggested that this "tough love" was what made him work toward meeting the expectations set by his teachers. He recalled his sixth- and seventh-grade teacher who refused to accept anything less than excellent work from him and the other students. She corrected him for even minor errors. When this happened, he would often claim that his work was better than other students in the class and she would respond that the work was not good enough because it was not perfect (Maddox, July 20, 2006, Interview).

So if Athens's black schools had some of the positive characteristics that are now defined as successful community school characteristics, why are we not embracing those traits? To start with, some researchers still question whether black schools were productive community centers as suggested by the people interviewed for this work. These scholars believe that the people

telling the stories in this and other similar research are simply nostalgic about “the good old days” (Ritchie, 1995).

I reject this interpretation wholeheartedly. I do not believe that we should return to segregated schools or that we should “strap” and “drill” our students into submission. On the contrary, neither of these will allow today’s students meet their highest potential. However, I do believe that the accounts in my research demonstrate that Athens’s black schools, like other all-black schools throughout the South, were “more demanding” of black youth than the diverse schools of today. I believe that understanding the instructional and institutional practices and “schooling characteristics” of all-black schools prior to *Brown* can help scholars, school leaders, and teachers in implement new and old strategies that could change the achievement of black and other minority children (Freedman, 2004; Randolph, 2004).

Researchers like Fairclough caution educators who are embracing the nostalgia of black schools because the stories *are* sometimes recounted through rose-colored glasses. He recognizes, as do I, that the only alternative for blacks to gain equality in public education at the time was to have their schools desegregated. However, Fairclough notes that the vision and work of the educators in black schools definitely surpassed simple classroom teaching. He calls these educators a “class of their own” who led their community through missionary, diplomatic, and political activism. These teachers shared a belief that “education could liberate the black masses from ignorance, degradation, and poverty” (Fairclough, 2007, p. 7). And though it might seem to some historians that stories of all black schools are simply “elegiac,” I suggest that the simple modeling of these attributes and beliefs by leaders like Samuel F. Harris turned schools like Athens High and Industrial into community environments where students could learn about how to better themselves and their community.

I realize that the stories relayed in this work are only a segment of the whole story and that other stories might not be so romantic, like the story Smith told about mean, old Miss Winfield whose expectations caused Smith a lifetime of stage fright (Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview). This work simply details some of the positive traits, the sense of community, that some students felt about Athens's black schools prior to integration. It is important to note that other stories still need to be told, like the stories of those students who dropped out of these schools and those students who did not believe that their teachers were caring individuals. Interviewees like Nunnally and C. Stroud touch on the stories of these students in their interviews. Nunnally, for example, suggested that students with disabilities did not attend or complete Athens's black schools, and Stroud noted that several of his friends dropped out of school in 1956 when AHIS and Union merged. A complete representation of Athens's black schools must also include these stories, work that is yet to be done.

I may be naive to suggest that the positive traits emphasized in this work, caring teachers, high expectations, community support for schools, can be regained after all of the sociopolitical changes that have taken place over the past 30 to 50 years. However, groups like the Coalition of Community Schools and others are suggesting otherwise. Today, several thousand schools are reinventing themselves using community schools models. Harkavy and Blank suggest that the community school philosophy is not "just another program" being imposed on schools. Instead, it is a way of thinking, acting, and implementing educational reform that recognizes the "historic central role" that schools have played in our communities and the power that communities can have when they are "working together" for the "common good" (Harkavy & Blank, 2001). Community schools can educate our children, strengthen our families and bring together communities, help make education stronger, and ensure that all children are successful.

Research shows that almost 50% of black families in the United States live below the poverty line, and one in three African American children under the age of 15 is poor (Graham, 1987; Ladson-Billings, 1994). The proportion of black students in today's Clarke County schools is almost 60%. When Latino and other minorities are added, the district student population is comprised of 73% minority students. Of the 10,000 students who attend school in the district, almost 7,000 of them live in poverty. Throughout the county, one of every four children in the Athens community lives in poverty. Most of these children are members of minority populations. Almost 36,000 of the local residents are poor, many of whom are black, making Athens the fifth highest poverty community in the nation among communities of the same size (Bishop, 2006).

Poor communities like Athens continue to strive for racial and economic equality. The promise of integration as a way to gain this equality was lost on many Athenians who continue to struggle with economic, social, and cultural problems. The development or redevelopment of community schools might be central in reigniting the political, economic, and social development of Athens's black communities and other communities with similar demographics.

Athens's schools have become isolated institutions that are no longer part of the community. Peter Senge suggests that "until we go back to thinking about school as the totality of the environment in which a child grows up, we can expect no deep changes." He believes that change requires a community of "people living and working together, assuming some common responsibility for something that's of deep concern and interest to all of them, their children." The community, he adds, includes "our families, neighbors, and community organizations, as well as our health, social-services, and family-support agencies; our youth- and community-development groups; our colleges and universities; and our civic, business, religious, and cultural

organizations.” Working together, he believes, can help change occur (Harkavy & Blank, 2001, pp.39-41).

These (re)envisioned community schools must have teachers who can build relationships with minority students. Teachers who feel unable to meet the educational needs of black and minority students because of differences in their cultural upbringing or beliefs must be provided with access to black and other minority teachers and community members who can model for them positive ways to “interact with, motivate, and instruct” minority students. This can happen through culturally relevant educational philosophies, instructional strategies, and behavior management styles, but it must happen (Rong & Preissle, 1997).

Community schools must also expect not only that teachers role model for their students, but that they also become liaisons to the community, “cultural conduits,” and activists who are fighting for an equalized education for all children (Dixon, 2003). Research gathered from organizations like the Academy for Educational Development, the Stanford Research Institute, the Chapin Hall Centers for Children, and others suggests that community schools can have a “positive impact” on “student learning, healthy youth development, family well-being, and community life” in communities like Athens because of the relationships built by these individuals. So with high expectations set by a highly qualified staff offering a rigorous curriculum and building strong relationships with their students and the community, Athens’s schools can begin to change the landscape of Clarke County for the better.

Next Steps

When historians from dominant groups tell stories of black schools prior to integration, they are typically sad and degrading. They usually suggest that the schools were dilapidated, underfunded, exploited institutions with unskilled teachers who were just trying to survive. I

hope that this work continues to build on the growing counterstories to that type of research. The next step is for people to read this type of work and begin to understand the success found in many of these institutions despite the oppression surrounding them. Towns, schools, and people sometimes have to return to where they came from and understand their own history before they can move forward. Reinventing Athens's schools as centers of the Athens community and continuing this type of community history will, I believe, allow the community and its people to build a better future.

This research was designed to analyze the history of black school development in Athens through archival data and extensive personal interviews to better understand how this historically black community lost touch with its involvement in the education of its youth. My hope is that the research will excite others to become involved in the public schools of Athens to reignite the relationships, trust, high expectations, and community that were previously grounded in Athens's schools. Historical community research projects like this one have been proven to help communities regain confidence that their experiences and their perceptions are worthwhile, while also "encouraging community action and cohesion, closing the gap between generations, and revitalizing those marginalized by age and other disadvantage" (Slim et al., 1995, pp. 14-15).

Over 5 years I have done intensive archival research, and I have interviewed 17 people, former students, teachers, and administrators, connected in some manner to the development of Athens's black schools. What I have found during this enlightening adventure was a desire by many more individuals to have their stories collected to enhance this history. Perhaps this community history, along with other contributions like Michael Thurmond's *A Story Untold*, *Black Men and Women of Athens*, will excite others to learn more about the history of Athens's black communities and the history of Athens's schools. Maybe some of them will even want to

continue this type of work. I would be honored to help anyone interested in furthering this research because it is not “my research”; it is the community’s history, and I would feel that I had failed those who entrusted me to pass on their stories if the work simply stopped with me.³¹⁵ The story of that endeavor, what I call how this research developed, is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 10 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH DESIGN

As I began my journey as an educator, I remember a young boy from my second year teaching named Brandon whose struggles were beyond my conception. The difficulty he had with social and emotional development, academic achievement, and societal challenges affecting his home and community were beyond my scope of understanding. Yet he wanted to learn and I was his teacher. We struggled together.

As a black child living with a mother in her twenties and grandmother in her thirties, neither of whom had completed high school, in the semiurban area of Athens, Georgia, Brandon was fighting a daily battle with poverty, educational inequity, social injustice, and disintegrating family and community structures. When I first met Brandon, in one of the area's predominantly black middle schools, I immediately noticed his and his family's disinterest in the educational process. While his struggles were many, I struggled mainly with my misunderstandings of how Brandon's daily battles were directly affecting his ability to learn. As I watched him fight to overcome these issues and achieve physically, socially, psychologically, and intellectually, I decided that I needed to challenge my white, middle-class understanding of the world and learn how to support Brandon in his efforts. This was where my career as a researcher began.

Background of the Research Design

Throughout its history, black Athenians prided themselves in the development of black educational institutions.³¹⁶ Athens's black schools, from their inception in the late 1860s, became community centers where the social and economic development of the black community was nurtured (Johnson, 1916). Michael Thurmond, an Athens native elected as Georgia's first black Labor Commissioner, suggests that Athens's black schools were a major contributor to his sense of "black identity" and community. Part of this community identity, he notes, was the strong

desire to work together to build supportive and equitable schools for black youth (Alasuutari, 1995).

Over the past 30 to 50 years, however, negative social and economic issues like high dropout rates and job loss have increasingly affected the Athens community. As a result, many black Athenians have become indifferent about the development or progress of their schools. Some locals suggest that the black community that developed around Athens's black schools began to dissolve following the closing of Athens's last black school in 1970 (Maddox, July 20, 2006, Interview; Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview).

Similarly to other southern communities dealing with school desegregation, Athens's newly integrated schools provoked frustration and apathy in Athens's black community. For black children, it seemed that they were pushed into environments that were unfamiliar with teachers who were uncaring and indifferent. For many black teachers and black administrators, it was the end of a long history of education being a profession of honor and prestige.³¹⁷ For community members, it meant the closing of almost every one of Athens's black schools where they had previously been raised and nurtured. The disappointment over the loss of their teachers and schools discouraged black Athenians from continuing their involvement in the development of Athens's schools. This dissatisfaction, along with the pressure of other community development issues, likely started the withdrawal of the black community from the development of Athens's black educational opportunities.

The purpose of this dissertation research has been to document the social and community history of Athens by studying the growth of Athens's black schools from the 1860s through 1970. The stories in this research suggest that this was a time when the members of the black community of Athens worked together to build public and private educational institutions that

were highly regarded throughout the state. The stories suggest a nonlinear, “slow,” “haphazard,” and somewhat unpredictable progress of Athens’s black schools (Fairclough, 2001). In addition, the research suggests that at some point or points, the black community support that helped to develop Athens’s black schools slowly began to decline.

Using the method of historical ethnography,³¹⁸ I wanted to study this span of events by combining two very different research methodologies. I used *historical inquiry*³¹⁹ along with *critical ethnography*³²⁰ to try to understand the development of black education in Athens and to try to decipher the characteristics of Athens’s black schools that community members believe were lost following school desegregation. By adding a critical³²¹ ethnographic component to this historical research, I hoped that I would demonstrate a relationship between “liberation and history,” where history becomes the “analytic tool” that provides voice to those previously silenced and encourages future “community action and cohesion.” Some researchers believe that this type of work can actual close “the gap between generations and revitalizing those marginalized by age and other disadvantage” (Slim et al., 1995, pp. 14-15). I believe that this type of community history can help Athens’s black community gain new confidence that their past experiences, perceptions, and beliefs are valued and help them work together with other communities to build stronger educational systems for all of Athens’s children (see also Anyon, 1997; Kearns, 1997; Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1997; Quantz, 1992; Slim et al., 1995).

Even though I have included some of the traditional components of a dissertation in this work (i.e., the problem, review of related literature, methodology, findings, summary, conclusions, and recommendations and evaluation), the nature of this work has not lent itself to those areas being artificially segmented. Instead, I wanted them to evolve as the story evolved. Similar to the work of Siddle Walker, I tried to allow this his-herstory to flow as one seamless

narrative that merges the literature with the data and to hold the possible solutions, research methods, and conclusions until the end.

Developing an Epistemological and Theoretical Framework

I chose qualitative over quantitative research methodologies for this study so that I could use descriptive and interpretive narratives, developed from the voices of teachers and students, to help explain what Athens's black schools historically meant to black Athenians (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Instead of using the value-free manipulation of numerical data found in quantitative research, I tried to build a "complex, holistic picture" of the history of Athens's black schools by using qualitative methods. This allowed me to develop intimate relationships with those whom I was researching (Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, 2000; Silverman, 2000).

The goal of this research has been to unify theory, method, and praxis to influence social and political policy at the local, national, and federal levels, especially in the area of black education. Denzin and Lincoln suggest that qualitative researchers can "isolate target populations, show the immediate effects of certain programs on such groups, and isolate the constraints that operate against policy changes" for such groups (2000). This was certainly my objective. In the end, I hope I was able to create a space for those being studied to (re)develop a sense of agency and a voice in the future growth and development of Athens's schools (Silverman, 2000).

Because I believe that our cultural interactions greatly affect the way we see, feel, and interpret the world, social constructionism is the epistemological stance³²² that informs my personal theoretical perspective³²³ (Crotty, 1998; Silverman, 2004). Seeing social constructionism as a strand of constructivism,³²⁴ I recognize knowledge as something built from

historical and sociocultural interactions, and I believe that the black community of Athens can be better understood through social artifacts and historically situated interactions among people, such as those found in schools (Crotty, 1998; Schwandt, 1997). I agree with Gergen's argument that knowledge should be viewed with suspicion because it can be interpreted differently by diverse communities, and I reject the realist epistemological notion that objectively accurate representations of the world can be produced (1985; 2001). However, I do believe that studying the "world of experience" from the viewpoint of "historically and culturally" positioned people can and does benefit research as a whole (Schwandt, 2000).

For this work, I debated whether or not to take an interpretive approach, an uncritical exploration of cultural meaning, or to take a more critical and reflective approach that might allow me to deal with issues of otherness and marginality (Crotty, 1998; Gordon, 1985; Schwandt, 2000). Interpretive approaches are typically used when the research purpose is to understand behavior through social interaction, while critical research is focused on aiding the fight against "inequality and domination" by exposing hidden patterns of meaning within social interactions (Carspecken & Apple, 1992; Crotty, 1998). Because the focus of my research was to better comprehend and promote change in the repressive social structure of modern black education and the schools serving this function, I decided to take a critical theoretical perspective.³²⁵ Using these methods, I have tried to find out how the reality³²⁶ of education and the power structures that affected this reality were "defined, interpreted, and constructed" by the members of Athens's black community prior to school desegregation (LeCompte, Millroy, & Preissle, 1992a).

Determining Who I Am as a Researcher

Before I began my research and throughout the earliest stages of my research planning, I struggled to determine who I was as a researcher. Would I be an *educational historian*, who gathers the detail, verifies the facts, and retains “the truth” for some historical event(s) in a constructive and accurate narrative format, or would I be an *educational anthropologist*, whose goal is to precisely explain the “cultural behavior and meaning” of a group as they deal with their educational development (Jacob & Jordan, 1993; Kearns, 1997)? Using a model described as historical ethnography,³²⁷ in which “memories, thoughts, and perceptions” of those being studied are analyzed, I decided to apply both these of these research traditions (Wood, 1992).

In her book *Their Highest Potential*, Siddle Walker uses this dual method to reconstruct the activities and events through the school history of Caswell County Training School in North Carolina from 1934 to 1969. Her research objective was to provide a clearer understanding of “why and how certain events occurred” and how they were regarded by the black students and community surrounding the school (Siddle Walker, 1996). Similar to this work, I have provided “individual representations of the past as it actually existed,” while simultaneously explaining the “meaning that school life held” for the black community members of Athens, Georgia (Hegel & Sibree, 1991/1822; Siddle Walker, 1996). Siddle Walker did an exceptional job of interlocking her data with current literature – each supporting the other. Her work is seamless and flows as one ongoing story in the tradition of the historian, or African storyteller, to provide a cultural understanding of the environment as it was seen by those who lived it (Scheub, 1990; Siddle Walker, 1996).

Jean Anyon’s book, *Ghetto Schooling*, though based on an economist model, also uses the story-telling model to illuminate how the snowballing effects of “economics and political

decisions” within school districts over time make positions of central actors “almost unbearable” and can constrain community members from securing positive school reform (1997, p. xix). However, her work differs from Siddle Walker’s in that her analysis of the history of eight schools in inner city Newark, NJ, results at the end of the work in the development of a comprehensive reform model that addresses the underlying issues affecting the decline of school support (Anyon, 1997). My final project has merged these two approaches by using some of the techniques of Siddle Walker to help secure the voice of the community and the techniques of Anyon to help develop some ways that might improve today’s schools (Anyon, 1997; Siddle Walker, 1996).

I have two main reasons for selecting a historical ethnographic framework. First, by using a historical mode of inquiry, I can clarify and provide insight on “contemporary policy questions” by helping others see how formal education is embedded in our social and cultural lives (Butchart, 1986). Second, I can use the heritage of critical educational ethnography to engage in a cultural critique” of Athens’s black schools by reviewing the larger sociocultural, political, and economic issues that link these schools to themes of “oppression, conflict, struggle, power, and praxis” (Schwandt, 1997, p. 22). Of course, I did not spend 5 years collecting these data to simply redeliver the details of how these schools developed. Like most critical researchers, I am committed to praxis, to educational change through emancipatory research and action (Trueba, 1999). In the end, I hope that my work can help present day Athenians see the “good” within the previously all-black schools of Athens and learn from them (Siddle Walker, 1993, 1996).

Developing Research Questions

To what degree does a community's ethnic, cultural, religious, social class, or any other group have the right to decide how the youth of that community are educated or for what purposes its schools are used? My objective was to seek some of these answers from the black community of Athens so that educational leaders and community members could use it in the future development of Athens's public schools. I have tried to address the following research questions, using a wide range of interconnected methods and empirical materials such as personal experiences, life stories, oral histories, and archives to describe both the "routine and problematic moments" that were the basis of the strong relationships built in Athens's black schools that resulted in the schools being remembered as the centers of community activity and engagement (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

- What were the economic and political forces that contributed to the development of Athens' black schools?
- Before desegregation, what role did the black community play in the shaping of Athens's black schools, including curriculum, general policies and practices, and beliefs about schools?
- How do black community members describe their schooling in Athens's black schools before school desegregation? What characteristics of the schools were most "valued" by the community (Siddle Walker, 1993, 1996)?
- How did the cultural background of black educators (teachers and school leaders) affect their choice of professions, the way that they related to children of color, and the level of involvement that they had in the all-black schools of Athens? What role did these black educators play within the community?
- How can educational reformers use the answers to these questions to guide them to "corrective action" that will promote future community involvement by black community members in Athens's schools (Anyon, 1997)?

Using Critical Historical Ethnography

I have chosen an ethnographic design because it is a holistic research model that tries to cover as much territory as possible about the culture and subculture being studied (Fetterman, 1998). As an ethnographer, I began my studies by looking at interactions among people in the ordinary setting of school. From these interactions, I conceptualized and attributed a “culture” to the group being studied. Using a critical ethnographic methodology, I have been able to study how black schools affected black Athenians prior to desegregation by examining their “learned patterns of behavior, custom, and ways of life” and their artifacts, relics, stories, rituals, and myths (Schwandt, 1997; Trueba, 1999).

Using historiographic methods,³²⁸ I have been able to track the “process of educational change” for this group to expose relationships between the group’s sociocultural, political, and educational present and past (Gale, 2001). By merging these two research models, I have derived a critical historical ethnography that allowed me to unify the intellectual activity of research with the *praxis* of daily life. Using Freire’s idea of praxis as reflection plus action, my inquiry has allowed me to critically review the development of these black schools in an attempt to empower the black community of Athens with knowledge of their successes and trials so that they may become agents of change in our present community (Freire, 2000/1970).

To build a “portrait” of the cultural values and norms of Athens’s black community, I engaged in ongoing fieldwork that included information gathering through interviews and archival research (Creswell, 1998). Van Maanen suggests that fieldwork is one of the best ways to determine how others achieve their group understanding of the world (Van Maanen, 1988). This type of fieldwork typically requires a commitment to remain in the community being studied over an extended period of time. Even though I did not formally live in the community

that I studied for all of the past 5 years of this research, I consider my work for the past 12 years in Athens's public schools as preliminary fieldwork that has provided me with the arena (as a teacher, school administrator, and district administrator) to design and implement my research plans.³²⁹

Bracketing Subjectivities/Biases

My task as a researcher carries serious intellectual and moral responsibilities. I must, as should those whom I study and those who read my research, acknowledge that the images or portraits that I derive from my ethnographic work on Athens's black schools will not be neutral (Van Maanen, 1988). I do not consider subjectivities³³⁰ as negative components of researchers' self-identity, and I doubt that a complete subjectivity-exorcism is really possible (Roman, 1992). Simply put, I recognize subjectivities and biases as being grounded in a researcher's personal history, life experiences, and professional training. These are derived from the "historical time period in which one grows up," as well as "from one's sex, social class, and ethnicity" (Jansen & Peshkin, 1992, pp. 705-706). Because I cannot change these events and become a culture-free person, I have embraced my subjectivities³³¹ as facets of my construct that help me determine how I view and understand the world.

After considering the impact of subjectivities and biases, I strategically designed procedures to bracket my presuppositions to reduce the effect of them on my research (Peshkin, 1988). I cannot claim that I found the correct bracketing technique for all of the subjectivities that I contended with during this research. However, I did achieve the first and foremost step – understanding that the subjectivities exist.³³²

I began my bracketing process by placing my subjectivities, in what some might term a subjectivity audit, clearly before the community I studied so that together we could discuss ways

to bracket them (Heshusius, 1994; Peshkin, 1988; Preissle (Goetz) & LeCompte, 1984; Smith, 1998). To help explain that process, I have included a list of the subjectivities that I dealt with during this research.

To this project, I bring ...

- An understanding of what it means to be white, middle-classed, privileged, and traditionally educated in the U.S.;
- An understanding of southern white culture, because I was raised in Georgia;
- Positive personal schooling experiences;
- Many years of study in the field of education and the sociocultural issues that affect it;
- An intuitive understanding of the word community, or a common sense of identity, though I recognize that my own common identity differs greatly from the participants whom I studied;
- A community-development ideology;
- A desire to study the influence of race and class on U.S. schools; and
- An understanding of modern schools through my past teaching and school leadership experiences.

