

# **Vitae Scholasticae**

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# **Vitae Scholasticae**

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## Editor's Note

For the past seven years, I have been privileged to serve as Editor of *Vitae Scholasticae: The Journal of Educational Biography*. It is with a great sense of appreciation and pride that I conclude my service to the journal. Effective January 1, 2016, the new Editor will be longtime VS contributor and Editorial Advisory Board member Lucy E. Bailey. A former ISEB President, Bailey is an Associate Professor of Social Foundations and Qualitative Inquiry at Oklahoma State University, where she serves as Director of Gender and Women's Studies. I look forward to exciting new developments in the journal under her leadership as I continue to count myself among *Vitae's* faithful readers.

In gratitude for the authors, editors, reviewers, and readers who have contributed to *Vitae Scholasticae's* growth, I take this opportunity to share some of my own biographical work in the issue's introductory article, "Revisiting *Schools of To-morrow*: Lessons From Educational Biography." Drawing on my research on teacher activist Flora White—a largely unsung contributor to the formative period of progressive education—I demonstrate how the life of a little-known individual can inform larger historical trends. My discoveries from White's archive offer new insights on John Dewey while calling for a reexamination of the historical narrative surrounding women in the early progressive education movement.

The two subsequent articles also deal with activist educators who have largely remained unrecognized. In "The Making of a Black Communist Educator: Doxey A. Wilkerson, 1922-1943," Shanté J. Lyons traces the personal journey of an esteemed African American academic that culminated in his membership in the Communist Party of the United States. Lyons notes that Wilkerson's life inspires the "radical imagination," prompting inquiries into new possibilities for Black liberation. In the next article, "Why does not somebody speak OUT?: Mary Ann Shadd Cary's Heteroglossic Black Protofeminist Nationalism," Elizabeth Cali offers a new perspective on a Black woman who transgressed conventionality to make herself heard. Readers will recall that Shadd Cary was a focus in Carol B. Conaway's essay, "Racially Integrated Education: The Antebellum Thought of Mary Ann Shadd

Cary and Frederick Douglass.” It appeared in *VS* in 2010, as well as in *Life Stories: Exploring Issues in Educational History Through Biography*, an edited book published in 2014 to commemorate the 30th anniversary of ISEB and *Vitae Scholasticae*.

This issue also presents an interview with Lora Helvie-Mason, conducted by Assistant Editor Alison Reeves. Helvie-Mason—a *VS* author and ISEB Treasurer—is an Associate Professor of Communication Studies at Tarleton State University, where she directs the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. A member of ISEB since graduate school, Helvie-Mason reflects on ways ISEB and *Vitae* have impacted her career. She envisions future initiatives for the organization and its journal to meet the needs of new members and emerging scholars.

The issue concludes with two book reviews on the lives of activists whose educational contributions have been far-reaching. In a review of Audrey Thomas McCluskey’s *A Forgotten Sisterhood: Pioneering Black Women Educators and Activists in the Jim Crow South*, Donyell L. Roseboro discusses the book’s portrayal of four Black women who worked individually and collectively to use education as a counteroffensive against widespread racial oppression. In the next review, Leslie Holt examines Gale Eaton’s biography, *The Education of Alice M. Jordan: Navigating a Career in Children’s Librarianship*. Eaton draws on archival material to depict the life of a sea captain’s daughter who headed children’s work at the Boston Public Library from 1902-1940, and who made important advancements in the field at a time when ideals were high, wages were low, and credentials were spotty.

We hope you enjoy the issue! In closing, I am reminded of Samuel Johnson’s observation that “No species of writing seems more worthy of cultivation than biography, since none can be more delightful or more useful, none can more certainly enchain the heart by irresistible interest, or more widely diffuse instruction to every diversity of condition.”<sup>1</sup> Thank you for your continued support of ISEB and *Vitae Scholasticae*. May your experiences with biography be both delightful and useful, both interesting and instructive—and may your life writing be received by an appreciative audience that is richly diverse.

—Linda Morice

<sup>1</sup>Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler*, 20 (October 13, 1750), as quoted in Nigel Hamilton, *How To Do Biography: A Primer* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 7.

## **Revisiting *Schools of To-morrow*: Lessons From Educational Biography**

Linda C. Morice

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Edwardsville*

December 2015 marks the conclusion of my role as editor of *Vitae Scholasticae: The Journal of Educational Biography*. In appreciation for this extraordinary professional and personal experience, I am sharing with *Vitae* readers some of my own biographical work. This essay reflects a recent trend in life writing in which a scholar gleans “otherwise undiscoverable realities” about major historical trends through the life of an ordinary person.<sup>1</sup> Here I present some of my findings on the life of progressive educator Flora White (1860-1948), juxtaposed against a classic in educational history: John and Evelyn Dewey’s *Schools of To-morrow*.<sup>2</sup> As I will demonstrate, the findings suggest a need to re-examine current views on the formative period of progressive education.

Thomas Fallace and Victoria Fantozzi note in a recent *Educational Studies* article that 2015 is the 100-year anniversary of *Schools of To-morrow*.<sup>3</sup> The book—which described the implementation of progressive theory in real school settings—enjoyed a wide readership, with fourteen printings in ten years. It focused national attention, in particular, on Marietta Johnson’s School of Organic Education in Fairhope, Alabama, and catapulted her into a major leadership role as a founding member of the Progressive Education Association (PEA). On a personal level, *Schools of To-morrow* provided a point of departure for the late twentieth- and early twenty-first century scholars who informed my work on the lives of women in the progressive education movement. I was inspired, for example, by Susan Semel and Alan Sadovnik’s efforts to recover the work of female founders of progressive schools, many

of whom might otherwise have been lost to history. Evoking the Deweys' book, Semel and Sadovnik assembled groups of historians whose essays appeared in two edited volumes—*Schools of Tomorrow*,<sup>4</sup> *Schools of Today: What Happened to Progressive Education*,<sup>4</sup> and *Founding Mothers and Others: Women Educational Leaders During the Progressive Era*.<sup>5</sup> These historians have greatly impacted the research on women in progressive education that continues today.

Despite the wide influence of *Schools of To-morrow*, and the fact that its publication initially elicited “mostly positive reviews,” Fallace and Fantozzi report that over time the book became John Dewey’s “most controversial and problematic text.”<sup>6</sup> While largely affirming *Schools of To-morrow*, Fallace and Fantozzi note that some critics accused John Dewey “of being an uncritical disciple of French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau.” Others suggested he was “opposed to the transmission of content to students.” Most recently, Dewey has been criticized for “endorsing a curriculum that patronized Black students.”<sup>7</sup> My own reading of *Schools of To-morrow*, and my study of primary sources from Flora White’s archive, reveal other problems. As I will demonstrate, John Dewey did not appropriately credit a rival theorist with the concept of Organic Education when he wrote the second chapter of *Schools of To-morrow*—suggesting instead that the term was Marietta Johnson’s. Following the book’s success, Dewey’s rival, Charles Hanford Henderson, became marginalized—despite having had a substantial influence on New England’s early progressive movement and women participants like Flora White. In light of Dewey’s eventual prominence in progressive education, twenty-first century scholars seeking to understand the movement’s formative period focused largely on women associated with Dewey in Chicago and New York. As a result, the historical narrative around early progressive education is limited in its geographic reach. This essay calls for research across a broader geographic swath, deepening an understanding of women’s contributions to the movement’s formative period.

### *Origins of the Schools of To-morrow*

Fallace and Fantozzi trace the origins of *Schools of To-morrow* to John Dewey’s visit to Marietta Johnson’s School of Organic Education in Fairhope, Alabama in December 1913. The genesis of that experimental school is detailed in Johnson’s memoir, completed shortly after her death in 1938 and first published by the University of Alabama Press in 1974.

In 1902, Marietta Johnson—a former supervising teacher in a Minnesota normal school—moved with her husband Frank to the utopian community of Fairhope, Alabama, on Mobile Bay. Like many residents of Fairhope, the Johnsons were socialists, and the community was established according to



the single-tax theory of Henry George, author of *Progress and Poverty*.<sup>8</sup> Johnson's memoir describes how she radically altered her pedagogy after reading two books. One was *The Development of the Child*, written in 1898 by New York pediatrician Nathan Oppenheim;<sup>9</sup> the other was *Education and the Larger Life*, written by Charles Hanford Henderson and published in 1904. Henderson devoted an entire chapter of the book to "Organic Education," which he described as all parts of the human organism operating together as a fundamental condition for success.<sup>10</sup> (Today we would call it educating the *whole child*.) In 1914 Henderson published a sequel titled *What Is It To Be Educated?* that was designed to offer "concrete and practical" approaches to his ideas.<sup>11</sup>

Prior to writing *Education and the Larger Life*, Henderson had taught physics and chemistry in Philadelphia and in 1893 became principal of the Northeast Branch of the city's Manual Training School. He lectured on manual training at Harvard in 1897-98 before being appointed headmaster of the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, a trade school with an emphasis on art and design. Henderson actively promoted his educational ideas in 1897 by giving public lectures on organic education at the Boston Sloyd Training School.<sup>12</sup> The school provided a natural audience for Henderson because it instructed teachers (including Flora White in 1897) on using woodcrafts to enhance students' cognitive abilities and manual dexterity. Henderson continued to speak in Boston during the winter of 1899 when he gave a ten-lecture series on organic education at the Industrial School under the sponsorship of Pauline Agassiz Shaw. A wealthy philanthropist, Shaw was the daughter of Harvard scientist Louis Agassiz and a benefactor of the Sloyd Training School.<sup>13</sup> Later, in the fall of 1899, Henderson gave a lecture series on organic education at Griffith Hall in Philadelphia "under the patronage of a number of well-known Philadelphians."<sup>14</sup> The lectures benefited Tuskegee Institute, an Alabama school for African Americans that was founded in 1881 with Booker T. Washington as its first teacher.

Writing in 1896, Henderson observed, "A progressive education would be one in which the educational process [is] being constantly readjusted to meet...changing conditions."<sup>15</sup> He advocated an educational program that would address the physical, intellectual, and moral needs of children. Noting that children are inherently curious, Henderson suggested they want "to be employed...with something that interests *them*, not mama or papa, or the teacher."<sup>16</sup>

Marietta Johnson discussed Henderson's influence in her memoir:

....Henderson, in his epoch-making book....presented a most constructive criticism of life and education. He not only agreed with Oppenheim as to the nature of the growing child and the insistence

that the adult's supreme responsibility is to supply the right conditions of growth, but suggested a practical program—life-giving to body, mind, and spirit.

