PRAGMATICISM AND BLACK EDUCATION IN THE SEGREGATED SOUTH

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ABSTRACT

Ian Jules Gutgold: Pragmaticism and Black Education in the Segregated South
(Under the direction of W. Fitzhugh Brundage)

This thesis explores the work of the Jeanes Teachers, a group of African American educators in the rural South, in three states: Virginia, Tennessee and Texas. Although the Jeanes Teachers accepted philanthropic support from northern philanthropists committed to a vocational model for African American education, the Jeanes Teachers resisted the elimination of academics from rural curriculums and charted a middle course between industrial education and traditional "book learning." The Jeanes Teachers' position at the intersection of a diffuse set of interests put them in a unique - and challenging - situation to promote African American education in the segregated South. Supervisors rejected the notion that African Americans should learn only vocational skills. Through their efforts to clean country schools, organize clubs and promote public health, Jeanes Teachers sought to bolster rural communities' support for their own schools and demonstrate to the white community that African American schools were worthy of additional state funding.

To Lucy – For Everything

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INTRODUCTION

> When judging the Jeanes teachers and their work - as so much else in Negro education - it should be remembered, however, that they are nothing else than heroic attempts to mitigate in a small way what is actually the result both of the extreme poverty and cultural backwardness in the Southern rural Negro community, and the outright discrimination against the Negro schools, which keeps them on an often incredibly low standard in regard to both equipment and training of teachers. When the Jeanes teacher is viewed in this setting, she becomes a remarkable and pathetic figure in the history of Negro education. - Gunnar Myrdal, 1944[1]

When Oxford Professor Lance G. E. Jones toured several rural elementary schools for African Americans in the South in the 1930s, he found that conditions varied widely. Early one morning the erudite Englishman visited a "one room, one teacher school in [a] poorly kept cabin." He observed about a dozen students of all ages sitting on "rough plank benches [with] no facilities for writing" and "few books." Next he traveled to a school held in a "church vestry, [a] long narrow room" that Jones found "totally unsuitable." One male teacher was responsible for instructing more than forty enrolled students, although only about twenty were present when Jones arrived. Several of the oldest boys were outside gathering firewood, which the teacher justified by explaining that they "would not learn much if they were in school." On another day of planned observations, Jones arrived at the first school only to find the one-room building empty with "no fasteners on [the] door or on [the] window shutters" and "benches...broken by

[1] Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, (New York: Harper, 1944), 1418.

marauders." A neighbor explained that the teacher "had been to school but left as no children appeared." A recent measles outbreak in the community was provided as the possible explanation.[2]

The conditions that Jones encountered were extreme, but they were not atypical.[3] Into the 1930s, most southern elementary schools for African Americans remained rural one or two teacher operations in which many children of all ages completed separate lessons at the same time. Most teachers did not have a college degree and in many parts of the South it was not uncommon for teachers to lack a high school diploma.[4] Describing a program to improve the

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[2] Lance G. E. Jones, *The Jeanes Teacher in the United States, 1908-1933*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 85-88. This short book is the only scholarly monograph on the Jeanes Teachers.

[3] There are few good studies of rural elementary schools for African Americans during the Jim Crow era. The two classic works on African American education in the South generally under Jim Crow are James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988) and Adam Fairclough, *A Class of Their Own: Black Teachers in the Segregated South,* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007). An important starting point for understanding the conditions of rural schools remains Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma*, especially Chapters 41 and 43. Other older works with good descriptions of schools for African Americans in the segregated South include John Dollard, *Caste and Class in a Southern Town*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937), Chapter IX; Hortense Powdermaker*, After Freedom; A Cultural Study in the Deep South*, (New York: Viking Press, 1939), Chapter 3 and Charles S. Johnson *Growing Up in the Black Belt: Negro Youth in the Rural South*, (Washington D.C.: American Council on Education, 1941), Chapter IV. Newer works that describe conditions inside rural schools for African Americans include Neil R. McMillen, *Dark Journey: Black Mississippians in the Age of Jim Crow*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), Chapter 3; James C. Cobb, *The Most Southern Place On Earth: The Mississippi Delta and the Roots of Regional Identity*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 171-181 and W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory,* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 141-146.

[4] Mapping the educational attainment of local teachers in various counties throughout the South would be illuminating. This data can be found on the top of Jeanes Teacher's reports, Box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers. There is considerable variation between counties with some counties having over 50% of their teaching staff having college degrees and others have very few teachers with degrees. Below is a typical report for Lauderdale County, Tennessee:

No. schools with 1 teacher: 14
2 teachers: 9
3 teachers: 4
4 teachers: [0]
5 teachers: 1

No. teachers with college degrees: 16
No. teachers who have no college credits: 4
No. teachers never attended high school: 3
No. teachers with homes outside county

training of teachers in rural schools in Louisiana, *The Journal of Negro Education* remarked that the teachers understood the state of the schools in which they taught because they had attended similar institutions:

> a dirty one-room school bare of all attractiveness and all comfort, though not of amusement, for an old gray mule may poke his head through the pasteboard which has taken the place of a pane, and a pig attempt to come up the steps - a school in which the teacher calls the class to the recitation bench in reading and gives a lick as each word is mispronounced.[5]

In many places throughout the South, rural education for African Americans one decade before World War II appeared not too different than it was at the turn of the 20th century.[6]

On his tour of southern schools, Jones was the guest of a Jeanes Supervisor.[7] Jeanes Supervisors were African American teachers who worked to improve rural schools for African Americans on the county level. Recruited and supported by the Rural Negro School Fund (better known as the Jeanes Fund), the Jeanes Supervisors, almost all of whom were women, performed a myriad of services for the dozens of scattered schools in their counties. They were not daily classroom teachers, but rather roving administrators and vocational instructors. Many taught

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[5] Jane E. McAllister, "A Venture in Rural-Teacher Education Among Negroes in Louisiana," *The Journal of Negro Education* 7:2 (April, 1938): 133-134.

[6] Black schools continued to be chronically underfunded and faced severe limitations in their physical plants and educational materials available to children. As this essay suggests, however, it is a mistake to think of education for rural African Americans as static during the Jim Crow era. Even before the school equalization campaigns after World War II schools for African Americans in the South began to improve their physical plants and reform their methods of instruction with the help of northern philanthropies and limited state support. See Joan Malczewski, *Building a New Educational State: Foundations, Schools, and The American South*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016) and Charles Bolton, "Mississippi's School Equalization Program, 1945-1954: A Last Gasp to Maintain a Segregated Educational System," *Journal of Southern History* 66, no. 4 (2000): 781-814. Malczewski demonstrates that school modernization and curriculum standardization for African American schools proceeded at different rates in different southern states. Despite the introduction of improvements such as bus transportation and hot lunches, however, the vast majority of southern elementary schools for blacks in the late 1930s remained unconsolidated one or two teacher schools.

[7] These educators used a variety of titles interchangeably including Jeanes Teacher, Jeanes Supervisor, Jeanes Supervising Teacher and Jeanes Supervising Industrial Teacher. This paper will use the terms Jeanes Teacher and Jeanes Supervisor to refer to the educators who worked for the Jeanes Fund.

vocations such as basket making and sewing. They also often offered pedagogical help to local teachers, fundraised to improve school physical plants, bolstered community support for schools by organizing clubs for local residents and encouraged improved health and hygiene in rural communities.[8] Jones, a sympathetic observer of the Jeanes Supervisors' work, noted that "the demands upon them are heavy, and they need much tact and patience as well as energy to carry them through their daily round of visits."[9]

An examination of the annual reports submitted by Jeanes Supervisors over the 1939-1940 school year in Tennessee, Texas and Virginia to their white superiors reveals the pragmatic approach of these teachers to African American education in the South.[10] This essay does not

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[8] Because of the slow pace of consolidation for African American schools, Jeanes Teachers were sometimes responsible for sixty or more small schools which they tried to visit as often as possible. Given the distance of northern philanthropists and the indifference of many local administrators to African American education, Jeanes Teachers had considerable autonomy in deciding how to improve African American education in their counties.

[9] Jones, 88.

[10] Like many educators, the Jeanes Teachers were compelled to generate substantial paperwork documenting their activities. The Jeanes Fund and later the Southern Education Foundation required Supervisors to submit both monthly and annual accounts of their work. When making their monthly reports, James H. Dillard, who directed the fund from 1908 to 1931, instructed Jeanes Teachers to "write plainly the names of schools visited...give [the] number of visits and also the time spent at each school, and tell briefly and specifically what you did at each school...remember that the more schools you can visit the better pleased we shall be with the report" ("Notice to Teachers," 1913?, folder 375, box 222, General Educational Board Papers). Unfortunately, these monthly reports are not preserved in either the General Education Board Collection at the Rockefeller Archive Center in Sleepy Hollow, New York or the Southern Educational Foundation Collection held at the Archives Research Center in Atlanta, Georgia. However, the annual reports from Jeanes Teachers in three states: Tennessee, Texas and Virginia are held in the Southern Education Foundation Collection. Although these reports are for only a single school year, 1939-1940, because each Jeanes Teacher submitted a report on activity in her county there are more than 100 individual reports. Each report runs about three typed or handwritten pages and describes in detail local conditions, the Jeanes Teacher's activities for that year, the number and size of the schools in each county and the academic qualifications of the county's teachers.

It is fortuitous that the three states which for which there are reports in the Southern Educational Foundation Collection represent a broad cross section of the South both geographically and culturally. Moreover, despite differences in geography and agriculture (i.e. the types of crops grown), almost all the counties in which the Jeanes Teachers operated were predominantly rural and faced similar challenges including lack of resources and poorly trained local teachers. This essay draws sparingly from other sources of Jeanes Teacher's voices such as *Jeanes Supervisor Quarterly* and *The Jeanes Story* in order to present as many representative views as possible.

Because this essay considers reports from only one school year it is important to recognize that they present only a snapshot of the Jeanes Teachers' work at one particular moment in time. Education for blacks in the Jim Crow era was not static. These reports themselves are testament to the uneven introduction of modern accoutrements such as state provided textbooks, bus transportation and hot lunches.

seek to evaluate the effectiveness of the Jeanes Teachers, but rather to understand their aims and the reasoning behind their educational program. Jeanes Supervisors worked to implement many aspects of the philanthropists' framework for rural development but moved far beyond the limited vision for African American education that their benefactors held. A careful look at their daily work shows that they did not see industrial training and traditional academic training in conflict, at least on the elementary level. They helped teach industries such as sewing and carpentry, but they also sought to give rural children exposure to art and music. Through their efforts to increase attendance, establish community groups and improve the physical plants of rural schools, the Jeanes Teachers organized communities to lobby for more state spending for black education in accordance with GEB policies. However, the Jeanes Teachers spurned the notion that black schools should have special, circumscribed curriculums. They rejected both the white philanthropists and an older group of African American leaders' commitment to an incremental view of black advancement that held that it would take generations of plodding progress to reach the level of their white neighbors.[11] The Jeanes Teachers believed that with the right reforms and attitudes blacks could do the same academic and professional work as whites in the present.