To this project, I am unable to bring...

- An understanding of severely negative schooling experiences;
- Experience attending a single-race or community-developed school;
- Experiences of being a member of a minority race, class, or ethnic group; or
- Experiences related to being taught by a teacher of color during my K-12 education.

Despite drafting a list of these subjectivity statements, I do not believe that simply admitting them gave me more than a modicum of control over my biases. Heshusius, like Peshkin, believes that there are really two types of subjectivity, the tamed and the untamed.³³³

One of the biggest problems in research is that some researchers do not know how to recognize

or deal with both of these types. Although it was difficult at times, I did not want to simply manage or restrain my subjectivities during this research. I believe that merely managing my subjectivities would not have allowed me to deal with the “hidden power inequities” found in most types of research. Instead, I wanted to investigate the idea of participatory consciousness in which I tried to “completely and nonevaluatively” monitor “my personal reactions,” forget myself, and become embedded in my research. With this type of attentiveness and passion for my research, Heshusius suggests that I might be able to dissolve my subjectivities and biases to open up modes of access to my participants in a way that not there before (1994).

For Siddle Walker, these subjectivity issues were less problematic because she is black, and she was raised in the community that she studied. Moreover, she attended and her mother taught at the school that she researched (Humphrey, 2004). Even though I do not have this level of insider traits, I can admit that I care so much for this research topic that I often lose sight of the fact that I am not black and I am not from the Athens area.³³⁴ I openly and honestly discussed with all of my participants my desire to “really know” what it was like to attend Athens’s black schools and how those schools made them feel. I relayed that the information would help me as a transformational leader trying to best meet the needs of all of the diverse learners in Athens’s schools.

By participating in community engagement activities, city-county planning teams, dialogue groups, training sessions, faith-based programs, neighborhood activities, and educational opportunities, I have tried to orient myself to the black community of Athens without being a blood member.³³⁵ This suggests that I might have had more subjectivity problems than the basic ones listed. To minimize these subjectivities, I sought out people within the black community to help me develop my research questions, as well as to help me find participants to

interview and collect archival data from so that I could fully answer my research questions and analyze my data as the his-herstory unfolded.

Dealing with Race: Cross-Cultural Research and Boundary-Spanning Issues

One of the biggest barriers in educational research is the demographic profile of the scholars completing the research. Because the vast majority of educational researchers (professors and graduate students) are white, the resulting research is often based in white epistemology and research methodology (Grant & Tate, 2001; Scheurich & Young, 1997). I understand this limitation to the extent that my own perspective allows and acknowledge it as a concern within my research. This is one of the reasons that I have chosen the framework of Siddle Walker's historical ethnography so that I can use historical and ethnographic methods in to provide "cultural understanding" of the community and environment from the "perspective" of the participants" (Siddle Walker, 1996). However, the fact that I am not a member of the group being researched means that my voice has directly impacted this research. It is likely though that even if I had been a member of the environment that my perspective would have impacted the research in some manner. No matter what, my background, subjectivities, and biases are tangled up in the research. Even with research that is completed collaboratively, as in the book *Essie's Story*,³³⁶ the background knowledge of the researcher and how the research was designed and implemented affected the study. However, I did use techniques to minimize the skewing of this data.

I have worked hard to modify my research, writing, and communicating styles to meet the needs of those being researched. I have used different writing techniques for different audiences, and, most importantly, I tried to find ways to communicate effectively "within and

across” different types of groups. This type of communication is often called boundary spanning (Schensul, Schensul, Gonzales, & Caro, 1981).

Although some researchers say that boundary crossing is unimportant and others claim that it is quite difficult (especially between different genders), other researchers suggest that interviewing across race, class, or ethnic lines is more effective than not because the participants explain their ethnic experiences in more detail because the interviewer is not a group member (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Weiss, 1994). Like me, most ethnographers study cultural communities³³⁷ different than their own, which makes cross-cultural communication skills critical during the research process. To successfully become a boundary spanner, I became familiar with the “behaviors, goals, and beliefs” of the groups that I studied and continue to study. This has often required me to cross both race and class boundaries to hear the voices of those being studied.³³⁸

As a white researcher working with race research, I had to conceptualize what race is and what it means to the group of black Athenians that I am studying. To do this, I had to decide what race does *not* mean in my research. I do not confine the idea of *race* to the “fixed” or “hierarchically arranged types” that Boas believed contributed to modern racism (Goodman & Leatherman, 2001). Nor do I use it in my work as a means for dividing, ranking, controlling, or justifying the unequal treatment of certain groups (DeMarrais & LeCompte, 1995). Instead, I use the term race in my research to explain the cultural similarities and struggles among blacks that affect the ways that they feel about education and school development and how they were treated in their all-black educational settings.

These similarities are not the result of skin color alone. Instead, they are a result of *social race*, the identification of population groups through common ancestry, religion, language,

customs, shared values, ethnic, racial, and cultural traits,³³⁹ behavior patterns, and a sense of “peoplehood” (Barfield, 1997; DeMarrais & LeCompte, 1995; Harris, 1997). With this conception of race in mind, I hope that this research can become the *vessel* that brings forth the historic understanding of Athens’s black schools from the black community, as well as become the *vehicle* through which this knowledge can be brought to the educational research community to use as a platform for the future development of schooling and educational policy (Van Maanen, 1988).

My career and life goal is to become a “cultural broker,” or “intermediary,” between Athens’s black community and the predominantly white and middle class administration and teaching staff of today’s schools. However, I believe that my role must move beyond the passive position of translating ideas between these two cultural groups. Instead, I want to help bridge these groups in such a way that in the future, **I become obsolete**, and the voices of the now underrepresented become a regular part of all school development conversations and decisions.

Developing a Research Methodology

My research design has included two major research methods,³⁴⁰ interviewing and document collection. My interviewing practices allowed my participants to give details of their experiences and my document and record collection practices allowed me to fill gaps from the interviews and organize a “collective memory” of black Athenians (Hill, 1993; Seidman, 1998). I believe that these two examining and enquiring methods permitted me to complete a critical historical ethnography that clearly details the black community’s role in the development and sustainability of Athens’s black schools prior to school desegregation (H. F. Wolcott, 2001).

I make no claim that I can or did provide voice and truth for the “others” in my research. As noted by Fine, I do recognize that I am bartering my personal “privilege” when I “re-present”

and recreate the stories of this community (Fine, 1994). However, in an unpaternalistic attempt to help black Athenians regain their own sense of agency and voice that existed prior to school desegregation, I took the first step in gathering this research and formulating it into one flowing collective memory.³⁴¹

My primary and most difficult research method was the use of life and oral his/herstories.³⁴² Though both of these methods have been used in ethnography, there is some debate on whether they are the same or two different types of data gathering. For the purposes of this project, I consider them both historically accurate “life narratives” that respect the telling of history as a “cultural bearing activity” (Dunaway, Baum, American Association for State and Local History., & Oral History Association., 1996). However, I do not use them interchangeably.

Because life histories acknowledge “the personal, social, temporal, and contextual influences” that “facilitate understanding of lives and phenomena being explored,” I used that interviewing technique³⁴³ for my opening interviews with black students, teachers, and school administrators (see protocol for these in Appendix A). In these primary interviews, I sought information about the students’, teachers’, and school administrators’ experiences and feelings when they attended or worked in Athens’s black schools (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). To follow up on the themes found in these life history interviews, I held a few oral history interviews (see protocol for these in Appendix B) with others to gather more data about social and political activities surrounding the development of these schools (Seidman, 1998).

Because I was researching the development of black schools in Athens from the 1860s through the 1970s, I took a sample of interviewees from different years to develop a holistic picture of black education in Athens during this period. I used a combination of sampling

techniques to secure the life history and oral history participants. Archival data was then used to fill in the gaps where there were no participants to tell the story.

I held life story interviews with seventeen “insiders,” black community members who attended Athens schools between 1930 and 1970.³⁴⁴ For these interviews, I used both happenstance and selective sampling methods.³⁴⁵ I used both advertising and snowball sampling³⁴⁶ to find the life history participants (LeCompte et al., 1993; Miller, 2000). As for the oral history interviews, I went through a similar selection process. However, I was looking for more of an “outsider” connection to black schools and their development. These participants were people who were born into families of educators, were nonteachers, or were students who were distant from the school structure and design. These individuals, though I valued their voices, are heard much less throughout the work, but were interviewed to validate the voices of the insiders.

After I selected my participants³⁴⁷ for life story and oral history interviews, I began each initial interview by explaining to the participants the benefits of participating in the project. I included an explanation of how the interviews would bridge a connection between older and younger generations of black Athenians and possibly encourage community action and involvement in the schools, while giving the participants the satisfaction of having someone listen to and appreciate their stories (Slim et al., 1995). During the interviews, I explained the risks, confidentiality, and withdrawal rights of the participants, and I promised to be honest throughout the process and in the publication of the final work. Aside from the time commitment, I explained to the participants the minimal risks that I foresaw in the research process.³⁴⁸

I also let the participants know that all records and discussion would remain confidential and that at any time, for any reason, they could ask me to stop any line of questioning or remove themselves entirely from the project without any negative repercussion whatsoever (Seidman, 1998). Originally, I designed the protocol to ensure confidentiality. I told the participants that I would change their names in the final product, drop any parts of stories and interviews that participants decided later that they preferred not to share, and destroy all taped records 1 year after completion of the final product. However, after starting the interviews, I found that the participants strongly desired that their names be attached to their stories, and I resubmitted a protocol change to the Institutional Review Board to allow me to use the participants' names in the final product (Seidman, 1998; Weiss, 1994).

Following an explanation of these issues, each participant was given a copy of a participation letter and "informed" consent form that included information about the study's purposes, benefits, procedures and risks, research dissemination plans, and confidentiality-anonymity clauses. For ethical reasons, I explained the importance of this informed consent process and reassured them that I would take "extreme care" to avoid any harm to them as I gathered the research and completed the study (see Appendices C, D, and E for IRB materials).

Before I asked any questions, I explained my background and the purpose of the study, and I explained their role in the success of the research. I also noted that their "visions of themselves" and their voices would be what I used to explain black schools to the public, not my own. It was during those discussions that I openly discussed my subjectivities and biases in relation to the topic and how those might affect the final product (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Miller, 2000). For both ethical and practical reasons, I also detailed the estimated time that I anticipated the project would require from them (Miller, 2000; Seidman, 1998).

When conducting the interviews, I met the participants in one of two convenient, comfortable locations that suited both of our needs. These locations included their homes or the “old Athens High and Industrial-Burney-Harris High” building. Those that were held at AHIS-BHHS seemed to bring back many memories that might not otherwise have occurred had the interviews been conducted elsewhere. One interviewee, Agnes Green, who lives in another state, was unable to meet me for her interviews in person, so her interview and follow-ups were completed through conference telephone calls and emails.

At each interview, I asked the participant if he or she was willing to be audiotaped to increase the trustworthiness (validity) of the interviews. All participants but one, Farris Johnson, Sr., agreed to the taping. The tapes were then transcribed by an outside transcriptionist and then, to increase the accuracy of the transcripts, I gave the respondents a copy of the transcriptions so that they could comment on anything that was missing or was incorrect.³⁴⁹ In addition to this, as suggested by Miller, I have offered my participants the opportunity to read my final analysis and interpretation of the data (2000).³⁵⁰

Throughout the interviews, I tried to be an ethical questioner, using appropriate prompts that were planned ahead of time and a dedicated listener, with encouraging motions and suggestions. My goal was to build a rapport with all of my participants.³⁵¹ As a result of this rapport, the interviews scheduled for approximately 90 minutes typically ran for 2 to 3 hours.

During the interviews, I used an open-ended, unstructured protocol focused on addressing the underlying themes of my research questions with follow up with questions that asked for illustrations of those themes. Because I was learning what those themes were as I went along, I kept my protocol flexible. As key topics became prevalent, I built a checklist to use in later interviews to make certain that I got clarification on specific themes (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Following the original interviews, I gave the participants copies of their transcripts so that they could give me any changes or feedback. At that time, I also officially asked if I could use their real names in the final version of the paper and I answered any follow-up questions. The consent forms, interview questions, and data inventory can be found in Appendices A through E.

Although I do not claim to be a critical race theorist,³⁵² I appreciate the emphasis that this group of scholars puts on stories. Ladson-Billings suggests that stories can “provide the necessary context for understanding, feeling, and interpreting” (1998, p. 13). Therefore, when I completed the interview part of my data collection, I tried to narrate the stories into “impressionist tales” that don’t “tell the reader what to think” about Athens’s black schools, but, instead, draw readers into the story, allowing them to better understand the problems and puzzles of the development of these schools from the inside (Van Maanen, 1988). These stories, or “living memories” of our past provided the framework for my archival data collection (Slim et al., 1995).

My in-depth archival data collection occurred simultaneously with my interviews. During this collection, I examined the black schools of Athens and the influence that the community had on these schools by pursuing newspapers, magazines, curriculum materials, legal documents, trial transcripts, plats, ledgers, historical journal articles, federal and state studies and reports, policy guides, school board meeting minutes, diaries, letters, memoranda, yearbooks, electronic resources, and any other primary or secondary sources I found that dealt with the topics of my study.

This type of data helped me to clarify, contextualize, chronicle, triangulate, and validate the “inner workings” of Athens’s black schools, especially those where I was unable to gather interview data. It would have been impossible to talk to educators like Judia Jackson Harris or

Samuel F. Harris, of course, because they passed on many years ago. However, archival records, reports, letters, and board of education minutes from these two educators helped me understand the amazing roles that they played in Athens's black schools at the turn of the century. The archival data allowed me access to "personal and private materials" related to the "innermost thoughts and feelings" of those whom I studied who were no longer alive or no longer able or willing to tell their tale (Hill, 1993; 1996).

Bringing It All Together: Data Organization and Analysis

Similar to Siddle Walker's research approach, I completed two to three rounds of data collection. During the first collection, I held initial life story interviews to determine the role that the black schools played in the lives of black students, teachers, and administrators (Siddle Walker, 1996). As I completed those interviews and recorded ongoing themes, I began to investigate those themes in my archival research (Spradley, 1979).

During the second round, I held a second set of life story interviews with some of the interviewees to clarify and expand on the themes that occurred across interviews, especially those on building black community and black communal involvement. At that time, I also began my oral history interviews to fill in structural gaps from within the life story interviews. Throughout this work, I continued to seek archival research that supported the themes that arose from each set of interviews. Finally, during the third round of data-collection, I asked the life-history interviewees to review their interview-transcripts and correct mistakes or errors.

After I completed and transcribed my interviews and after I completed my archival data collection, I began to tidy up, sort, and catalog my data.³⁵³ I began this process early in my research by keeping fieldwork journal notes to reflect on my ideas, problems, progress, and research developments (Silverman, 2000). Using the whole-text analysis coding method, the

commonalities among my archival data and interview data slowly emerged (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). Those themes or markers are the areas that I used to sort my data into the final chapters seen in this document (Weiss, 1994). At a later date, I hope to use the data to develop a Community Cultural Heritage Curriculum for the Clarke County School System designed to help children better understand and appreciate their community's rich history.

Understanding Ethical Issues

The main ethnographic ethic that I have maintained throughout this research is to make sure that I substantiate my interpretations and findings with data that are gathered in an ethically sound manner. Almost all major scholarly associations have their own codes of ethics. Because my research crosses several major areas—historical studies, anthropology, and education, I abided by the four major guidelines that are included in all three of these areas. These codes (informed consent, avoidance of deception, accuracy, and respect for privacy and confidentiality) are central to the success of any qualitative study.

Even though I provided my participants with “informed consent forms” that detailed how I would secure their “well-being,” I cannot be certain that my participants fully understand the form or the processes of research studies. Therefore, I have tried to reiterate all parts of that agreement before each interview session and follow-up. I have also tried to answer any questions that the participants asked at anytime during the study.

In line with my Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, I tried to make certain that my participants were not deceived by my research plan, and I tried to find ways to ensure them the maximum benefits and least amount of risk for their participation (Christians, 2000). Of course, my subjectivities, biases, epistemology, and even my developing relationship with my

participants have affected this final product in some way³⁵⁴ (Peshkin, 1988). However, I feel confident that I have done everything possible to make this a sound research project.

Dealing with Trustworthiness, Rigor, Validity, and Authenticity Criteria

Historically, many fields of research have required some demonstration of validity³⁵⁵ to get the research accepted in the larger society. However, discomfort with the “epistemological assumptions” that are underlying the “notion of validity” has resulted in reconceptualizations of what “valid” means. Radical postmodernists argue that validity, or truth, has no meaning because there is “no single interpretation” that can or should be judged superior to others. Other theorists, like Lincoln and Guba, began by suggesting that the word *trustworthiness* should be used instead of validity. Here, validity is not viewed as truth. Instead, validity is dealt with in a nonepistemic manner because it represents how “well” the communication, dialogue, and research developed instead of whether or not the results were factual (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

However, Lincoln and Guba have developed more detailed *authenticity criteria* to determine if research is meaningful. They believe that the components of this criteria are the “hallmarks of authentic, trustworthy, rigorous, or ‘valid’ constructivist inquiry” (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, pp. 163-188). I have decided to use this authenticity criteria model to assure that my research has merit. To ensure that this is a high quality study, I have made sure that my research is

- presented in a fair and balanced manner that is reviewed by all participants before official publication;
- beneficial to the participants in some manner (intended to help them (re)gain a sense of agency within their community);
- designed as a tool to bridge racial barriers for all participants and readers;
- designed to promote future research development in the field of black education and black community involvement in schools; and

- designed to empower the participants to act in some manner (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Schwandt, 1997).

In addition to these, I also made certain that I cited the original form of all materials used in this research, and I triangulated my research and design methods so that the gaps of one method could be filled by another and analysis was done from more than one vantage point (Schwandt, 1997).

As I reviewed the methodological processes used in this research, I have found that there is much more research to do, not only in the field of educational history as it relates to black Americans, but also in cross-cultural qualitative research methods, so that scholars like me who are working in cross-cultural environments can do their research well. The next section is the start of my musing about these topics and others that relate to this research. I realize that scholars have spent many years studying the same issues that I address in the next section, such as how schools have become sites of *miseducation* for minority children. However, as I have already emphasized, there is still much work to do. I believe it is my obligation to use the voices that I heard in this research to take the next steps and use educational research, specifically educational anthropology, to investigate solutions to current education issues.

CHAPTER 11

SUMMARY THOUGHTS FROM A CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGIST AND EDUCATOR

Throughout U.S. history, black education has developed within the context of the social, cultural, political, and economic oppression of black communities (Anderson, 1988). Even though universal education and a belief in self-improvement have been central components of black communal development since emancipation, the kinds of education received by blacks have historically been defined by their social and economic position compared to whites (Anderson, 1988; Morgan, 1995; Ogbu, 1978). This has resulted in a *perceived* history of substandard educational opportunities for black Americans (Ogbu, 1978).

Although U.S. schools have sought to provide all communities with an education that promotes “democratic citizenship,” they have in many ways developed schools that perpetuate “second-class citizenship” for blacks (Anderson, 1988; Ogbu, 1978). To retain power over black communities following emancipation, whites sought control of black educational development through “gross mechanisms” like segregation, inadequate funding, poor facilities, and lack of teacher training for blacks. One of the primary reasons that black education developed in this manner was because black *cultural capital*, the values, attitudes, preferences, beliefs, norms, formal knowledge, experiences, and behaviors that equip blacks for life in U.S. society, was and still remains devalued by the whites who historically controlled black education (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Lareau, 1992; Ogbu, 1978).

Even though the ultimate goal of white control of black education was to restrict black freedom, black thirst for education did thrive, existing within black communities throughout the age of slavery, the era of Jim Crow, and the culmination of the Civil Rights Movement (Goodrich, 1976). In many communities, *resistance through education* began when blacks

started to recognize the political ramifications of education and how it could be used as a platform to further their liberation (Anderson, 1988; Sterling, 1994; Woodson, 1933). Shortly after emancipation, the “enduring cultural belief” in intellectual achievement became so interwoven within black societal development that the struggle for black freedom could not be separated from the struggle for black education. **They became one and the same** (Anderson, 1988).

My purpose in writing this dissertation has been to reveal the economic, political, and social changes that took place in Athens, Georgia, from 1865 to 1970 to better understand the burning desire of black Athenians for educational uplift. I have endeavored to tell the story of Athens’s black schools, how they began as cultural community hubs and how the teachers in them helped many black Athenians resist oppressive societal structures through their caring ways (Anderson, 1988; Borman, Fox, & Levinson, 2000; Siddle Walker, 1993). This work is a reminder of when education was believed to be the “ladder to climb up” from where you are “to where you needed to be” (H. B. Stroud, Sr., July 18, 2006). My hope is that this research shows how over time the loss of the black schools and black teachers and the development of integrated educational institutions played a role in the solidification of Athens’s black caste minority status (Ogbu, 1978).

This dissertation research began over six years ago with a paper that I wrote for a graduate school class on Samuel Harris and the Black Mammy Memorial Institute. That investigation stimulated my interest in understanding how Athens’s black schools were historically viewed by black Athenians. As a result of that work, I continued my research by examining themes from that data set and others on Judia Jackson Harris, recruitment and

retention of black educators in Athens, and other research projects that I thought might prompt a change in attitude about Athens's schools by Athens's black and white communities.

At all stages of my research, it was important to me to triangulate the historical foundations of black education in the South to ethnographic interviews and archival research of the "folks" who experienced the schools to my current life experience as an educator in Athens's schools. Throughout this work, I applied my own theories of *social reproduction* and *cultural production* to try to understand why the production of "culture and identity" acquired in Athens's black schools was and continues to be recognized as nurturing and caring and why the "culture and identity" acquired in today's schools might be perceived to be reproducing rather than transforming the inequalities between black and white Athenians (D'Amato, 1993; Levinson, Foley, & Holland, 1996; Levinson & Holland, 1996; Ogbu, 1978).