This idea took possession of me and I could not rest until I had started a school.<sup>17</sup>

Prior to encountering the books by Oppenheim and Henderson, Johnson had operated in a professional environment where "The Curriculum was sacred!"<sup>18</sup> She discovered she "had been forcing children 'way beyond their powers...[and] had practically been maiming their minds and emotions." She concluded the entire system in which she taught "went directly contrary to the natural needs of the child."<sup>19</sup>

However, Marietta Johnson was challenged in implementing her new beliefs in a local school setting. When the Johnsons arrived at Fairhope, Alabama was still struggling to build a viable system of public education since the South had been slow to embrace common schooling. The Johnsons and other Midwestern transplants soon discovered that Fairhope's public schools compared unfavorably to schools in their previous communities. With the support of one Fairhope couple who offered to provide \$25.00 per month for expenses, Marietta Johnson opened a free school for six young pupils. She recruited students with disabilities who could not attend public schools. Johnson also gained the financial support of Joseph Fels, founder of Fels Naptha Soap Company, who funded single-tax initiatives throughout the United States. His philanthropy allowed her to relocate the School of Organic Education to a better facility and draw children of well-to-do families in the Northeast and Midwest who were interested in progressive education.<sup>20</sup> The school afforded students an opportunity for physical exercise, nature study, music, handwork, storytelling, dramatizations, and games. They were led into reading, writing, arithmetic, and geography not through coercion, but by their desire to know.

Eventually Marietta Johnson made "society friends" from Greenwich, Connecticut, who invited John Dewey to visit the School of Organic Education in December 1913.<sup>21</sup> He was then at Teachers College/Columbia University in New York, having left the University of Chicago where he had chaired the Department of Philosophy, Psychology, and Pedagogy from 1894 to 1904. (Between 1896 and 1903, Dewey also served as director of the University of Chicago laboratory school.) Fallace and Fantozzi report that *Schools of To-morrow* signaled "a new direction" for John Dewey because the book "endorsed progressive approaches to teaching that diverged from the curriculum he helped implement and wrote extensively about at the University of Chicago's laboratory school."<sup>22</sup> The book described theories and curricula behind 16 selected schools. They included the School of Organic

Education in Fairhope, Alabama; the Elementary School at the University of Missouri; Public Schools No. 45 and No. 26 in Indianapolis; the public schools of Chicago (including the Francis Parker School, the Howland School, and the Lane School); the Cottage School at Riverside, Illinois; the Phoebe Thorn Experimental School of Bryn Mawr College; the boys' school at Interlaken, Indiana; the Little School in the Woods at Greenwich, Connecticut; Miss Pratt's Play School in New York City; the kindergarten of Teacher's College of Columbia University; the public school system of Gary, Indiana; and the public schools of Cincinnati.

In the preface, John Dewey noted that the schools presented in *Schools of To-morrow* "were chosen more or less at random; because we already knew of them or because they were conveniently located." Dewey added that they did not begin to represent the efforts of "sincere teachers" in schools "growing up all over the country" where efforts were underway to "work out definite educational ideas."<sup>23</sup> As Fallace and Fantozzi point out, the Deweys did not create a random sample; rather, they identified a group of schools with tendencies towards greater freedom, child-centeredness, and "the recognition of the role education must play in a democracy."<sup>24</sup> Most of the schools presented in the book were located in the Midwest or New York, where the Deweys had lived. Evelyn Dewey, recently graduated from Barnard College in New York with aspirations of becoming an educational journalist and writer, conducted all on-site visits at the 16 selected schools/school districts, except one; John Dewey made the trip to Fairhope with his 14-year-old son Sabino, who attended the School of Organic Education for a week and wanted to stay.

Marietta Johnson's school was the first to be featured in *Schools of To-morrow*. Its presentation constituted the entire second chapter, immediately following a chapter (presumably written by Dewey) on the teachings of Rousseau. Dewey described the School of Organic Education as an experiment in Rousseau's principles. Dewey wrote, "To this spot [Fairhope] during the past few years students and experts have made pilgrimages, and the influence of Mrs. Johnson's model has led to the starting of similar schools in different parts of the United States."<sup>25</sup>

The Deweys' book was an international success. It has continued to prompt interest among researchers to the present day. As recently as 2013, Jeroen Staring referenced the book when he wrote, "only one reformer—Marietta Johnson of Fairhope, Alabama—dared to found a school, its core curriculum sailing under the flag of Henderson's organic education."<sup>26</sup> However, my research revealed two problems with Dewey's presentation in *Schools of To-morrow* and the enthusiasm it generated, as evidenced by Staring's assertion. First, Dewey failed to appropriately credit Henderson in the book. Second, Johnson's was not the first organic school.

### *Puzzling Findings*

Even before the publication of *Schools of To-morrow*, John Dewey reported on his visit to Fairhope, suggesting the School of Organic Education continue as an “experiment station” so its method could “spread and permeate the rural schools of the county and then of adjacent counties.”<sup>27</sup> There is no mention of Henderson in the written record of Dewey’s report, as there is no mention of Henderson in the book.

Some scholars noticed the omissions. Writing in 1961, Lawrence A. Cremin observed that Marietta Johnson “undoubtedly” borrowed the term, “organic education,” from Charles Hanford Henderson.<sup>28</sup> (In the bibliography, Cremin also cited *Education: A History*, a 1946 book by A. Gordon Melvin that portrayed “the [Francis] Parker-Henderson-Johnson stream as the authentic stream of progressive education”).<sup>29</sup> In “*Schools of Tomorrow*,” *Schools of Today* Joseph W. Newman suggested that Dewey did not acknowledge Henderson’s work in organic education because the two men were rivals.<sup>30</sup> In 2015, Fallace and Fantozzi likewise note that Dewey failed to mention Henderson in the 1915 book.<sup>31</sup> It is important to point out, however, that Dewey went *beyond* the omission these scholars noted, actually implying in the book that the term, “organic education,” was *Johnson’s*. (Dewey wrote, “She calls her methods of education ‘organic’ because they follow the natural growth of the pupil.”)<sup>32</sup>

Given Dewey’s professional activities in 1902, he was almost certainly aware of the publication of *Education and the Larger Life* and its chapter titled “Organic Education.” Apart from his role as department chairman at the University of Chicago, he also directed the faculty of the school of education and served as editor of *The Elementary School Teacher*. During this period Henderson’s writings were cited in numerous professional publications ranging from general education and industrial education journals, to official reports and religious magazines.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, *The New York Times* highlighted the connection between Henderson, organic education, and Marietta Johnson shortly before her Greenwich friends invited Dewey to visit Fairhope. On March 16, 1913 the *Times* ran a full-page article on Johnson’s school under the headline, “Founder of Organic Education Tells of New School.” A subheading stated, “Mrs. Marietta I. Johnson of Fairhope, Ala. Discusses a System of Developing the Latent Powers of Children and Points Out Weaknesses of Prevailing Methods of Teaching.” The *Times* reporter wrote a brief introduction and then recorded Johnson’s words for the remainder of the article in which she credited Oppenheim and then Henderson for influencing her pedagogy and program. Johnson stated:

The next step in my process came when I procured Dr.

Henderson's "Education and the Larger Life." This is a remarkable contribution to our educational science. It puts the whole interest upon the doer, not upon the thing he does. Knowledge, itself, is of no value, unless the person can profit by it, and in consequence, there is much useless knowledge in the world. We all know that. Yet, despite our knowledge of it, we suppress the child in every way, almost, that he may 'learn.'<sup>34</sup>

It is difficult to imagine that John Dewey, a New York resident, would have been unaware of the *Times* article; however—even if that were the case—Dewey's own writing documents his knowledge of Henderson's prior work in organic education. In October 1915—five months after the release of *Schools of To-morrow*—Dewey published a response in *School and Home Education* to William C. Bagley's criticisms of his new book. Dewey denied the allegation that *Schools of To-morrow* focused on his "disciples" who put his theories into practice. He answered Bagley by writing, "So far as Mrs. Johnson's Organic Education is not the result of her own public school experience, it is inspired by the writings of Dr. Hanford Henderson."<sup>35</sup> It would appear that Dewey neglected to appropriately credit Henderson in a book with a large readership but evoked his name to sidestep criticism in a publication with a smaller circulation.

### *Not the First*

My own research on the lives of women in progressive education revealed that Marietta Johnson did not, as Staring contends, found the first organic school. Dewey noted in the preface to *Schools of To-morrow*—and Harold Rugg and Ann Shumaker confirmed in 1928—that the formative period of progressive education had an ad hoc quality, with individual practitioners conducting isolated experiments.<sup>36</sup> Although it would be nearly impossible to determine who established the *first* school to implement the principles of organic education, Henderson's prominence in the decade prior to 1907 suggests that at least one such school—and possibly more—could have existed before the founding of Johnson's school at Fairhope.

Proof of that possibility surfaced in my biographical research on Flora White, a public school teacher who revolted against the industrial model of education and in 1897 founded her own experimental school in Concord, Massachusetts. Although White was my grandmother's aunt, I never knew her.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, after beginning a tenure-track appointment at my current university, I became the grateful recipient of a large cache of White's papers that members of my family had stored for over half a century following her death. The papers detailed a full career experimenting with, and publicizing,

child-centered theories of the early progressive education movement. Prior to founding Miss White's Home School in Concord, she studied at the Sloyd Training School in Boston where she gave lectures that alternated every week with those of Harvard professor and pragmatist William James. Francis Parker offered her a job heading a department at Cook County Normal School; however, White declined because she had recently accepted another position at Westfield (Massachusetts) Normal School on the urging of the Secretary of the State Board of Education. Two informational booklets for Miss White's Home School—the only ones extant today—list C. Hanford Henderson as an endorser. Printed first for the 1900-01 school year and then for 1906-07, the earliest booklet is housed in Massachusetts in the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library and Historic Deerfield Library; the other booklet belonged to Flora's niece, Catherine White, and remains in a private archive.

I was startled by the 1900-01 booklet's articulation of the philosophical principles of Miss White's Home School:

This school is an effort in the direction of organic education, and is founded in the belief that a healthy, active organism is the first requisite for a healthy, active mind.

Regime, physique, and bodily alertness are considered pre-eminent as factors of education.<sup>38</sup>

Although "organic education" is an unfamiliar term to most twenty-first century readers, it is interesting that in 1900 White felt no need to define it for her audience, apparently expecting they would understand it. Following the publication of *Education and the Larger Life*, Flora White continued to use the term, "organic," in her school's 1906-07 booklet that stated, "This school was founded in the belief that a healthy, active organism is the only sure foundation for a healthy, active mind."<sup>39</sup> Perhaps to assure parents who might hesitate to place their children in what White acknowledged was an experimental school, she added:

[This school] has been described as a new departure in education, but it is rather an effort to retain in its grasp that which has in all ages been recognized as the best in education.