Investigating the work of the Jeanes Teachers also suggests the dynamism of African American education during the Jim Crow era. The activities of the Jeanes Teachers during the

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[11] Benjamin Brawley, Jeanes Fund President James Hardy Dillard's biographer, describes the essence of this thinking shared by Dillard and other philanthropists involved in the GEB's efforts: "The...only sound solution of the [race] problem is for the more experienced race to stand squarely for good will and justice, and to aid the backward race until it becomes entirely able to stand on its own feet, and then for the two to cooperate in building up a civilization to which each group will make its own distinctive contribution...This is only Christian and statesmanlike method. It has been adopted by such men as…James Hardy Dillard and his devoted colleague, B. C. Caldwell, among Southern white men; and by Samuel C. Armstrong of Hampton Institute, Wallace Buttrick, of the General Education Board, Robert C. Ogden and George Foster Peabody...Julius Rosenwald...It is the method that has produced Booker Washington and Robert R. Moton among American Negroes and hundreds others of similar spirit. Benjamin Brawley, *Doctor Dillard of the Jeanes Fund*, (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1930), 3-4.

1939-1940 school year to lobby local school boards for hot lunches, bus transportation and state provided textbooks shows the mighty, if sometimes glacial, changes that affected African American schools in the years before the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. In particular, the Jeanes Teachers' work in the late 1930s and early 1940s highlights the growing involvement of southern state governments in black education.[12] Unlike Booker T. Washington, who emphasized the need for blacks to change their attitudes and habits in order to rise in the world, Jeanes Teachers were more likely to identify increasing state aid as the prescription for poorly performing rural schools.[13] In small and subtle ways, and occasionally in big gestures, the Jeanes Teachers sought to provide the very best education for black children in the South. Subtle diplomats as well as indefatigable boosters, Jeanes Teachers' attitude towards education is best captured by their motto, "To do the next needed thing."[14]

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[12] James Hardy Dillard, President of the Jeanes Fund from 1909-1933, reflected that fermenting greater state support for black education was one of the greatest achievements of the Jeanes Teachers: "The most gratifying fact in the work of the Jeanes Fund has been the welcome and gradual increase of support received from local school officials, on whom success has always depended. From the first we have helped only at the request of the county superintendent and under his direction. What success the work of the Fund has attained is largely due to the interest of the state and county superintendents in later years to the wise and energetic defection of the State agents for colored schools connected with the carious State Departments of Education. During the past ten years there has been a study increase of financial support from public school funds. In 1912-13 the county funds contributed to the work a total amount of only $3,402; in 1921-22 the amount was $114,521. At present, in 1923, there are 266 Jeanes Teachers, and some counties have similar work unconnected with the Jeanes Fund. "Fourteen Years of the Jeanes Fund, 1909-1923," folder 7, box 30, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[13] Louis R. Harlan's *Booker T. Washington: The Making of a Black Leader, 1856-1901*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972) and *Booker T. Washington: The Wizard of Tuskegee, 1901-1915*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983) are essential starting points for understanding Washington.

[14] These moto is invoked frequently in a retrospective collection of essays by Jeanes Teachers, *The Jeanes Story: A Chapter in the History of American Education, 1908-1968*

CHAPTER 1: THE RURAL NEGRO SCHOOL FUND AND INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION

The Rural Negro School Fund was one of an elaborate series of philanthropic organizations dedicated to improving education for blacks in the South. [15] Following the exclusion of African Americans from electoral politics at the end of the 19th century, southern state governments began to spend vastly more on white education than black education.[16] Institutions established by wealthy northerners such as the Slater Fund, the Rosenwald Fund and the Jeanes Fund gave critical support to southern African American communities as they sought to establish and maintain schools.[17] John D. Rockefeller's General Education Board (GEB) administered many of these organizations and influenced the operation of many others through a series of interlocking directorates.[18] This aid, however, was often in the form of matching funds

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[15] Significantly, although the Jeanes Fund recruited Supervisors they often did not pay their entire salary. The Fund encouraged Supervisors raise part of their salary from the communities in which they worked within one or two years of beginning work (Wright, 18; Liston, 16). They also lobbied, sometimes with success for county superintendents to fund part of salaries (Liston 36).

[16] In Alabama, for example, the ratio of expenditures for white and black students was nearly 1:1 in 1890, but had jumped to more than 3:1 by 1910 and remained nearly unchanged in 1935. In Virginia, Tennessee and Texas the gap was less pronounced, but the state still spent about twice as much per white pupil as they did for each black pupil in 1935. Mississippi had the distinction as the most unequal state in 1935, spending only 23 cents for each black student for every dollar spent on a white student. For an excellent discussion of the inequalities in school funding in the South during the Jim Crow era see Robert A. Margo, *Race and Schooling in the South, 1880-1950: An Economic History*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), Chapter 2.

[17] See Anderson 79-109 and Fairclough 121-122. Louis R. Harlan examines the efforts of philanthropic efforts of northern philanthropists and southern progressives through the Southern Education Board in *Separate and Unequal: Public Schools Campaigns and Racism in The Southern Seaboard States 1901-1915*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1958).

[18] Anderson, 86.

conditional on black communities pooling their own resources to become eligible for philanthropic funds.[19] Historian James D. Anderson has observed this policy amounted to a form of "double taxation," or "self-help" as it was known within African American communities, as blacks paid taxes that went largely to support white schools while fundraising among themselves to support their own institutions.[20]

The GEB and its affiliated organizations vigorously promoted an industrial model of education for southern blacks.[21] Historian Adam Fairclough has convincingly shown that the philanthropists "deplored the move toward 'conventional book knowledge'" and continued to promote industrial education into the 1940s under the guise of new names.[22] He demonstrates that the philanthropists generally resisted blacks' "encourag[ing] the gravitation of their schools toward the academic."[23] Like Samuel C. Armstrong at Hampton Institute and Booker T. Washington at Tuskegee Institute, the philanthropists not only promoted vocational training, but a very narrow view of industrial education that did not overtly threaten white supremacy or economic dominance.[24]

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[19] Ibid, 156.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Historians have fiercely disagreed over the motivations of these white philanthropists. Louis R. Harlan argues that the members of the Southern Education Board, a charitable foundation partly funded from the GEB that sought to increase southern African Americans' access to public education in the early twentieth century, intended to mitigate the worst excesses of southern racism "by goodwill, tact, and hard work" (75). James D. Anderson, conversely, claims that the philanthropists were principally motivated by the desire to "upgrade black labor productivity while preparing blacks for racially prescribed social roles" (82). Harlan views the philanthropists' embrace of industrial work primarily as an unfortunate, but necessary concession to gain the support of influential southerners whose help was essential to expand African American education. Anderson, in contrast, contends that the philanthropists were "racists" who sought to further their business interests by providing limited training to blacks (Ibid, 80-81).

[22] Fairclough, 304. See also Eric Anderson and Alfred A. Moss, *Dangerous Donations: Northern Philanthropy and Southern Black Education, 1902-1930,* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 85-107.

[23] Ibid, 303.

[24] Anderson and Moss make the important observation that although the GEB consistently supported industrial education, even before the death of Booker T. Washington in 1915 they were beginning to shift their support of

The Rural Negro School Fund originated with a gift of $1,000,000 from Anna. T. Jeanes, a wealthy Quaker woman from Philadelphia. The sole surviving heir to a coal mining fortune, Jeanes left the money shortly before her death in May 1907 "to be devoted to the one purpose of assisting *in the Southern United States, Community, Country or* Rural Schools, for that great class of Negros, to whom *the smaller* Rural or Community Schools are alone available" and specified that Hollis Burke Frissell of Hampton Institute, Booker T. Washington of Tuskegee Institute, George Foster Peabody, William Howard Taft and Andrew Carnegie should serve on the Board of Trustees.[25] From the beginning, the Fund was closely associated with the GEB and committed to promoting industrial education, although when the Board first met in February 1908 none of the members "had any definite [or] clear-cut idea as to just what should be done or how it should be done."[26]

The pattern for Jeanes Fund's future work was set when Jackson Davis, the Superintendent of Schools in Henrico County, Virginia wrote to the President of the Fund, James Hardy Dillard in 1909, asking for money to fund a traveling teacher to visit rural one-room schools and teach "hand-work." Davis explained that he was "anxious to make industrial training an essential part of the work in the Negro schools of Henrico County" and that over the past school year he had been encouraging local black teachers to promote vocational education. The "response and cooperation," he wrote, "has been so general as to lead me to believe that next

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African American education away from private institutions like Tuskegee and toward public schools under white political control.

[25] "Extract from the Will of Anna T. Jeanes" in Arthur D. Wright, *The Negro Rural School Fund, Inc. (Anna T. Jeanes Foundation) 1907-1933*, (Washington, D.C.: The Negro Rural School Fund, Inc., 1933), iii. Italics in original.

[26] Wright, 11.

session would be a most favorable time to begin the work in a systematic way." Davis emphasized black communities' commitment to self-help as he made his request:

> Many of the schools have organized Improvement Leagues in their communities and have made the school buildings and grounds more attractive in many ways. They have also made beginning with various kinds of hand-work, such as sewing, making baskets of white-oak, mats of corn shucks, fishing-nets, brooms, ect., in every case using materials already at hand. They have gotten homes in some communities to agree to allow school children to come in at certain times each week for lessons in cooking.[27]

Dillard agreed to fund the traveling teacher at the rate of $40.00 per month and Davis selected Virginia Randolph, an African American teacher at a rural one room school, to serve as the traveling industrial teacher.[28]

Over the next several decades, Randolph became the model for hundreds of "Jeanes Teachers" across the South. Born to formerly enslaved parents in Richmond, Virginia in 1874, Randolph passed the examination for teaching in rural schools when she was sixteen and spent thirteen years teaching at Mountain Road School, a one-room schoolhouse, in Henrico County. She taught the girls cooking and sewing and the boys how to make baskets, but she also visited the nearby white school to see what the teachers were doing and how she could apply their methods to her students. She raised money, founded a Sunday school and initiated the first Arbor Day celebration in her part of the state. She also dramatically improved the physical plant of the school by planting grass and flowers and whitewashed the small building frequently to keep it clean.[29] Though many of the Jeanes Teachers who came later would possess much more formal education than she did, Randolph's example of always making the most with what she was given,

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[27] Jackson Davis to James H. Dillard, May 21, 1908, reproduced in Wright, 12.

[28] Ibid.