Using Anthropology to Study the Development of Black Educative Structures

Anthropologists distinguish themselves in the field of education by capturing detailed stories of the "discontinuities" between "mainstream school culture and the traditional cultures of ethnic-racial minorities," like blacks. Some of these researchers suggest that blacks are unsuccessful in school because they do not "successfully adapt" themselves to traditional school culture, which in an integrated setting is typically built on white, middle class values. These idea can be seen in the curriculum canon that excludes the faces and stories of black America, as well as the struggles and successes of other minority groups ("Athens, Georgia... In 1914," 1914; Darling-Hammond, 2001; Darling-Hammond et al., 2002; Darling-Hammond & National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (U.S.), 1997; Delpit, 1995; Freire, 2000/1970; Kohl, 1988, 1994, 1998; Kozol, 1992, 1995, 2000, 2005; Moses & Cobb, 2001; Tatum, 1997; Vaughn, 1974; Wells & Crain, 1997).

Although this observation defuses the inane notion that blacks are genetically inferior and culturally deprived, it fails to explore the “social and historical forces” that are responsible for the *reproduction* and *production* of cultural and ethnic differences between blacks and whites. Without recognizing how “communication styles, cognitive codes,” and sociocultural history empower certain groups over others, even before they enter the schoolhouse door, researchers cannot fully understand how the school structure perpetuates the culture of the dominant society (Levinson & Holland, 1996; Lubeck, 1985).

To address this issue, some educational anthropologists have become increasingly interested in studying how societies maintain “social cohesion and continuity” by transmitting their “core values and knowledge” to others through collective educative experiences and structures (Levinson & Holland, 1996). These researchers assume that human behavior is guided by a set of “cultural knowledge” that helps members of a group make sense of the world (Spindler, 1982). They recognize that cultural knowledge is much more than understanding the group’s art, music, and movement. It is recognizing the “reality, values, actions” shared among group members through linguistic and nonlinguistic symbols, meanings,³⁵⁶ and acts of resistance. This knowledge is developed and passed on to help other group members survive and adapt to their environments (Bullivant, 1989; Grant & Sleeter, 1996; King, 2001; Lubeck, 1985).

This dynamic social process of cultural production has begun to challenge previously held notions of social reproduction because of the realization that people are constantly “contesting” and “accelerating” their own knowledge development. They are not simply “cultural dupes.” One of the important discoveries about cultural production is the idea that when knowledge development occurs in a structured school setting it can produce *educated* or

miseducated people depending on who controls the knowledge (Levinson & Holland, 1996; Woodson & Kunjufu, 2000).

Education or Miseducation: Schools as Sites of Cultural Production

Education and schooling have become equated with the development of cultural capital, as groups served by Western-style schools internalize “dominant meanings” relayed through the formal and hidden curriculum (Bledsoe, 2000; Levinson & Holland, 1996; Reed-Danahay, 2000). As “agents of socialization,” these schools strive to teach students to conform to society’s codes of conduct, while also teaching them to become “liberally educated.” To the extent that schools are embedded in the dominant majority culture, they reinforce the “social norms and values” of that culture as they “inculcate new information” into the students who attend them (Faiman-Silva, 2002; Levinson & Holland, 1996; Reed-Danahay, 2000; Woodson & Kunjufu, 2000).

The valued “cultural knowledge,” or what Faiman-Silva calls school capital, that is doled out to students in these educational institutions is chosen based on the “specific and appropriate social positions” that are deemed proper for those students. As a result, many schools socialize their minority students with totally different sets of norms, values, and languages than the ones presented in their homes. To deal with this, black Americans and other minorities must learn how to reconcile these differences, which can and often does result in a clash between cultures (2002).

Luykx suggests that the entire ideological project of schooling is built on the notion that students are socially deficient and they must be socialized with the correct values and behaviors to become successful in our society. However, she notes that students often resist this assumption of inadequacy and become defiant or develop learned helplessness (1996). Fordham describes as

a debilitating process the struggle of trying to master white people's curriculum, language, culture, and "lies" that are taught in schools. She believes that schools have historically produced social groups of blacks whose collective identities and minority status have been shaped by these devaluing lessons. Out of this development, she claims that black people have become "nine lives" or persistent people, because of their talent for defying their own social deaths as they develop techniques to survive on "hostile [white] soil" (Fordham, 2004). However, even with this type of unified resistance, the "blackfaced or blacked out" misrepresentations of black culture that are reinforced in educational settings perpetuate the notion that the "individual and collective psyches" of blacks are not adequately valued in U.S. society (Castile, Kushner, & Adams, 1981; Fordham, 2004).

Valuing Black Collective Identity

For the purposes of this work, as I have previously emphasized, I consider race as a "social construction" and black Americans as one social group (Pollock, 2004). Like other ethnic minorities, blacks are often placed or perceivably misplaced in this social, historical, and variable category because of their similar cultural heritage, not their "biologically ascribed characteristics" (Lieberman & Kirk, 2004; McCarthy & Crichlow, 1993a). Omi and Winant recognize that a person's racial identity overflows the boundaries of skin tone because of the "specific social relations and historical context" that result from past "exploitation, social stratification" of and "discrimination and prejudice, cultural domination, and cultural resistance" against certain groups (2001).

Many other researchers, like Carrithers and Boas, also reject the biological notion of race, instead stressing the "sociality" of such groups and the collective culture that results from their socialization (Carrithers, 1992; Omi & Winant, 2001). The American Anthropology Association,

in collaboration with the Science Museum of Minnesota, recently developed a website and exhibit that explains race from the biological, cultural, and historical points of view. The exhibit and site give clear examples of why the biological race argument is faulty (*RACE: Are we so different?*, 2007).

Freire suggests that these oppressed groups develop their own “level of awareness of reality” and use it to critically interpret other aspects of their reality (2000/1970). As a result of this collective culture, I believe that blacks have developed a “mode of rationality” that has evolved from their shared history of *resistance* against racism, capitalism, and genocide, despite the shattering effects of slavery, denial of education and miseducation (Gordon, 1985).

Marvin Harris and other researchers have also suggested that race is a culmination of experiences rather than genetics, and they have developed theories about the importance of “social race,” defined by some as ethnicity. Harris suggests that social race is the identification of population groups through common ancestry, religion, language, and customs. These groups contain people who are deemed to be, both by themselves and by others, “physically and psychologically alike, regardless of scientifically established genetic relationships” (1997). According to social identity theory, these self-definitions are important because they help individuals determine “what to do, think, and even feel” as they internalize the values, meanings, and standards of living put forth by society (Ashford & Kreiner, 1999). For blacks, this shared cultural knowledge has supported the development of a collective black self-identity and consciousness that lends itself to resistance against dominant identities (Cousins, 1999; King, 2001).

Historically, one of the main areas of resistance for black communities began with black struggles for educational development. Educational anthropologists and others have only

recently begun to research how the suppression of black heritage in U.S. integrated schools has affected the development of black agency and the black freedom struggle. Many researchers have established that the lack of access to this knowledge has resulted in a “culture of resistance” within black communities that defies mainstream rules and social norms (Faiman-Silva, 2002; McCarthy & Crichlow, 1993b). This resistance, well documented by researchers like Kohl and Kozol, is demonstrated by black students’ following the route of defiant “not learning” because of oppressive school structures that devalue their collective identity (Kohl, 1988, 1994, 1998; Kozol, 1992, 1995, 2000). As a result, the black resistance movement *for* educational advancement that began to develop around the time of emancipation in towns like Athens, Georgia, has transformed into today’s black resistance movement *against* education.

The Cultural Production of the Miseducated Person

Both production and reproduction theorists confirm that the “resistant cultural practices” that result from schooling experiences can strengthen the bonds of “collective identity” and allow black communities to create “dignity and meaning” in their daily lives (Luykx, 1996). However, by denying that this culture is a “static, unchanging body of knowledge,” cultural production theory provides a better means of understanding how human agency and individual empowerment can be produced even under the “powerful structural constraints” of educational institutions and oppressive societal structures like those found in Athens, Georgia (Borman et al., 2000; Hoffman, 1998; Levinson & Holland, 1996; Montero-Sieburth, 1998).

Throughout the transition from informal slave education through the development of the Athens public school system, the black community of Athens sought and continues to seek more educational opportunities and improved resources for its children. Education, rooted deeply in black communal values, has historically been viewed by black Athenians as valued *cultural*

capital those attending the schools, as well as the community as a whole (Anderson, 1988; DeMarrais & LeCompte, 1995). Black Athenians interviewed for this work suggest that their parents and other community leaders explained to them the importance of getting an education. As a community, black Athenians regarded education as a privilege, not a choice (H. B. Stroud, Sr., July 18, 2006, Interview). This strong desire for education remained ingrained in Athens's black community through the "veil of segregation and in the face of enormous obstacles," including inadequate funding and substandard curricula, for more than 80 years (O'Brien, 1999; Thurmond, 1978).

However, even though the new integrated schools tried to equalize the educational opportunities between blacks and whites, the closing of the black schools drove a wedge between the black community and the new Clarke County School District. Black Athenians had to learn to live in new schools without their "caring," "trusting," and loving teachers of their previously all-black schools (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview; Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview). Many of their teachers who were displaced during the process of desegregation were the former leaders who directed the community struggle against "inequitable and undemocratic social structures." They believed that the black community could overcome oppressive white structures, unjust social arrangements, and disenfranchising educational curricula through the expansion of educational opportunities for black Athenians. Losing these transformational leaders deformed the black schools from community hubs into oppressive institutions (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Rice, December 3, 2001; Siddle Walker, 1996).

Following the full integration of the Clarke County School District, one black community member objected,

The *racist* school system of Clarke County has deprived Black youths in this county of an opportunity to secure a relevant education. The curricula of the school system have been

lacking in providing the necessary training and education for the Black youth of Athens. The standard educational system of the county has failed not only in its attempt to “whiten” the Black youth’s mentality but it has also failed because it has not provided the *psychological incentive* that is necessary in the educational preparation of an individual [italics added].

As a result, in June of 1970, that community member and others started a Liberation School that worked to “create a sense of racial pride and dignity” in the city and dispel the myths and stereotypes about the mental inferiority of blacks (“Liberation school,” June 21, 1970).

However, even with local initiatives like the Liberation School, the Athens’s black community went from seeing progress and development in their black community-controlled schools to seeing large numbers of black students dropping out or graduating with a poor education by the middle of the 1970s.

Today, the vast majority of the struggling students who drop out of school or who are retained in Athens schools are black. The schools are now minority majority populated with black and Latino students in the majority. The gap in general student achievement between black students and their white peers (as assessed by high stakes standardized tests) has continued to widen and the number of blacks referred to Clarke County’s special education program and vocational, noncollege preparatory program tracks is disturbing.

Today, the schools of Clarke County have once again become racially identifiable. Student achievement problems, current rezoning issues, school choice plans, and de facto segregation are now being blamed for their roles in the *resegregation* of Athens’s schools. Ninety percent (18 of 20) of the Clarke County schools have more than half of their students living below the poverty line. In eleven of Clarke County’s schools 75 to 95% of the students are living below the federal poverty line. Almost 80% of these high poverty students come from low income minority families (mainly black and Latino). After all of the struggles among minority

groups to achieve an equitable education, research suggests that these resegregated, high-poverty, neighborhood schools continue to be unequal in resources and academic achievement even after 35 years of integration (Farmer, 2007; "Resegregated neighborhood schools fail to meet promises of achievement and equity," September 26, 1996).

Over time, these frustrations seemed to have caused the black community of Athens to give up its desire for universal education and self-improvement. As a result, Athens's schools, once sites of cultural and community development, have become unsupported and isolated institutions. This loss of black community support has crushed most educational initiatives to increase student achievement since integration. Low expectations by teachers have resulted in the academic disengagement of black students, especially males, which in turn has caused teachers to lower their expectations even further (Hubbard, 1999; Sleeter, 2004). In the end, black students have been put in a situation to either "resist" the structure of the schools or "conform" to it (Hoffman, 1998). As more than 50% of the students fail to meet state standards on high stakes tests and drop out rates continue to rise, the Clarke County School District is one of the lowest achieving school districts in the state (Bishop, 2006; *Clarke County AYP Report Card*, 2003-2004; *Clarke County AYP Report Card*, 2005-2006; Hoffman, 1998).

Hale suggests that these results are not surprising because public schools were not intended to provide equal access or opportunity for black Americans. In fact, she notes that they were strategically designed to provide upward mobility for whites only (2001). Athens's black schools originated as arenas of social uplift for the black community, but over time these schools have become "oppressive social structure[s]" that symbolize the "fundamental inequities" that still exist between black and white Athenians (Borman et al., 2000). The "caste-like, inferior status" of black Americans that these schools perpetuate has negatively affected the social status

of the black community and has resulted in substantially less “economic and social rewards” for educational attainment (Shaw & Coleman, 2000). Even though the struggle for formal education gave this community a unifying goal and a sense of identity, it has not been enough to overcome the economic, social, and political constraints of white society.

Education is a *cultural process* that formally and informally helps people transmit their cultures, typically serving the purposes of those who help develop it. When education is structured and developed with only certain cultures in mind, minority students, schools, and communities often suffer because their cultures become marginalized. This dissertation is a part of an empowerment effort to improve the social, emotional, political, and economic development of my students, most of whom are from impoverished black families. The life stories and oral histories that developed from these conversations, interviews, and archival data have become part of an educative process that mediates the boundaries among history, language, literature, culture, and ethnicity in an effort to (re)organize black Athenians toward community uplift (Shaw & Coleman, 2000). My hope is that this research provides a framework to add to the current “public policy” debates about black education and community involvement in Athens and other high poverty, high minority communities.

As a former classroom teacher turned school administrator in the school system that I have studied, I have provided a unique real-time perspective to this research endeavor. I used my pseudo insider-status to gather the “cherished experiences and insights” of black Athenians to provide evidence of past *black community agency* to (re)invigorate black community involvement in Athens’s schools (Atkinson, 1998; DeMarrais, 1998; Etter-Lewis, 1993). In the end, I hope that this dissertation can rebuild networks of better schools for all of the students in

my community who are struggling to get an education and who would benefit greatly if the community once again embraced the schools as it did 100 years ago.

Woodson once said that the “mere imparting” of the knowledge is not a sufficient education. Instead, he noted that the effort of education must result in helping people “think and do” for themselves (2000/1970). Like the students of Samuel Harris, the students of the Clarke County School District deserve a chance to participate in community-supported schools that nurture their minds, their bodies, and their hearts so that they can see how education can be used as the key to their future success. Mann said it best when he recognized education as the “great equalizer of the conditions of man ... beyond all other devices of human origin” (1848). We must build schools that meet this expectation for all children.

Appendix A

LIFE HISTORY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Name of Interviewee:
Date/Location/Time of Interview:

Questions about the Consent Form:

1. Tell me about your educational experiences in Athens' black schools. *If they do not talk about the school structure, teachers, or classes offered, I will go to number two. If they do, I will skip two and move on to number 3.*
2. Tell me more about the classes that you enrolled in, the relationships that you had with teachers/administration, or the way that you remember the school being set up.
3. Describe to me what you believe "community" meant to you when you were growing up around here.
4. What role(s) did the black community of Athens play in schools when you were growing up?
5. How did you, your family, or the black community of Athens feel about school desegregation before it took place?
6. *Optional:* What role(s) do you feel that the black community of Athens played in the schools following desegregation or in today's schools?
7. What do you want to tell me that I did not ask about?

Appendix B

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Name of Interviewee:
Date/Location/Time of Interview:

Questions about the Consent Form:

- I. Tell me about your connection to Athens black schools. *If they do not talk about the school structure, teachers, or classes offered, I will go to number two. If they do, I will skip two and move on to number 3.*
- II. Tell me more about how you were (financially, politically, socially) involved with the development of these schools?
- III. What role(s) did you see the black community of Athens playing in the development of black schools?
- IV. How did you, your family, or your community feel about school desegregation before it took place?
- V. *Optional:* What role(s) do you feel that the black community of Athens played in the schools following desegregation or in today's schools?
- VI. What do you want to tell me that I did not ask about?

Appendix C

ORIGINAL CONSENT FORM

History of Black Education in Athens, GA Consent to Study Form

I, _____, agree to take part in a research study titled *Black Education in Athens, GA*, conducted by Monica Dellenberger Knight (Social Foundations of Education, University of Georgia, (706) 546-7721, Ext 18326; knightm@clarke.k12.ga.us), under the direction of Dr. Judith Preissle (Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy, University of Georgia, (706) 542-6489; jude@uga.edu). I understand that participation in this study is voluntary and I can stop taking part in this study at any time without giving any reason and without penalty. I can ask to have the information related to me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed. I can also request copies of any publications produced from this study.

Reason/Purpose of this Study: I understand that the purpose of this study is to gather people's experiences with black education in Athens, Georgia, prior to 1970.

Benefits: The benefit of this project is to add to the knowledge of the experiences and contributions of black schools in Athens, Georgia. I understand that the direct benefit to me is the opportunity to talk about my school experiences and share my ideas about education for blacks in Athens since 1970. I understand that I will not receive any other direct benefits for my participation in this study.

Procedures: If I volunteer for this study, I will be asked to...

1. complete a consent form.
2. participate in **two to four** 90-minute individual interviews. I will be asked permission to be audio taped. If requested, the researcher will stop recording my answers or stop the interview at any time without penalty to me. I understand that my answers will be transcribed and that the transcriptions will be kept by the researcher indefinitely for research purposes. **I understand that all audio tapes will be destroyed by January 1, 2010.**
 - ☐ I approve of the audio taping of my answers for the individual interview.
 - ☐ I would prefer for my answers to be handwritten for the individual interview.
3. **loan the researcher copies of archival materials that are pertinent to the data collection. *These will be limited to photographs, personal writings, books, journals, and personal notes from friends and family, local newspaper articles, or other items related to black education in Athens during the time period being studied.* I understand that all archival data will be returned at a time that I specify.**

Discomforts or Stresses: People often get uncomfortable with discussions about race and cultural identity. If any questions make me feel uncomfortable, I can pass on the question or

stop the interview. The researcher has assured me that there will be minimal discomfort or stress due to participation in this project.

Risks: I understand that there are no reasonable foreseeable risks in this project.

Confidentiality: The researcher has informed me that all of the information that I give will be confidential, unless otherwise required by law. I will be given a fictitious name to use on all documents in the study. Audio tapes of the interviews will be kept in a secure limited access location until the researcher destroys them. I understand that the research will be made public, but my identity will remain confidential. However, I realize that some events that I discuss could be linked back to me without the researcher's knowledge. I understand that the researcher will try to minimize this risk as much as possible.

Further Questions: The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the study. The researcher can be reached by telephone at 706-546-7721 Ext. 18326 or by email at knighm@clarke.k12.ga.us.

Final Agreement and Consent Form: My signature below indicates that the researcher has answered all of my questions to my satisfaction and that I consent to volunteer for this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Signature of Researcher

Date

Signature of Participant

Date

IRB Oversight Paragraph: Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

Appendix D

REVISED CONSENT FORM TO ALLOW USE OF REAL NAMES

History of Black Education in Athens, GA ReConsent to Study Form

I, _____, have agreed to take part in a research study titled *Black Education in Athens, GA*, conducted by Monica Dellenberger Knight (Social Foundations of Education, University of Georgia, (706) 546-7721, Ext 18326; knightm@clarke.k12.ga.us), under the direction of Dr. Judith Preissle (Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy, University of Georgia, (706) 542-6489; jude@uga.edu).

I understand that the research in which I have participated in will be made public. When interviewed, I signed a consent form stating that I agreed to be given a fictitious name to use on all documents in the study. After participating in the interviews, I have decided that I will:

- ☐ *Allow the researcher to use my real name in the final documentation of the study.*
- ☐ *Not allow the researcher to use my real name in the final documentation of the study.*

I understand that I need to check one of items listed above and I understand that this document will be attached to my original consent form.

Further Questions: The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the study. The researcher can be reached by telephone at 706-546-7721 Ext. 18326 or by email at knightm@clarke.k12.ga.us.

Signature of Researcher

Date

Signature of Participant

Date

IRB Oversight Paragraph: Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

Appendix E

DATA INVENTORY

1. Categories of data collected
 - a. Population being studied: Black Athenians living from the 1880s through the 2007.
 - b. Transcriptions of interviews have been maintained on the following individuals.

<i>Participants</i>	<i>Date(s) Interviewed</i>	<i>Where was the data collected</i>
Farris Johnson, Sr.: (F. Johnson)	July 12, 17, 26, 2006	Johnson's home
Howard B. Stroud: (H. Stroud)	July 18, 2006	H. Stroud's home
Ileane Nesbit Nunnally: (Nunnally)	July 17, 2006	Nunnally's home
Fanny Frances Neely Nesbit: (Nesbit)	July 25, 2006	AHIS/BHHS
Harold Horton: (Horton)	July 14, 2006	AHIS/BHHS
Bennett Johnson: (B. Johnson)	July 13, 2006	AHIS/BHHS
Bettye Moore Stroud: (Moore)	July 18, 2006	H. Stroud's home
George Stroud: (G. Stroud)	July 18, 2006	H. Stroud's home
Charles Stroud: (C. Stroud)	July 18, 2006	H. Stroud's home
Melvin Stroud: (M. Stroud)	July 18, 2006	H. Stroud's home
Charles Maddox: (Maddox)	July 20, 2006	AHIS/BHHS
Elizabeth Smith Platt: (Smith)	July 11, 2006	Smith's home
Alberta Lay Maddox: (Lay)	July 11, 2006	Smith's home
Lee Linston III: (Linston)	July 25, 2006	Linston's home
Agnes Green: (Green)	August 12, 2006	Telephone
Jeff Foster: (Foster)	August 13, 2006	AHIS/BHHS

- c. Field notes of interviews (in situ and reconstructive) have been maintained on the following participants.

<i>Participants</i>	<i>Abbreviation</i>
Farris Johnson, Sr.	F. Johnson
Ileane Nesbit Nunnally	Nunnally (maiden name)
Fanny Frances Neely Nesbit	Nesbit
Harold Horton	Horton
Bennett Johnson	B. Johnson
Mack Sewell	Sewell

- d. The following facilitating documents are available on request:
- i. IRB application
 - ii. Consent forms
 - iii. Interview protocols
- e. Timelines for research and communication to committee is available on request.
- f. The following artifacts have been obtained by Monica Knight for the completion of this research.