It considers, as did the schools of Greece, that good physique and bodily vigor are indispensable to mental activity; and it therefore provides a training [that is] organic, vital, [and] permanent.<sup>40</sup>

In short, the documents demonstrate that Miss White's Home School employed Henderson's principles of organic education well before Marietta

Johnson. By all accounts, White's school achieved its purpose. The alumnae included the dean of Wellesley College, famous artists, and women who were prominent in civic affairs. In retirement, Flora White pronounced the school a "marked success" and the pinnacle of her career. She recalled that college requirements did not drive her curriculum, although her students prepared for college and had no difficulty passing college exams.<sup>41</sup> Although the school closed in 1914—one year after John Dewey's visit to Fairhope—Flora White's work helped to pave the way for the founding of Concord Academy, today regarded as one of the top secondary schools in the United States.

### *Henderson's Marginalization*

Marietta Johnson made a substantial contribution to progressive education. As she became more prominent, Johnson was increasingly identified with John Dewey rather than Charles Hanford Henderson. In *The Transformation of the School*, Cremin noted that "Mrs. Johnson read other works [in addition to Oppenheim] that helped her in formulating her ideas, among them *Education and the Larger Life* by C. Hanford Henderson, the scientist-headmaster of Pratt Institute in New York, and some early pamphlets of John Dewey."<sup>42</sup> Later publications from the State of Alabama cite Dewey as an early influence on Johnson while failing to mention Henderson. The current *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, for example, reports that Johnson's ideas were shaped by Oppenheim's *The Development of the Child*, as well as Jean Jacques Rousseau, Friedrich Froebel, and John Dewey.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, Henderson's name is absent from a *University of Alabama News* article that attributes Johnson's theoretical influences to Rousseau, Froebel, and Dewey.<sup>44</sup> Henderson's legacy was also diminished by misspellings of his name in Marietta Johnson's memoir, completed shortly after her death in 1938 and housed at Teacher's College prior to its 1974 publication by the University of Alabama Press. While Johnson named Henderson as being—along with Oppenheim—a key influence on her pedagogy and school program, his name repeatedly appeared in the text as C. *Manford* Henderson. The misspelling was replicated in George Allen Brown's "Memoir of Marietta Johnson," published at the eighteenth annual meeting of the Alabama Historical Association and again in *Thirty Years with an Idea*. According to Brown, Marietta Johnson stated, "It was when she studied 'Education and the Larger Life' by Charles Manford Henderson that she felt she had something practical upon which to start, and with her *own* small boys, she began to experiment."<sup>45</sup>

After 1915 John Dewey's prominence grew, while Henderson's waned by comparison. By Marietta Johnson's own acknowledgment, Dewey's support helped her raise funds for her school, and she became one of the first U. S.

women educational leaders to gain recognition for twentieth-century reform efforts. Half a century later, Lawrence Cremin recognized Johnson's pioneering work in *The Transformation of the School*. He called the School of Organic Education "easily the most child-centered of the early experimental schools."<sup>46</sup> As early as 1919, Johnson became a founding member and one of five speakers at the first meeting of the Progressive Education Association, which became the most influential voice for child-centered pedagogy in the United States.

### *A Binary*

The reader might wonder why, if he was reluctant to give credit to Henderson, Dewey would offer unqualified praise to Johnson, even suggesting organic education was *her* term. One possibility might lie in the binary view of gender that placed men in the role of theorists, and women in the role of practitioners. If John Dewey really regarded Henderson as a rival in 1915, then Marietta Johnson—a woman practitioner—would have posed a much lesser threat to Dewey's prominence in the field. Although it is difficult for current readers to envision that an educator whose name is virtually unknown today could have seriously rivaled John Dewey, the early importance of the two men is suggested in a 1920 *Washington Times* article. It claims progressive education began with Dewey and the Laboratory School at the University of Chicago, and with Henderson's manual training experiments and writing.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, Staring contends that Dewey's career was still on the rise when he came to Teachers College—and only by 1915 did he "become a welcome guest speaker at many meetings about public education in New York City...[and] an ever more prominent authority on progressive education."<sup>48</sup>

The notion of a theory/practice dichotomy that marginalized women's contributions to educational thought (both before and after Dewey) has been suggested by feminist scholars from Jane Roland Martin to Susan Douglas Franzosa.<sup>49</sup> They demonstrate the dichotomy is a false one, inasmuch as the women who experimented with new educational practices (like Johnson and White) were also informing theory. It is noteworthy that, over one hundred years after the founding of Marietta Johnson's school, scholars have continued to discuss the degree to which her contributions to educational thought may have been marginalized. An example is Jerry Aldridge and Lois McFayden Christiansen's 2013 book, *Stealing From the Mother: The Marginalization of Women in Education and Psychology from 1900-2010*. The authors note that "many of the progressive ideas Marietta developed have been basically ignored or attributed to John Dewey."<sup>50</sup> Other scholars have explored Dewey's views that both empowered and marginalized women in



such works as Charlene Haddock Seigfried's edited book, *Feminist Interpretations of John Dewey*<sup>51</sup> and Francis Maher's essay, "John Dewey, Progressive Education and Feminist Pedagogies: Issues of Gender and Authority."<sup>52</sup> In examining the historiography of gender and progressive education, Kathleen Weiler observed that "when Dewey addressed the situation of women, he never seems to have considered the idea that 'man' was a privileged location."<sup>53</sup> Weiler concluded that Dewey "dealt unevenly" with "different representations of women, and most frequently ignored the question of gender altogether."<sup>54</sup>

Charles Hanford Henderson died in 1941. Five years later Melvin wrote that Henderson, a superb writer who was "modest to a fault," was "[o]ne of the greatest educators of the twentieth century" who, "far from being heralded from the housetops, was almost forgotten even before his death."<sup>55</sup> In 1896, after observing the effects of summer learning loss among his students, Henderson had founded a pioneering boys' camp called Marienfeld in Chesham, New Hampshire.<sup>56</sup> In 1914 he established an open-air school that he also called Marienfeld, in Samarcand, North Carolina. After moving to the South, Henderson remained there for the rest of his life, retiring in Tryon, North Carolina, and spending winters in Daytona Beach. It is likely that Flora White first met him when he was lecturing at the Sloyd Training School in Boston. Beyond having an interest in educational theory, she operated, with her sister Mary, a summer camp for little boys at Heath, Massachusetts, and would have had an additional reason for interest in Henderson's work.

Given the information in Flora White's school booklets and the interest in new educational ideas in New England and elsewhere at the turn of the twentieth century, there are compelling reasons to revisit school founders in the formative period of progressive education, in order to better understand the movement. It is noteworthy that in the early twenty-first century, when historians began to explore the contributions of women progressive educators, the lack of sources caused scholars to begin their research with women who had been associated with John Dewey in Chicago and New York. After all, they had to start *somewhere*. While this effort produced important scholarship, it also had a limiting effect. Of the female founders depicted in *Founding Mothers and Others: Women Educational Leaders During the Progressive Era*, most had a connection to Dewey. Among the cited founders who established schools before 1935, none were situated in New England. In view of the region's prominence in the history of education—as seen, for example, in Horace Mann, Elizabeth Peabody, and Francis Parker—there are likely some women leaders, in addition to White, who remain unrecognized but whose stories would be useful to scholars. If, as Dewey suggested, educational experimentation was occurring all over the U. S., historians would be well advised to explore experimental schools that existed across a broad geo-

graphic area. Such an approach would better trace the contributions of teachers and activists to the formative period of progressive education, while also providing an understanding of how the movement unfolded.

### Summary and Conclusions

Landmark dates are important occasions to revisit classic texts. Fallace and Fantozzi are to be commended for re-examining *Schools of To-morrow* at its centenary. The documents of Flora White reveal new perspectives on John Dewey and Marietta Johnson, both important figures in *Schools of To-morrow*. White's sources also underscore how biographical research on less prominent persons can contribute to an understanding of larger historical trends. Since previous research on female founders of progressive schools has largely focused on women associated with John Dewey—and substantial interest in educational reform was also evident around Charles Hanford Henderson in Boston and Philadelphia—it would behoove scholars to cast a wider geographic net to study women who made important contributions to the theory and practice of progressive education's formative era.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Barbara Finkelstein, "Revealing Human Agency: The Uses of Biography in the Study of Educational History," in *Writing Educational Biography: Explorations in Qualitative Research*, ed. Craig Kridel. (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1998). See also Barbara Caine, *Biography and History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> John Dewey and Evelyn Dewey, *Schools of To-morrow* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1915).

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Fallace and Victoria Fantozzi, "A Century of John and Evelyn Dewey's *Schools of To-morrow*: Rousseau, Recorded Knowledge, and Race in the Philosopher's Most Problematic Text," *Educational Studies* 5, no. 2 (2015): 129-152.

<sup>4</sup> Susan F. Semel and Alan R. Sadovnik, eds., "*Schools of Tomorrow*," *Schools of Today: What Happened to Progressive Education* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Alan R. Sadovnik and Susan F. Semel, eds., *Founding Mothers and Others: Women Educational Leaders During the Progressive Era* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Fallace and Fantozzi, "A Century of John and Evelyn Dewey's *Schools of To-morrow*," 129.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> In his 1879 best-selling book, George described the disparity between the haves and have-nots and advocated a single tax on land as the solution. Henry George, *Progress and Poverty: An Inquiry into the Causes of Industrial Depressions, and of Increase of Want with Increase of Wealth* (New York: W. J. Lavell, 1879).

<sup>9</sup> Nathan Oppenheim, *The Development of the Child* (New York: Macmillan, 1902).

<sup>10</sup> Charles Hanford Henderson, *Education and the Larger Life* (Boston and New

York: Houghton Mifflin, 1904).

<sup>11</sup> Charles Hanford Henderson, *What Is It To Be Educated?* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1914), vi.

<sup>12</sup> Annual Report, Perkins School for the Blind (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1898), 79.

<sup>13</sup> *The School Journal*, 58 (January 28, 1899): 106.

<sup>14</sup> *City & State*, (August 10, 1899), 7: 83.

<sup>15</sup> Dr. C. Hanford Henderson, "The Aim of Modern Education," *Popular Science Monthly* (August 1896), 49: 487.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 496.