[29] *The Jeanes Story: A Chapter in the History of American Education, 1908-1968*, (Atlanta: Southern Educational Foundation, 1979), 25.

and quietly (and occasionally loudly) advocating for more, was intimated by future Supervisors. Whether a Jeanes Teacher had graduated high school, attended Hampton or Tuskegee, a state normal school or (more rarely) received a liberal arts education, she was likely to be the most educated person in her family.[30] Jeanes Teachers perceived acutely the inequity of the Jim Crow system while at the same time experiencing the benefits of hard work and they sought to inoculate these values into the students in the schools in which they served. One Alabama Jeanes Teacher, describing conditions in her county in the early 1940s, wrote that "The day has passed when our youth learn only to cook, sew and carry on a 4-H project for raising pigs…they must carry with them some marketable…skills when they board a bus for the army, navy [or] defense factories."[31]

Historians Eric Anderson and Alfred A. Moss emphasize foundation officials' fear of offending southern whites' racial sensibilities as a motivating factor behind their advocacy of

[30] Two sources in particular are invaluable in understanding the development of the Jeanes Fund and the background and training of its teachers. These are Arthur D. Wright, *The Negro Rural School Fund, Inc. (Anna T. Jeanes Foundation) 1907-1933*, (Washington, D.C.: The Negro Rural School Fund, Inc., 1933) and Hardy Liston "A Study of the Work of the Jeanes Supervising Teachers for Negro Rural Schools" (M.A. Thesis, University of Chicago, 1928). Wright became President of the Jeanes Fund in 1933. His book includes a compilation of the Fund's board minutes and an introductory essay that includes several useful statistics on the teachers themselves. Wright relates that in 1933 there were over 300 Jeanes Teachers in fourteen southern states (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia) and Supervisors were operating in approximately 38% of southern counties with ten or more African American teachers. He observes that the average Jeanes Teacher in 1933 was a black woman in their mid to late 30s, received about $900 per year (slightly more than the regular school teachers in each county), paid for their own car to travel between the various schools in their county and had worked as a Jeanes Supervisor for six years.

Liston conducted an extensive survey of Jeanes Supervisors and had access to numerous unpublished reports from the organization. Combing the data from Liston and Wright shows an upward trend in the amount of post-secondary education of the Jeanes Teachers. In the late 1920s Liston noted that the average for Supervisors was 1.5 years, while in the early 1930s Wright reported the amount as over two years. It seems as though many Jeanes Teachers had some training at Hampton or Tuskegee and only more rarely had a liberal arts education. More work needs to be done to understand exactly how the Jeanes Fund promoted the education of its teachers. Newsletters held in the Southern Education Foundation Collection at Atlanta University Archive Center reveals the ways in which the Jeanes Fund encouraged Supervisors who did not have their undergraduate degree to complete it at special summer schools and promoted those who already had a bachelor's degree to receive master's in education from elite northern universities like the University of Chicago and Teacher College, Columbia University.

[31] *The Jeanes Story*, 36.

vocational training. "From the beginning," they observe, "GEB-style philanthropy sought to placate southern white critics."[32] They underscore that in the first decades of the twentieth century white antagonism towards any educational initiative that could potentially undermine the South's racial hierarchy was so intense that it put the philanthropists on a very cautious footing. Extreme deference to local officials including the use of "indirect funding and euphemisms such as 'county training school' in place of high school" were only two of the many strategies employed by the GEB to minimize white opposition to their work.[33] Significantly, the Jeanes Fund only placed Supervisors in southern counties at the request of local superintendents. Arthur D. Wright, who became President of the Fund in 1933, explained that "the work of any individual Jeanes teacher must be determined by...the wishes of her superintendent...[and]...the needs of the local situation in which she is working."[34] Afraid of alienating the white school administrators whose support was critical for the Jeanes Fund's operations, the philanthropists largely refrained from directly requesting additional state resources for African American schools from state officials.[35] "They have to be extremely careful not to arouse sentiments that would impede the progress of their work," noted Swedish economist and sociologist Gunnar Myrdal. "For success they must depend upon the traditional paternalistic attitude toward the

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[32] Anderson and Moss, 7.

[33] Ibid, 8.

[34] Wright, 17.

[35] The GEB relied on the Jeanes Teachers to lobby for more resources as part of their strategy to stay away from directly interfering in the administration of southern public schools. Anderson and Moss observe that the "GEB...avoid[ed]...confrontation [with southern whites] as much as possible. For example, the GEB's program of appointing state supervisors of Negro rural schools minimized opposition by making these supervisors subordinate to the state superintendent of public instruction, by recommending no Negroes for these positions, and by simply not making an appointment where significant opposition existed...The money challenged through the Jeanes Fund for supervising industrial teachers also kept the GEB somewhat in the background. The GEB countered charges that it was seeking to dominate the schools to which it donated by gradually lifting most conditions on its gifts," (61-62). See also Fairclough, 250-253.

Negro who keeps in his place."[36] It was the Jeanes Supervisors themselves who tactfully lobbied for increased public investment in black education.[37]

In practice, the GEB encouraged the promotion of trades such as basket weaving and furniture making and basic skills like rudimentary reading and writing. President Dillard wrote soon after the Jeanes Fund's inception that "the negroes [sic] themselves are ready to welcome industrial education, and our county superintendents are giving a most hearty approval to the plans of the Jeanes Board."[38] Dillard, a native Virginian, sought to reassure white southerners that black education would bring positive benefits to the white community. "We are recognizing the problem of the presence of the larger population of negroes by undertaking to include these in our educational system," he wrote. "We of the South cannot afford to have in our midst any, mass of ignorance, and it is to our interest in every way to train the negroes [sic] to thrift and intelligent industry. It will pay us in material advancement, as well as in the consciousness of duty, to appropriate a fair share of public funds to this cause, and it was pay us to see that these funds are efficiently expended."[39] As late as 1944, GEB officials wrote that the goal of elementary schools for blacks should be "training in the ability to talk, to read, to write, to use numbers, to get along with people, to use the hands, and to take care of property...Vocational

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[36] Myrdal, 1418.

[37] Ibid. James L. Leloudis has observed that the Jeanes Teachers' gender gave them space to maneuver as they advocated for their schools in delicate world of black-white diplomacy under Jim Crow. See *Schooling the New South,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 187-189. See also Fairclough 254-257 and Glenda Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 147.

[38] James H. Dillard, "Negro Rural Schools," 1908?, Box 222, Folder 275, General Educational Board Papers.

[39] Ibid.

Education…should be emphasized to greatest possible extent…this type of education meets the needs of the Negro himself, and it also has the approval of most white leaders."[40]

Jeanes Teachers' reports to white foundation officials offer an unparalleled lens through which to understand how African American educators applied the philanthropists' policy of industrial education in the ramshackle schoolhouses of the Jim Crow era South. The most obvious consideration when examining these reports is that the white administrators of the Southern Education Foundation controlled the reappointment of Jeanes Teachers.[41] Like an academic completing her *vitae*, they had every motivation to vigorously present their accomplishments in a way that would appeal to the priorities of their patrons. However, although the Jeanes Teachers had an incentive to highlight certain aspects of their work does not mean that their reports are not a faithful representation of their activities. Their descriptions in the annual reports are largely consonant with their writings elsewhere such as the *Jeanes Supervisor Quarterly* and a retrospective collection of essays published by former Jeanes Teachers after the program had ended in 1968, *The Jeanes Story*.

The most notable difference between the Supervisors' reports to the Jeanes Fund and their writings elsewhere is their silence on the indignities of Jim Crow segregation. For example, a Supervisor in the *Jeanes Story* describes being run off the road in 1938 on the way to a school by a group of five white men who called her a racial epithet and demanded to know where she was going. "This car belongs to my Missus," the Jeanes Teacher responded, "She is sick and I am going to the store to get some liniment for her."[42] Having told the lie, the men let her go and

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[40] P.H. Easom, "Negro Education In Mississippi," 1944, Box 98, Folder 878, General Educational Board Papers. See also Fairclough 249 and Anderson, 115-117.

[41] The Jeanes Fund ceased to be an independent legal entity in 1937 when it merged with the Peabody Education Fund, John F. Slater Fund and the Virginia Randolph Fund to form the Southern Educational Foundation.

[42] *Jeanes Story*, 65.

she arrived at the next school she was visiting unharmed.[43] This type of frank recognition of racial prejudice is not mentioned is the annual reports**.** In contrast, the only mentions of race relations in the reports are positive ones. For example, the Supervisor from Appomattox County, Virginia remarked glowingly that she had the support of influential white community members. "I have been invited to speak in white churches to white audiences on several occasions and the High School Chorus has been invited to sing in the White High School," she wrote. "The white teachers visit our schools and observ [sic] their work...The white ministers, the Supervisor and Librarian will appear on any of our programs and render service in any way possible to us."[44] This disparity is reflective of the GEB's commitment to minimizing racial conflict in the South.[45]

A comparison of the Jeanes Teachers' reports with the stated policies of the GEB and the administrators of the Jeanes Fund demonstrates that the Supervisors did not merely tell their white superiors what the Supervisors thought they wanted to hear. Although the major outlines of many Jeanes Teachers' reports reveal the influence of the progressive-minded foundation staff in such initiatives as the promotion of community building, vocational education and the unit method, a discerning reading can tease out instances in which the Jeanes Teachers rejected the circumscribed view of black education that the philanthropists held. One Supervisor's description of the work performed in her county, for example, includes both a precise accounting of the candles and mattresses made and a strong statement that she emphasized "reading, social studies, writing and art" in her schools.[46] Jeanes Teachers' reports show how these African

[43] Ibid.

[44] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Appomattox County, Virginia" folder 5, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[45] For more on the GEB's policy of "stabilizing...white supremacy" see Fairclough, 173.

[46] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Jasper and Newton Counties, Texas" folder 3, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

American educators worked within the GEB's framework of rural development as they sought to boost local support for education and advocate for increased public expenditures for black schools while at the same time moving beyond the philanthropists' commitment to a narrow industrial curriculum.

CHAPTER 2: THE POLITICS OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Much of the work of the Jeanes Teachers in the late 1930s and early 1940s relates to community development. Supervisors frequently describe "beautifying" country schools and homes, establishing community organizations and running immunization campaigns. In promoting these objectives, the Jeanes Teachers were supporting the philanthropists' aspiration for African American communities to be clean, cohesive, healthy and productive. "We are to try to make that [rural] life, just where it is, healthful, intelligent, efficient," opined GEB President Frederick T. Gates, "to fill it with it with thought and purpose, and with a gracious social culture not without its joys."[47] As they worked to improve communities, the Jeanes Teachers sought to organize rural people in ways that increased popular support for black education. While the GEB was generally reluctant to ask white school administrators for additional resources, the Jeanes Teachers sought to both bolster rural communities' support for their own schools and demonstrate to the white community that African American schools were worthy of additional state funding. Their location at the intersection of northern philanthropy, rural black communities and southern state governments put them in a unique position to promote African American education.