<i>Artifacts</i>	<i>Obtained from or created by</i>
Audiotapes of interviews	Created by Monica Knight
Transcriptions of interview audiotapes	Created by Angie Moon De Avila (paid transcriptionist)
Videotape: <i>A refuge in adversity: The history of Burney-Harris-Lyons Middle School</i>	Created by Dr. Marilyn Ragatz and students and staff of Burney Harris Lyons Middle School
Yellow Jacket Yearbooks	Created by Yellow Jacket yearbook staff; obtained by Lee Linston and Homer Edwards, Jr.
"Black Mammy Memorial Institute" Monument brochure	Obtained by University of Georgia Hargrett Library

- g. Who collected the data: Monica Knight
- h. For what purpose was the data collected: The purpose of this research is to expand the social and community history of Athens, Georgia, by studying the growth of Athens' black schools from the 1880s through the 1960s, a time when the black community of Athens worked together to build public and private educational institutions that were highly regarded throughout the state of Georgia.
- i. How was the data collected: Personal notes and audiotapes
- j. Gaps in data: It would have been helpful to have interview data from at least one person born between 1948-1949 and 1952-1956. This would have given a gap of only one to three years between each participant.

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ENDNOTES

¹ I use the word black throughout this research because the vast majority of the people I studied self-defined as black, instead of African American, and they called their schools “black schools” and they called their community, the “black community” (Johnson, July 13, 2006, Interview; Johnson, July 12, 2006, Field notes; Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview; Maddox, July 20, 2006, Interview; Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview; H. B. Stroud, Sr., July 18, 2006, Interview). The only interviewee who self-defined as African American was Dr. Agnes Green, and she referred to herself as African American when she talked about being in an all-white environment where the teachers were unable to understand how to work with her because they had never worked with an African American (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

² Sociologists consider the concept of community to mean a “particularly constituted set of social relationships based on something which the participants have in common.” However, there is much debate over what constitutes those social relationships and “what characteristic features of social interaction constitute the solidaristic relations typical of so-called communities” (Marshall, 1998, pp. 97-98). In addition to these debated areas, the use of the term community to “identify” and sometimes “endorse” a particular form of “social association” is also questioned. In 1955, Hillery reviewed almost 100 definitions of the term community and determined that there was one central factor in all of the definitions that could not be debated; each definition dealt with people. Therefore, because no clear and widely accepted definition of the term community has been developed, I have used the term to mean any group with “a common sense of identity” for this work (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1997; Marshall, 1998, pp. 97-98). In addition to the debate on the term community, there is much debate on what identity is and whether or not it exists. Schwandt suggests that identity is the “concept of sameness” and the “unity of self amid change and diversity.” However, he admits that some theorists (specifically postmodern theorists) believe that identity is “always fragmented, never integrated, never fixed, and always being remade” (Schwandt, 1997, p. 122). Kevin Murray suggests that people’s telling of stories about their personal past or a community’s personal past allows them to construct an identity in two key ways, the social identity—which determines their place within the social order—and the personal identity—which determines the uniqueness of a person. Life stories, he says, do not “simply reflect” events but “actively shape” the being of the individual telling the stories (Murray, 1995). For this work, I use the term identity to loosely mean “one’s sense of self and one’s feelings and ideas about oneself” (Marshall, 1998, p. 296). Black identity and black culture has been studied at the macro and micro level and there is also debate on its definition. I have used what my participants term “closeknit” or a feeling of “closeness to other blacks,” who have lived in the same geographic region, dealing with similar economic, social, and political situations, and are educated in the same institutions as the baseline of black identity and black culture for this work, realizing that as this work continues that my definition will likely become more multidimensional and complex (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview; Thornton, Tran, & Taylor, 1997).

³ For the purposes of this research, I consider Athens’s black community as having two main components, rural blacks and city blacks. The bulk of the research focuses on the black Athenians living in the city of Athens, but because of the interconnectedness of city residents and county residents (especially as it relates to education and religion) both communities are discussed.

⁴The subject of increasing the economic value of slaves through education was brought up at the Agricultural Convention at Macon in 1850 and 1851. During these talks a resolution was made to enact a law authorizing the education of slaves. Later that year, the state house passed the resolution, but the state senate denied it by two or three votes. The final result of the legislation was a paternalistic compromise of the development of appropriate slave etiquette that could be taught early to black youth to make certain that they were safe (Woodson, 1919).

⁵ Police forces patrolled Athens to secure the town from “subversive activities” by slaves or “itinerant [northern abolitionist] peddlers” (Coleman, 1968, p. 21).

⁶ Black teachers made between one and two hundred dollars a year, while the lowest paid white teachers made between two and three hundred dollars a year. The black teachers of Athens taught classes that ranged from sixty to one hundred and fifty students each day. One black school chose to run double sessions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, to allow for a smaller pupil teacher ratio (Flanigen, 1896-1897; Woofter, 1912).

⁷ Cultural capital includes the “language and social roles” that community members hold and the “general cultural background, knowledge, and skills passed from one generation to the next” (for more on cultural capital, see Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; DeMarrais & LeCompte, 1995, p. 15).

⁸ I am using the term “desegregation” here as the legal definition of removing legal barriers to allow for equal treatment of blacks.

⁹ Following integration, previously black schools in black neighborhoods were often converted into administration buildings for the school district, which reduced the activity of the black community in the schools (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

¹⁰ These activities had previously included social dinners, community meetings, craft bazaars, fund-raisers, business networking, war support endeavors, dances, and plays (Athens City Schools Board of Education, 1906 -1907; Flanigen, March 27, 1911).

¹¹ The use of the term “racial uplift” is problematic to some scholars because it seems to endorse the paternalistic, Victorian, bourgeois mores of North American culture with the assumption that, if only blacks would attach themselves to those mores, they would find economic, political, and social success (Kevin K. Gaines, 1996). In this dissertation, I use the term as a means of defining the communal work taking place to allow blacks a social, political, and economic position in the Athens community. However, King suggests that uplift is simply “a notion that presumes a certain racial solidarity and recognizes the necessity of claiming and working under the aegis of a racially defined group identity.” She believes that the conservatism that fractured many southern black communities after emancipation resulted from differing belief systems in the black community itself, not just in the tensions between the black and white communities. Many scholars, like King, suggest that asserting “blackness” during this era was to assert a “political and cultural identity” that may have been only uniform in the nostalgic retelling of that time. As a researcher, I realize that the “affirmations of black community and identity” that I have found during the interview phases of this work could simply be “fantasies of realism” (King, Spring, 2002, p. 212).

¹² Due to space limitations, the educational struggles prior to slave ships coming to North America in the 1700s are not included in this work. However, this certainly does not mean that those are not valuable components of the larger development of the black experience and the black struggle for liberation and freedom, as the notion that slaves understood and equated education with freedom, because of they were denied access to it, is central to this work (see Harding, 1981).

¹³ The movement toward self-sufficiency by black southerners following the Civil War amazed the first inspector of the Freedmen's Bureau. In fact, in one of the first reports of the bureau noted the strong effort of blacks to "educate themselves." At least five hundred native schools, founded and run by freedmen, were in operation in the South only one year after the close of the war. By 1868, all of the cities and most of the smaller towns also had Sabbath schools that were run at night and Saturday and Sundays for working blacks. Even though these schools were sometimes funded by white churches, they were almost always operated by all-black teachers (Anderson, 1988).

¹⁴ Black leaders like Washington and Du Bois agreed that black education should train men and women to "earn a living." However, the view on what such a living would entail was the platform for the industrial and classical education debate which brewed for more than 40 years (Du Bois, 1973b; Gates & West, 2000; Peabody, 1919). Lee and Slaughter-Defoe include Horace Mann Bond in the list of early educators discussing control of black education. However, Franklin and Anderson suggest that Bond did not share the same faith in the "uplifting" and "liberating" effects of education as other scholars like Woodson (Lee & Slaughter-Defoe, 2001). However, later work of Bond, especially after he assumed presidency of Fort Valley State University in 1939 and then Lincoln University in 1945 (and his efforts toward Africanization), seemed to demonstrate a much stronger commitment to education for equality (Kilson, 1994).

¹⁵ When I use the term culture, I am conceptualizing it as the "ways of thinking" and "living" by certain groups. More specifically, I am using the notion that it is a group's way of living that includes the "shared cultural knowledge" demonstrated by "skills, consciousness," values, expressive forms, social institutions, and behavior that enable their survival as a people (King, 2001, p. 271). This, I believe, is in line with how

¹⁶ The 1918 U.S. Bureau of the Census records indicate that, even though the number of black children grew by 25% between 1880-1900, the number of black children enrolled in schools dropped because of the political efforts of white planters and politicians who worked to keep black education "underdeveloped." However, 95% of the increase in black enrollment between 1900 and 1910 was a direct result of a rise in school attendance. Only 5% of the increase resulted from population growth. These data refer to children between the ages of 5 and 20 years old (Anderson, 1984).

¹⁷ Forty percent of blacks between 10 and 14 years old were illiterate in 1890. By 1910, the illiteracy rate of children between the ages of 10 and 14 had dropped to less than 20% (Anderson, 1984; Harlan, 1958).

¹⁸ In 1910, around 46% of blacks were attending school in the South compared to 62% of the white students (Anderson, 1984).

¹⁹ At this time, the highest population of blacks in the U.S. was in the South. See Anderson, Goodrich, or Watkins (1999; 1976; 2001) for more information about northern philanthropists. See Fairclough, Foster, or Harding (2001; 1997; 1981) for information about black churches. Finally, see Hale (2001) for information about the role of black churches and education today.

²⁰ Other authors who discuss these battles include, but certainly are not limited to (Du Bois, 1983; Du Bois, Blight, & Gooding-Williams, 1997; Washington, 1899).

²¹ Prior to the turn of the century, black schooling focused mainly on reading, writing, "proper English," and religion. Black history and identity was typically taught in the home, not the schools. However, some instances existed where early black teachers merged black history into the curriculum, giving the students a chance to gain a black "identity" (Litwack, 1998a).

²² Until 1900 when Du Bois applied it at Atlanta University and 1916 when Woodson founded *The Journal of Negro History*, black schools rarely integrated “scientific study of black life and culture” into their curriculum (Anderson, 1988).

²³ Washington graduated from the Hampton Institute in 1875 (Peabody, 1919).

²⁴ However, Washington’s career was characterized by inconsistent behaviors. Although he advised blacks to avoid political activities, he was himself a “powerful political boss and dispenser of patronage” who secretly funded law suits against voting discrimination. While he preached “Puritan morality,” he sabotaged the work and careers of blacks and whites who opposed him (Gibson, 1978). Current scholars are suggesting that Washington was more complex than past researchers like Harlan suggest (Cunnigen, Glascoe, & Dennis, 2006).

²⁵ The *talented tenth* were the select few who would become the leaders in black communities. Du Bois, one of the talented, believed that these leaders required a special education that included industrial and classical studies. Prior to this point, black educational leaders, trained in industrial schools like Hampton and Tuskegee, were often not taught to “think and act” on behalf of the interests of black people. Instead, they were trained to accept and maintain the social order of the country (Anderson, 1988; Goodrich, 1976; Harlan, 1983; Morgan, 1995).

²⁶ Scholars who designed this curriculum did not make it an “Africanized American” curriculum because they believed that the United States had too much to offer Africa and other nations. However, these scholars did not drop the “soul of Africa” from the curriculum because they believed that “Negro blood” could offer something to the world also (Anderson, 1988; Harlan, 1958; Lee & Slaughter-Defor, 2001). See Levine (1977) for more on black consciousness.

²⁷ The Niagara Movement was started by Du Bois as a black intellectual group who began aggressively demanding black civil rights and privileges in 1905. This group was the foundational start of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which took shape in 1910 (Anderson, 1988).

²⁸ Some historians, however, have documented that some industrial schools used the industrial guise to gain these resources, but the actual teachings in the school were more closely aligned with the self-reliance model (Anderson, 1988; Carroll, 2006).

²⁹ Research on this era has established that the educational achievement of black children was less a function of their environment generally and more a function of their opportunities for schooling (Anderson, 1984).

³⁰ The main thrust of this campaign was instituted after the release of Caliver’s 1933 book, *The Education of Negro Teachers*. At the time that it was written, more than 44% of black elementary teachers had not met the average accepted minimum standard of two years of college for any teaching positions in black schools. Georgia had the lowest number of trained black educators during this time, with only 38% having finished high school (Caliver, 1933, 1970; Lee & Slaughter-Defor, 2001).

³¹ The reduction of industrial courses was seen more often in higher education institutions because they had other means of gathering fiscal and human resources to maintain their programs (Fairclough, 2001; Morgan, 1995).

³² The ATA was started in Nashville in 1904 by John Robert Edward Lee, a founding member of the Texas Colored Teachers State Association. This national organization was originally named Association of Colored Teachers. In 1934, the name was changed to the ATA. The organization remained active for 62 years until it merged its work with the National Education Association. The ATA had many prominent black educators as members and leaders, like renowned Mary

McLeod Bethune who was the first woman president of ATA in 1924 (National Education Association, 2002-2006).

³³ This migration to urban areas with restrictive covenants that kept blacks in ghetto areas resulted in a similar segregation in the North as was historically seen in the South (Franklin & Joint Center for Political Studies (U.S.). Committee on Policy for Racial Justice, 1989).

³⁴ Between 1932 and 1948, the number of black teachers doubled throughout the U.S., and by the 1950s half of all black professionals were schoolteachers (Foster, 1997; Foster, 2001; Gordon, 2000).

³⁵ In the seventeen southern states, between 1930 and 1931, there were more black secondary teachers with college and high school training than white secondary teachers. The only area where whites predominated was in graduate schooling. However, for the same years, at the elementary level, almost 23% of the black teachers had not completed high school compared to 5% of white teachers. This discrepancy has been largely attributed to the lack of high schools for blacks (Caliver, 1970; Gordon, 2000).

³⁶ Most black teachers at that time were women. The feminization of teaching was universal. Some scholars suggest that this was because white officials were less threatened by black women than they were by black men (Leloudis, 1996). The overall role that women played in the Civil Rights Movement cannot be underestimated, and the schools, in addition to social clubs, churches, and volunteer organizations, were some of the behind-the-scenes locations where women could work toward equality (Fairclough, 2001).

³⁷ Farris Johnson, Sr., for example, served as a member and an officer on the organizing committee of the Morehouse School of Medicine, the Athens-Clarke County Charter Commission, the Northeast Boy Scout Council, the Athens-Clarke County Regional Library Board, the Board of Zoning Adjustments, the Masonic Lodge, the Veteran of Foreign Wars (VFW), and the Morehouse College Alumni Association, in addition to being an educator in his community for thirty-two years (Alumni Association Reunion Leadership Team, August, 2004; Johnson, July 12, 2006, Field notes).

³⁸ From the equal pay for equal work movement (1900s), the development of the first salary schedules (1920s), the fight against dependency supplements (for men only) and administration stipends (1940s), and support for the Equal Pay Act of 1963, through today's unionization and professionalization movements, black educators have fought for equal pay and benefits between male and female teachers and between teaching and other comparable work (Carter, 1992; Gordon, 2000).

³⁹ Samuel and Judia Jackson Harris, for example, opened black teacher training programs in the summer to support the ongoing professional development of black educators from rural communities like Clarke County (Shaw, 1996).

⁴⁰ In much of the 20th century getting a high school education was "quite an accomplishment" for black people. Once they graduated, their home communities would often "hire them to go back and teach other children" in their community school (H. B. Stroud, Sr., July 18, 2006).

⁴¹ Because white school boards did not want to bother with black schools, financially or politically, they spent little time checking up on them. As a result, the black administration and teachers within these schools had much power and control over what was taught and how it was taught (Fairclough, 2001; Foster, 2001).

⁴² See Reed (1985) for information about cultural connections between black teachers and their students or Afrocentric curriculum.

⁴³ At this point, however, white flight to the suburbs and changes in black housing patterns quickly began a process of resegregation. This defacto resegregation is viewed as more harmful, in some ways, than the original segregation patterns, perhaps because of its voluntary nature. By the 1980s, it was estimated that approximately half of black children still attended segregated schools ("The African American Journey," 2006).

⁴⁴ Culturally relevant teaching is a distinctive educational philosophy grounded in the historical development of the black teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2001).

⁴⁵ I developed this inclusive model by reviewing the work of many educational scholars focused on minority student achievement (Aldridge, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2001; Darling-Hammond, French, & Garcia-Lopez, 2002; Darling-Hammond & National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (U.S.), 1997; Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Klein, 1999; Foster, 1997; Foster, 2001; Hale, 1982, 2001; hooks, 1994, 2003; Kohl, 1988, 1994, 1998; Kozol, 1992, 1995, 2000, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1998, 2000; Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1997; Payne, 1998).

⁴⁶ Some educators of minority populations, like Freire, have suggested a complete restructuring of Western educational practices used with working class or nontraditional, poor students. Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* describes his personal struggle to free the paralyzed from poverty and powerlessness through liberating teaching practices (Freire, 2000/1970).

⁴⁷ With so many teachers feeling "incapable" of meeting the social and educational needs of black and minority students because of differences in their cultural upbringing, highly qualified black and minority educators can be used to coach other teachers in ways to motivate black students by using culturally relevant educational philosophies, instructional strategies, and classroom management styles (Ladson-Billings, 1994; McAllister, 2002; Rong & Preissle, 1997).

⁴⁸ Using primary resources and other materials when "critically and holistically" studying topics, like the life of Martin Luther King, Jr, allows students to assess and interpret the history for themselves (Aldridge, 2002).

⁴⁹ These schools had an Afrocentric worldview that included teaching about the "centrality of community," "respect for tradition" and "ancestors," "spirituality and ethical concern," "harmony with nature," "sociality of selfhood," and the "unity of being" (Lee & Slaughter-Defor, 2001).

⁵⁰ These schools often used the *Negro History Guide* as a tool to link relevant personal experiences to the study of civics and black social issues (Chilcoat & Ligon, 1999).

⁵¹ SNCC and COFO, the group that facilitated the activities of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), recruited black and white volunteer teachers and nonteachers to work in these Freedom Schools. They trained these educators in southern politics, race relations, safety, pedagogical techniques, core curriculum, and their philosophy on nonviolence (Chilcoat & Ligon, 1999; Rothschild, 1982).

⁵² Ongoing training by the university students was provided to local community members so that the black community could *control* the program without the university students the following summer.

⁵³ This idea is based on Vincent Harding's river metaphor, previously used to describe black educational history by Aldridge (2002).

⁵⁴ Jubilee is the term used to describe May 4, 1865 when 5000 blacks in Athens and Clarke County were freed from slavery (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

⁵⁵ Clarke, originally from North Carolina, played a significant role in obtaining treaties with the indigenous Creeks (1782) and the Cherokee tribes (1792), briefly stopping the conflict between European settlers and Native Americans. Most of these treaties were not lawfully attained, and the removal of these indigenous groups suggests that Athens was originally built on conquered lands and has been a white-dominated community since that time. Hynd discusses the removal of Native Americans from the land by “thousands of volunteer” militia groups, which were commonly formed in the area by locals and University of Georgia students (Hynds, 1974).

⁵⁶ Madison County and Oconee County were parceled out of the county when the county seat of Clarke was moved from Watkinsville to Athens in 1811, leaving Clarke County as the smallest county in the state.

⁵⁷ The Poor School Fund, enacted in 1822 by the state legislature of Georgia, provided financial support for children unable to pay tuition at private academies. Typically, the cost was around eight cents per pupil per day. Athens’s authorities believed that, to support a public school system, they would need at least twenty dollars more per pupil each year. Hence, the free schools were never fully functional (Coleman, 1968; Joiner, Bonner, Shearouse, & Smith, 1979). Rice notes that later provisions for the state school funds in 1868 and 1877 were gathered from “income from poll taxes; a special tax on shows and exhibitions and malt and spirituous liquors as enacted by the legislature; proceeds from any commutation tax for military service; taxes that might be assessed on domestic animals; remaining carryover in the school fund; and half-rental from the 14-year lease on the Western and Atlantic railroads.” He notes that even though these tax avenues were numerous, they “amounted to a pittance” (Rice, October 29, 2001).

⁵⁸ Economic recovery following the Civil War was slow, and many county school systems did not hold local school tax elections to secure public school funding. Even when they did, the vote of two-thirds of the voters was hard to gain. With meager state funding, most county schools were unable to stay open for more than three or four months a year (Rice, October 29, 2001).

⁵⁹ The Lucy Cobb School was a distinguished white girls’ prep school that offered classes throughout the 1860s to prepare girls in the areas of English, natural philosophy, French, arithmetic, music, reading, and writing. The A.M. Scudder’s Center Hill Classical Academy and Mathematical School was one of the oldest classics academies for boys in the city, opening its doors in 1846. The R. P. Adams’s School for Boys and the Cobbham Academy were both college prep schools for white males. These tuition-based male boarding schools housed students in the 1860s who wished to attend the University of Georgia. Like the university, they closed for two years during the Civil War so that the students attending could fight for the Confederacy (Coleman, 1968).

⁶⁰ The education of lower income white Athenians was also inconsistent because of financial and family problems that prevented children from affording and attending the wealthy, private schools. Poor white students, with funds provided by the state of Georgia, were taught English education only in some of the local private schools. Teachers of these students were required to charge them the same fee as paying students as long as the fee did not exceed seven cents per pupil. Only those poor students who were proficient in elementary school were allowed access to the “higher branches” of education and utility (Coleman, 1968).

⁶¹ The slaves of white city families typically lived in servant houses on the corner of city blocks next to the large antebellum homes of their white owners, while rural slaves lived in wood slave quarters of one or two rooms and dirt floors (Coleman, 1968; Schwartz, 2000).

⁶² One local historian suggests that few slaves in the city of Athens worked in mills because they were not economically sound investments. It was more expensive to have slave labor than poor, unskilled white labor, because of the cost of paying for the food and shelter needs of the enslaved (Gagnon, 1999).

⁶³ A few free blacks did live in Athens prior to the Civil War. These free blacks, working menial labor jobs or owning small businesses, were harshly scrutinized by white police and were required by law to not leave their premises after 9:15 PM (Hynds, 1974). Urban slaves commonly were treated with less cruelty than rural slaves who lived on plantations. City slaves were often given more access to literacy and numeracy training.

⁶⁴ Powers, born into slavery in 1837 and passing away as a freedwoman in 1910, may not have been literate herself. However, the pictures portrayed in her quilts vividly relayed the stories of the bible (Georgia Humanities, 2004-2006d; Perry, 1994).

⁶⁵ The story, *Famous grave found off Fourth Street, Digging through history: Quilter remembered* by Lee Shearer, originally appeared in the Jan. 9, 2005 edition of the Athens Banner-Herald. It is reprinted here with full permission.