<sup>17</sup> Marietta Johnson, *30 Years with an Idea* (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1974), 9-12.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, xi-xii.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph W. Newman, "Experimental School, Experimental Community: The Marietta Johnson School of Organic Education in Fairhope, Alabama," in *Schools of Tomorrow, Schools of Today: What Happened to Progressive Education*, eds. Susan F. Semel and Alan R. Sadovnik (New York: Peter Lang), 69, 75.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph W. Newman, "Marietta Johnson and the Organic School," in *Founding Mothers and Others: Women Educational Leaders During the Progressive Era*, eds. Alan R. Sadovnik and Susan F. Semel. (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 26.

<sup>22</sup> Fallace and Fantozzi, "A Century of John and Evelyn Dewey's *Schools of To-morrow*," 130.

<sup>23</sup> John Dewey and Evelyn Dewey, *Schools of To-morrow* preface.

<sup>24</sup> Fallace and Fantozzi, "A Century of John and Evelyn Dewey's *Schools of To-morrow*," 133.

<sup>25</sup> Dewey and Dewey, *Schools of To-morrow*, 17.

<sup>26</sup> Jeroen F. Staring, "Midwives of Progressive Education: The Bureau of Educational Experiments 1916-1919," (Ph.D. diss., University of Amsterdam, 2013), 26.

<sup>27</sup> "Professor Dewey's Report on the Fairhope Experiment in Organic Education," in *John Dewey: The Middle Works, 1899-1924*, vol. 7 (Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979), 387-389.

<sup>28</sup> Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), 149.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 373.

<sup>30</sup> Newman, "Experimental School, Experimental Community," 73.

<sup>31</sup> Fallace and Fantozzi, "A Century of John and Evelyn Dewey's *Schools of To-morrow*," 136.

<sup>32</sup> Dewey and Dewey, *Schools of To-morrow*, 23.

<sup>33</sup> Some of the publications included *Industrial Education Magazine*, *Western Journal of Education*, *Perkins School for the Blind Annual Report*, *The Craftsman*, *Dominicana*, and *Report of the Commissioner of Education for Porto Rico*.

<sup>34</sup> Davis Edwards, "Founder of Organic Education Tells of New School," *The New York Times*, March 16, 1913.

<sup>35</sup> "Educational Survey," *School and Home Education* (October 1915): 1.

<sup>36</sup> Harold Rugg and Ann Shumaker, *The Child-Centered School* (New York: Arno Press & the *New York Times*), 48-49.

<sup>37</sup> Two excellent sources examine the benefits and pitfalls that biographers may encounter when they write about family members they never knew. They are Lucy E. Bailey, "Necessary Betrayals: Reflections on Biographical Work on a Racist Ancestor," in *Life Stories: Exploring Issues in Educational History Through Biography*, eds. Linda C. Morice and Laurel Puchner. (Charlotte, NC: Information Age), 253-272; and Elisabeth Israels Perry, "From Belle Moskowitz to Women's History" in *The Challenges of Feminist Biography: Writing the Lives of Modern American Women*, ed. Sara Alpern et al. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 79-96.

<sup>38</sup> *Miss White's Home School*, Concord, MA, 1900, 1.

<sup>39</sup> *Miss White's Home School*, Concord, MA, 1906, 1.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Flora White, letter to Anne Halfpenny, June 17, 1940, Westfield State College.

<sup>42</sup> Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, 148.

<sup>43</sup> Cynthia Mosteller-Timbes, "Marietta Johnson School of Organic Education," *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1863>, accessed July 29, 2015.

<sup>44</sup> "Magazine Tells of Marietta Johnson, Visionary," *UA News*, January 2, 2001.

<sup>45</sup> George Allen Brown, "Memoir: Marietta Johnson and the School of Organic Education," in *Marietta Johnson, 30 Years with an Idea* (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1974), xii.

<sup>46</sup> Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, 152.

<sup>47</sup> "'Homelike' School Assn. to Meet Here," *Washington Times*, April 8, 1920: 11.

<sup>48</sup> Jeroen F. Staring, "Midwives of Progressive Education," 25.

<sup>49</sup> Jane Roland Martin, "Excluding Women From the Educational Realm," *Harvard Educational Review*, 52, no. 2 (1982): 133-148; Susan Douglas Franzosa, "'Schools Yet-To-Be': Recovering the Work of Nineteenth Century Women in Early Childhood Education," *Vitae Scholasticae*, 32, no. 1 (2015): 5-24.

<sup>50</sup> Jerry Aldridge and Lois McFayden Christiansen, *Stealing From the Mother: The Marginalization of Women in Education and Psychology from 1900-2010* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2013), 67.

<sup>51</sup> Charlene Haddock Seigfried, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Dewey* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).

<sup>52</sup> Francis Maher, "John Dewey, Progressive Education and Feminist Pedagogies: Issues of Gender and Authority," in *Feminist Engagements: Reading, Resisting, and Revisioning Male Theorists in Education and Cultural Studies*, ed. Kathleen Weiler. (New York: Routledge, 2001), 13-32.

<sup>53</sup> Kathleen Weiler, "The Historiography of Gender and Progressive Education in the United States," *Paedagogica Historica*, 42 (2006): 167.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>55</sup> A. Gordon Melvin, *Education: A History* (New York: John Day, 1946), 328-331.

<sup>56</sup> Raphael J. Shortlidge, "Marienfeld, A Summer Camp for Boys," [pages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~aldrichnaa/brochure.htm](http://pages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~aldrichnaa/brochure.htm) (accessed October 28, 2015).

# **The Making of a Black Communist Educator: Doxey A. Wilkerson, 1922-1943**

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## *Introduction*

This essay examines Doxey A. Wilkerson's personal journey of 21 years, which culminated in his decision to join the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) in 1943. Wilkerson (1905-1983), an esteemed academic specializing in early childhood development, was also respected in radical circles. He is an early example of a politically-minded African American scholar/educator who identified with a controversial political party and a transformative sociopolitical ideology. Like many within the Black intelligentsia of the time, Wilkerson struggled to find truth in a liberatory construct that would end the oppression of all marginalized groups in the United States. In so doing, he demonstrated both the vision and courage to live as an unapologetic and self-proclaimed Marxist-Leninist radical.

The essay also discusses the ways in which Wilkerson's ideological evolution within radical economic theory became aligned to his personal experience, ultimately leading to his membership in the CPUSA. Although his scholarship and political influence are noteworthy examples of the Black radical tradition of hegemonic resistance, Wilkerson has been largely absent from the narrative of liberation discourse. However, his life serves as an excellent point of departure for continued discussion around political inclusion, socio-educational development, the liberation of thought, and socio-historical realities of the African American masses.<sup>1</sup> Doxey Wilkerson is more than

a symbol of Black radicalism within educational and political contexts. His story inspires the radical imagination, prompting further inquiry into new possibilities of Black liberation in the present.

It is important to note that Wilkerson joined the CPUSA during World War II. This global conflict had major implications for the status of African Americans in the United States. On the surface, it provided them with opportunities for employment in the military and in wartime industries, as well as a chance to achieve more sociopolitical mobility than ever before. By serving in World War II, African American men could again demonstrate their long-held desire to be full participants in a society that had marginalized, emasculated, and vilified them for centuries. However, the desire for full citizenship benefits fell short of achieving reality in the collective African American experience. Wilkerson's decision to join the CPUSA echoed the dissatisfaction of other Black leaders after the previous World War. As Michael Dawson observed,

Not only did racial violence aimed at blacks lead blacks to form their own radical organizations, but it also influenced blacks such as [W. E. B.] Du Bois, Chandler Owen, and A. Phillip Randolph to affiliate with the Socialist Party and some such as [Cyril] Briggs and [Harry] Haywood to join the Communist Party.<sup>2</sup>

Invariably, African-Americans who came into contact with the CPUSA faced important questions regarding the appropriate role of revolution, reform, nationalism, integration, protest, and legal action in improving twentieth century life in the U.S. These considerations were the essence of the Black radical tradition in resisting the tenets of White supremacy and socio-cultural hegemony that defined the very existence of African Americans for over two centuries. Although the actions and ideology of the CPUSA were routinely demonized by U. S. propaganda, communism had strong appeal for generationally oppressed Americans during the Great Depression. During this time, questions of the pragmatism and praxis of communist ideals were discussed throughout the nation in radical, leftist, and intelligentsia circles. In 1940, historian Mark Naison wrote, "If the Soviet Party could overcome age-old divisions in the Russian Empire, might it not be possible for the American Party, ethnically fragmented though it was, to ultimately transcend American prejudices and fight aggressively for black concerns?"<sup>3</sup> To some, the CPUSA appeared to offer the most politically pragmatic solution to the failed experience of democracy for African Americans. Its sociopolitical platform, coupled with the tradition of hegemonic resistance, would be an important ally if the revolutionary movements toward self-determination and self-declaration were to succeed.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, racism remained a formidable obstacle to social change in the United States. Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal had failed to be a catalytic agent in curbing the institutional marginalization of the oppressed. Martin Kilson noted that in addressing the "Negro question," the "progressive segment of the black intelligentsia was called upon to assist both the modern social advancement of the Negro masses and their full fledged citizenship."<sup>5</sup>

Although some highly regarded people in the Black intelligentsia and liberation movements were critical of the party, Naison notes that the CPUSA "represented something new" in the lives of Black Americans. This was largely due to "its links to an international revolutionary movement and efforts to encourage integration within its entire sphere of influence."<sup>6</sup> Within the epicenters of the African American collective—such as Harlem, Washington, D.C, and throughout the Black Belt—the party maintained a universal and radical approach to unifying the experiences of oppressed laborers and the perennially oppressed and institutionally exploited African Americans. Moreover, Dawson notes that a "substantial portion" of U. S. Whites who openly advocated for Black equality were communists and their allies. He added that "many communists, both black and white, were heroes who suffered greatly for their deep commitment to racial equality."<sup>7</sup> However, the prevailing question among African Americans of the time was whether the nascent reality of political, economic, and social self-determination would be the only solution for true liberation of the oppressed.