Though the conditions that Jeanes Supervisors faced differed depending on where they served, certain challenges were nearly universal. These included erratic student attendance, inadequate school facilities and limited state support for African American schools. Although some scholars distinguish between a first generation of Jeanes Teachers that primarily focused on community initiatives and teaching simple industries and a later group that committed itself to

[47] Frederick T. Gates, "The Country School of Tomorrow [1913]," in *Occasional Papers* (New York: General Education Board, 1940), 6.

pedagogical reform, an examination of the Supervisors' reports from 1939-1940 demonstrates the ways in which community building and instruction in handicrafts remained an important part of the Jeanes Teachers' work at least into the early 1940s.[48] This continued focus on community development does not reflect the Jeanes Teachers' dogmatic commitment to one form of education or another, but rather the persistent poverty and lack of state investment in many rural black communities. Through their work, the Jeanes Teachers sought to strengthen the image of the country school in the eyes of both rural blacks and southern whites.

One of the most critical problems that Supervisors sought to remedy was the lack of regular school attendance. Jeanes Teachers viewed the failure of many rural students to consistently attend school not as an isolated issue, but as part of a broader pattern of community disengagement in the schools. In sharecropping regions, a lack of parental involvement in schools was often closely connected to parents' frequent relocations for agricultural work. In Pittsylvania County, Virginia, Jeanes Teacher Susie Shepperson underscored a strong connection between the peripatetic lifestyles of the parents and their reluctance to send their children to school. "Because of this unsettled home life," she reported, "parents are not as interested in anything in the community as they would otherwise be. They do not join the P.T.A. because they are not planning to remain or they see no need helping secure a library because their children will not be there to read the books."[49]

[48] For example, Valinda Littlefield, "'I Am Only One, But I Am One': Southern African-American Women Schoolteachers, 1884-1954," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2003). Littlefield contrasts the "quiet force" of the first generation of teachers with the "de facto superintendents" of a later era. This distinction contains much truth but obscures the extent to which industrial training remained an important part of black education into the 1940s.

[49] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Pittsylvania County, Virginia," folder 7, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

Even in areas where most families remained in the same community for many years, educators faced considerable challenges in getting them to come to school. Despite the existence of compulsory attendance laws, weak enforcement rendered them practically meaningless.[50] In many places, the schools closed completely for several weeks during harvest time so that students could help their parents in the fields. Picola Morrow, the Supervisor from Rutherford County, Tennessee, explained how the schools opened there at the end of July, continued until the end of September and then "close[d] for cotton picking season" before continuing until May.[51] In Northampton County, Virginia, Supervisor Margaret McCune lamented that the beginning and end of the term depended on how many students left schools to work in the fields. "Regular attendance was one of our big problems," she observed, "as our time of opening in the fall and closing of schools in the spring depended upon attendance due to seasonal crops."[52]

Agricultural work was only one among many obstacles that prevented the regular school attendance of rural African American children. Supervisors also listed outbreaks of communicable disease, lack of transportation and lack of school clothes and books as impediments. The Jeanes Teacher in Hamilton County, Tennessee described collecting garments for "children who cannot attend school because of the lack of clothing. The County [sic] provides a large supply of pants, dresses, shirts, undergarments and in some cases shoes to be

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[50] One of the few counties to offer a favorable attendance report explicitly mentions having a truancy officer that worked with the black community. "Attendance is not a problem in Bedford County [,Virginia]. We have an attendance officer in the person of Mrs. George Schenk. She and I travel together quite a bit. She praises us for keeping the children in school, and giving her such little trouble." "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Bedford, Virginia," folder 2, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[51] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Rutherford County, Tennessee," folder 2, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[52] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Northampton County, Virginia," folder 7, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

used for this purpose."[53] Other times children simply lived too far away from a school. One Jeanes Teacher from Virginia described families who "wanted an education but [were] unable to get to the location" and also could not afford the $2 per month fee to ride the bus.[54]

Jeanes Teachers responded to these challenges with initiatives designed to help rural people appreciate the advantages of sending their children to school. Many went door to door in an effort to make parents "conscious of the benefits of daily attendance," including, in some counties, hot lunches.[55] In Montgomery County, Tennessee Susie Brown visited more than thirty-five homes in the month of August "encouraging parents to send their children to school every day."[56] She attempted to alleviate parents' concerns that sending their children to school would be prohibitively costly by explaining to them that the state had recently promised to buy books for children in the first three grades.[57] One Jeanes Teacher in Virginia made a series of maps of her county and launched a drive to locate children in order to support her 100% enrollment campaign."[58] Another Supervisor in Virginia reported that she had "visited...practically...the home of each child this term."[59]

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[53] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Nelson County, Virginia," folder 7, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[54] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Powhatan, Virginia," folder 7, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[55] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Botetourt, Virginia," folder 5, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[56] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Montgomery County, Tennessee," folder 2, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[57] Ibid.

[58] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Northampton County, Virginia," folder 7, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[59] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Middlesex & Matthews Counties, Virginia," folder 6, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

Jeanes Teachers also created positive incentives for regularly going to school. In Walker County, Texas, Estelle Jordan purchased certificates to reward pupils who had perfect attendance. “There are fifteen students over the county who have never missed a day of school in the entire year,” she reported. “Four of these have never missed a day...for the last three years.”[60] Similarly, the Jeanes Supervisor for Hardin and Decatur counties in Tennessee provided students with small awards for satisfactory attendance.[61] Perhaps the most innovative solution to increase attendance was devised by Ethel Wiley of Nelson County, Virginia. She planned an infant beauty contest to both raise money and to encourage families to send their children to school. “A baby was selected from a family that was not or did not show much interest in [the] community,” explained Wiley. “Votes were printed and the names of babies in every community in the county [were] placed on these votes.” Residents of Nelson County paid to vote and Wiley offered cash prizes to the three highest vote getters. “This aroused much interest, brought many children into the schools and [raised] the total amount of...one hundred fifty-one dollars and five cents. We took out expenses[,] sent...fifty dollars for [the] Virginia Randolph Fund, and banked [the] remainder for the high school we hope to get.”[62]

Residents of rural communities were sometimes skeptical about the motivations of educators in their communities. L. O. Seet Avent, the Jeanes Supervisor for Lauderdale County, Tennessee, reported that one of the great “handicaps” of her work was that “an idea prevails that

[60] “Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Walker County, Texas,” folder 4, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[61] “Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Hardin & Decatur Counties, Tennessee,” folder 1, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[62] “Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Nelson County, Virginia,” folder 7, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Paper

the school is maintained for 'the Teacher' vs[.] 'The Child.'"[63] Significantly, it is important to note that all the teachers for schools for African Americans in Lauderdale County lived within the county and some had presumably grown up there themselves.[64] Nevertheless, parents were apparently convinced that schools existed for the benefit of the teachers instead of the students even when teachers were members of the local community themselves. The doubt of some community members is understandable given the negligence of some local teachers towards their responsibilities. Sociologist Charles D. Johnson observed a teacher in a one-room school who told him that, "I'll just keep the children busy today. I don't feel like teaching."[65] Another exhausted teacher refused to control the children in her schoolhouse. "You'll have some pages to write up from this mess," she told Johnson.[66]

Another factor contributing to the resentment of some rural people towards the classroom teachers in Lauderdale County, Tennessee may have been their comparatively high salaries *vis-à-vis* ordinary agricultural workers. Although the United States Census did not tabulate county level income data before 1950, other sources can give a picture of what a typical sharecropping family may have earned. Lauderdale County is in West Tennessee along the Mississippi River. Cotton was (and remains) the major crop and conditions were not dissimilar to those in the Mississippi Delta less than seventy miles to the South. Like African Americans in the Delta, most blacks in Lauderdale County were sharecroppers rather than renters.[67] In one study of a

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[63] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Lauderdale County, Tennessee," folder 2, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Quoted in Fairclough, 303.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Clarice H. Hellums and Kara H. McCauley, *Visions of Lauderdale County, Past and Present*, (Allan and Akin Printers, 1996).

typical cotton plantation in the Mississippi Delta in 1937, the average gross income per family was $558.14, with renters earning $750.27 on average and sharecroppers earning $491.90 on average.[68] Another study of agricultural laborers in Bolivar County, Mississippi, about 80 miles south of Lauderdale County, reported an average income of $579 in 1927.[69] Similarly, Arthur F. Raper reported the cash income of sharecroppers in the cotton counties of Green and Macon, Georgia to be $281.58 and $519.93, respectively for 1934.[70] In contrast, the monthly income of an African American classroom teacher in Lauderdale County, Tennessee was $125 per month over the eight month term or $1000 per year, likely about twice what a typical farming family earned. Interestingly, the teachers in Lauderdale County were particularly well paid with most other black teachers in Tennessee earning about $100 per month.[71] Black teachers in Texas and Virginia typically did not earn as much as their Tennessee counterparts, with some teachers in Virginia earning as little as $43 per month. However, even this seemingly meager amount likely represented an attractive paycheck compared with the toil and uncertainties of agricultural labor.

It is tempting to speculate that the atypically high salaries for African American teachers in Lauderdale County, Tennessee was a major factor in producing the community distrust of the schools that the Jeanes Supervisor found noteworthy. In the absence of further evidence, a firm conclusion is impossible to offer. However, it is important to note that the selection of teachers for black schools was an intensely political process in most southern counties during the Jim

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[68] Raymond McClinton, "A Social-Economic Analysis of a Mississippi Delta Plantation' (M.A. Thesis, University of North Carolina, 1938), 38-40.

[69] Cobb,, 119.

[70] Arthur Raper, *Preface to Peasantry: A Tale of Two Black Belt Counties,* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1936), 55.

[71] See folder 1 and 2, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

Crow era. Historian Adam Fairclough has described how superintendents had nearly unchecked power to hire anyone they chose and set qualifications as they saw fit.[72] Because of pervasive disenfranchisement, African American communities had limited opportunities to remove ineffective teachers by putting political pressure on local, elected superintendents.[73]

Due to the decentralized nature of the Jeanes program, supervisors had varying degrees of power in trying to appoint effective teachers with community support. In King George and Stafford counties in Virginia, for example, the Jeanes Teacher appears to have had considerable influence over the hiring and firing of classroom teachers. She reported that she compiled a report on each teacher in the county and "ma[d]e my recommendation for the appointment of teachers."[74] In contrast, the Supervisor in Bedford County, Virginia emphasized the consultative nature of her role. "I did not 'hire nor fire' teachers," she explained, "but am simply trying to foster the growth of pupils and teachers, and to adjust to local conditions."[75]

Regardless of their capacity to alter the composition of their counties' teaching staffs, Jeanes Teachers worked to change rural people's attitudes toward schooling by promoting community organizations. For example, the Jeanes Teacher from Bedford County wrote that one of her objectives was to "help patrons become interested enough to want better schools, and to improve the buildings and grounds."[76] To this end, she organized Parent and Junior Leagues in

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[72] See Fairclough 126-131.

[73] Ibid. See also Mydral 1418.