⁶⁶ Colonel Barrow owned several rural plantations in addition to a city home in Athens. In 1866, Barrow built a school on his Oglethorpe County plantation and hired a white teacher to instruct forty of his black slaves (Coleman, 1968; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

⁶⁷ One record notes that Olivia Cobb chose to break the state law forbidding white slave owners to educate their servants because she believed that her "girl-servant" was "a most excellent" one who could only improve by having some reading, writing, and arithmetic skills. However, the servant progressed so rapidly that Cobb soon confessed that she was "almost incompetent" to continue teaching her (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

⁶⁸ Informal education was provided in Athens's rural and city slave communities to ensure that everyone had an understanding of shared rights and responsibilities of maintaining the household including the distribution of food, building and maintenance of shelter, completion of chores, and care for blood and nonblood relations. After securing the slave quarters and completing their work, these slave communities passed on other forms of informal learning through tales and song (Abrahams, 1992; Levine, 1977).

⁶⁹ Pierce's Chapel African Methodist Church was Athens's first black church. After one year of existence, the church had over 250 members. Following Pierce, Hill First Baptist opened as the first black Baptist church in 1867 (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

⁷⁰ Before 1900, a network of lodges grew as offshoots of the black churches. These lodges, also known as burial societies, provided black Athenians access to sickness and death insurance coverage that offered financial assistance to families following a family death, while also offering them access to social events and secret and elaborate rituals ("Economic Co-operation among Negro Americans," 1907). By 1912, approximately 75% of all adult black Athenians were members of a lodge (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

⁷¹ Coleman suggests that numerous black churches existed prior to 1866, but they were controlled by the larger white church of the same denomination, and the preachers who spoke at them were typically white. By 1912, 29 black lodges, where blacks could openly discuss politics and religion, had opened in Athens. The church and the lodge supplied a larger "social field" for the blacks of Athens than the whites had at the time, making them logical places to discuss and pursue ideas about social progress through educational and economic advancement (Chambliss, 1934; Coleman, 1968; Long, 1919; Thurmond, March 19, 1978).

⁷² Unlike Alfred Richardson, Madison Davis was of mixed lineage. He was one of the first black legislators elected in 1868 by freed slaves who ousted two white legislators with their first ballot votes. However, Davis was 7/8s white. When 25 blacks were removed from the General Assembly by fellow Georgia House of Representative members because of their race, Davis remained because they could not prove that he was more than 1/8 black. His mixed race caused him many problems. He was not allowed to stay at black hotels because he was too white, nor white hotels because he was “colored.” He was, however, a well-known and established Athenian who helped pass legislation that created the Georgia public school system, banished the whipping post and flogging of female prisoners, and provided the right to vote for women. He lived on Newton Street and later at 853 Prince Avenue, near Monroe Morton’s family home. He was buried in the historic Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery (Hester, 2001).

⁷³ White Athenians employed numerous schemes to keep blacks from the polls because they knew that the black vote could change the political climate of the town. In 1891, a white landlord hired numerous black men who qualified to vote and paid them \$3.00 per day to work with him in another county on the day of the election. Another white community member gave a large barbeque for blacks that directly conflicted with the voting times, hoping the blacks would choose food over going to the polls (Wardlaw, 1932).

⁷⁴ The *Athens Blade* was the first black weekly newspaper, printed on Fridays for \$1.50 per year. It was edited and owned by black men (Pledger, 1879a).

⁷⁵ This quote reflects the thinking that resulted in the 1896 *Plessy decision by the U.S. Supreme Court*. However, the paper in which it is cited was printed prior to *Plessy*. After some searching, I located the original quote in the majority opinion in the *Dredd Scott* case by Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, a Jackson appointee, in 1857.

⁷⁶ The Freedmen’s Bureau was developed in an “attempt to establish a governmental guardianship over the negroes [sic] and insure their economic and civil rights” (Du Bois, 1910).

⁷⁷ Alonzo Powers was the son of Harriet Powers, famous quilter. He was born sometime around 1855. He went to school long enough to get his teaching license, and then he taught for a few years. He later went into the ministry (Hester, 2001).

⁷⁸ Butchart analyzes the AMA as a group that originally, like the Quakers, was interested in the problem of land tenure for black people. However, he notes that the AMA later forgot about basic reforms such as “land and protection” and focused more energy on education. This increased dedication was a “placebo” for the race problems and failed to affect the ruling ideology of the South (1980).

⁷⁹ In that year alone, the Freedmen’s Bureau built six privately funded schools in the state of Georgia, obtaining funding from northern aid societies, religious organizations, and philanthropies. It is unknown if Knox was one of the original six or actually a seventh school built that same year. One record suggests that the school was established only in a “small way” by the Freedmen’s Bureau (Butchart, 1980; Long, 1919; Rowe & Barrow, 1923; Underwood, January 29, 1978). By 1866, with the help of the Freedmen’s Bureau, approximately 8000 freed persons were attending schools in Georgia. This number rose to more than 20,000 within 10 years (Georgia Humanities, 2004-2006a).

⁸⁰ I have found at least one record of a male teacher at this early stage of Knox. Fred A. Sawtell taught grammar students in 1869 at Knox (Sawtell, 1869).

⁸¹ The assault record does not specify whether the assailant was black or white. However, the assailant's name was W.M. Pledger, and that is the same name of the famous black Athenian who started Athens's first black paper.

⁸² The Georgia Educational Association was founded in 1866 by freedmen to help blacks "establish and support" the schools in their communities (Barnard, 1871; "Economic Co-operation among Negro Americans," 1907).

⁸³ Following emancipation black communities commonly combined a varied of resources to employ teachers. By 1870, over 1000 southern teachers had been employed through these means. The teachers at Knox received a salary of approximately \$35.00 per month (\$25.00 in cash and the remainder provided in the value of their room and board) (Hurt, 2003; Long, 1919; Woofter, 1912; Wyatt-Brown, 1994).

⁸⁴ At one point, before 1882, one of the rooms was turned into a community chapel that could seat 100 people.

⁸⁵ Students were not considered enrolled unless they had attended the school for at least five days (Carrie J., 1869; Sawtell, 1869; Vannest, 1869a, 1869b).

⁸⁶ The only records found were from two teachers the month of April and two teachers the month of February. It is unclear if these teachers did the summary report for the younger grades and for the older grades or if all teachers reported for their own classroom. If teachers reported for their own rooms, the total daily attendance would naturally be higher (Carrie J., 1869; Sawtell, 1869; Vannest, 1869a, 1869b).

⁸⁷ Only around 10 to 20% of these students were over 16 years old (Carrie J., 1869; Sawtell, 1869; Vannest, 1869a, 1869b).

⁸⁸ Grammar education most likely included early literacy classes focused on reading, writing, and basic mathematics and intermediate education most likely included vocational studies, foreign language, and advanced mathematics.

⁸⁹ On many occasions, students from the school were asked to present musical, vocal, or dramatic productions at the Morton Theatre, a local black-owned theatre in downtown Athens ("Performances," 1925).

⁹⁰ Hill First Baptist Church was closely associated with the school. Because the church was unable to build its own facility, the congregation met in the basement of Knox for 10 years (Thurmond & Hester, 2001). One reference notes that local blacks wrote to the AMA and demanded that they build Congregational Churches for the Colored because the room used at the school was "not large enough to accommodate the people when there is anything like a good interest, as we cannot seat, comfortably, more than one hundred persons," which was a "great inconvenience at times." They also suggested that there was "not the air of sacredness in worshiping in a school-house as there is in an out-and-out church edifice" (American Missionary Association, March, 1887, p. 73-74).

⁹¹ The story, *Metamorphosis of the Clarke County public school system* by Dr. Marion J. Rice, originally appeared in the October 29, 2001 edition of the *Athens Banner-Herald*. It is reprinted here with full permission.

⁹² The tuition of the school ranged from \$.50 to \$1.50 per month depending on the courses taken by students (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978). The number of months that the school was open each year is not clear.

⁹³ The Knox Institute stood on the land that is now the H.T. Edwards Building of the Clarke County School District on the Atlanta Highway in Athens. This land was turned into Athens

High and Industrial School in 1956. Later, that school was renamed Burney Harris High (also a black high school). Following school desegregation, Burney-Harris High School closed and reopened one year later as Burney Harris Lyons Middle School.

⁹⁴ Du Bois claims that black schools, black churches, and the Freedmen's Bureau made this destructive period of history far less grave than it would have been without these support agencies (1910).

⁹⁵ Heard was sold two times in his life, once to a "fair master," named Professor John A. Trenchard, who ran a white boarding school in Elberton, Georgia. Professor Trenchard purchased Heard's mother and her four children, Millie, Henry, Beverly, and Delia, and allowed them to work as house servants and cooks when Henry was very young (Heard, 1928).

⁹⁶ During this time, Heard's employer would probably sit with Heard and work on his reading and writing skills. Most likely, Heard's employer would allow him to read text aloud and then he would teach him the words that he was mispronouncing and help him to learn the definitions of those words.

⁹⁷ Between 1881 and 1956, the Jeruel Academy changed names four times from Jeruel Normal School, to Jeruel Academy, to Jeruel Baptist Institute, and finally to Union Baptist Institute (Thurmond & Hester, 2001; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978; Underwood, August 4, 1985, January 29, 1978).

⁹⁸ Reverend C. H. Lyons was the father of Charles H. S. Lyons. Lyons Building on the campus of Jeruel was most likely named after this prominent community member.

⁹⁹ By the 1920s, five major railroad companies, including Georgia, Central of Georgia, Seaboard Air Line, Southern, and Gainesville Midland, served the Athens area (Brown & W.H. Harris M.D., 1918-1919).

¹⁰⁰ Jeruel Academy had a model farm on-site to give black children an opportunity to do "practical work" in "scientific agriculture" ("Athens' Colored Educational Institutions: Jeruel Baptist Association of Georgia Doing Splendid Work - Information on source is incomplete," Unknown).

¹⁰¹ Because the school offered boarding, many students attended the school from surrounding counties or other states (Brown & W.H. Harris M.D., 1918-1919; Underwood, August 4, 1985, January 29, 1978). The trustees and principal believed that it was necessary for the out-of-town students to live in the dormitories so that they could receive better training and development through the care, conduct, and moral training of the academy teachers (Brown & W.H. Harris M.D., 1918-1919). The Stroud family did not live in the dorms, and they lived so far from their school that their father had to use their car to get them there (G. E. Stroud, Jr., July 18, 2006, Interview; H. B. Stroud, Sr., July 18, 2006, Interview).

¹⁰² A master's thesis written on the training of black women for domestic service in Athens, Georgia, suggests that Union Baptist trained blacks in the field of domestic service and practical work through the 1940s (Killian, 1941).

¹⁰³ The Jeruel Music Department also supported two student clubs, the Junior Club for elementary students and the Glee Club for academy students (Brown & W.H. Harris M.D., 1918-1919).

¹⁰⁴ The Social Purity group focused their work on instilling the students with a knowledge and desire to take proper control of their bodies (Brown & W.H. Harris M.D., 1918-1919).

¹⁰⁵ The Sisters of Love society was started by girls boarding at the school. The purpose of the group was to help the girls bond together in a “kindly spirit” so that they might help each other and the dorm matron in household cares (Brown & W.H. Harris M.D., 1918-1919).

¹⁰⁶ The Literati, Lincoltonian, and Ciceronian were three literary societies for the three areas of study, primary, elementary, and academic-secondary. One catalog for the school noted that a friendly spirit of rivalry was intended among these groups (Brown & W.H. Harris M.D., 1918-1919).

¹⁰⁷ The principal’s staff included a treasurer, registrar, secretary, and matron (Brown & W.H. Harris M.D., 1918-1919).

¹⁰⁸ Over 200 farmers attended the conference each year (“Athens’ Colored Educational Institutions: Jeruel Baptist Association of Georgia Doing Splendid Work - Information on source is incomplete,” Unknown). The annual session was held during the month of March and was organized by the Farmer’s Department, Educational Department, and the Women’s Department of Jeruel Academy (Brown & W.H. Harris M.D., 1918-1919).

¹⁰⁹ At this time, families commonly raised their own chickens, pigs, and small gardens on their city property (C. W. Stroud, July 18, 2006, Interview).

¹¹⁰ Following his death in 1955, Lyons was recognized for his leadership of the school when the Clarke County School District named Lyons Junior High School after him. He was the first black Athenian to be recognized by the school system in this manner. Lyons is also remembered for his efforts to organize the Landrum Baptist Church in 1865, which was soon abandoned for a new location later named Ebenezer West Church around 1878 (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978; Underwood, January 29, 1978; Union Baptist Institute Press, 1926).

¹¹¹ All students assembled each morning for song and prayer (H. Stroud in McConnell, April 4, 2001).

¹¹² It took Representative Keith Heard one and a half years to get approval by the Georgia House of Representatives for the historical marker, which was placed on the edge of the school site, now the home of the University of Georgia’s Brumby Hall dormitory (McConnell, April 4, 2001).

¹¹³ The opening of the merged Athens High and Industrial School was one of many attempts by the local government to appease Athens’s black community so that they would not desire integrated schools. The *Brown versus Board of Education* decision made little difference in Georgia at this time. It took multiple lawsuits, federal government intervention, and ongoing boycotts and demonstrations before all school systems in Georgia were finally integrated. Even though the 1949 Minimum Program for Education Act included more funding for black schools, most communities used those funds to try to make separate institutions, like Athens High and Industrial, to placate black community members instead of discussing integration.

¹¹⁴ The story, *Honoring the past: Community gathers to remember the Union Baptist Institute* by Joan Stroer, originally appeared in the April 3, 2001 edition of the Athens Banner-Herald. It is reprinted here with full permission.

¹¹⁵ Killian suggests that this school opened in 1907, though no other sources offer an exact date of founding. This date would have been eight years prior to the opening of Heard University, where the founder is said to have worked (1941).

¹¹⁶ I must note here the difference between private schools at the turn of the century and private schools of today. Many of these schools received tuition from their students, fundraising from local churches and lodges, and possibly small financial subsidies from the federal, state, or local

government, which differs from today's private schools that typically do not receive much government funding. One record calls schools like Knox "public," because they were started by the Freedman's Bureau and they were open to all students who could attend. However, Knox School and others of the time required most students to pay tuition ("Knox Institute," August, 1972). For the purposes of this dissertation, this school is considered private because it was not opened and run by the local government like more modern public schools.

¹¹⁷ Public schools when they began in the South were different than today's public schools because these schools often required students to pay small fees for books and supplies, and they sometimes required tuition fees for special courses that required specialized teachers. Du Bois suggested that public schools were developed and maintained because of the fear whites had of blacks educating their own youth. He noted that, in the midst of the southern strife following Reconstruction, blacks brought three things to the South through their "negro rule": democratic governments, free public schools, and new social legislation (Du Bois, 1910).

¹¹⁸ Clarke County was one of the communities that led the state in the establishment of public schools. Georgia's public school system was not "fully established" until 1873 ("Economic Co-operation among Negro Americans," 1907).

¹¹⁹ Even though the report said "schools," Dr. Rice noted in one article that the author probably meant teachers (October 29, 2001).

¹²⁰ Records are not available to show how many months that the county schools were open each year. However, surrounding county systems were unable to stay open for more than a few months a year.

¹²¹ The electronic version of the WPA Federal Writers' Project Interviews recognizes the dialect of the participants. I cross referenced both the printed version, edited by Al Hester, and the electronic version (<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/wpa/12080124.html>) to make certain that the rich dialect was not lost.

¹²² At the time, Reese Street was the original and only public black high school in Athens, and it served high school students from the city and from the county. The school was later renamed as Athens High and Industrial School and then Burney Harris High School. The original school was located on the corner of Reese and Church Streets. Mrs. Nesbit noted that the original building is now used as an Elks lodge and health care center (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview).

¹²³ Mrs. Nesbit's father left her mother in 1936. Because of the financial strain of seven children, Mrs. Johnson Neely moved into town to 1248 West Broad Street so that she could work and her children could continue in school. Only a wall remains of Mrs. Neely's home at 1248 West Broad Street. The property sits directly across the street from the current Jackson McWhorter Funeral Home (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview).

¹²⁴ The story, *Developer can picture lasting school tribute* by Alisa De Mao, originally appeared in the Jan. 16, 2005 edition of the Athens Banner-Herald. It is reprinted here with full permission.

¹²⁵ Bettye Moore Stroud, however, did not have to walk far. She recalled her cousins having to walk all the way from the Atlanta Highway through the woods to meet her each morning. They always walked together as a group (Kissane, 1999; Moore (Stroud), July 18, 2006, Interview).

¹²⁶ At some point, a water pump in the front of the school house (Moore (Stroud), July 18, 2006, Interview).

¹²⁷ The oil used was probably used car oil (Moore (Stroud), July 18, 2006, Interview).

¹²⁸ Judia Jackson was born on February 1, 1873, to Alfred and Louise Jackson (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

¹²⁹ Built by Monroe B. (Pink) Morton, an early entrepreneur in the downtown black commercial district of Athens, in 1910, the Morton Theater was the first black developed, owned, and run vaudeville theatre in the country. The theatre was and remains located in the downtown Hot Corner district where blacks historically came to see movies, local blues players, nationally-known concert pianists like Alice Carter Simmons of the Oberlin, Ohio, Conservatory and other famous musicians like Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Cab Calloway, Jimmy Lunceford, and Bessie Smith (Shipp, 1988). The building also housed offices of local black doctors, lawyers, and undertakers (e.g., Dr. Ida Mae Johnson Hiram, the first black woman licensed doctor in Georgia, Dr. William H. Harris, who helped to start the Georgia State Medical Association of Colored Physicians, Dr. Isadore Horace Burney, a physician, Dr. Burnett L. Jackson, a dentist, and Drs. Farris and Albon Jackson, both physicians). The building also held restaurants, pool halls, bookstores, and other miscellaneous shops throughout its history. It is now a performing arts center owned by the Athens Unified Government, which took it over in 1980 and revitalized it with the help of the Morton Theatre Corporation, a nonprofit organization that manages the theatre (Rowe, 1913).

¹³⁰ When Rosenwald Funds were contributed to building a schoolhouse, the efforts of the school were to be coordinated by the state agents of Negro education and the Jeanes Fund supervisors (Anderson & Moss, 1999; Anderson, 1988).

¹³¹ The Rosenwald rural schoolhouse construction program began in 1912 when Rosenwald, on his fiftieth birthday, donated \$25,000 to Booker T. Washington to support the “offshoots of Tuskegee.” These were schoolhouses being built throughout the South in the Hampton-Tuskegee model of industrial education by Fisk University graduate Clinton J. Calloway and others (Anderson, 1988).

¹³² One source notes that black southerners donated 16.64% toward Rosenwald schools, while whites donated 4.27%, Rosenwald Fund donated 15.36%, and the remaining 63.73% was provided through public taxation. In Georgia, these statistics were 18.74% from blacks, 8.5% from whites, 55% from taxation, and 17.9% from the Rosenwald Fund (Anderson, 1988).

¹³³ In other areas of the state, “public” schools for both black and white students began to open in the 1870s. However, with little financial support from the state, the city governments had to cover the costs of these schools. Therefore, even though they were called “public” schools, most were tuition-based and not at all like the common schools of the North. By 1871, only 5% of all black “educables” attended public Georgia schools (Bond, 1934). Even though a county school system was enabled after the passing of the 1868 Reconstruction Constitution, it was not sufficient for most residents of Athens. The rural county system did not have enough resources to support the entire county, and the schools could stay open only for three or four months a year. Therefore, the city of Athens opened its own independent school system in 1886, and there were two boards of education in Athens (one city and one county) from 1885-1955.

¹³⁴ Emory Speer was a local attorney elected as an Independent Democrat to the Forty-sixth (1879) and Forty-seventh (1883) Congresses. In 1893, he was named Dean of the Mercer University Law School (*Speer, Emory, 1848-1918*, 2006).

¹³⁵ “Mat” Davis was born a slave in Athens, Georgia. In 1868, Davis was elected to the General Assembly and helped to frame the Georgia Constitution. Because of his light complexion, he was

one of two black representatives allowed to keep their seats when the legislature voted to expel black members.

¹³⁶ The application for the establishment of the public city schools was signed by M.A. Harden, clerk of the Georgia House of Representatives; William A Little, speaker of the House; H.A. Carlton, president of the Senate; and the Honorable D. McDaniel, governor of Georgia (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

¹³⁷ The bond referendum was held to establish an “independent school district” in Athens with the ability to tax. At least two-thirds of the voters approved the action (Rice, October 29, 2001).

¹³⁸ I must note here that it is interesting that the school system would add two schools for whites and only one for blacks if blacks had a larger student population. I speculate that the school board sought less crowded schools for the white community so that they could retain white support for the schools. Because local blacks had little political power at this time, they could not complain as loudly as local whites about their taxes being used for schools that were overcrowded.

¹³⁹ The Foundry Street School, being founded as a private school, was not listed in any records after 1886. Mamie Jackson was the principal of the Foundry Street School in 1886.

¹⁴⁰ This quote was taken from an interview in 1939 with Mrs. Mary Wright Hill, an educator of 30 years and once the principal of one of Athens’s black schools (East Athens).

¹⁴¹ Born and schooled in Athens, Mack was a popular and well-known county school teacher before he was named principal of the East Athens School. He remained at the school until he successfully completed his Civil Service Examination and became a postmaster in 1900. One record notes that there was “probably no colored man in Athens or Clarke County who has shown more interest in the advancement of his race” than John R. Mack. Mack was married with seven children, two of whom worked in the Athens public schools. The thrifty community member owned three homes. He was known for his “straightforwardness” that won him the respect of both black and white citizens of Athens (“John R. Mack,” 1914).

¹⁴² In 1895, the schools’ directions were refocused on industrial training when J. A. Bray was named principal.

¹⁴³ By this time black illiteracy rates had dropped from 90 to 40%. However, though many blacks could read, their reading and writing skills were often not at a “high enough level to qualify for jobs in the complex world of the large-scale factories and administrative offices” (Wish, 1964, pp. 186-187).

¹⁴⁴ The effect of new cotton mills opening in Athens resulted in many available jobs for blacks. This resulted in a decrease in the state’s rural black population as workers moved to the cities to take advantage of jobs, better educational opportunities for their children, and a wider social network. Many of the best teachers left the rural areas and went to teach in the cities because the pay was better and the pupils attended more regularly (Ellis & Speno, 1971).