### *Evolution of Ideology*

Wilkerson's path to communism and liberatory ideals can be viewed in four critical and distinct phases of his life, the first being his childhood. Wilkerson's early years provided him with a unique understanding of racial otherness, discriminatory practice, and the underpinnings of a system of oppression driven by the institution of capitalism. He explained, "The experiences of my childhood and adolescence did much to shape the attitudes of social protest which later became driving forces in my life."<sup>8</sup> Wilkerson's mother, remarried after being abandoned by his biological father, worked three jobs in order to sustain the household. A bright child mired in a socio-cultural setting that caused him to mature quickly, Doxey concluded that "it just did not seem fair" that his mother had to work so hard to have so little.<sup>9</sup>

To supplement the family income, Wilkerson utilized his maturity and intelligence to acquire odd jobs such as selling newspapers around his hometown of Kansas City, Missouri. Due to his fair complexion, he was mistaken for a young White male and offered a position as a caddy at an exclusive country club. The political and social geography in which he found himself

gave Wilkerson a unique understanding of race navigation—a survival skill Black children needed in the early twentieth century, as demonstrated by the collective social and economic experiences of African Americans. Wilkerson explained, “these experiences as a child worker did much to sharpen my consciousness of race.”<sup>10</sup>

During his employment at the golf course, Wilkerson had an altercation with a White caddy as a result of being called a nigger. Upon becoming aware of the altercation, the club manager quickly fired Wilkerson when he ascertained he had “hired a Negro.”<sup>11</sup> Wilkerson subsequently identified himself not only as an African American, but also as a part of the working class, and developed “a hatred for exploiters.”<sup>12</sup> At this stage of ideological development, Wilkerson’s new philosophical truth was that there were workers and employers. He concluded that employers do not have the same interest as the workers; rather, employers work to maintain the status quo of hegemony, while workers struggle to survive on a subsistence level through ongoing toil in a seemingly unbreakable system.<sup>13</sup>

Without prior knowledge or exposure to Marxist theory, young Wilkerson’s summation of class and economic exploitation seems rather acute in this stage of ideological development.<sup>14</sup> Like W. E. B. DuBois in his adolescent years, Wilkerson had an early consciousness of race that permeated his socio-cultural reality. (Du Bois had a schoolyard encounter with a young White student that caused DuBois to understand himself to be different from his peers. The understanding contributed to his desire to explore the guise of race and its interconnectedness to the political, social, and economic experience of African Americans nationwide.)<sup>15</sup>

However, Wilkerson’s early experience also suggests a unique understanding of the intersectionality of race and class that would later be refined within a Marxist-Leninist framework. Wilkerson’s understanding was that capitalism does not specifically target the African American laborer. Rather, it is a system designed to subjugate the poor to the systemic results of institutionalized oppression and sustain the rich in their place as the oppressor.<sup>16</sup> Race, as Wilkerson understood it, was an added variable to further marginalize and quell the progression of a specific sector of the working class.<sup>17</sup>

As a student at the all-Black Sumner High School in Kansas City, Doxey Wilkerson developed an interest in the arts, especially playing the clarinet. In 1922, following high school graduation, he was admitted to the University of Kansas. This began Wilkerson’s second stage of ideological development in which he gained invaluable insight into intercultural relations. Previously inexperienced with intercultural environments within an educational setting, Wilkerson found that his undergraduate experience demystified his notions about White students and professors. Wilkerson concluded, “I developed warm friendships with a number of white fellow students and several profes-



sors, sincere democrats, all who were quite as bitter as I at the injustices accorded to the Negro on campus."<sup>18</sup>

Compared to some institutions, the University of Kansas was "forward thinking" in admitting African American students. However, it failed to grant Black students full inclusion in some university programs during Wilkerson's years of attendance. As in many Midwestern universities of the era, the faculty and administration struggled to embrace full integration, especially in light of prevailing attitudes among alumni and residents of the surrounding community. In addition to denying African American students admission to certain athletic programs and the university swimming pool, officials also turned a blind eye to racial segregation during music events and to prejudicial behavior in the classrooms of university professors. Wilkerson decided to become a "crusader" for the civil rights of African American students while attending the university.<sup>19</sup>

Wilkerson sought social and political platforms at the university to lend organizational credence to his ideals. In 1923, he was initiated into the University of Kansas chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha, Inc. As the first African American fraternity on college campuses nationwide, Alpha Phi Alpha was recognized for providing a social network for African American male students on White college campuses, training and developing "negro leadership" among the college ranks, and supporting the university and surrounding African American communities with organizationally developed communal empowerment programs.<sup>20</sup>

As the chapter President, Wilkerson's ideological orientation reflected Du Bois' notion of the "talented tenth." This model called for the holistic development of race leaders who had been trained in the classics, arts, philosophy, math, law, and science to become the saviors of the collective through social and economic uplift.<sup>21</sup> While committed to activism as a fraternity and school leader in addressing student concerns, Wilkerson also wanted to address issues that stemmed from the legacy of slavery, racism, discrimination, and poverty.<sup>22</sup>

Wilkerson would complete both a B. A. and M. A. at the University of Kansas before transitioning to his third stage of ideological development when he held academic appointments at Virginia State and Howard Universities. (In time, he would also earn a doctorate at New York University.) An important event occurred when Wilkerson discovered a book in the library titled *The Socialist Cure for a Sick Society*.<sup>23</sup> The author was Norman Thomas, who would run six times as the Socialist candidate for President of the United States. After reading the book, Wilkerson began to envision his evolving ideology married to egalitarian practice. What would the world look like with legislated reform enforced by the spirit of men and women who would embrace Universalist ideals? To Wilkerson, the society's "sickness"

was embedded in the spirit that guided the laws and poisoned the very souls of its citizens. Although Wilkerson's college and fraternal experience had provided new focus for his childhood recollections, he now had an ideological grounding for his practical application of activist stances against injustice. In the next stage of life, Wilkerson would take an intellectual approach to improving the lives of the oppressed.<sup>24</sup>

Wilkerson immediately accepted his first teaching position at Virginia State College after receiving an M. A. in Education in 1927.<sup>25</sup> Energized with a zeal and motivation to "do something about injustice," he espoused a sense of radicalism that materialized in his pedagogy and practice. Wilkerson explained, "The dominant interests in my professional career, covering sixteen years at Virginia State and Howard University, has been the adequacy, or rather inadequacy of public provisions for the education of Negro children."<sup>26</sup> During his first appointment, Wilkerson traveled throughout Virginia conducting surveys and writing scholarly articles on the state of public education and its treatment of African American students. Appalled by the conditions he observed, Wilkerson was motivated to write and publish scathing articles on the state of Virginia education to gain the attention of political pundits and the community.<sup>27</sup> However, to his dismay, Wilkerson soon realized that "crusading" for humanity with the pen would not prompt any radical change in the education system that failed to provide "public provision" for African American students.<sup>28</sup>

He understood that a radical theorization without material outcomes is fruitless. The central tenet to radical resistance to hegemonic structures is strategic organization within specific geographical spaces. In accordance with the Black radical tradition, collective education, empowerment, planning, and action are needed to combat oppressive functions.<sup>29</sup> Illustrative of this radical theorization, Wilkerson concluded that "agitation and organized pressure" were necessary to create spaces for children to succeed.<sup>30</sup> The utilization of political pressure, not revolutionary resistance, became a favorite weapon for Wilkerson in fighting for quality resources for African American children. Assuming the role of "political agitator," Wilkerson galvanized the will of Virginia's African American communities to actually use their limited citizenship rights to gain access to what was constitutionally guaranteed by birthright. Unlike their Black Belt brethren, African Americans in Virginia—when prompted to pay their poll taxes and vote—could actually wield power to alter political outcomes in their favor.<sup>31</sup> Regarded as a "bad Negro" by the State Department of Education, Wilkerson was accused of trying to "lead the Negro masses to rebellion."<sup>32</sup> Exhausted by the lack of intellectual freedom as well as by political pressures to fire him due to radical activities, Wilkerson left Virginia State in 1935. He moved to Howard University in Washington D. C., a campus that embraced a subversive and

overt radical ideology in its faculty and staff.<sup>33</sup> Howard offered Wilkerson a wellspring of intellectual and ideological stimulation, thereby challenging his own radical theorization.<sup>34</sup>

At Howard, Wilkerson taught classes within the School of Education and evolved into a self-proclaimed radical. He became fascinated with the intersection of education and economics and the tortuous state of public education for African American children. After conducting national studies, Wilkerson furthered his understanding of the interconnection between the denial of educational opportunity, political freedom, and the persistence in economic exploitation. In studying these three variables that prompted oppressive institutional states, Wilkerson experienced a paradigm shift. He asserted,

I began to view the problems of Negro education in terms of a larger and more significant frame of reference; the universal struggle of the masses of underprivileged people, both White and Negro, for liberation from the hands of their exploiters. I began to sense how the whole oppressive plantation society was caught in the grip of an inherently exploitative economy of which lay by schools were but a superficial expression.<sup>35</sup>

This Universalist paradigm shift was deeply rooted in his research within the Black Belt, and his ever-evolving theorization around notions of perennial economic exploitation of the poor through government institutions, including the state-sponsored public education system.<sup>36</sup> Wilkerson found that in areas such as the Black Belt where the labor force sustains the existence of a caste system, poor children are systematically molded into tools of labor to ensure production levels are met.<sup>37</sup> In one public school in South Carolina, Wilkerson inquired about a White child who was disengaged and falling asleep throughout the course of the lesson. The administrator reminded him that "the children were tired because they leave school early to go work in the mills, where they remained all night."<sup>38</sup> After this eye-opening experience, it was apparent to Wilkerson that he was seeing a society built upon economic foundations that could not tolerate real democracy. He reasoned that in a true democracy, a liberty-denying hegemony would not have prevailed.<sup>39</sup>

Wilkerson concluded further that to reinstitute political, social, educational, and employment realities for citizens, a "substantial extension of democracy" must be the praxis of state functions. With his newfound understanding of socialism and Marxism, Wilkerson became deeply immersed in the revolutionary theory of Marxism. Reflective of his own ideological development, Wilkerson was challenged to conceptualize Marxist theory and the

reconciliation of his own life experience.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, Wilkerson was gaining recognition as a rising star in academia. In serving on President Franklin Roosevelt's Advisory Committee on Education, Wilkerson researched and published *Special Problems in Negro Education*, a critical work that examined the comparative experiences of African American and White children from elementary school to college.<sup>41</sup> This study provided groundbreaking empirical data that supported his claims of the dire straits of southern public schools, characterized by a lack of quality resources, instruction, and overall experiences for African American children as compared to White children.<sup>42</sup>

Wilkerson explained, "The development of a democratic program of Negro education represents, therefore, something more than a means towards justice for the Negro people; it is an essential condition for national and social security."<sup>43</sup> Here Wilkerson advocated for the holistic inclusion of African American citizens from the genesis of their democratic development. He further suggested that a failure to do so would pose a danger to democracy, since institutionally oppressed people will respond with revolutionary resistance.