[74] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: King George-Stafford counties, Virginia," folder 6, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[75] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Bedford County, Virginia," folder 5, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[76] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Bedford County, Virginia," folder 5, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

many of the schools and a County Wide Improvement League.[77] Across the South, Supervisors established thousands of community groups including Mother's Clubs, Parent Teacher Associations, 4-H Clubs and Cooperative Canning Clubs. Through these groups they increased the engagement of adults in rural schools. Increasing adult involvement was part of what one Supervisor described as a broader strategy "to make schools community centers."[78] Through the clubs, Jeanes Teachers also gave the parents of children that they served exposure to new methods of farming, parenting and food storage and preparation. In some counties, Supervisors worked closely with both black and white home demonstration agents and other local professionals to disseminate information about healthy living and farming. In McLellon County, Texas, for example, the Supervisor wrote that she regularly "contacts all the agencies in her county and secures their aid in working out a cooperative program…all the agencies come together and do special work in their field…the home demonstration agent, farm agent, dentist…other agencies in a community."[79] In this way, Supervisors served as agents of modernization for rural communities.[80]

The work of Shelby County, Tennessee Supervisor Pearl L. Nicholas is suggestive of the ways in which Jeanes Teachers promoted club life both to stimulate involvement in the schools

[77] Ibid

[78] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Haywood County, Tennessee," folder 1, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[79] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: McLennon County, Texas," folder 4, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers. For more on the Jeanes Teachers work with home demonstration agents see also "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Harrison County, Texas," folder 4, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers; "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Lamar County, Texas," folder 3, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers and "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Haywood County, Tennessee," folder 1, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[80] For more on home demonstration agents see Roy V. Scott, *The Reluctant Farmer: The Rise of Agricultural Extension to 1914* (Urbana, IL.: University of Illinois Press. 1971); Wayne D. Rasmussen, *Taking the University to the People: Seventy-five Years of Cooperative Extension* (Ames. Iowa: Iowa State University Press. 1989) and

and improve the well-being of rural residents. During the 1939-1940 school year, her first as a Supervisor in the county, Nicholas listed "interest[ing] the people of the community in the program of school" as her most pressing concern when she began her position as a Jeanes Teacher.[81] She responded by inviting local residents to visit the schools and holding a luncheon for community members to organize canning clubs.[82] Similarly, the Jeanes Teacher in Madison County, Tennessee started mattress making clubs to help families who could not afford proper bedding. She wrote that "approximately 1500 farm families will make mattresses for themselves" using surplus cotton in each county. Rosa Martin in Powhatan, Virginia organized health clubs in every rural community in her county. "They sponsor the clinics," she wrote, [provide] hot lunches, T.B. [immunizations], Red Cross, Infantile [sic] Paralysis [prevention], help the aged, [provide] clothing for the needy…[and] [t]each young mothers how to raise the young baby."[83]

The attempts of the Jeanes Teachers to establish clubs was emblematic of the holistic approach that Jeanes Teachers took to bettering the schools in their counties. Supervisors saw club life, community health, the physical conditions of schools and curriculum and pedagogy as interconnected elements of school improvement. They recognized that they could not ameliorate the education available to rural residents without improving the health and welfare of the broader community. Similarly, by fostering the provision of vital services such as immunizations,

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Karen J. Ferguson, "Caught in 'No Man's Land': The Negro Cooperative Demonstration Service and the Ideology of Booker T. Washington, 1900-1918." *Agricultural History* 72. no. 1 (1998): 33-54.

[81] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Shelby County, Tennessee," folder 2, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[82] Ibid

[83] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Powhatan, Virginia," folder 7, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

mattresses and food preservation they not only increased community cohesion and investment in the schools, but also substantiated the benefits of collaboration with community outsiders.

Significantly, the Jeanes Teachers stayed keenly aware of how their community development initiatives were perceived by the white community. Like the GEB, they understood that reducing white opposition to black education was the key to increasing the resources available to black schools. Unlike the philanthropists, however, the Jeanes Teachers were willing to importune white school administrators to increase the funds allocated to black schools. Although they could not bring effective electoral pressure to bear on white school administrators, the Jeanes Teachers sought to demonstrate that black communities were worthy of additional investment within the paternalistic framework of Jim Crow. To this end, Supervisors staged events designed to showcase the progress made by black schools.

Supervisors' writings demonstrate the ways in which they sought to present their work to influential local whites. In doing so, they had support of the Jeanes Fund administrators, who viewed proving that black schools were worthy of additional state support as a principal goal of the program. President Dillard reflected in the early 1920s that "the most gratifying fact in the work of the Jeanes Fund has been the welcome and gradual increase of support received from local officials."[84] However, unlike the white philanthropists, who were reluctant to actually do the work of pressing white officials to increase funding, the Jeanes Teachers tactfully made their case. For example, when the superintendent refused to extend the black school term in East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana which was only five months compared to the white school's nine, the Supervisor staged a demonstration, "Open House and Achievement Day," in order so that

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[84] James Hardy Dillard, "Fourteen Years of the Jeanes Fund, 1909-1923," folder 7, box 30, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

"visitors (white and colored)...[could]...see and hear results which were immediately noticeable at the school and likewise at many of the homes in the community."[85] As a result, the Superintendent recommended a seven month term for all black schools with the addendum that "If and when attendance reports show that Negro children are ready for a longer term it will be given."[86] Similarly, in Appomattox County, Virginia, the Jeanes Teacher organized an "annual exhibit" and invited the local state senator, judge school board members and "other white friends." The guests were invited to visit the school and served a full dinner. The Supervisor wrote that the purpose of these meetings was to both "strove to maintain the good feeling which is developing between the two races" and "to prove ourselves of their help."[87]

Helen Blunt, the Supervisor from Cass County, Texas, even managed to invite a newspaper reporter to a P.T.A. rally and proudly included a clipping with her report. Calling the parents gathering a "meeting of unusual merit," the journalist was surprisingly impressed with the progress made by the black schools. "Their school yard has been beautified with native shrubbery and wild and well as nursery stock and beds of perennials," the reporter wrote:

> The neatly painted paneled fence, not only protects their yard but adds much to the appearance of the appearance of the well kept grounds...Their project for this year has been a school garden which excels anything we have seen this year, from which they have been able to sell many plants and vegetable…[There was a] [g]roup [s]inging, "What He does for me, I'm on my way, Toiling on["]...The Fish [sic] dinner served on the lawn was a happy culmination to this inspirational meeting.

The journalist's description of the meeting is notable for its tone of unexpected approval. Like the white officials in East Baton Rouge and Appomattox County, the reporter views the efforts of

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[85] "Memories They Cherish...A Symposium of Experiences as Jeanes Teachers, Jeanes Supervisor Quarterly, March 1949," folder 12, box 146, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[86] Ibid.

[87] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Appomattox County, Virginia," folder 5, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

the black community as worthy of encouragement and praise. Blacks' willingness to stage ritual acts of deference such as singing and providing dinner to the white community are seen as important rites as the Jeanes Teachers sought more resources for African American education. These interactions highlight the fact that although African American communities did not have effective electoral power, they were able to appeal to influential whites' sense of paternalism in order to select tangible improvements in the schools.

The efforts of the Jeanes Teachers to raise money from influential whites for their work is reminiscent in many of ways of Booker T. Washington, who served on the Board the Jeanes Fund until his death in 1915. Like Washington, the Jeanes Teachers understood that they had to work within the Jim Crow system if they were to make any improvements in black schools. Also like Washington, they appealed to certain whites' sense of paternalism by staging demonstrations that showcased the industry and thrift of the schools and students under their direction. Historian Peter Coclanis argues that Washington's emphasis on clean bodies, homes and schools served an important economic purpose for blacks in the Jim Crow South in the late nineteenth century. "It is not at all a stretch to suggest," contends Coclanis, "that Washington - as meticulous and fastidious as Louis Pasteur - believed that by changing their cleanliness behaviors, rural African Americans would not only improve their physical environment and enhance their physical health, but also gradually acquire, internalize, and routinize the values that would once stabilize their social situations and set them on the path to the slow accumulation of modest amounts of wealth."[88]

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[88] Peter A. Coclanis, "What Made Booker Wash(ington)?: The Wizard of Tuskegee in Economic Context," in W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed., *Booker T. Washington and Black Progress* (Gainesville: FL: University of Florida Press (2003), 92.

However, there are important rhetorical differences between the Jeanes Teachers and Washington. Washington often described black poverty in moral terms. For example, he famously refused to admit any students to Tuskegee that did not have a toothbrush. "One thing that I have always insisted upon," wrote Washington, "is that everywhere there should be absolute cleanliness. Over and over again the students were reminded in those first years - and are reminded - that people would excuse us for our poverty, for our lack of comforts and conveniences, but that they would not excuse us for dirt."[89]

The Jeanes Teachers, however, despite their political savvy in how they presented their work to local school officials, were more likely to attribute the poor conditions in rural blacks' homes and schools to a lack of resources rather than personal failings. Indictments of the backwardness of rural people would have likely resonated with the white foundation officials reading their reports, yet the Jeanes Teachers largely attribute the wretched condition of southern black schools to a lack of materials. For example, the Supervisor from Anderson County, Texas highlighted how important the successful enlistment of a variety of stakeholders was in the process of school improvement. She wrote that she "solicited the aid of the Co. Supt., Dist. Supts., trustees, principals (White and Colored), teachers, patrons, P.T.A. officials and other interested people in contributing or building need school equipment, outbuildings, wells, sanitary drinking devices, playground equipment, ect."[90] Although the Jeanes Teachers too preached the

[89] Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery,* (Boston: Bedford/St, Martin's, 2002 [1901]), 43.

[90] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Anderson County, Texas," folder 4, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers. Similar examples can be found in "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Cass County, Texas," folder 3, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers, "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Appomattox County, Virginia," folder 5, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers, "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Nacogdoches County, Texas," folder 4, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers and "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Henry County, Tennessee," folder 1, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

importance of keeping oneself and one's property neat and orderly, they were more likely to highlight the paucity of material resources as a cause of black poverty rather than a paucity of spirit.[91] The Jeanes Teachers' appeal for greater state support for southern black education reflects not only the slowly changing political dynamics of the Jim Crow South in which increased state aid for black schools was gradually becoming a reality, but also the Supervisors' attitudes toward the betterment of rural schools and communities. Whereas Washington at the turn of the nineteenth century emphasized African Americans' need to change their habits in order to one day reach the same level of "civilization" as white Americans, the Jeanes Teachers forty years later stressed the need for increased state involvement in order to make specific and carefully calculated improvements to country institutions and homes.[92]

Scholars have noted that the Jeanes Teachers' gender played a pivotal role in their ability to successfully advocate for more public spending on black education. Historian Jim Leloudis notes that "black women were…drawn to Jeanes teaching because it offered them access to the public stage at a time when their husbands and brothers had been driven from politics and their communities had been punished to the margins of civic life."[93] Similarly, historian Adam Fairclough observes that "black women teachers could take advantage of the lingering paternalism that made white southerners – many of whom waxed lyrical over their 'black

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[91] Interestingly, it appears that a common criticism of the Jeanes Teachers was that they were too enthusiastic about the communities in which they worked. Sociologist Charles S. Johnson interviewed a white school superintendent in Louisiana who complained: "Somehow they [the Jeanes Teachers] see only the best things in the colored schools in their parish. That's what they talk about - the rose ythings. They forget about all the bad things, they just ignore them - never talk about them. Why I've been to their meetings, and to hear them talk every one of them comes from the best parish in the state. They just see the world through rose-colored glasses," quoted in Mydral 1418.