¹⁴⁵ Though many whites believed that the black workers squandered their meager \$1.25 a day salaries (men), black Athenians continued to buy more homes and farms and open more businesses each year. By 1912, black farmers owned and cultivated one eighth of the farmland in Athens. One local paper suggested that Athens’s black farmers were teaching white farmers a few “lessons” (Brooks & O’Kelley, 1918; Woofter, 1912).

¹⁴⁶ At this time, industrial education included technical and vocational courses to prepare blacks for practical duties and skilled trades.

¹⁴⁷ Du Bois claimed that the history of black education in the South was “enforced

ignorance” and that the only solution was to provide some classical education to blacks that would give them the knowledge to protest the oppressive southern political economy (Litwack, 1998a).

¹⁴⁸ His grandfather, from whom he got his name, was born a slave. The elder Harris was known by many of Athens’s wealthy white families because his slavemaster allowed him to be “hired out” to others to as an “honest, self-respecting shoemaker” (Moss, 1910, p. 6).

¹⁴⁹ The stereopticon was an early movie projector from the nineteenth century with two lenses.

¹⁵⁰ In 2006, several black seniors at the University of Georgia began investigating the possibility of Harris receiving an actual degree from the University of Georgia (Jones, 2007).

¹⁵¹ One article suggests that white business leaders and blacks raised the funds to allow Harris to attend Morris Brown (Shipp, 1988).

¹⁵² Most likely, Harris participated in courses at these schools during vacation and summer breaks when his school was closed.

¹⁵³ This doctrine institutionalized racist practices in the U.S. Scholars have documented that in most cases the separate facilities, housing, and transportation that resulted from *Plessy* were inherently unequal (Zhang, 2002).

¹⁵⁴ One record shows that Harris taught at the private Knox Institute sometime in 1894. It is unknown if he taught there in 1895. If he did, his name was not listed on the February, 1895, AMA staff records. It was common for teachers at this time to be employed as “extension workers” who completed a certain amount of teaching in a central school and devoted the rest of their time to visiting smaller schools to supervise other teachers or teach evening courses (Orr, 1950). Harris could have been one of these individuals because of his abilities as a master educator.

¹⁵⁵ School personnel salary was based on grade-level taught, seniority, and grades on annual examinations. Each year, Harris was given the annual exam on which he scored as high as (if not higher than) other school personnel and only a few points lower in grammar and history (Flanigen, 1896-1897).

¹⁵⁶ Industrial education, originating from the European educational movement and later a worldwide movement toward technical and agricultural schools, was a major component of black education at the turn of the century. Industrial education was designed to train the “head, hand, and heart” of “lazy people” (blacks, immigrants, and working class people) to make them “good for something.” The black industrial education movement, rooted specifically in the educational needs of 4,000,000 freedmen in the late 1800s (90% of whom were illiterate), became the northern industrialists’ and southern oppressors’ solution to the “race problem” (Spivey, 1978; Violas, 1978). Many whitolitical figures like President Teddy Roosevelt believed that industrial education was a proper educational model to save the “deficient” black race (Fredrickson, 1987).

¹⁵⁷ Armstrong believed that “the removal of black people from any effective role in southern politics was the first step toward ‘proper’ reconstruction” (Anderson, 1988, p. 37). Industrial education soon became the model in the South to produce a productive, employable, and useful black populace that would benefit themselves and their employers (Gardner, 1975; Hanus, 1908).

¹⁵⁸ Between 1900 and 1910 economic and industrial changes occurred in Athens. As a result of the closing of many large plantations, the black community had to reroute their occupations toward hard and skilled labor for men and working at steam laundries and bakeries for women.

¹⁵⁹ Historical research suggests that many white industrialists supported industrial education because it taught blacks *how to behave*, controlling them with social and economic restraints

instead of the physical and emotional restraints previously used by slave masters. Southern progressives began political activities, like the New South Movement, “to blend the political, social, and cultural ideals of the Old South with the impulses and aspirations of the Industrial Revolution,” and people like Jabez Lamar Monroe Curry put political pressures on southern schools to focus on the “material value of education, manual training, and industrial training” to “control the education of its black population” (Fultz, 1995a, pp. 202-203; Spivey, 1978, pp. 76-77).

¹⁶⁰ Most likely the remaining funds to originally start this program came from local black taxes, school vouchers, appropriations from various black churches, and donations from private community members (Gardner, 1975).

¹⁶¹ It seems that the Board of Education pushed for this transfer also, because Harris made a quick move in the middle of the school year after the previous principal, J. A. Bray, wrote to the Board of Education saying that he could not help the “poor unfortunate people” of the area. He stated confessed that his failure to do so was a sign of pure “human weakness,” so he must resign (Bray, December 22, 1902).

¹⁶² Mildred Lewis Rutherford, fondly called Miss Millie, was born in 1851 to Laura Cobb and Williams Rutherford. As an “educator, organizer, administrator, scholar, historian, and orator,” she was actively involved in the education of women in Athens and throughout the country. She was the principal of the prestigious Lucy Cobb Institute from 1880 to 1895 when her sister M.A. Lipscomb took over for her so that she could focus on her writing. She was the president of the Athens' Ladies' Memorial Association and one of the founders of the Athens's chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. In 1925, the University of Georgia gave her an honorary doctoral degree in literature for prolific writings (LaCavera, 2001b). Rutherford is also known for her outspoken opposition to the women's suffrage movement. In a 1915 address to the Georgia legislative body, she stated that “God had said a woman's place was in the home and that is where the vast majority of women were content to stay. They did not want the vote” (LaCavera, 2001a).

¹⁶³ In the report, Bonds demonstrates his dedication to the industrial school idea when he states that he was “dreaming of the ideal school in which, in addition to the regular literacy and scientific work, every boy will be taught how to earn a living with his hands, and every girl will be taught how to cook and sew” (Athens City Schools Board of Education, 1905-1906).

¹⁶⁴ Although the school had no age requirement, females were allowed to attend only if they were accompanied to and from the school by someone approved by the principal. The school offered the use of a reading room and bathrooms (where one could bathe with permission) from 6:00 – 9:45 PM and classes from 7:15 – 9:15 PM. If a student wanted to “bathe,” she would have to get prior approval from the principal or the chairman of the reading room (Flanigen, April 21, 1905).

¹⁶⁵ Existing historical records discussing the date of the opening of the cooking school differ. Michael Thurmond's book, *A Story Untold, Black Men and Women of Athens*, specifies that the cooking extension school did not open until 1908, whereas Flanigan's Board of Education meeting minutes from April, 1905, include documentation about this extension school. After triangulating the data sources, I believe that the cooking program was started in 1905 and was expanded to a full “extension school” in 1907-1908.

¹⁶⁶ Over the course of the 1905-1906 school year, West Athens Colored School raised \$26 in agricultural sales by selling 1800 cabbages, one eighth acre of beans, and one and a half acres of

sweet potatoes. The sewing department made \$35 selling over 125 articles and garments like “children’s dresses, jackets, underwear, ladies’ shirt waists, aprons” and the cooking department helped students learn to make plain foods like “breads, pies, meats... and cakes of different kinds” (Harris, 1910).

¹⁶⁷ Through his fundraising, he was able to get small donations, ranging from \$100 to \$1000, from Peabody and Slater funds. None of these donations, however, could sustain all of the programs that Harris was interested in implementing (Athens City Schools Board of Education, 1906 -1907; Flanigen, March 27, 1911).

¹⁶⁸ Black leaders like Professor Du Bois believed that the use of industrial education pedagogy represented the old South attitude of “adjustment and submission” by presenting educational methodology that confirmed the “alleged inferiority” of the Negro race. Du Bois claimed that the purpose of education should be the development and growth of the idea that all black people have the right to “know,” grow, understand, and “aspire,” while Washington followers simply wanted education focused “relevant problem-solving.” Some suggest that these intellectuals were striving for common goals, primarily the economic and social development of the black community. There are several commonalities between their philosophies. Both Washington and DuBois supported industrial and vocational training for most blacks. They both emphasized education focused on self help, personal and moral development, and vocational competence, and in each of their writings, they seemed to place some blame on blacks for their own social, political, and economic situations (Carroll, 2006; Gardner, 1975, p. 509).

¹⁶⁹ Research suggests that the salary of “the average Negro teacher [was] hardly sufficient to maintain the standard of living expected of teachers” in the early 1900’s (Caliver, 1970, p. 112; Flanigen, January 19, 1907; Fultz, 1995a, pp. 112, 440). BOE annual reports starting in 1886 recorded that Athens was one of the lowest paying school systems in the state for both black and white teachers. Serious pay discrepancies between the races continued through the 1950s (Athens City Schools Board of Education, 1904-1905; Fultz, 1995a; Thomas, 1960).

¹⁷⁰ Washington describes the black belt as an area of the southern states with very dark and fertile soil. However, because this area of land was normally populated by black communities, the use of the term later became a negative reference to areas of the South where blacks typically outnumbered white residents (Washington, 1971).

¹⁷¹ Black educators of this time had to fight many other progressive reformers for available philanthropists’ dollars because the progressive era claimed an “increasing public awareness of social injustice.” Other reform groups were seeking to finance their own reform efforts against “municipal corruption” and in support of “temperance crusades, and settlement houses” (Enck, 1976, p. 85).

¹⁷² The Jeanes Fund was a little different than the other philanthropic groups because it only supplied funding for salaries of supervising teachers who would travel around the South to support overwhelmed rural school teachers. It did not support funding for general supplies, buildings, teachers, or other needs. The Jeanes teachers came to Georgia in 1907 and most likely did not work for the Athens city school system because they focused their efforts on one room rural school houses. One record suggests that Jeanes teachers were not used in Athens public schools until 1955, but were used in the county schools since 1932 (Underwood, August 19, 1987).

¹⁷³ This probably occurred at more than one school between 1880 and 1913 before a third black school was opened.

¹⁷⁴ Harris defined his work from 1902-1909 as a study focused on understanding how to address the occurrence of rampant “general desertion” of Athens’s domestic workforce. The desertion was partially due to the closing of large plantations and the loss of basic domestic service jobs, as well as the lack of education to fit the workers into other fields in the community. He noted that the workers were not trained in the “ideal of the dignity of work” for the new fields and so many left their work with a “depressive feeling of drudgery” (Harris, 1910, p. 7).

¹⁷⁵ In 1910, David Crenshaw Barrow was the University of Georgia Chancellor, a board member of the Jeanes Fund for the improvement of rural black education, and a prominent member of the Athens community. Barrow County and the David C. Barrow School of the Clarke County School District were both named in his honor (Georgia Humanities, 2004-2006b).

¹⁷⁶ Edward R. Hodgson was the president of Empire State Chemical Company and a firm member of the Hodgson Cotton Company, King-Hodgson Company and the Georgia Phosphate Company. Around 1880, he was appointed by Georgia’s Governor, Henry D. McDaniel, as one of five commissioners charged with establishing the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, Georgia (Gordon, 1953; Rowe, 1913).

¹⁷⁷ W.T. Bryan was the president of the Athens Electric Railway Company (Harris, 1910).

¹⁷⁸ H.S. West was a judge in Athens City Court (Harris, 1910).

¹⁷⁹ Billups Phinizy was a prominent and wealthy cotton factory owner who held many prestigious local offices. These offices included presidency of the Southern Mutual Insurance Company, the Bank of the University, and the Commercial Club of Athens. He was also the vice president of Athens Electric Railway Company, the director of the Georgia Railroad and Banking Company (Augusta) and Southern Manufacturing Company, and a trustee for the Atlanta Trust Company (Samway, 1997).

¹⁸⁰ T.P. Vincent was vice-president of the Georgia National Bank and is believed to have been an Athens city councilman or commissioner in the early 1900s (Harris, 1910).

¹⁸¹ Judge John J. Strickland was a local Athens attorney and judge who also served as the petitioner’s attorney for the charter (Harris, 1910; Hood et al., 1910c).

¹⁸² However, the trustees did take advice on hiring from Harris and his board of directors (Hood et al., 1910a).

¹⁸³ The school’s name was suggested by Chancellor Barrow of the University of Georgia (Moss, 1910).

¹⁸⁴ Whites often used the image of this overweight, dark-skinned woman as a pillar to black motherhood to justify the existing social order and oppression of those days (Clarkson, 1910).

¹⁸⁵ The mammy “loved unconditionally” with full “forgiveness for the past.” She was believed to be worthy of “admiration and adoration” by both the black and white communities (Goings, 1994, p. 64; Litwack, 1998a). Stories and poems, such as Martha S. Gielow’s *Mammy’s Reminiscences* of 1898, valorized the “devoted foster parents” that Mammies, Daddies, and Uncles became in many southern white homes. Whites believed that these “good Negroes who accepted their subordinate place with equanimity, cheerful compliance, and faithful labor, and who rejected agitation for social and political equality” were worth remembering (Gielow, 1898, p. vii).

¹⁸⁶ These black women, noted in history and literature, symbolized the supposed “racial co-operation” that occurred between slaves and their masters in some southern homes and the supposed good-old-days of the South. However, over time the wonderful characteristics of the mammy deteriorated into mere stereotypes used for restaurant names, pancake syrup containers,

flop dolls, and movie titles (Harris, 1982; Northen, 1910). Of course, this image of the mammy that was portrayed by the Black Mammy Memorial Association (and by Aunt Jemima) carelessly disregarded the constant and systematic rape, torture, abuse, and murder of black workers during the time of slavery throughout the Americas.

¹⁸⁷ Twenty-first century sensibilities find this language offensive, but no records suggest any white or black community backlash from Harris's comments. It is likely that Harris's approach was "so nebulous that it could be interpreted favorably by any group" at the time (Vernon Johns Society, 2003).

¹⁸⁸ William Jonathan Northen was governor of Georgia from 1890-1894. He spent a great deal of time traveling the country delivering speeches on southern economy and racial problems. Following the Atlanta 1906 race riots, Northen visited towns throughout the state with the Business Men's Gospel Union, a black and white coalition of prominent Christians striving to develop antilynching leagues (Georgia Humanities, 2004-2006g).

¹⁸⁹ Joseph Mackey Brown is remembered for two terms as Georgia's governor (1909-1911, 1912-1913). Unlike Northen, Brown is noteworthy for his negative role as a ringleader in the Leo Frank lynching, inciting people in one of his writings "to form mobs" to ensure justice (Georgia Humanities, 2004-2006e).

¹⁹⁰ Mary Ann Rutherford Lipscomb was born in Athens, Georgia, to Laura Cobb Rutherford and Williams Rutherford. She was a teacher of "elocution, science and general education" and a writer of essays, poems, and articles. She was married to Francis Adgate Lipscomb who was a professor of *Belles-lettres* at the University of Georgia (Lipscomb, 1894, p. 469-470). Lipscomb is recognized as one of the people who helped to develop the State Normal School in Athens because of the lack of adequate training facilities for teachers (Ingram, 2000). Mrs. Lipscomb was the sister of Millie Rutherford, principal of Lucy Cobb the 15 years prior to Lipscomb becoming principal in 1895. She remained principal of the school until 1907 (LaCavera, 2001b).

¹⁹¹ Little is known about this index except that it was likely a group of industrial planners who catalogued the industrial development of towns in Georgia and Alabama to help enhance southern industry.

¹⁹² The Black Mammy Institute charter notes that the school was designed specifically to help black students work toward a "life-occupation, not as teachers or LEADERS but as INTELLIGENT INDUSTRIAL WORKERS and CITIZENS" (Hood et al., 1910c, p. 5).

¹⁹³ One record suggests that this might have been the donation of 25 acres (worth approximately \$5000), along with \$2000 for the development and construction of a building from the city given to Harris during and immediately following his quartette tour (Hood et al., 1910c). However, another record notes that the city of Athens donated the land and money (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

¹⁹⁴ Though less emphasized, these academic and social courses were central in all of Harris's schools because of the importance that the black community gave to these areas. A local newspaper article recognizing Dr. Isadora Horace Burney, a pioneer black dentist in Northeast Georgia, noted that the dentist gave speeches at schools like Harris's that explained how there was "no field of labor among negroes ... more vital in its bearing on racial uplift than ... the fundamental [and academic] ideas of personal hygiene, salvation, and health" ("Athens, Georgia... In 1914," 1914).

¹⁹⁵ Mr. Pledger was a friend to abolitionist Frederick Douglass. He published a local black newspaper and was a leading figure in national Republican politics. In 1880, he was elected state chairman of the Republican party (Shipp, 1988).

¹⁹⁶ When I first started researching Harris I was confident that he was entirely aligned with the industrial education model. After several years of continued research, I have concluded that like Washington he was quite a complex individual that seemed to focus his energy on the goal of providing the community with what they needed for their economic and political uplift and at the time that was workforce skills.

¹⁹⁷ In 1920, a state constitutional amendment required counties to levy a 1 to 5 mills school tax. It also allowed for local areas to levy up to 5 mills of additional taxes (Rice, October 29, 2001).

¹⁹⁸ To honor Harris for all of his years of service, the community named a YMCA Branch and a National Honor Society Chapter after Harris. Also, in 1956 when Union merged with AHIS to make one community high school, AHIS was renamed Burney-Harris High School after Professor Harris and Ms. Burney who was a math teacher and administrator in the school ("Black Athens: In Quest of a Heritage" August 16, 1975; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

¹⁹⁹ Following the integration of AHIS-BHHS and Athens High School, Robertson was sent to be the assistant principal of Cedar Shoals (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview).

²⁰⁰ Many more stories remain to be told in this area. However, for the original submission of this work, I focused on only a chosen few.

²⁰¹ Farris F. Johnson, Sr., was interviewed for this research several times over a few months. He preferred for his interviews to not be taped, so all notes were handwritten throughout the interview process. He was both a student and teacher at Union Baptist and later a principal at West Broad Elementary and Lyons School, an assistant principal at AHIS, and an assistant superintendent of Clarke County Schools (Johnson, July 12, 2006, Field notes; July 17, 2006, Field notes; July 26, 2006, Field notes; March 14, 2007, Field notes).

²⁰² During this era, black clubwomen were also very active. The women of turn of the century black clubs were devoted to both the "black cause" and the "cause of women" (Loewenberg & Bogin, 1976). These early reformers recognized not only the intersectionality of racism, classism, and sexism, but they used the knowledge of these intersections as a platform to promote black women's rights, in addition to black communal uplift (Riggs, 1994). Mary Church Terrell recognized this intersection when she stated that black women with "ambition and aspiration" are "handicapped" not only because their race, but also because of their gender (Terrell, 1898). I was unable to gather sufficient information during this research to speak on black women's clubs in Athens at the turn of the century. However, I hope that as I continue with this research that I expect that I will discover more about Athens's community service groups led by black women. Gathering that information will help make certain that women like Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Anna Julia Cooper are not the only heroines that "rescue black women from total historical oblivion" (Hine, 1981, p. 5).

²⁰³ A picture of the corn club, shown in Thurmond's book *A Story Untold: Black Men and Women of Athens*, shows Jackson Harris standing off to the side while the ten members of the club sit together for the photo (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978, p. 81).

²⁰⁴ Besides being a renowned principal and teacher in Athens's black schools, he was also the Grand Organist for the Grand Lodge of GA. Professor Edwards is now a 33D Prince Hall Mason. Sometime in the late 1940s, Professor Edwards was initiated into the Athens Masonic Order under grandmaster Johns Wesley Dobbs. In 1947, when the Lincoln Masonic Lodge was

reinstated in Athens, Edwards was selected as Worship Master and served in that capacity for 25 years (Taylor, Unknown).

²⁰⁵ Pierce's Chapel was organized in 1866 by Henry McNeal Turner, the first black chaplain in the US Army. The church was first named after Reverend Lovick Pierce, a white minister who helped the black parishioners find an independent worshiping site on the Oconee River. The church would later change its name to the First African Methodist Episcopal church. Before the chapel was built, the meetings took place in a local blacksmith's shop between downtown and the Oconee River. In December 1881, the church relocated to its current location at 521 North Hull Street. Finally in 1916, the church had raised enough funds to have the first American trained black architect, L.H. Persley and Athens' builder R.F. Walker design and build the current chapel. The church remains open today with the oldest black congregation in Athens (Carl Vinson Institute of Government, 2006; The Athens-Clarke Heritage Foundation, 2006).

²⁰⁶ One hundred and twenty nine black Baptists decided to leave the First Baptist Church of Athens in 1867 to open Hill First Baptist Church, Athens' first black Baptist church. The First Baptist Church records suggest that black members were prominent in the church, having five more members than the white congregation in 1855 (First Baptist Church of Athens, 2006). Good ties existed between the white and black congregations, as seen by the way that the white church members continued to allow the black parishioners to use the white church until another church location was found. As a result of differences between church members, Hill Chapel Baptist Church split off Hill First Baptist and was organized in another location in 1892 (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

²⁰⁷ Tithing is an historical practice based in the Bible that is prominent in black religious organizations because it has been "reinforced by centuries of family tradition" (Thomas-Lester, 2006).

²⁰⁸ Jeruel Academy-Union Baptist School originally opened in 1881 in Landrum Baptist Church (later called Ebenezer Baptist Church, West).

²⁰⁹ From all records available, it is likely that the Foundry School was basically an overflow school used by the Athens' City Schools for one or two years, around 1886-1888, as the school system expanded due to increased student enrollment (Branson, 1886; Rice, December 3, 2001; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

²¹⁰ One of the most instrumental social gatherings within these churches was the yearly 2-to-3 day revival, typically held at the close of the summer. Blacks from in and out of the community came to these "social events," bringing food and drink (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

²¹¹ Nesbit was born on July 29, 1934 into the Billups family. The Billups had eight children, 2 boys and 6 girls. Nesbit was the youngest of all of the children (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview).

²¹² Linston had been raised by both parents, Mrs. Julia Frances Linston, a 1937 AHIS graduate who worked taking tickets at the Harlem and Georgia Theaters, and Lee Linston, Jr., a 1933 AHIS graduate who worked for the Loaf Mella Company. Since Linston started school, his parents expected him to respect his teachers and "to excel." One of his brothers and two of his sisters graduated as the salutatorians of their AHIS class. Although his family did not come to the school very often, outside of Tuesday night Parent Teacher Association meetings and athletic events, they all thought highly of AHIS and the teachers who worked there. Linston's siblings, Odela, Joan Anita, and Jimmy, graduated at the top of their AHIS classes in 1959, 1962, and 1963. He also had two siblings who graduated from Clarke Central High School after the white

and black schools merged. As black schools have closed and as black elders have passed on, Linston has begun to gather items from the schools and the elders in order to ensure Athens's black history is not lost (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview; March 19, 2007, Interview).