Wilkerson also aligned his ideological development with his scholarly practice by concluding that the federal government—through institutional oppression—played a role in sustaining segregated schools with a shortage of quality teachers, poor instruction, and the universal disenfranchisement of the oppressed.<sup>44</sup> He also surmised that because the system is aided and supplemented by the government, therefore, government entities could reverse the situation by bolstering the education system and rectifying the inequities within society.<sup>45</sup> Due to his newly-attained scholarly recognition, Wilkerson was invited to participate in a foundational study on the African American educational experience in the South led by Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal. While conducting this study, Wilkerson became one of the ranking intellectuals within a small cohort of social scientists and skilled researchers. However, philosophical and idealistic disagreements between Myrdal and Wilkerson hindered the amplification of the work and perspective he provided to Myrdal's study.<sup>46</sup>

Wilkerson argued that the project was staged. He accused Myrdal of choosing participants for a study that aligned with his preconceived notions of the problem within American society. Wilkerson also disagreed with the methodology, claiming validity and reliability issues. Moreover, he felt Myrdal missed an opportunity for a wide range of African Americans within the Black Belt to give full testimonies to their social, economic, and political realities. Illustrative of his Marxist theorization, Wilkerson insisted that the oppressive state existed as a result of the need for cheap labor, as it was vital to the economic structure. Myrdal concluded that race was the major issue

within a hegemonic domination by Whites. According to Myrdal, the only solution to fixing the ills in the United States, specifically the Southern region, was if White citizens would change their distasteful attitudes towards African Americans and invest themselves in the true spirit of U. S. democracy and citizenship.<sup>47</sup> This summation by Myrdal was indicative of the racial paternalism deeply entrenched within a framework that suggested the true power to change systems lay specifically in the hands of White citizens.

Although the variables of race and White supremacy are manifested throughout the societal experiences of African Americans, Wilkerson's ideological development demonstrated a deep commitment to the theories of dialectical and historical materialism.<sup>48</sup> William Watkins asserts,

Dialectics allows one to observe phenomena in their oppositionist aspects. It sees both universality and particularity of contradiction in phenomena....It also examines the processes whereby quantitative changes become qualitative changes. Dialectics posits that the objective contradictions within capitalism, thesis and antithesis, will lead to its negation and lead to a new social order, Socialism.<sup>49</sup>

Wilkerson's ideological stance, illustrated by his disagreement with Myrdal, was consistent with socialist ideals. His advocacy for a critical examination of capitalism and the sociopolitical context of the African American existence aligned with socialist tenets. Wilkerson's ideological framework suggested that it is not the consciousness, as Myrdal purported, that determines the social being; rather, it is the social being that determines the consciousness.<sup>50</sup>

The fourth and final stage illuminates Wilkerson's formal entry into the CPUSA. In 1942 he took a sabbatical from his teaching duties at Howard to work for the Office of Price Administration (OPA). This government program was intended to enlist support for effective price control, rent control, and rationing measures to curb wartime inflation. Within this organization, Wilkerson was an education specialist who traveled throughout the South to help develop and execute consumer education programs in African American schools.<sup>51</sup> Since he worked under the auspices of the U. S. Army, his employment was considered military service. In 1943, he appealed for permanent employment with the OPA to further his work on education in the Black Belt. Since, at thirty-eight, Wilkerson's age surpassed the military limit, he was denied permanent employment with the OPA. However, he continued his duties for the remainder of the year.<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile, Wilkerson became the focus of increased and intense scrutiny. The government was highly sensitive to radical activity on the home front, and Wilkerson no longer hid his radical ideologies behind the stroke of the pen. A fully converted Marxist, Wilkerson

was avowedly radical in his pedagogy and practice. He made his ideology known in his classes, conversations, and professional relationships. When investigated by the FBI, Wilkerson acknowledged his Marxist beliefs to the agents. The Bureau's final assessment was that Doxey Wilkerson was just a "college professor that had some ideas that every body doesn't agree with."<sup>53</sup>

On June 19, 1943, Wilkerson announced his official membership in the CPUSA. Upon this announcement, he resigned from the OPA and Howard University and assumed responsibility for leading the party's education programs in Washington, D. C. In becoming a member of the CPUSA, Wilkerson became the most visible African American intellectual of the time to make this shift in ideology and political affiliation. The CPUSA was a known entity within the African American community, due to its recruitment efforts and organized protests. For Wilkerson, membership in the party was prompted by his "powerful urge to render maximum service for winning the war."<sup>54</sup>

To Doxey Wilkerson, the "war" was not about the military participation of the United States in a global conflict, but the war for democratic existence that the oppressed fought with an imperialistic government.<sup>55</sup> As evident in his politically-charged rhetoric in a myriad of scholarly publications, Wilkerson made it clear that his stance reflected the CPUSA's position of liberation for the working class. All of the marginalized groups within society were threatened by the government's failure to provide the elusive democracy promised by the Constitution, according to Wilkerson. He asserted, "One cannot reconcile himself even temporarily to the Jim Crow system, to the poll tax, to anti-Semitism, and the principle of exceptionalism directed against Communists, without thereby surrendering the basic strongholds of democracy to the fascist enemy within and without."<sup>56</sup> In alignment with party initiatives, Wilkerson understood that the ultimate goal for a new world order would be to convince and organize the working class on the idea that the true solution of the basic problems in America was a full transition to socialism.<sup>57</sup>

Wilkerson's formal announcement resulted in local and national press coverage, and he became a topic of discussion in a multitude of circles throughout the U. S. Although many wondered why Wilkerson would join such a controversial group, he was generally celebrated within the Black intelligentsia and throughout political and academic circles for his courage to be unveiled as a true radical. The personal correspondence he received from his friends, former colleagues, and supporters reflect their admiration for his radical move to the CPUSA. Although Wilkerson would eventually resign from the party in 1957, due to his disillusionment over revelations about Joseph Stalin, he spent many years working in the epicenters of Black oppression, witnessing the effective works of Communists in fighting for African American rights and helping to organize strong labor movements.<sup>58</sup>

During these years the CPUSA was extremely organized and strategic

about their recruitment of African Americans to the party. While at Howard, Wilkerson recalled witnessing the highly visible demonstrations, political positioning, and organization within Black epicenters. He noted, "We saw Communists fighting on issues that we were concerned with. We saw a big party in Baltimore where white and black got together and danced together. We saw an outfit that is showing more concern for our concerns than anybody else we've seen around."<sup>59</sup> In the end, it was the CPUSA's strategic visibility that attracted him to the party. Solidifying Wilkerson's membership gave the CPUSA greater access to intelligentsia circles. His credibility and influence also allowed for the party to become a more trusted entity in African American liberation. Through this platform, Wilkerson would continue to address quality education for the oppressed and vocational training for the poor in the South. He became the spokesman for the CPUSA's educational programs and utilized his scholarly credentials and access to propagandize party ideals within the African American collective. Galvanized with a fully developed sociopolitical ideology, Wilkerson was no longer subversive in his activism for the holistic liberation of oppressed peoples.

Doxey Wilkerson's life, practice, and ideological evolution gives us further insight and a more unique perspective on the African American experience during the mid-twentieth century. However, he has been missed in the discourse of Black Marxist, Communist, and educational circles for decades. Certainly his accomplishments, scholarship, and courageous actions have given him limited mention within a niche rhetorical space. Upon reflection, it is necessary not only to understand his voice and intellectual contribution to a collective democratic experience; we must also add his voice to the narrative of reimagination. His evolution is indicative of a human being who did not lose faith in the possibilities of liberation. The human condition is innately indisposed to change. We fear the possibilities of losing our comfort. A critical examination of Wilkerson's life gives us the occasion to seek within ourselves the courage to embrace the discomfort that will allow ourselves to evolve into something greater.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> William H. Watkins, "Black Curriculum Orientations: A Preliminary Inquiry," *Harvard Educational Review* 63, no. 3 (1993): 325.

<sup>1</sup> Michael Dawson, *Blacks In and Out of the Left* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2013), 24.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem during the Depression* (Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2005), 11; see also *Daily Worker*, April 28, 1940.

<sup>4</sup> Naison, *Communists in Harlem*, 18.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Kilson, *Transformation of the African-American Intelligentsia 1880-2012* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2014), 89.

<sup>6</sup> Naison, *Communists in Harlem*, xvi-vii.

<sup>7</sup> Dawson, *Blacks In and Out of the Left*, 42.

<sup>8</sup> Doxey A. Wilkerson, "Why I Became a Communist," *New Masses*, November 16, 1943: 14.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Reiland Rabaka, *Du Bois's Dialectics: Black Radical Politics and the Reconstruction of Critical Social Theory* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008).

<sup>15</sup> Lewis David Levering, *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Biography 1868-1963* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2009).

<sup>16</sup> Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983).

<sup>17</sup> Wilkerson, "Why I Became a Communist," 14-16.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Charles H. Wesley, *The History of Alpha Phi Alpha: A Development in College Life* (New York, Vanguard Press, 1975); *Lawrence Journal-World*, May 8, 1924.

<sup>21</sup> Derrick P. Alridge, "Guiding Philosophical Principles for a DuBoisian-Based African American Educational Model," *Journal of Negro Education*, 68, no. 2 (1999).

<sup>22</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, "Marxisms as Utopias: Evolving Ideologies," *American Journal of Sociology*. 91, no. 6 (1986), 1295-1308.

<sup>23</sup> Doxey A. Wilkerson, interview by Martin Duberman, *Norwalk*, December 13, 1983, Courtesy of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Harlem, NY, 36; Norman Thomas, *The Socialist Cure for a Sick Society* (New York: John Day, 1932).

<sup>24</sup> Wilkerson, "Why I Became a Communist," 14-15.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Wilkerson, interview by Martin Duberman, 32.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>36</sup> Richard H. King, *Race, Culture, and the Intellectuals: 1940-1970* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

<sup>37</sup> Wilkerson, "Why I Became a Communist," 16.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> King, *Race, Culture, and the Intellectuals*, 64.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Doxey A. Wilkerson, Interview with *Jewish Currents*, November, 1988, Courtesy



of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Harlem, NY.

<sup>42</sup> Doxey A. Wilkerson, *Special Problems of Negro Education* (Westport, CT: Negro Universities Press, 1939), 151.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Maceo Crenshaw Dailey, Jr. and Ernest D. Washington, "The Evolution of Doxey A. Wilkerson, 1935-45," *Freedomways* (Fall Quarter, 1985), 101-115.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Doxey A. Wilkerson, interview by Martin Duberman, 32.