[92] This distinction is reflective of the difference between an earlier generation of philanthropy made by the original benefactors themselves and a later era of philanthropy administered by foundation staffs. See Anderson and Moss, 10. It also reflects, however, the distinctive ideas of the Jeanes Teachers of what kinds of assistance rural communities needed as they saw firsthand what kinds of resources they lacked.

[93] Leloudis, 189.

Mammies' – more tolerant of assertiveness when it came from women."[94] Fairclough emphasizes that although Jeanes Teachers had little leverage to demand additional resources from the state bureaucracy, through grit and tact they were often able to forge successful relationships with local superintendents and garner more resources for black schools.[95]

The Jeanes Teachers commitment to a vision of rural improvement that included collaboration with outside professionals is especially evident in their health care initiatives. Supervisors spearheaded immunizations campaigns, lobbied for the opening of clinics and sought to change skeptical attitudes about modern medicine. In working to improve the health of the communities in which they served, Jeanes Teachers faced not only fertile conditions for the spread of diseases but also reluctance from parents to permit their children to be examined by medical personnel. In Jasper and Newton counties in Texas, Jeanes Supervisor Barbara A. Kebe reported that "fear and ignorance" was the chief obstacle to improving community health. "It is difficult to get persons to consent for their children to be given physical examinations or to be immunized for diphtheria or smallpox," she wrote. "In many cases parents expose their children to communicable diseases in order for them to have the disease early."[96] Similarly, in Crockett County, Tennessee Supervisor H.L. Pempleton noted that "the children have feared the appearance of the Doctor [sic] and Nurse [sic] and this was caused by an incident where a child took sick and died two years ago shortly after being vaccinated. All parents actually believed the vaccination caused the death in spite of anything the doctors could say."[97] In this case, the Jeanes

[94] Fairclough, 227.

[95] Ibid, 258.

[96] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Jasper and Newton Counties," folder 3, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[97] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Crockett County, Tennessee," folder 1, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

Teacher had established such strong relationships with the local communities that county health officials asked the Supervisor to promote vaccinations on their behalf. “Since all the patrons seem to have a great deal of confidence in my word,” Pembleton explained, “I was asked to improve the sentiment.”[98]

Despite the antipathy of some residents towards health care professionals, the work of many Jeanes Teachers to promote health and hygiene in rural communities appears to have been successful. In Nelson County, Virginia Ethel L. Wiley described organizing rural health clinics after repeated bouts of illness kept large numbers of children out of school.[99] She made each teacher under her supervision responsible for contributing five dollars for every thirty school and pre-school children in the local communities. “The money was raised by...children who could pay twenty-five cents each,” she reported. “Teachers [sold] candy or [held] some form of entertainments. Thus 1,169 children were immunized against diphtheria, and 679 against smallpox.”[100] Wiley added that the only children who did not receive the vaccinations were those that had been immunized during a similar campaign two years earlier.[101] Similarly, the Jeanes Teacher from Madison County, Tennessee reported that over 3,000 students were vaccinated against smallpox in her county during National Negro Health Week. Local black doctors examined children and “cards were given to parents showing the defects found, together with the physician's recommendation for correcting such defects.”[102]

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[98] Ibid.

[99] “Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Nelson County, Virginia,” folder 7, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid

[102] “Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Madison County, Tennessee,” folder 2, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

Through their efforts to promote school attendance, improve the physical plants of schools and encourage community health, the Jeanes Teachers helped implement many aspects of GEB's vision of for rural development. They also organized African American communities to tactfully lobby for increased state expenditures for black education. Despite widespread disenfranchisement, the Jeanes Teachers creatively bolstered rural communities' support for their own schools and sought to demonstrate to the white community that black schools were worthy of additional state funding.

CHAPTER 3: THE AMBUGUTIES OF PEDAGOGICAL REFORM

Unlike their efforts at community building, which in many ways furthered the GEB's educational vision for rural black communities, the work of the Jeanes Teachers to promote pedagogical reform in county schools for African Americans is emblematic of the creative ways in which the Supervisors sought both to teach simple industries and raise academic standards. A careful examination of the Jeanes Teachers work inside the classroom shows how they sought to go beyond the industrial curriculum promoted by the GEB and expand the subjects offered to rural children.

As they organized county-wide meetings for teachers and provided mentoring in recent innovations in instructors and evaluation, Supervisors served as critical intermediaries between the distant world of educational theory and day-to-day practices in the southern hinterlands. Jeanes Teachers describe their pedagogical reforms using the progressive educational terminology that was in vogue among GEB staff members. Standardized tests, an emphasis on "experiential learning" and a belief that students should explore their local surroundings dominate the Supervisors' reports. For example, the Jeanes Teacher from Chester County, Tennessee wrote that "at...group meetings [the] point of view and aim of education was stressed with the idea that every local environment offers opportunity for varied rich experiences, that an inquiring and investigating attitude of mind best promotes learning and that children should be made aware of the rich implications of the everyday."[103] Many Jeanes Teachers in the late 1930s and early 1940s explicitly described their educational project as a progressive one. The

[103] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Chester County, Tennessee," folder 1, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

Supervisor from Bowie County, Texas explained that "to assist teachers to improve professionally I held small study groups, had book reviews on progressive education [and] forum discussions with training college heads as leaders. Similarly, the Jeanes Teacher from Amelia County, Virginia described her long-term goal as making the schools "progressive." "Approximately 90% of my elementary teachers live in the county," she wrote. "They have a natural interest in the progress of the county. I have received 100% cooperation from them this term, and I feel that with their cooperation, and the cooperation that the parents have shown that they were willing to give, Amelia will be progressive as the years pass."[104]

Jeanes Teachers' description of their educational vision as progressive, however, meant different things to them then it did to the philanthropists that sponsored their work.[105] Historians Eric Anderson and Alfred A. Moss have observed how the GEB staff viewed progressive education as a way to make education more practical. "Many of these philanthropic bureaucrats were primarily interested in black educational experiments for their relevance to the overall Progressive educational agenda," they observe, "including the elimination of 'dead languages,' the introduction of 'practical' vocational training, and reformation of the curriculum to promote 'life adjustment.'"[106]A close reading of the Supervisors' reports, however, demonstrates the ways in which they resisted the GEB's wariness of "conventional book knowledge" and sought to enable rural children to both earn a living in the Jim Crow era South and develop their academic

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[104] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Amelia County, Virginia," folder 5, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[105] Fairclough makes a similar argument. "The concept of 'industrial education' was sufficiently vague to permit blacks and whites to work at cross-purposes while apparently agreeing upon common goals (250).

[106] Ibid, 10. Fairclough describes how philanthropists wanted to promote a curriculum that helped people feel satisfied with rural life: "The foundations kept the industrial idea alive by repackaging it under different names: rural education, life-related teaching, functional education, rural adaption" (304).

skills.[107] Jeanes Teachers did not view progressive pedagogical methods merely as a way to make education more vocationally oriented, but also to strengthen children's abilities in reading, math and art. Significantly, Supervisors largely framed their promotion of industrial education not in the economic language, but as the means to help rural children understand the world around them. In doing so, Jeanes Teachers both affirmed their nominal commitment to the GEB's vision of rural development and separated industrial education from its demeaning associations with black inferiority.

It is impossible to understand the attitude of Jeanes Teachers towards pedagogy without an appreciation of what teaching and learning was like in most country schools before their intervention.[108] In the absence of Jeanes Teachers, most black students in the rural South worked their way through the limited textbooks available while their teachers checked on the progress of each grade in their classrooms. Since most students were responsible for buying their own books, pupils in the same grade would sometimes have different editions or even completely different books. H.J. Williams, who grew up in Yazoo County, Mississippi remembered having to leave school because his father couldn't afford to purchase books for him. "We had a bad year and my daddy wasn't able to buy me school books and that's when I dropped out of school," he recalled. "Didn't go no further. I went [as] high as 8th grade. That's as far as I could go. When I was in the 8th grade, I was studying in the books with some of the other children at school [that] was able to have books and that's [how] I was studying."[109] Because a single teacher was often

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[107] Fairclough, 304.

[108] Leloudis discusses how the Jeanes Teachers changed the pedagogy of North Carolina schools. See *Schooling The New South*, Chapter 6.

[109] H.J. Williams interview, Behind the Veil: Documenting African American Life in the Jim Crow South Digital Collection, John Hope Franklin Research Center, Duke University Libraries.

responsible for teaching dozens of children at different grade levels, students often failed to receive the instruction that they needed for promotion to the next grade level. Julia Taylor, who grew up in Sunflower County, Mississippi, remembered learning to read with a simple book called a primer. "You were in the pre-primer and then big primer," she explained. "It actually took you three years to complete first grade [the pre-primer], which should have been done in one year…the pre-primer didn't have about six or eight pages, but you stayed in that all year." [110]

The most significant pedagogical initiative promoted by Jeanes Teachers to remedy these problems in the late 1930s and early 1940s was encouraging local teachers to adopt the unit method of instruction. The work of Anderson County, Texas Supervisor Sophie Montgomery is representative of the ways in which Jeanes Supervisors sought to implement modern teaching techniques. Montgomery described how she divided all the teachers in the county into three zones and gave each zone the objective "to discuss and work out (in a practical way) the teaching of the social studies by means of the Unit Method on the primary and intermediate levels."[111] Each group of teachers picked a topic including "Planting a School Vegetable Garden...Providing Adequate and Safe Water Supply…[and]...Indians" and developed a series of lessons around that topic. "Two zones completed outline work," she reported, "and decided for the next school year to try teaching these units in their own classrooms."[112]

By introducing the unit method of teaching into rural schools, Jeanes Supervisors influenced local teachers to move away from solely assigning students to read and recite pages

[110] Julia Taylor interview, Behind the Veil: Documenting African American Life in the Jim Crow South Digital Collection, John Hope Franklin Research Center, Duke University Libraries.