²¹³ Alice Wimberly was the daughter of Drs. Ida Mae and Lace Hiram. Wimberly's mother, Dr. Ida Hiram, was the first black female dentist licensed to practice in the state of Georgia (Renew, 2000).

²¹⁴ In 1918, Ida Mae rented the Hiram house from Dr. William H. Harris. She purchased the home from him in 1934 to live there with her daughter, Alice, who was her dental assistant for many years. Shaw remembers Wimberly using the Hiram house as a school (Renew, 2000).

²¹⁵ Dr. Harrison, who kindly allowed me to use the photos on his website www.theyellowjacket.com, asked that I thank the following individuals for allowing him to use their photo albums, yearbooks, and personal relics to build his website: Mr. James Alford, Sr., AHIS 1958, Mrs. Reba Joyce Haynes Williams, BHHS 1969, Mrs. Isabella Horton Jackson, AHIS 1937, Ms. Fannie Marie Lumpkin, AHIS 1939, Mrs. Cornelia Barnard Harrison, AHIS 1939, Mr. James M. Harrison, Jr., AHIS 1958, Mr. Mack Harris, AHIS 1937, Mrs. Gloria Celestine Little, AHIS 1949, and Mrs. Jewell Thurmond Barnett

²¹⁶ During these years, schools did not offer special programs for students who did not meet the academic standards (Maddox, July 20, 2006, Interview). Some of these students would just stop coming to school after awhile if they could not get the material. Some students remained in the same grade for several years until they mastered the material. Grades were not confined by ages until much later.

²¹⁷ Domestic sciences and sewing were required for females for at least three of their years at Union. However, males were allowed to take the courses as electives if they desired (Union Baptist Institute Press, 1926).

²¹⁸ Class sizes at Union ranged from 10 to 23 students (Union Baptist Institute Press, 1926).

²¹⁹ Unlike the city schools that went only through the eleventh grade, Union went from the first grade through the twelfth grade (Horton, July 14, 2006; Union Baptist Institute Press, 1926).

²²⁰ At that time, glue was not typically bought from a vendor. Instead, teachers worked with the students on how to make the glue by hand with common household products. This type of hands-on project interested H. Stroud, and he quickly settled into the routines of school (H. B. Stroud, Sr., July 18, 2006, Interview).

²²¹ Charles Stroud attended Union from around 1944-45 until 1956 when he transferred to the merged Union-AHIS (C. W. Stroud, July 18, 2006, Interview).

²²² His brother Melvin also took his first grade class with Miss Henry four years later. Miss Henry worked at the school for a very long time (M. Stroud, July 18, 2006, Interview).

²²³ Charles H. S. Lyons began his career at the Savannah River Institute in Hartwell, Georgia, in 1917. He later moved to Jeruel Academy-Union Baptist, at least by 1930, probably earlier (Gardner, 2006).

²²⁴ Lyons's life revolved around the school. He lived in the house right next to the school. The University of Georgia's Brumby Hall is situated on the land where Lyons's house stood (Moore (Stroud), July 18, 2006, Interview; H. B. Stroud, Sr., July 18, 2006, Interview).

²²⁵ This idea is similar to the leaders discussed in Siddle Walker's work who always seemed to be walking around with eyes in the back of their heads (1996).

²²⁶ Although many students walked several miles daily to attend the school or were driven by family and friends, others living outside of Athens stayed in the school's dormitories (Johnson, July 17, 2006, Interview; C. W. Stroud, July 18, 2006, Interview).

²²⁷ In addition to working in his leadership position, Lyons also taught class. His students "dreaded" being in class with him because they realized, if they failed to complete their work, that they would remain in that classroom with Lyons until it was complete (H. B. Stroud, Sr., July 18, 2006, Interview).

²²⁸ Horton was born in Athens in the mid 1930s. He was raised in his grandmother's home with his two brothers, sister and cousin (Horton, July 14, 2006, Interview).

²²⁹ Horton's grandmother was a domestic worker for the white Trussel family, who owned Trussel Ford (Horton, July 14, 2006, Interview; March 12, 2007, Interview).

²³⁰ He also remembers their being a "very close knit family and a very loving family" who may have been poor in finances, but who were rich with love, encouragement, and support from their great aunts, their grandmother's sisters, who sent them money to cover some of the school and housing costs (Horton, July 14, 2006, Interview).

²³¹ One of the grounding tenets of the school was that the students needed spiritual, as well as mental development (Union Baptist Institute Press, 1926).

²³² Since Union Baptist was the only black high school in the county, county public school funds supported some of staff at the school. Therefore, it might be appropriate to call Union a semiprivate school. However, the vast majority of the funds used to run the school were donations and tuition fees of the students. See Chapter 3 for more details about Jeruel Academy and Union Baptist. Once the county and the city consolidated, Union students merged into the Athens High and Industrial public high school where no tuition fees were accepted.

²³³ The Harlem theatre was a highlight location for Athens's black youth in the 1950s. It was an air-conditioned black movie theatre, owned and managed by the Abrams family, where shows like *The Platters in Rock All Night*, Anthony Quinn in *Man from Del Rio* played weekly. Students could get in for free or for a reduced price if they brought in a Bensons bread wrapper. The theatre's advertisement exclaimed, "Wait and see the big ones, best at the air-conditioned Harlem, where you can meet your friends in comfort" (Advertisement (Abrams) in Yellow Jacket Staff, 1957).

²³⁴ Bennett F. Johnson turned 70 years old the year he was interviewed. He was born on the eastside of Athens, but moved at an early age to Rocksprings homes on Broad Street. From there, he attended West Broad Elementary, then Reese Street school, and finally graduated from Athens High and Industrial. He later taught music at Lyons School, under Principal Farris F. Johnson, Sr., and at Burney-Harris High, following Dr. Walter Allen, under Principal H.T. Edwards (Johnson, July 13, 2006, Interview).

²³⁵ It is suggested that free public schools were the greatest contribution that Athens and the State of Georgia could have made to the development of black agency and social progress (Branson, Unknown). However, in reality, blacks seeking public education services saved lower income whites from financial despair by helping them also gain access to public schools.

²³⁶ One record notes that at some point before 1916, West Broad housed Athens High Colored School, in addition to the elementary school, for a short period of time while other facilities were being built (Rice, October 29, 2001).

²³⁷ At this time, no records could be found to indicate the opening date or closing date of the Little Knox school.

²³⁸ Most likely, the original building was torn down and the wood shop was built on the lot directly behind the original school (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview).

²³⁹ When Nesbit and Horton attended school, Little Knox, West Broad School, Reese Street School, and Athens High and Industrial were all called “city schools” because they were supported by the city prior to the city of Athens and the county of Clarke consolidating in 1956 (Horton, July 14, 2006, Interview).

²⁴⁰ Several of the individuals interviewed for this study said that they knew how to read prior to entering school because of family support (i.e., Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview; C. W. Stroud, July 18, 2006, Interview; G. E. Stroud, Jr., July 18, 2006, Interview; H. B. Stroud, Sr., July 18, 2006, Interview).

²⁴¹ At that time, the school was heated by coal fuel, and the floors remained wood. Daily doses of oil were used to keep the dust down on the floor because of the dirt tracked into the school from the dirt roads leading up to it (Maddox (Lay), July 11, 2006, Interview).

²⁴² West Broad Street School was a well-built building with long halls (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview). The original structure, with some additions, still exists on Broad Street. Currently, it houses the Rutland Regional Psycho-Educational Facility.

²⁴³ Ileane LaBelle Nesbit, the daughter of Eugene and Isabella Julia Stephens Nesbit, was born in Macon, Georgia, on Dec 7, 1930. Her family moved to Athens from Macon when she was 5 so that her father could continue his work as a chauffeur for a family that owned two Athens clothing stores, Davidson’s and Michael’s Brothers. Her mother, a talented seamstress, also worked for the clothing stores. The move was a return home for her parents because Athens was the original home place of her extended family, and her brother had been born there a few years before (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview; March 14, 2007, Interview). Since there are two people with the last name Nesbit cited in this work, I am going to use Ileane LaBelle Nesbit Nunnally’s married name, which is Nunnally. In the citations, the married name will be in parenthesis.

²⁴⁴ Although early on, her mother had thought that Nunnally would grow up to be a seamstress like herself, her mother never forced Nunnally into that field because she knew that through a good education Nunnally would have a “good go” in life and be successful in any field she attempted (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

²⁴⁵ Callie Elder, a tall mulatto woman born in 1860, lived with her daughter, Cornelia, in Athens in 1938 when the WPA came to interview for the slave narratives (Hornsby, 1938).

²⁴⁶ Morton’s class was probably a remedial class focused on catching students up.

²⁴⁷ Nesbit seems to remember Mrs. Reed telling her that she had to ask Mr. Charles Duval, the principal of Athens High and Industrial at the time, permission to move her up from first to third grade. During that time, the high school principal supervised all of the black school teachers and staff (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview).

²⁴⁸ Diggs was Nunnally’s mother’s best friend, and they had attended Morris Brown College together (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

²⁴⁹ Most likely, this program started in the 1940s when the National Parent Teacher Advisory (PTA) pushed legislation for funding school lunch programs (Washington State PTA, 2006).

²⁵⁰ These types of programs date all the way back to schools like the Judia Jackson Harris school where such plays were also performed yearly (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978; Underwood, September, 1987).

²⁵¹ When the ribbon was given out for the maypole, the students would stretch it out and they would look up to the top of the pole where their ribbon was “planted.” Then the music would start and the students would dance around the pole in a weave-like pattern until the ribbon was tight and then they would unwrap the pole in the same manner (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

²⁵² It was quite common for black women to teach for a few years following their completion of high school until they found a suitable husband and got married. However, some of these women only left teaching until they had children of school age and then they returned to the classroom. Starting as early as the 1820s and the common school movement, the *feminization* or gender restructuring of the teaching field was viewed as a direct benefit to society as a whole because it allowed women to work in the growing field of education without directly threatening the traditional female role. By the 1870s, more women than men taught in U.S. schools, peaking at eighty-six percent in the 1920s (Reshkin & Roos, 1990).

²⁵³ These “other mothers” developed from the African tradition of “communal caring,” where women and other community members care for non-biological children when they are unable to provide for by their own mother or family. Black male teachers have also historically been known to assume the “role of a parent surrogate” when working with children in educational settings (see also Collins, 1991; Ware, 2002, p. 36).

²⁵⁴ Elizabeth Beauty Vee Smith Platt was born in Athens on December 27, 1949. She was raised in Athens for most of her life by her grandmother, along with her four siblings. She attended West Broad and AHIS, graduating from Burney Harris High School after the name change in 1967. Since there are two people with the last name Smith cited in this work, I am going to use Elizabeth Beauty Vee Smith Platt’s married name of Platt when I cite her in this work. In the reference citations, the married name will be in parenthesis.

²⁵⁵ Alberta Maddox Lay was born on January 16, 1949 at 341 Glenn Avenue. She was raised by her mother and stepfather with her four living siblings. Since there are two people with the last name Maddox cited in this work, I am going to use Alberta Maddox Lay’s married name of Lay when I cite her in this work. In the citations, the married name will be in parenthesis.

²⁵⁶ Platt remembered working at the school with another little girl named Kathy who was white. The girls became very good friends that summer, and they had a good time. However, they had a bad experience one day when Platt took Kathy to the local neighborhood store owned by a white family. The owner, who Platt thought was a kind woman, yelled at her for bringing in the white girl. She said, “Why are you in the store with that white girl? Don’t you come back here with that white girl.” Platt believes that she will remember that tongue lashing as long as she lives. To this day, she does not know why the woman would not allow her to bring the little girl into the store (Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview).

²⁵⁷ Mack Sewell was a student at West Broad in the early 1940s (Sewell, July 11, 2006, Interview).

²⁵⁸ Platt believes that “old biddies” like Wingfield, who never got married, had boyfriends, or had children did not always know how to “embrace the children” (Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview). It is likely that this is the same Agnes Wingfield who taught seventh grade to Melvin Stroud around 1955, the year before Union closed (M. Stroud, July 18, 2006, Interview). Once Union closed, many of the teachers at that school transferred into the Athens’s public schools.

²⁵⁹ These productions were a common feature in Athens’s black schools from the turn of the century forward. When Platt and Lay were in school, they prepared an annual play that they

performed at all of the other black elementary schools and junior high schools. These schools included East Athens, North Athens, and Lyons (M. Stroud, July 18, 2006, Interview).

²⁶⁰ Reese Street School was planned for construction in July, 1913, because of the overcrowding of West Broad School, East Athens School, and Newtown. The construction began in September, 1913, and was completed by January, 1914. That is when the first students enrolled at the school. In 1960, the Clarke County Board of Education sold the Reese Street School for \$4101.00 because they believed that the school was no longer needed. In 1968, the Athens Masonic Association, Inc., purchased the school and continues to own the property (uncited and undated reference provided by Linston, March 19, 2007). The original Reese Street building still stands on the land and is used by the New Joy Church of God in Christ and the Prince Hall Affiliation of the Athens Masonic Association for their work. Although Nesbit did not herself attend Reese Street for elementary school, she remembers that the school must have housed some elementary grades for students who lived farther north and east of West Broad School at one point because she recalls knowing Mrs. Lillie Ray, who was a second-grade teacher at the school (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview; March 22, 2007, Interview).

²⁶¹ Nesbit remembers someone selling prepackaged food, like moon pies and school supplies, in the basement. However, her family could never afford to purchase anything (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview).

²⁶² Nesbit remembered being the youngest student in the class. She was at least 2 years younger than all of the other students. To her, many of the students there seemed already “grown” (Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview).

²⁶³ Brown, who lived on Finley Street and later Hancock Avenue, lived quite close to the school, like most of the teachers (Nesbit, July 25, 2006).

²⁶⁴ In the few years’ difference between when Nunnally went to Reese Street and then when Nesbit attended Reese Street, there was only one major difference that the interviewees noted. Nunnally said that the students changed classes, and Nesbit reported that the teachers moved from class to class (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview; Nesbit, July 25, 2006, Interview).

²⁶⁵ The “dust bowl” was where early AHIS football practice and games were held. The field had no bleachers, so fans had to sit in the grass to watch (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview).

²⁶⁶ The last, and maybe the only, lynching that took place in Athens, Georgia, occurred on Wednesday, Feb. 16, 1921, following the shooting of Mrs. Ida D. Lee, 25, wife of prominent Oconee county farmer Walter M. Lee, 31. Even though the murder had taken place in Oconee County, John Lee Eberhart, a young black man working for the Lee family who had allegedly stolen a gun from Mr. Lee, was held in the Clarke County jail on Washington Street. After a possible, but not confirmed confession, hundreds of community members from Athens and surrounding counties swarmed the jail from both sides and kidnapped Eberhart. They returned him to the land near the original murder and burned him alive (Wilkes, 1997).

²⁶⁷ The Child Labor Act, passed July 1, 1946, stated that no minor under 14 years of age could be employed, except for household labor. The Compulsory Attendance Law, passed in 1945, stated that no child between 7 and 16 could be in school less than 175 days each year (University of Georgia. Institute for the Study of Georgia Problems., 1944). The baby boom of 1946-1964 also created a more “child-oriented” community in Athens and the country at large (Education, 1944-1945).

²⁶⁸ Because the buildings were not connected, students were required to walk in the rain and sometimes snow from building to building to attend their classes (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

²⁶⁹ Rocksprings Street is a centrally located street near West Broad School and the new AHIS location. The street backs up to the Broad Acres Governmental Housing facility.

²⁷⁰ After basketball and football games, the school would hold different types of dances, such as a Sadie Hawkins dance, to give the students a positive environment for socializing. Homecoming was typically one of the largest activities of the year. The festivities lasted over two days. The school would hold a large pep rally and bonfire the day before the game. Then, they would have a parade the day of the game, with hundreds of participants, a band, and three or four floats. Finally, over 600 community members would gather at the UGA Sanford Stadium for the game (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview; Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview). During halftime, the “coronation” was held where the homecoming queen and her personal attendants would be recognized. Following the game, the students would attend the homecoming dance in the school gymnasium where the girls would arrive in long dresses and boys would wear their best suits (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview; Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview). The only event larger than homecoming was prom, where students were allowed to stay out until midnight dancing and playing cards (Turner in BHL Middle School, 2004).

²⁷¹ School prep rallies were typically held before each football and basketball game.

²⁷² Other special events, like Honors Day, were held to recognize students who had been successful throughout the year. Class Night was another student event where each grade would perform a play to demonstrate their talent in music, fine arts, and drama (Maddox (Lay), July 11, 2006, Interview; Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview). AHIS/BHHS teachers also put on at least one faculty play each year. During some of these events, Reverend Billups, who was also the history teacher, would lead the choir, in their robes of blue and gold, in the songs of the day (Allen in BHL Middle School, 2004).

²⁷³ An interesting note about the local of the Athens black community in the 1940s was the development of the Broad Acres Project. After Parkview Homes (a government housing facility for whites), Broad Acres was Athens’s second low income government housing facility built. It was an all-black facility, and it was built in the center of Athens’s black community. Both of the facilities were identical when they were built because of the federal regulations of “separate but equal.” When the ground was selected for construction of Broad Acres, Mr. Scutters, a white business leader and family friend of Ilene Nesbit Nunnally’s father, ensured that the building of the units would stop at the edge of the Nesbit property. The two families were very close friends, sharing children’s names and clothing throughout their lives (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

²⁷⁴ The AHIS-BHHS building was later renamed in honor of Professor H.T. Edwards, Sr. Its purpose was to be a teaching and learning center.

²⁷⁵ During that same year, the Samuel F. Harris and Annie M. Burney Branches of the National Honor Society were added to the school (Yellow Jacket Staff, 1965).

²⁷⁶ AHIS-BHHS parents insisted that their children “go to school, behave, and get our lessons” because they did not want anyone to think that their children lacked “home training.” When children failed to comply, Lay said that it was not “spanking or beatings” that changed her mind about her behavior. Instead, it was the talks from her mother, who completed the eighth grade, about the importance of education on her future (Maddox (Lay), July 11, 2006, Interview).

²⁷⁷ Because the school enrolled students from the entire county, there was a parent leader for each side of town (east and west) (Yellow Jacket Staff, 1947).

²⁷⁸ The stories from AHIS students align with Siddle Walker and Snarey's work that suggests that black teachers can help to liberate their students from their own "state of need" by helping them to "actively" promote their own welfare and the welfare of those around them (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004).

²⁷⁹ Most of the students did not have any contact with the white schools to know that the resources that they had at AHIS-BHHS were any different. Platt said that she lived right down from the University of Georgia but never even knew it was there until she was in high school (Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview). Maddox stated that she did not know any white families because they lived in a "whole different part of town" (Maddox (Lay), July 11, 2006, Interview).

²⁸⁰ Sometimes teachers would change students' grades because they did not follow the teacher's directions. Platt remembers having an "A" in business shorthand, but being given an "F" because she refused to turn around in her chair the way Ms. Rosa L. Goosby expected, and Lay claims that her "D" grade in Mr. Clyde Foster's mathematics class was changed to an "F" after she questioned him about the grade (Maddox (Lay), July 11, 2006, Interview; Smith (Platt), July 11, 2006, Interview).

²⁸¹ She was a very efficient typist because she had taken private lessons (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

²⁸² These data include only students in the 9th, 10th, and 11th grades because the yearbook in which the data were published was produced prior to the close of the school year, and thus do not include graduation numbers (Yellow Jacket Staff, 1959). However, some students were held back. When basketball team or football team members, for example, did not do their school work to meet Fess's expectations, they would be held back to complete the work (Linston, July 25, 2006). This did not bother some athletes who wanted to stay back to play for "just one more year" any way (Linston, July 25, 2006).

²⁸³ I attempted to interview Edwards for this study; however, because of illness and age, he was not available. However, I did interview his son, Homer Edward, Jr., and other close friends, colleagues, and students of this former principal.

²⁸⁴ Several of the interviewees demonstrated Burney's shoulder move, which seemed to consist of raising one shoulder (probably the right) toward her ear in a quick and repetitive manner.

²⁸⁵ Holmes was inducted into the Benedict College Athletic Hall of Fame in 1985.

²⁸⁶ At that moment, some of the AHIS students began calling Holmes "cigar man" because he loved his cigars. He would often walk around the school with an unlit cigar in his mouth and have the smell of cigar smoke trailing from his clothing (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

²⁸⁷ During those years, girls played only half-court basketball (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

²⁸⁸ King serves as the Communication Chairperson of the AHIS-BHHS Alumni Association, along with other community service work (AHIS/BHHS Alumni Association, 2004; Smith (Platt), December 31, 2006, Interview).

²⁸⁹ Growing up with a mother who believed in education and who "pushed" her children to do well in school was the other variable that Johnson believed helped him become the success that he is today (Johnson, July 13, 2006, Interview).

²⁹⁰ Outside of teaching, Dr. Allen also played and organized an AHIS “dance band,” similar to the modern high school jazz band. This group, of which Dr. Allen was a member and the director, played for both school and out-of-school functions, and he would play along with the other group members. Occasionally, the band would make a few dollars, and split it among the members (Johnson, July 13, 2006, Interview).

²⁹¹ Nunnally graduated from high school at the age of sixteen because at that time, AHIS only went through the eleventh grade (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 17, 2006, Interview).

²⁹² David Nunnally, a Union Baptist graduate, met Ilene Nesbit at Ebenezer Baptist Church when Ilene was in high school. David Nunnally, Sr., is a longtime public servant and educator who founded the Athens Area Human Relations Council (a nonprofit organization focused on the improvement of relations among all races and classes of people that gives out yearly scholarships to high school seniors for postsecondary educational options) and the Reach Out and Touch Club (a children’s organization focused on preparing the “the men and women of tomorrow” through workforce and character development (Silk, 2006). He remains a strong advocate of public education as a veteran on the Clarke County Board of Education, where he has served since 1992.

²⁹³ Community service was central in the lives of educators like H.T. Edwards, A. Burney, and I. Nunnally. They were not dictated to give outside of the classroom, but they perceived that the community work was a natural component of their daily work as educators. This aligns with the idea that these black teachers considered their students as part of their “extended family” and they extended their “caring” beyond the classroom and school walls (Cooper, 2002; Siddle Walker, 1993, 1996).