<sup>49</sup> William H. Watkins, "A Marxian and Radical Reconstructionist Critique of American Education," in *Black Protest Thought and Education*, ed. William H. Watkins. (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 110.

<sup>50</sup> Wilkerson, interview by Martin Duberman, 32.

<sup>51</sup> Doxey A. Wilkerson, *Why Negroes are Joining the Communist Party* (New York: CPUSA, 1946).

<sup>52</sup> Doxey A. Wilkerson, "What I Found in the Communist Party," *Daily Worker*, February 8, 1944.

<sup>53</sup> Wilkerson, interview by Martin Duberman, 34

<sup>54</sup> Doxey A. Wilkerson, "What I Found in the Communist Party."

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Doxey A. Wilkerson, *The Negro People and the Communists*, (Tehran and New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1944), 36.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Wilkerson, interview by Martin Duberman, 35.

**“Why does not somebody  
speak OUT?”:  
Mary Ann Shadd Cary’s Heteroglossic  
Black Protofeminist Nationalism**

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*Introduction*

In the 150 years since nineteenth-century African American woman activist, feminist, and nationalist Mary Ann Shadd Cary entered the public sphere in print and speech, scholarship on Shadd Cary has increased to ensure Shadd Cary’s place in the historical and literary record as a nineteenth-century African American woman committed to the uplift of Black communities and the increased prosperity of Black lives. And yet, Shadd Cary’s persistence as a race woman who, unlike her Black women contemporaries such as Frances E. W. Harper, did not “take pains not to step on the toes of her male contemporaries,” not only earned her the conflicted responses (and at times outright ridicule) of her nineteenth-century peers, it has also framed the way contemporary scholarship occasionally positions Shadd Cary’s work apart from her nineteenth-century African American women peers.<sup>1</sup> Due in large part to landmark scholarship by Jane Rhodes, biographical publication by Jim Bearden and Linda Jean Butler, a short biographical film produced by Peter Raymont, Lindalee Tracey, and Maria Pimentel, and more recent scholarship by Joycelyn Moody and Carol B. Conaway, Shadd Cary’s position as a nineteenth-century Black nationalist is on firm ground.<sup>2</sup>

Less firmly established is the rhetorical nuance and complexity with which Shadd Cary promoted her protofeminist Black national agendas.<sup>3</sup> This article revisits Shadd Cary's work as publisher and editor of the *Provincial Freeman* and frequent author of political essays, and in the process reframes Shadd Cary and her educative work as a key and revelatory part of a constellation of nineteenth-century Black women writers and speakers. I investigate Shadd Cary's heteroglossic discourse and rhetoric as a form of nineteenth-century Black protofeminist nationalism both specific to Shadd Cary and part of a pattern of heteroglossic rhetorical and discursive traditions of nineteenth-century African American women activists such as Maria W. Stewart and Frances E. W. Harper. This essay refocuses the positioning of Shadd Cary's putative gendered unconventionality to better situate her as one part of a constellation of nineteenth-century African American women who each in her own way transgressed conventionality to make herself heard.

### *Mary Ann Shadd Cary's Intersectional Contexts*

Shadd Cary's emergence as a key figure in racial uplift projects and political activism in the mid-nineteenth century positioned her within the social, raced, and gendered constraints and ideological matrices that her African American women contemporaries faced. As Hazel Carby explains, "in order to gain a public voice as orators or published writers, black women had to confront the dominant domestic ideologies and literary conventions of womanhood which excluded them from the definition 'woman'."<sup>4</sup> For Shadd Cary, this meant that the social and economic privileges which allowed her the ability to gain a public voice rather quickly upon her relocation to Canada West did little to shield her from the raced and gendered discrimination she faced while participating "in movements in which race and racial equality were framed as male and in which sexual equality was framed as white."<sup>5</sup> And certainly, as they did with her Black women contemporaries, these ideological constraints would play a central role in the heteroglossic approach that Shadd Cary took in her editorial and authorial projects.

Shadd Cary's newspaper editorship and political writings reveal her complex positionality as a woman of some social and financial privilege simultaneously impacted by the race and gender oppressions embedded in nineteenth-century racist and patriarchal societal norms. As Carol B. Conaway delineates, Shadd Cary sustained a modicum of economic and social class privilege which engendered her political connections with Henry and Mary Bibb, Samuel Ringgold Ward, and famously Martin Delany.<sup>6</sup> These were connections that would allow her fairly unencumbered access to a public speaking and writing career. However, access and acceptance are two very different things. While Shadd Cary's family, professional, and activist rela-

tionships assisted in shaping her path as an educator, a public speaker, and a newspaperwoman, none of this privilege translated to her protection from the raced and gendered hegemony that governed public opinion and ideology in the mid-nineteenth-century slave holding United States. Her work, as Shirley Yee notes, “was as much about her effort to secure a place in the movement as it was about finding a new geographic location for transplanted blacks.”<sup>7</sup> Every step Shadd Cary took in this vein was intrepid, as she faced criticism even from her former friends and supporters including abolitionists Henry and Mary Bibb and Frederick Douglass. And, while the criticism Shadd Cary faced was most evidently gendered, embedded in these gendered critiques are the implications that for nineteenth-century Black women activists, the “battle for womanhood,” as Mia Bay argues, is also “the battle for race.”<sup>8</sup>

Shadd Cary’s prominence in nineteenth-century Black activist movements protesting slavery and agitating for equal educational opportunities for Black people simultaneously ensured her visibility as a Black woman nationalist and garnered her significant criticism from her peers. Revisiting these public responses to Shadd Cary’s increased participation in the public sphere of the periodical press and speaking circuit today illustrates the “matrix of sanctioned [...] social, political, and economic viewpoints” within and against which she exercised her anti-slavery and Black protofeminist nationalisms.<sup>9</sup> For example, in her well documented disagreements with Canada newspaper editors Henry and Mary Bibb, the Bibbs’ rhetoric limns a distinct image of the gendered judgment and character attacks that threatened Shadd Cary’s ability to be an effective Black protofeminist nationalist and activist.<sup>10</sup> Over various ideological disagreements regarding African American education practices and a power struggle over who should be the voice of the movement, the Bibbs launched a defamatory campaign against Shadd Cary which resulted in Shadd Cary’s newspaper, the *Provincial Freeman*, serving “as a site of gendered contention” where Shadd Cary alternately navigated and troubled the respectability politics of the day.<sup>11</sup>

As contentions played out between Shadd Cary and the Bibbs, by way of disparaging Shadd Cary’s womanhood and virtue, Henry and Mary Bibb utilized their anti-slavery newspaper, the *Voice of the Fugitive*, to discredit Shadd Cary and her race work.<sup>12</sup> In 1852, the Bibbs published an article in the *Voice* vilifying Shadd Cary’s critiques of the Bibbs’s anti-slavery and Black community projects.<sup>13</sup> And, according to Jane Rhodes, it seems they were also targeting her vehement protest of their choice to publish her salary as a teacher.<sup>14</sup> The discourse employed in the Bibbs’s critique offers an early glimpse of what would become a gendered pattern of admonishment of Shadd Cary’s public voice and presence vis-à-vis respectability politics. The 1852 *Voice* article states “Miss Shadd has said and written many things which we think will

add nothing to her credit as a lady, for there should be no insult taken where there is none intended.”<sup>15</sup> Another 1852 article, while not dissimilar from other articles directed toward women audiences in the press, “seemed almost deliberately placed for Shadd’s benefit” as it states “Girls do you want to get married? And do you want good husbands? If so, cease to act like fools.”<sup>16</sup> Any effort by the Bibbs to suggest in their above referenced posts that Shadd was taking personal offense where none was intended disappears with the rising salience of Shadd Cary’s plans to publish her own newspaper, the *Provincial Freeman*. In 1853, the Bibbs directly confront Shadd Cary’s political moves with a barrage of gendered insults, referring to her as “a designing individual whose duplicity is sufficient to prove a genealogical descent from the serpent that beguiled mother Eve, in the Garden of Eden.”<sup>17</sup> Indeed, this well documented battle in print reveals the complexity and vulnerability of Shadd Cary’s position as a Black woman speaking out in the nineteenth-century Black press and thus the intersectional contexts that inform and inflect the multivocality of her work.

It is imperative to note, though, that the Bibbs’ description of Shadd Cary as disreputable and unladylike coalesce with a larger pattern of gendered indictment of her transgression of nineteenth-century Black women’s discursive conventions. For example, when Shadd Cary spoke at the 1855 National Colored Convention in Philadelphia, the *British Banner* published an article asserting that “Such Conferences are not the place for woman” and “Had ‘Miss Shadd’ not had in her bosom more of the male than of the female heart, she would have felt ashamed of her position, and hastened to hide herself amid the soft obscurities of her own sex.”<sup>18</sup> In fact, even Frederick Douglass could not quite offer an unqualified statement of support for Shadd Cary. In the same breath that he praised her activist work, he critiqued her deviance from the conventional rhetoric that had come to be expected of public Black women speakers and writers, stating in a July 4, 1856 article in his own newspaper that “her tone is sometimes harsh and complaining.”<sup>19</sup> Together, these examples offer insight into Shadd Cary’s vulnerable position within the “matrix of social, political, and economic viewpoints” of her contemporary moment, a position that is crucial to our current understanding of her heteroglossic deployment of specific Black activist, nationalist, and feminist agendas. Often, nineteenth-century Black women anti-slavery activists and advocates of racial uplift such as Maria W. Stewart and Frances E. W. Harper, among many, confronted these ideologies strategically in their spiritual narratives and sentimental and domestic works. However, Shadd Cary’s tactical confrontation of respectability politics and the conventions of true womanhood emerged in a somewhat different, yet related, form.<sup>20</sup>

Contemporary scholarship has recovered Shadd Cary’s work as integral to understanding the various ways that nineteenth-century African American

women participated in their sociopolitical milieu. And yet, the boldness that led to Shadd Cary's Black (mostly) male contemporaries' gendered critiques of her work in the nineteenth century is the same boldness that continues to lead scholars to position her as apart from, rather than a part of a constellation of nineteenth-century Black women writers whose forms of social and political agitation were wide and multivalent, deep and layered. To be sure, Shadd Cary stands out as one of few identifiable Black women nationalists of the nineteenth century precisely because she eschewed the conventions of spiritual, sentimental, and domestic narratives, often employing the Black nationalist rhetoric and discursive forms utilized by African American men such as Martin Delany and James T. Holly, whose debates she intended to join. She was a woman who could be, as Jane Rhodes puts it, "headstrong, cantankerous, and abrasive in her personal and public relations."<sup>21</sup> It seems this rhetorical directness and discursive sharpness, while a quality celebrated in and even required of her male peers, caused her to stand out not only to her contemporaries, but also to current African Americanist scholars familiar with the rhetorical and literary conventions most salient in nineteenth-century Black women's work.<sup>22</sup>