[111] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Anderson County, Texas," folder 3, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[112] Ibid.

from their textbook and instead to perform a series of practical activities that cut across different disciplines. The "Planting a School Vegetable Garden" unit that Montgomery helped her teachers develop included short readings on gardens, a series of math activities in which students performed various calculations related to gardening and the actual industrial work of planting the garden itself. "The unit assignment (or experimental unit)," wrote an authority on progressive education at the time, "is a sequence of worthwhile experiences and activities designed to promote most effectively the educative growth of the pupil."[113] To this end, Montgomery was trying to get the teachers in Anderson County to do more than merely teach each school subject individually, but to develop a series of activities for children that fostered a variety of both academic and industrial skills all at once.

Supervisors reported that one of the chief results of the introduction of the unit method was increased student engagement. The Jeanes Teacher in Jasper and Newton counties in Texas reported that "the majority of the teachers" she supervised "were able to find teaching by the unit method much more beneficial than directly following textbooks page by page, because it provided for more student participation, more socialization and a greater interest. All these lead to the development of a better product on the part of the school and pupil."[114] Similarly, the Supervisor from McLennon, Texas explained that because "the teachers are able to correlate the many different subject matter materials together...they are able to make the type of teaching done each day more realistic to the children and [the] children are provided opportunity to develop as

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[113] Raymond P. Maronpot, "Reaching the Individual via the Unit Method," *The Modern Language Journal* 31:3 (March, 1947), 160.

[114] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Jasper-Newton counties, Texas" folder 3, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

the units grow."[115] The Supervisor from Hamilton County, Tennessee wrote that black teachers' employment of the unit method attracted the interest of the white teachers in the country. "The Unit [sic] method of instruction is followed and materials for units and suggested and discussed [sic] at these meetings," she wrote. "Negro teachers of the system receive the cooperation of the White supervisors and teachers in their meetings. They delight in attending the Negro meetings and say that they use the original ideas suggested in the Negro meetings in their own schools."[116]

If the image of white teachers taking in progressive pedagogical methods from their black counterparts in the midst of Jim Crow seems extraordinary, the idea of combining multiple academic subjects and practical work in instruction was not new to the region. Louis Harlan describes "'correlating,' or sometimes, more colloquially, 'dovetailing''' as "the essence" of Booker T. Washington's educational philosophy. Strikingly, Harlan's description of Washington's efforts to increase the use of correlating over the 1904-1905 year school at his Tuskegee Institute sounds uncannily similar to the Jeanes Teacher's experiences nearly forty years later with the unit method:

> As Washington elucidated this concept to the trustees, dovetailing meant, as in dovetail joints in carpentry, 'blotting out differences between the literary department and the industrial department.' The idea was that students would practice mathematics in the carpentry shop and write essays on plowing a field in the English class. Thus, 'the training on the farm, the blacksmith shop, the cooking division will be given due credit in the academic department for all work in arithmetic and English that [the student] does in those departments, and that the industrial processes shall be made the basis of the academic department wherever possible for the lessons in the academic department.'[117]

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[115] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: McLennon County, Texas" folder 4, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[116] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Hamilton County, Texas" folder 1, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[117] Harlan (1983), 149.

In his concept of dovetailing, Washington seems to have presaged an idea that would take progressive educators several more decades to put into widespread use. However, if the actual practice of Washington's dovetailing and the Jeanes Teachers' unit method was rather similar, the motivations behind implementing them were different in important regards. Like his promotion of personal cleanliness, Washington's endorsement of dovetailing seems to have been driven by a combination of a belief in the moral righteousness of simple work and political considerations, namely his need to emphasize that Tuskegee was a practical industrial school to his southern white neighbors who were leery of any education for blacks.[118] An English instructor at Tuskegee explained that at the core of the school's mission was "to teach to do by exposition of the principles underlying his trade than to compose a sonnet or describe a sunset, though the school did not wish the student to be 'unresponsive to the beauty in the world about him.'[119] The Jeanes Teachers, by contrast, did not repeat with the same insistence as Washington that all work should be directed towards practical ends, although they did recognize the importance of helping their students support themselves and their families in the rural economy. The same Supervisor from Jasper and Newton counties in Texas who was so proud of the results of the unit method in her schools also organized a county-wide circulating library and introduced art classes.[120] For her, the unit method was just one aspect of the strengthening of instruction in rural schools, not an effort to curtail the curriculum. Her use of it arose from her conviction in the "adaptation of methods to meet the individual needs of the pupils," a practice that included "emphasis on reading, social studies, writing and art," not merely industrial trades. Additionally,

[118] See Harlan (1972), 158-166 and Harlan (1983), 151-152**.**

[119] Harlan (1983), 151.

[120] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Jasper-Newton counties, Texas" folder 3, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

Washington promoted dovetailing at Tuskegee in the context of an exceptionally well-educated academic department that drew most instructors from the finest institutions open to blacks at the time including Harvard and Oberlin. Asking these men and women to mark up an essay on blacksmithing was a task quite different than the Jeanes Teachers' efforts to get rural teachers to do something more than merely supervise students as they worked through an obsolete and dog-earned textbooks.

Unlike Washington, over thirty years earlier, the Jeanes Teachers underscored industrial training as only one of several prescriptions for improving rural education. One of the most critical problems for Jeanes Teachers was improving the reading ability of their students. H.L. Pempleton, the Supervisor from Crockett County Tennessee, explained that she became interested in improving the children's reading ability after she observed students at the high school in her county struggling to understand what they read.[121] Similarly, Nancy V. Berry, the Supervisor from Wood County, Texas, observed that "children were not able to do Arithmetic, English, Geography, Health, History, [or] reference work of any kind because they could not read."[122] Jeanes Teachers instructed local teachers to monitor their students' progress and adjust their instruction accordingly. Pempleton encouraged local teachers to have children memorize entire words rather than focus on learning phonetics. [123] "Judging from the results of the Detroit Reading Tests," she reported, "a great deal of Reading [sic] ability is being developed. I can not say that this work is even near to what we shall expect, but since developing readers is a slow

[121] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Crockett County, Tennessee," folder 1, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[122] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Wood County, Texas," folder 4, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[123] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Crockett County, Tennessee," folder 1, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

process, we believe a good year of work on this subject has been done. Arithmetic, however, shows the faster progress."[124] Similarly, in Wood County, Texas, Berry related that "the teaching of A,B,C's was substituted by word and sentence method...use of flash cards, pictures, story telling (teacher and pupil) [and] learning through experience are practical in most schools. (Much room for improvement yet.)"[125] Like her colleague in Tennessee, Berry administered an exam at the end of the year to assess what progress had been made. "More than 400 standardized reading tests...taken at the expense of pupils and teachers," she explained as she hinted that the results did not meet her expectations. "It did show where they were and created interest in [the] reading problem which next year will be attacked with greater interest and intelligence."[126]

Many Jeanes Teachers also took special efforts to give the children exposure to the arts. M.A. Townes, the Jeanes Supervisor from Prince Williams County, Virginia explained that the promotion of art and athletics was part of her plan to "make[e] school work more attractive to child."[127] Similarly, the Supervisor from Hardin and Decatur counties in Tennessee wrote that she wished to give students "daily experiences in music, art and poetry."[128] By far the most elaborate plan for arts education came from Daisy Armstrong in Roanoke, Virginia. She arranged for artists to visit local schools, worked to make art extension classes available to teachers and encouraged students to "work...for boldness in the use of color and the use of large

[124] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Crockett County, Tennessee," folder 1, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[125] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Wood County, Texas," folder 4, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[126] Ibid.

[127] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Prince Williams County, Virginia," folder 7, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[128] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Hardin & Decatur Counties, Tennessee," folder 1, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

strokes."[129] She also organized choirs within the schools, a countywide music festival and a radio broadcast by her students on WDBJ, a local radio station.[130] Although Armstrong was exceptional in the fervor and success of her efforts, she was far from alone in her desire to promote the creative capacities of rural children.

Like their introduction of the unit method, the Jeanes Teachers' promotion of the arts could be read in different ways by the philanthropists and by the Supervisors' themselves. The GEB could read the special efforts of the Jeanes Teachers to add painting and music as part of their larger program to promote "life adjustment," as they furthered the stability of rural communities.[131] The Jeanes Teachers themselves, however, viewed their promotion of art and music in terms of strengthening the overall curriculum. The Supervisor in Botetourt, Virginia, for example, listed her work to introduce music education in the "Improvement of Instruction" section of her report. "It was decided to continue to stress reading, more emphasis on pure and correct language, ethics of life (manners and behavior) art, and music," she wrote.[132] The Jeanes Teacher from Cass County, Texas similarly linked arts education to curriculum. "Teaching demonstration[s] were given in the following subjects," she wrote, "Reading, Number work, Art Appreciation, History, English, Citizenship, Create Art and Public School Music."[133]

[129] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Northampton County, Virginia," folder 7, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[130] Ibid.

[131] For more on rural adjustment see Fairclough, 304 and Anderson and Moss, 10.

[132] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Botecourt County, Virginia," folder 5, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[133] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Cass County, Texas," folder 3, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

Although some long-time Jeanes Teachers report spending less time on industrial education in the 1940s they did in the early days of the Jeanes Fund, it remained an important part of most Supervisors' work.[134] When the Jeanes Teachers do mention industrial education in their reports, however, it is almost always framed within the context of a progressive view about teaching children about their environment, not merely the utilitarian benefits of possessing vocational skills. For instance, although the Jeanes Teacher in Botetourt County noted that "the Economic [sic] situation is a vital part of my program," her description of the teaching of manual work sounds much more like Maria Montessori than the Wizard of Tuskegee:

> Industrial work. Working with the hands is urged as a part of the guidance given children, promoting the best in them, finding their hobbies, and helping to develop a wide use of leisure time. This is carried on in all the schools culminating in an exhibit at the close of the session. Out of this comes much art work and this year we were able to take some work to Va. State College to be placed on exhibit.[135]

Even in counties where the Supervisor did not have such an imaginative understanding of handicrafts, vocational training was presented as just one of a number of goals. The Supervisor in Marion County, Texas listed "Industrial Work" as the fifth of her eight objectives, behind "1. Health[,] 2. Live at Home Program[,] 3. School Plant Beautification [and] 4. Class Room Instruction and in front of only "6. Recreation[,] 7. Community Organization [and] 8. Home Visitation."[136] Although she showed a more vocational focus than her Virginian counterpart, she still refused to cast manual training in a wholly applied light:

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[134] In a collection of reflections by longtime Supervisor, several describe spending less time on industrial education then they did in the early days of the program. "Memories They Cherish...A Symposium of Experiences as Jeanes Teachers, Jeanes Supervisor Quarterly, March 1949," folder 12, box 146, Southern Educational Foundation Papers. See also Littlefield, "I am only, but I am one," Chapter 2.

[135] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Botetourt, Virginia," folder 5, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[136]"Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Marion County, Texas," folder 4, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

> Industrial work: Practical Instructions given in serving, cooking, table setting, selecting patterns, making simple menus, darning, making button holes, renovating old broken down chairs, upholstering furniture ect. Special demonstration in canning fruits, and vegetables with proper care and use of sealer and pressure cooker. Making rugs, embroidery work with fancy stitches. Water coloring, creative art, ect.