²⁹⁴ In the early 1900s, Ed Stroud, grandfather to Howard, Charles, Melvin, and George Stroud, opened a one-room community school for blacks called the Mt. Zion Baptist Church School. He then helped to open the Rosenwald School at the current site of Colham Ferry Elementary, which was open until 1956 when school system began integration. After 1969, the school’s name was changed to Oconee County Intermediate School, and in 1984 to Colham Ferry and later Malcolm Bridge Elementary School. It is very interesting how the school’s name changed over the years and how the black founder of the school’s name disappeared from the school when the school was integrated. In 2006, a community push began to have the school’s name returned to Ed Stroud School in honor of this early educator who provide such a strong foundation for so many students in Oconee County (Melancon, 2006). Ed Stroud had at least a bachelor’s degree and could speak four or five languages. He owned his own farm in Farmington, Georgia (Oconee County). His grandson, Howard, remembers going to the school very early in the morning with his grandfather to build a fire to keep the students warm during their day of studying (H. B. Stroud, Sr., July 18, 2006, Interview).

²⁹⁵ The merger election that replaced the Athens City Schools and the Clarke County Schools with the Clarke County School District was held as early as 1955. Following county tax equalization, this measure became effective on July 1, 1956. Therefore, these men most likely met after the measure was approved by the polls.

²⁹⁶ In an effort to stop the curtailing of federal law, President Dwight Eisenhower approved the use of federal troops to help with school integration implementation. These military demonstrations indicated to small and large communities that the federal court orders would be upheld.

²⁹⁷ To start this process, the school board rented and remodeled the old Union Baptist School building and displaced all of the students and teachers from the small rural schools to one location.

²⁹⁸ Records suggest that, as early as 1949, black teachers in Athens and Clarke County were calling for equity in all of these areas, and as a result, they filed a 1950 Resolution with the Georgia Teachers and Education Association to seek support for the development of solutions to these issues (Rice, December 3, 2001).

²⁹⁹ The “freedom of choice” plan permitted larger attendance areas that would cross both black and white communities and allow students and their families to voluntarily decide what school they wished to attend (Gordon, 1994; Rice, December 3, 2001). White students had the option to attend a black school, but none chose that option.

³⁰⁰ The following Monday, January 9th, Holmes and Hunter came to campus to register for classes. They were met by a crowd chanting “Two-four-six-eight! We don’t want to integrate!” (Craig, Dyer, & Wilson, January 9, 2001).

³⁰¹ This basketball game took place a few days after Hunter and Holmes started at the school. UGA had lost the game against Georgia Tech on their home court (Craig et al., January 9, 2001).

³⁰² When asked by friends and family why she did not return to Childs, she replied, “I didn’t like it over there.... I wasn’t happy and I didn’t like being different and being treated differently.” She believed that there still be “all that hatred” and she did not want to be a part of a school like that one (Green, August 12, 2006, Interview).

³⁰³ White enrollment dropped in the public schools by 700 students between 1970 and 1974. The newly opened white private schools serving many of these students included Athens Academy, founded in 1967, and Athens Christian School, founded in 1970 (Thurmond & Sparer, 1978). In contrast, between 1960 and 1999 private school enrollment fell everywhere in the country except the South and the southwestern border states (Downey, 2003).

³⁰⁴ Some racial disruption had occurred several days before “Rowdy Thursday” at an Athens High School intramural basketball game.

³⁰⁵ Some, but not many, black students had been admitted to the white high school since 1962-63, when W. Green attended the school.

³⁰⁶ Wilson is the co-owner of Wilson's Soul Food and Wilson's Styling Shop in the historic Hot Corner business district of Athens. When Hot Corner was in its prime, it was the only place in Athens where many black businesses were accepted (Lee, 2001).

³⁰⁷ The Clarke County Alternative Education Program is housed in the BHHS, now called the H.T. Edwards building. In addition to that program, the school district’s highest poverty and highest need families are also served in the building in adult literacy programs, migrant education programs, and early learning programs like prekindergarten, Even Start, and Early Head Start.

³⁰⁸ Campbell is a teacher at the Alternative Education Program, a punitive alternative middle and high school, which is located in the old AHIS-BHHS building now called the H.T. Edwards Teaching and Learning Center. This is a picture of Campbell working with a student in his class. The story, *Grads wary about plans for building* by Alisa De Mao, originally appeared in the May 7, 2006 edition of the Athens Banner-Herald. It is reprinted here with full permission.

³⁰⁹ I am a member of the steering committee of PPA, as well as a community liaison for the successor organization OneAthens, selected by the superintendent and the other co-conveners of

the initiative to work with the community for the development of strategies to address generational poverty.

³¹⁰ It is difficult to compare graduation rates before 1975 to today. Before the passing of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) federal law in 1975, Clarke County Schools were not required to enroll students with disabilities that impaired their learning, and so the current graduation rates would be deflated with the addition of students who have learning or physical impairments. The IDEA was passed to make sure that children with disabilities were given the opportunity to receive “a free appropriate public education,” like all nondisabled children (Cvach, 2006).

³¹¹ I have cofacilitated the MCTF since 2005 with two different community leaders, Sheriff Ira Edwards and Rick Dunn of the Department of Family and Children’s Services. I have played a role in the development of the original recommendations in 2003 and the current 2006 recommendations as a district employee and as the Director of Student Achievement and Educational Equity.

³¹² F. Johnson remembers his first educational experience around the age of 5 when his cousin, Mack Johnson, began peer tutoring him. Mack believed school to be so interesting, relevant, and important that he wanted to teach his cousin everything being taught to him. They would count, point out colors, sing songs, talk about plants and animals, and read together. After a while, F. Johnson became frustrated by his exclusion from school, and he began to follow Mack to school. Because Mack had provided him with a lot of the instruction, Farris was fairly proficient when he arrived, and the teacher agreed to let him start school early (Johnson, July 26, 2006, Field notes).

³¹³ Like Principal Dillard in Siddle Walker’s book, *Their Highest Potential*, Johnson spent his career modeling the behaviors he wanted his teachers to teach their students. This type of leadership style reinforced his expectations of teacher excellence in both pedagogy and interpersonal skills. His demonstrated care for his teachers helped them to build supportive and nurturing relationships with the students they served (Siddle Walker, 1996).

³¹⁴ The correct language of this African proverb from Nigeria is, *Obodo n’ezu ezu azu nwa* in Igbo and Yoruba and *It takes a whole village to raise a child* in English. This proverb from Nigeria exists in numerous forms in several African languages. The general meaning of the saying is that the responsibility for a child’s upbringing and development is a communal effort and should be shared by the larger family (Healey, Kariuki, & Adongo, 1998-2007).

³¹⁵ I interviewed several more individuals than those whose stories were told in this work. I hope to include them in future presentations on this topic.

³¹⁶ Anderson and other historians have also recounted this thirst for education within black communities. They note that this phenomenon dates back to the slave community where the fundamental belief in learning and self-improvement were understood as the basis of freedom, citizenship, and uplift (Anderson, 1988; Bond, 1934; Thurmond & Sparer, 1978).

³¹⁷ Desegregation caused many black teachers to leave the education profession. Those not fired were transferred from the black schools to newly integrated schools, often meeting with “unfavorable outcomes” like racial harassment and early dismissal. Desegregation jeopardized the job security of these black educators, threatened their intellectual competence, and undermined their morale (Thurmond & Hester, 2001).

³¹⁸ Ethnography and history are often seen fundamentally opposite forms of social research. However, Horowitz and Haney suggest that this does not have to be the case and if these two

research fields are combined using methods like life histories we can broaden our understandings of “macro” issues, usually done through historical research by digging more deeply in “micro” issues, typically covered through ethnographies (Horowitz & Haney, Aug, 2006) Woods suggests that historical ethnographies can take many forms, such as life-histories or oral histories that are conducted at the “individual” level and the “institutional and district levels” or wider ethnographic looks at “social and historical movements” (Woods, 1996). This work crosses both the individual and the institutional levels (For more on historical ethnography, see Comaroff & Comaroff, 1992).

³¹⁹ To understand the process of historical inquiry, I reviewed the work of many scholars (Butchart, 1986; Crotty, 1998; Gale, 2001; Hegel & Sibree, 1991/1822; Miller, 2000; Siddle Walker, 1996; H. F. Wolcott, 2001; Woods, 1996). However, *The Process of Historical Inquiry: Everyday Lives of Working Americans* was one of the primary texts used in this work to conceptualize how to use historic resource materials, formulate of historical research questions, and develop strategies (historiographic methods) to address those questions. I used this text because the researchers demonstrated how to do the research by doing the research (Clubb, Austin, & Kirk, 1989). I also relied on the works of Anyon and Siddle Walker. However, these scholars are not as focused on historical methodologies in their work (Anyon, 1997; Siddle Walker, 1996).

³²⁰ The work that was most valuable with my interpretation of ethnography was *The Handbook of Qualitative Research in Education*, and more specifically the chapters related to critical ethnography (LeCompte, Millroy, & Preissle, 1992b; Preissle (Goetz) & LeCompte, 1984; Quantz, 1992; Spradley, 1979; Trueba, 1999; Van Maanen, 1988; Weiss, 1994). Quantz relays that critical research on social structures is always historical because the structures have been “created by humans” and are “potentially altered by humans.” It was this statement and the idea “history must play a productive role in the ethnographic presentation of the concrete practices of subordinated people” that helped me to realize that this research must be done through historical ethnography (Quantz, 1992).

³²¹ Siddle Walker does not use the word critical when calling her research ethnography, as she takes a more symbolic interactionist approach to her study. However, like other critical researchers, her “counterstory” of the good segregated black school paints a very different picture of black education in the South prior to school integration than other researchers in this area who often write about the poor state of the schools (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Siddle Walker, 1996). Even though her book is not about segregated versus nonsegregated schools, the work was developed to uncover themes that were central to one desegregated school that was highly regarded by the community it served. By placing these themes into their historical moment, Siddle Walker begins to demonstrate how “retrospective evaluations” of the times of segregation can *critically* deal with the legal, sociological, and academic issues of that time (1996; 2000). Of course, Siddle Walker does not spell out the specific “emancipatory action” that her discourse promotes, which could be problematic for researchers like Trueba (Siddle Walker, 1996; Trueba, 1999). However, she does provide “voice” for a group that has previously been silenced. This alone, Ladson-Billings and Tate would say, makes her work critical (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1997; Trueba, 1999).

³²² Crotty suggests that scholars’ epistemologies are the overarching “theories of knowledge” embedded in their theoretical perspectives (1998). They are how we know, understand, and interpret the knowledge of the world. In many of the major qualitative paradigms, ontology is

precedes epistemology. However, in the area of critical constructivist theory, the line between the relativist ontology (where realities are considered alterable) and the transactional-subjectivist epistemology (where the researcher and subject create the findings together) disappears (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). My epistemology or how I see the world is most likely colored because of the “major, influential philosophers, writers, politicians, corporate leaders, social scientists, [and] educational leaders (e.g., Kant, Flaubert, Churchill, Henry Ford, Weber, Dewey)” perceived as valuable in today’s society. Epistemologies rise out of social history and when that history is grounded in the work of one specific social group, the resulting ontologies and epistemologies will parallel the views of that group (Scheurich & Young, 1997). I say this simply to note that I recognize my ideas are shaded by this social history and as a result, my research will be affected by this shading.

³²³ A scholar’s theoretical perspective is the “philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the [research] process and grounding its logic and criteria” (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). Guba calls these perspectives paradigms, or “basic belief systems” that are used to interpret the world (1990). Other researchers have been known to call these idioms or models (Guba, 1990; Gubrium & Holstein, 2002; Silverman, 2004).

³²⁴ The difference between constructivism and constructionism, Crotty notes, is that constructivism resists the critical spirit and deems all constructions of the world valuable and constructionism fosters a critical review of how the world is constructed (1998).

³²⁵ Because of the debate on whether constructivism and critical theory can be combined or if they are “brash and sometimes contenders,” I must note that my research is simply influenced by critical theory (Guba, 1990, p. 9). Wolcott suggests that a study can be influenced by an ethnographical approach, instead of having to learn all the “nuances of seasoned researchers fully conversant with that tradition” (2001, p. 92).

³²⁶ Like Marx, I believe that social beings determine their own consciousness (or reality) and those who “own the means” of its “production” in a society end up with having “the power to effect the kind of consciousness” that exists in that society (Crotty, 1998, pp. 60-61).

³²⁷ I am taking a critical stance on this research model, which is typically recognized as a form of symbolic interactionism. I realize that these two frames are distinctly different in their form. Symbolic interactionists work in a “peaceful and growthful world” and critical theorists work in a world where there are “striking disparities” in the power distribution impacted by the interconnectedness between “oppression, manipulation, and coercion” (Crotty, 1998). Even though the unification of this constructionist dichotomy has been difficult, I see no other way of pursuing this research. I live in both of these worlds, so my research must be derived from both of them.

³²⁸ Historiographic methods allow a researcher to utilize various schools of historical interpretation to add something of value to the body of educational history. It is one of many ways to participate in historical inquiry. Although it can be used for other means, like explaining changes in historical interpretation across time, I used these methods to “obtain a fuller and richer understanding” of a historical period or set of historical events. These methods cross the same nine components of good research, including developing research questions, determining the relevance and scope of the research, digging deep in the primary and secondary resources, assembling findings and developing a story, critical reviewing and critiquing the story, and determining possible outcomes or solutions (O’Brien, Remenyi, & Keaney, July, 2004, pp. 138-139).

³²⁹ I did, however, recognize that this “closeness” to the community could cause me trustworthiness (validity) problems in the end. To help with this issue, I connected with one of my close friends, Ileane Nesbit (Nunnally), who was also an interviewee who helped me to gain access to many of the people whom I interviewed and some of the archival materials that I was able to gather (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 10, 2006, Interview). This snowball method yielded many more individuals and materials than I ever imagined, and as a result, I am still collecting data for the next stage of this research. By telling others that I would “tell their story,” I was able to cross the trust threshold and enter into conversations that were personal, passionate, and similar to those among insiders. Snowball sampling, also termed network sampling, is usually used when a researcher is searching for “hard-to-find” participants. This type of sampling allows the researcher, through networking, to gain access to more participants through the initial participant (LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 1993; Miller, 2000).

³³⁰ Subjectivities are predispositions, opinions, beliefs, values, biases, assumptions, knowledge, and needs that researchers bring to their research (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

³³¹ Researchers who do not accept, question, and reflect on their subjectivities and biases will, Peshkin notes, have their research data skewed, blocked, and transformed by those subjectivities (1988).

³³² Admitting the inevitabilities of subjectivities and biases, Preissle and LeCompte suggest, is one of the major differences between anthropological research and other traditions (1984).

³³³ An example of an untamed subjectivity for me is my passion to find new and innovative ways to reduce the achievement gap for students of color. I have personal knowledge as a teacher that building relationships with students can in fact overcome social, political, and economic so-called barriers and allow children access to knowledge, no matter their race. My passion is untamable and I hope that I controlled it enough throughout this process so that my voice did not ever interrupt the voices I was seeking to hear. An example of a tamed subjectivity would be my communication style. Interviewing others and just listening was a skill that I had to learn and I feel that I did it reasonably well. My goal, once again, was to build a space for my subjects to feel comfortable about talking with me, so some of my passion had to show, and feel confident that I was listening, so I had to silence myself so that they could be heard.

³³⁴ I do not mean to suggest that I am color-blind. Actually, I believe that I am the exact opposite, which some might find a subjectivity in itself. I work hard to participate in the black community’s development in Athens and the surrounding area. My objective is not to be considered “black,” but to be considered a member of the community concerned with the issues facing the black community.

³³⁵ Smith suggests that interpretation of her research in black hair salons was less strenuous because of her “common cultural bond” with those whom she was studying (1998).

³³⁶ Even though McBeth notes that her work with Essie was a “truly collaborative project” where every page was reread to her so that errors could be “remedied or re-remembered,” the collaborative approach did not eliminate the “power-laden relationship” that is inherent in ethnographic research and writing. However, it did allow them to acknowledge those relationships (Horne & McBeth, 1998).

³³⁷ For my purposes here, I very broadly define cultural communities as a “complex whole” that includes all human social enterprises, such as occupational, familial, social, emotional, institutional (including religious), and ethnic (including racial) components. In other words, I deem any group that establishes formal or informal “stable or enduring rules and regulations,

interests, behavior patterns, and ways of viewing the world [including values, morals, laws, customs, and beliefs]" as a cultural community, even if the membership criteria varies or is inconsistent (Preissle (Goetz) & LeCompte, 1984; Schensul, Schensul, Gonzales, & Caro, 1981; Schwandt, 1997). See endnote 1 for information on the connection between culture and community.

³³⁸ In my effort to cross these boundaries, I have accepted the following belief statements derived from cultural studies. I believe that oppression comes in many forms (e.g., social class, race, religious, gender); all thoughts are mediated by the socially and historically constituted power relations in our society; truth is subjective; certain groups in our society are more privileged than others; and research can result in the reproduction of class, race, and gender oppression (Gall et al., 1996).

³³⁹ Many people use the term race and ethnicity interchangeably because with both identifications people believe that they gain their identity from distinctive linguistic, cultural patterns, common ancestors, or physical looks (Harris, 1997).

³⁴⁰ The "strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods" is called the research methodology (Crotty, 1998).

³⁴¹ As the voice returns to black Athenians and more community members become engaged in school programming and development, I hope to hear them say, "I am tired of hearing you speak for me. Only I can speak for myself. I'll speak for my people and these issues" (Fine, 1994). Early this year, I was facilitating a meeting of the Clarke County Multicultural Taskforce where a community member called out to a white administrator presenting to the group, "You can't change the schools, only the community can change the schools." This excited the group, and as a result, many others have become more vocal and active in the meetings that followed ("January 9 Meeting Minutes," 2007).

³⁴² Life histories are called life stories by some researchers (Miller, 2000). I use these terms interchangeably. Because of my feminist stance on the term history, as a story of men-only, I often split the term history into his/herstory.

³⁴³ In the tradition of historical ethnography, I used these interviews as a time to "invoke the past" with the participants to gain information and feelings about their experiences in black schools (Woods, 1996). This helped me build relationships with the participants because they recognized that I was highly engaged in the interview process. Often, I linked ideas that one interviewee brought up to something offered in another interview. For example, the "dust bowl" was a common place where AHIS students congregated to watch football before the school had its own field. When people brought up football, I would ask if they were referring to playing or visiting the dust bowl and that seemed to incite other memories that might not have been brought out (Linston, July 25, 2006, Interview).

³⁴⁴ Miller notes that the goal of sampling is to secure a wide array of individuals that represent a multitude of groups that are "significant" to the topic being studied so that generalizations about the phenomena can be made (2000). Of course, all of these individuals that I interviewed were black. The race was important in this particular component of the data collection because I am looking for the "black community's view" of these schools. Gender was not as important in this selection because both females and males had many of the same levels of access to education during the era being studied. It is, however, not clear by this research if males and females went to school at different rates or for different lengths of time. That is an important area that should be addressed in later works.

³⁴⁵ Through happenstance sampling I became aware of several participants during my initial research designing and archival collecting. Selective sampling allowed me to find those specific individuals who helped to complete my data set (Miller, 2000).

³⁴⁶ Snowball sampling, also termed network sampling, is usually used when a researcher is searching for “hard-to-find” participants. This type of sampling allows the researcher, through networking, to gain access to more participants through referrals from the initial participant (Miller, 2000). I did this through Ileana Nesbit (Nunnally). On two different occasions she drafted lists of 20 to 30 individuals who she believed would be willing to talk with me about the research (Nesbit (Nunnally), July 10, 2006, Interview; July 16, 2006, Interview).

³⁴⁷ There were five individuals that I requested to interview that were not able to participate. Commissioner Michael Thurmond and I were never able to get our schedules to be compatible. However, he wants to participate in the next stages of this work through interviewing and helping to find additional participants if needed. One of the individuals asked was too feeble at the time of the request to participate and his son decided that they would pass as much information on as possible. Two of the individuals had passed away prior to the interview request and one individual declined and did not tell the reason for not participating. Many individuals asked after the interviews were completed if they could be interviewed.

³⁴⁸ At that time, I explained that I might possibly raise “false hope” in the participants by suggesting that by telling their story they could achieve personal or social changes. At this point, I realize that some interviewees might have felt that telling their story was therapeutic. However, to be ethical, I clarified that my purpose in doing the research was not to play the role of a counselor during the research process and that I could not promise that the research would result in any personal or community changes (Seidman, 1998).

³⁴⁹ Miller suggests that this type of final check with the interviewee acts as an “additional interview” giving the participant a chance respondent the chance to expand upon points that they with hindsight see as requiring additional information” (2000). Almost all of the interviewees took this chance to fill in gaps, put in details that they had forgotten to include, or correct names of individuals discussed in the interview.

³⁵⁰ Some researchers consider allowing the participant access to the analysis stage to raise ethical issues. However, I believe that this was a necessary step in the process of becoming a boundary spanner who is able to appropriately give voice to an underrepresented population (Miller, 2000). The respondents have had a chance to review their interview data, and I will be requesting additional feedback from them once the dissertation is finished and submitted.

³⁵¹ Glesne and Peshkin define rapport in qualitative research as a “distance-reducing, anxiety-quieting, trust-building mechanism that primarily serves the interest of the researcher,” giving the person(s) being interviewed the ability to “talk” (1992).

³⁵² Ladson-Billings recognizes critical race theory (CRT) as a field of research has developed into a valued “intellectual and social tool” for de/reconstructing oppressive structures and discourse. Billings and other CRT’s believe that researchers should work from the inside of the system out, meaning that you may need to be a member of the oppressed group being studied to actually garner all of the insight necessary to gain the full potential of the research (1998).

³⁵³ Huberman and Miles suggest that successful “data management” requires a “systematic, coherent process of data collection, storage, and retrieval” (1994).

³⁵⁴ Lincoln and Guba suggest that the ways in which we know and understand is most definitely tangled up with “what we know,” as well as with “our relationship” those that we are studying (2000).

³⁵⁵ Validity in the field of research means that the study is “sound, cogent, well grounded, justifiable, or logically correct” (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

³⁵⁶ These researchers have determined that *meanings* are not static bodies of knowledge that are absorbed or reproduced, from one generation to the next as suggested by old structuralist frameworks (Lubeck, 1985; Weis, 1996). Instead, these researchers have found that group members actively participate in the making of these meanings as “new situations” or when “contradictory experiences” take place (Grant & Sleeter, 1996).