While the Jeanes Teachers taught handicrafts, the way that they understood their project was different from the vision of industrial education the GEB continued to promote into the 1940s. Whereas the GEB underscored the centrality of practical work, the Jeanes Teachers emphasized vocational training as only one of a number important initiatives for rural schools and the opportunities for psychological development that came from working with one's hands.

Significantly, the ways in which the Jeanes Teachers discuss industrial work in their reports does not betray an eagerness to appease a donor class supposedly committed to the proletarianization of rural blacks.[137] If the GEB's commitment to industrial education stemmed primarily from a desire to train black workers for the South's emerging industrial economy, it might be expected that the Jeanes Teacher had an incentive to exaggerate the vocational aspects of their pedagogical reforms. Strikingly, however, most of the reports seem to do just the opposite: downplaying the Jeanes Teachers' efforts at promoting industrial education while using language and examples dedicated to underscoring their work towards a progressive vision of community development.

There are several reasons the Jeanes Teachers choose to frame industrial education in the context of community building. First, an excessive focus on the GEB's commitment to industrial education ignores the ways in which their emphasis on industrial work was part of a broader vision of rural development. The GEB certainly did promote a very limited conception of

[137] Anderson stresses the economic motivations of the philanthropists over all other considerations (see, for example, 82).

African American education that prioritized practical training, but one that (however paternalistically) did strive to increase the well-being of rural communities.[138] By connecting their efforts at industrial instruction to the psychological development of children, the Jeanes Teachers were furthering the impression that they were committed to this wider vision. For example a Jeanes Supervisor from Tennessee reported that she was encouraging teachers to help students "mak[e] use of things at hand to enrich their environment."[139] By "us[ing] old articles such as bottles, sacks, old clothing, strings and various materials that appear to be of no use at home…[and]...natural materials (clay, glass, sacks, ect.)" instructions taught students how to make "useful articles."[140] Similarly, a Jeanes Teacher from Virginia stressed that "many native materials were used" during the teaching of "handicraft and other forms of industrial activities.[141] These descriptions typify how the Supervisors wanted to present their efforts on industrial training within the broader context of rural development.

Rural development, however, meant different things to the Jeanes Teachers and to the philanthropists that enabled their work.[142] For the Supervisors, rural development meant unlocking the potential of country children to support themselves and gain a greater appreciation for their community, their environment and for themselves. For the philanthropists, rural development meant improving communities in a way that contributed the social stability of the

[138] See Anderson and Moss, 7-11.

[139] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Hardin & Decatur Counties, Tennessee," folder 1, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[140] Ibid.

[141] "Special Report of Jeanes Teacher for School Year 1939–1940: Northampton County, Virginia," folder 7, box 145, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[142] Fairclough makes a similar argument. "The concept of 'industrial education' was sufficiently vague to permit blacks and whites to work at cross-purposes while apparently agreeing upon common goals (250).

South.[143] By placing their work to promote industrial education within this wider context of rural development, rather than strictly vocational training, the Jeanes Teachers separated industrial education from its demeaning associations with black inferiority. Whether conscious or unconscious, this particular framing of industrial work was part of a complex rhetorical strategy that emphasized African American equality even within the extremely confining constraints of Jim Crow and the ideological program of their benefactors.

The report of B.V. Holton, the Supervisor from Limestone County, Texas is representative of the delicate way that Supervisors sought to both contextualize industrial training within a comprehensive program of rural development and demonstrate to the philanthropists the tangible manual work that they had encouraged. She included her description of the industrial work performed in her county alongside the betterment of the physical plant of the school and the teaching of the academic subjects. Physical work, in her description, is almost afterthought. "Class improvement was accomplished by proper lighting, ventilation, heating, seating, maps and bulletins," she wrote. "Reading, English and Arithmetic were stressed; Also sewing, woodwork and art." She did take care, however, to include a precise accounting of the articles made by the students in her county:

> Projects of sewing:
> 56 dresses made, 186 tea-towels hemmed, 10 quilts made, 25 handkerchiefs made, and luncheon sets
>
> Woodwork:
> 10 end tables, 25 miniature houses and furniture.
> 110 pieces of pottery, 30 pieces of soap carving, 10 rugs and 7 mattresses
>
> Yard beautification:
> 5 campuses sodded, 210 pieces of shrubbery set out, 75 trees set out, 25 rose bushes planted.

[143] See Fairclough 248-151 and Anderson and Moss, 7-11.

By putting the industrial work within the context of the teaching of academic subjects, Holton reveals the ways in which it is just one part of a broader educational program. Yet, by including such a precise accounting of the handiwork done, she suggests the eagerness of white philanthropists to see that African American children were receiving industrial training. This balancing act reveals the complex ways in which the priorities of the philanthropists, the needs of rural children and the professional judgements of the Jeanes Teacher came into conflict over the issue of curriculum.

CONCLUSION: MASTERS OF THE MARGINS

The Jeanes Teachers were expert diplomats.[144] Working at the junction of the needs of northern philanthropists, southern school administrators and rural black communities, they were specialists at the art of the possible. A close look at their efforts to simultaneously bolster black community support for education and increase state funding for black schools demonstrates their mastery of the marginal ground where the interests of their benefactors, white school officials and students met. Education is an inherently political process and the Jeanes Teachers revealed themselves to be skilled political actors as they managed to both expand the curriculum of rural schools and mollify critics of academic training for African Americans.

Many children in the rural South remembered the efforts of their Jeanes Teachers years later. Clara W. Lewis, who attended a one-room school in Virginia, recalled her Jeanes Supervisor as a someone who wanted to "see that each student did the best he could under the circumstances...and [it] looked like from what they did, they did an excellent job."[145] Sandy Chapman, who also grew up in rural Virginia, vividly recounted how hard the Jeanes Teacher for his school worked to get her students transportation to the new segregated high school:

> So what they did, they were able to find a bus, old bus parts, that had been used for a chicken house. And what they did, they got that body and turned over to a man with a chassis, Model A. Ford. And he agreed to put...the bus body on his chassis. And the...blacksmith installed it, painted it and made sure the glass was replaced in it and then it was turned over to us. Now the various communities gave donations toward helping to pay the man who drove the bus.[146]

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[144] Fairclough has called black teachers during Jim Crow "racial diplomats." See *A Class Of Their Own*, 5 and ""Being in the Field of Education and Also Being a Negro...Seems...Tragic": Black Teachers in the Jim Crow South." *The Journal of American History* 87, no. 1 (2000): 70.

[145] Donna Tyler Hollie, "'I Consecrate Myself To The Service of Teaching': The Jeanes Teachers, A Case Study in Fauquier County, Virginia"(Ph.D. dissertation, Morgan State University, 2000), 128.

[146] Ibid, 126-127.

Even more than five decades after their time in elementary school, the herculean efforts of the Supervisors remained etched in the minds of some of their students.

Many white school administrators, while they were far less willing than the Jeanes Teachers to support academic training for blacks, respected their work ethic and dedication to the communities they served. Jackson Davis, the Henrico County, Virginia superintendent whose letter asking for a traveling industrial instructor set the pattern for future Jeanes work and who later became an official with the GEB, described the first Jeanes Supervisor, Virginia Randolph, as "a teacher who thought of her work in terms of the welfare of the whole community and of the school as an agency to help the people to live better, to do their work with more skill and intelligence, and to do it in the spirit of neighborliness."[147] Similarly, J.A. Presson, an official in Arkansas' Department of Public Instruction, praised the Supervisors for their "wisdom, patience, and untiring efforts."[148] It is a testimony to the Jeanes Teachers hard work and their artful racial savoir faire that they were able to earn plaudits from both sides of the color line.

Outside observers also lauded the Jeanes Supervisors' work. Oxford Professor Lance G. E. Jones noted that "critics from time to time have questioned the value of this or that activity, but the spirit in which the Jeanes Teachers have carried out their task has been beyond reproach, and would have been warmly commended by the practical-minded little lady whose sympathy and generosity made their work possible."[149] Similarly, Swedish economist and sociologist Gunnar Myrdal contended that "everyone agrees that the Jeanes teachers have made a great improvement in Southern Negro education."[150]

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[147] Quoted in Jones, 33.

[148] J.A Presson to J.L Bond, December 2, 1921, Box 30, Folder 2, Southern Educational Foundation Papers.

[149] Jones, 109.

[150] Mydral, 1418.

The Jeanes Teachers' position at the intersection of a diffuse set of interests put them in a unique - and challenging - situation to promote African American education in the segregated South. Although they worked within the GEB's basic framework for rural development, Supervisors rejected the notion that African Americans should learn only vocational skills. Through their efforts to clean country schools, organize clubs and promote public health, Jeanes Teachers sought to bolster rural communities' support for their own schools and demonstrate to the white community that African American schools were worthy of additional state funding.

Jeanes Supervisors' work to tactfully lobby white state officials for additional resources suggests one way that education for African Americans was not static during the Jim Crow era. One of the most consistent themes in American history is that African Americans, even when faced with the most oppressive circumstances in slavery and freedom, have found ways to learn. Without the zealousness of blacks to attend freedmen schools after the Civil War, and the anxiety this produced among poor whites who began attending school themselves, it is doubtful that many states in the South would have established public school systems when they did.[151] This appetite for education did not go away after the restoration of white Democratic rule in the former Confederacy. Although residents' support for local schools varied from community to community, the success of the Supervisors to organize rural blacks and win gradual improvements from state authorities underscores the complexity of black-white relations in the years before the Civil Rights Movement.

An examination of the Jeanes Teachers' work suggests the need for a multidimensional understanding of African American education in the segregated South. Rather than a simple

[151] For a fascinating account of enslaved people's efforts at self-education before and after Emancipation see Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

continuum with Booker T. Washington's industrial training on the one hand and W.E.B. DuBois' classical training on the other, the Jeanes Teacher's efforts to both raise the academic rigor of schools and provide manual training invites historians to more carefully consider the actual conditions of black schools and motivations of individual educators. The Jeanes Teachers worked within the framework for rural education promoted by the GEB, yet they consistently went beyond it by expanding the curriculum and rejecting the notion that African American education should be limited to industrial training.

The work of the Jeanes Teachers also highlights the power and limits of self-help ideology in American history. To the extent that Supervisors' efforts to organize rural communities to demonstrate their worthiness for state aid was successful, it was because it was a strategy (perhaps the only strategy) that southern state officials, philanthropic staff and rural African American communities could all support. The efforts of the Jeanes Teachers to adroitly showcase the exertions of black communities to help themselves suggests the deep American faith in self-improvement shared by members of disparate classes. It also demonstrates, however, the enormous obstacles facing black communities in the quest for equal school funding and the limited methods available to them to achieve that end. The Jeanes Teachers' labors were mighty because the inequity they confronted was vast.

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