Today, scholars reframe Shadd Cary's boldness, no longer as villainous or evil, but now as exceptional, anomalous, and unconventional. For example, Shadd Cary's prominence as a Black woman nationalist prompts Carla Peterson to point out that with the "notable exception of Shadd Cary," Black women did not participate in public debates on Black emigration and nationalism.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, this singularity leads Carol Conaway to emphasize that Shadd Cary and her political approach was "unconventional."<sup>24</sup> Elsewhere, Shadd Cary's employment of what Carolyn Calloway-Thomas has referred to as language "ill-suited to a woman" and Shirley Yee terms the "masculine language" of nineteenth-century Black activism and nationalism undergirds Conaway's suggestions that Shadd Cary was an "other to most of her gender" as well as to many more in political circles to which she was connected.<sup>25</sup> I posit here, that we continue to adjust the focus while reframing Shadd Cary's work. Certainly, Peterson's and Conaway's assertions ring true and require recognition, for we must not deny the specificity of Shadd Cary's voice, her work, and her Black nationalist methods. However, I underscore the risk of further marginalization embedded in labeling Shadd Cary as exceptional or unconventional. This line of thought risks obstructing the recognition of nineteenth-century African American women's political work as a genealogy and a constellation of nineteenth-century African American women who published and created public political community space for themselves and their Black women peers.

Such a focus on exceptionalism, as Jacqueline Jones Royster has argued, creates barriers that "have served as filters, screening from view the women

themselves, systematically blocking out the very possibility of a substantial crediting of their achievements, such that these achievements, when they do seep into view, are typically considered exceptional rather than as part and parcel of a pattern."<sup>26</sup> It is the pattern that I am interested in. Indeed, what more can we gain from a broader mapping of the dynamics of nineteenth-century Black women's raced and gendered political expressions when we underscore the multivocality of Shadd Cary's editorship and her writings? As Jennifer Bernhardt Steadman suggests regarding Shadd Cary's travel writing, I too suggest regarding her Black protofeminist nationalism: the form of her writing "invites us to broaden our ideas" about what comprises nineteenth-century Black women's nationalist and political discourse.<sup>27</sup> The multivocality with which she deploys the interwoven rhetoric of her public identity and her political arguments surely situates Shadd Cary as a part of a long tradition of nineteenth-century African American women speakers and writers utilizing multivocality to express their political views.

An examination of Mary Ann Shadd Cary's editorial work and her political writings as specifically heteroglossic enables readers also to position Shadd Cary well within a contingent of her own nineteenth-century Black women contemporaries rather than at odds with those who sought to reject her or position her as an outsider of her own cause. As Steadman notes, nineteenth-century Black women "participated avidly in theorizing the priorities and strategies free black communities should adopt" such that Maria W. Stewart can be understood as Shadd Cary's predecessor and Frances E. W. Harper one of her contemporaries.<sup>28</sup> Just as both Stewart's and Harper's specific narrative strategies employ multivocality to navigate the raced and gendered boundaries of their sociopolitical world, so too do Shadd Cary's editorial maneuvers and political writings engage in the multivocal tradition of nineteenth-century Black women's expressivities. In concert with landmark scholarship by Shirley Wilson Logan on nineteenth-century Black women's persuasive discourse, I foreground Shadd Cary's particular "rhetorical (and discursive) acts with an eye toward the features of that act that are shared by other rhetorical acts arising from similar but not identical rhetorical situations."<sup>29</sup> In other words, while this article focuses on Shadd Cary's heteroglossic rhetoric and discourse, it is always with the recognition that her multivocality positions her as part of a larger contingent of nineteenth-century Black women thinkers, speakers, and writers.

### *Mary Ann Shadd Cary's Heteroglossic Strategies*

Part of our responsibility in engaging with the singular and collective capacities of Mary Ann Shadd Cary's work involves anchoring that work in the multitudinous tradition of African American expression in which it

belongs. As contemporary scholars remind us, African American personal, political and social expressions defy long standing White hegemonic notions that African American artistic expression has one note, a singular sound, a fixed medium, an unrefined mode. Shadd Cary belongs to defiant tradition of Black expression that "called attention to their dexterous manipulation of independent discursive acts."<sup>30</sup> Her decisions as editor of the *Provincial Freeman* and her rhetorical and discursive maneuvers in her political essays and letters employ rhetorical structures grounded in a "simultaneity of discourse," glossolalia, and heteroglossia, which Mae G. Henderson tropes as "speaking in tongues."<sup>31</sup> In following Henderson's concept of heteroglossia, this analysis also draws from Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the dialogic, the multi-voiced movement between the unitary, literary, and individual languages incorporated in the discourse of the novel as "dialogized heteroglossia."<sup>32</sup>

However, my analysis is most directly in concert with those African Americanist and Black feminist scholars who have been theorizing the multivocality and heterogeneity of Black women's discursive forms and literary representations for decades. Black feminist and African Americanist theories of multiplicity in Black women's oral and written work including Henderson's speaking in tongues, Claudia Tate's engagement of "dialogic discourse," Joycelyn Moody's assignation of "multiple discourses," Carla Peterson's attention to "principles of hybridity" in Black community formation, and P. Gabrielle Foreman's identification of a "practice of simultaneous address" all contribute important insights and clarifications to the ways that Black women's writing itself, as Cheryl Wall states, operates as "a multivocal tradition."<sup>33</sup> This vast and growing body of scholarship has firmly positioned multiplicity at the heart of Black women's discursive and rhetorical expressivities. And, not only does Shadd Cary construct profeminist images of Black nationalism that disrupt racist and patriarchal figures of respectable womanhood, her rhetorical structuring of these images reveals a strategic interaction with multiple discursive worlds and simultaneous associations and dissociations with various aspects of her discursive communities and perceptions of her presences as a Black woman public speaker and author.<sup>34</sup> The result offers a glimpse of Shadd Cary's dynamic, ever-shifting voice and discursive dialogues in service of a heteroglossic and profeminist formulation of nineteenth-century Black nationalism.

With this in mind, I argue that Shadd Cary's strategic use of the *Provincial Freeman* as a liminal and therefore key locale for heteroglossic Black profeminist national discourse positions her well within a dynamic tradition of nineteenth-century Black women writers. Her publication of her own newspaper and her political prose rely on a simultaneity of discourse in figuring Black nationalism. This discursive simultaneity, visible vis-à-vis the



visual rhetoric of the masthead of the *Provincial Freeman* reflects a navigation of nineteenth-century politics of respectability while also upholding protofeminist nationalist politics. My analysis complicates what I see as Shadd Cary's self-effacement in her strategic founding and promotion of the *Provincial Freeman* through a front of male committee members.

Shadd Cary's self-effacement in her founding of the *Freeman* and in the visual rhetoric of the newspaper's masthead itself simultaneously articulates her Black nationalist ideology and her protofeminist political stance through a rhetoric of respectability. To this end, Rhodes's description of Shadd Cary's maneuvering in the founding of the *Freeman* is fascinating and instructive:

At a mid-December (1852) meeting of Windsor's black residents, she publicly denounced the *Voice* and called for the creation of an independent journal. Mary Ann had been wounded by the attacks on her virtue and femininity, and she deployed an elaborate—though unsuccessful—strategy to create the illusion that she was not overstepping acceptable gender boundaries. When Shadd had an idea to promote, she would discuss the matter with a few close allies, and then a meeting would be called with someone else—always male—serving as chair. The gathering would seek public approval for Shadd's initiative, thus insulating her from charges that she was a solitary oppositional voice.<sup>35</sup>

Shadd Cary's structuring of a limited public persona as founder and editor of the *Freeman* represents a heteroglossic rhetorical strategy at the heart of her nationalist stance. As Rhodes and Moira Ferguson have pointed out, Shadd Cary's self-effacement, while not disingenuous, was rather transparent, leading Rhodes to state that "it is clear that the impetus for starting a newspaper lay with Shadd," and that the Bibbs, editors of the competing paper, *Voice of the Fugitive*, "were not fooled."<sup>36</sup> Thus, Shadd Cary's rhetoric can be understood as engaging in simultaneous discourse with her Black nationalist competitors, most notably the Bibbs, and also with White and Black patriarchal discourses of nineteenth-century print politics which consistently portray print circulation masculine activity.

In fact, Shadd Cary builds her agenda for shaping Black national leadership upon these multiple discursive interactions. In other words, Shadd Cary's articulation of her concept of Black nationalism as best enacted through Black and White integrated and equal citizenship takes place when she transgresses the boundaries of race solidarity and respectable womanhood. Through the publication of her own paper, Shadd Cary at once openly opposes the separatist Black national agenda of her former friend and Black public community figure, Henry Bibb, and in this opposition she transgress-

es the bounds of respectable womanhood by stepping into the public printing sphere. Her self-effacement engages rhetorically and strategically with nineteenth-century White dominant and Black male subdominant politics of respectability which position Black women's public leadership and Black women's womanhood as incongruous. As Melina Abdullah points out, the "hypocritical process of defeminization of the Black woman (enabled) Whites to justify her oppression and exploitation. If she were seen as a woman, as feminine, there would be an implied humanity."<sup>37</sup> When we consider this disturbing paradox in terms of Shadd Cary's upholding of her respectability and femininity through the rhetorical screen of her male publishing partners, her role as Black protofeminist nationalist emerges. Shadd Cary deploys a multivalent demand for public recognition of her dignity *and* her national leadership by underscoring her womanhood while still maintaining a public newsprint presence.

Additionally, on the masthead of the *Freeman* Shadd Cary does not appear as one of the chief editors. Indeed the editors are listed as Samuel Ringgold Ward and co-editor Alex McArthur. As Jane Rhodes and Carol Conaway have pointed out, the only indication that Shadd Cary was the force behind this paper is the assertion readers could see in an editorial statement beneath the masthead that "all communications should be sent to the correspondence editor, M.A. Shadd."<sup>38</sup> Our attention to this strategic self-effacement also underscores Shadd Cary's hybrid discourse. Her name is concurrently present and obfuscated. The examples of Shadd Cary's strategic founding of the paper, and her use of visual rhetoric in the masthead discussed above, underscore the multiplicity of voices through which Shadd Cary spoke and organized as an active Black woman nationalist at the time. Shadd Cary demands public recognition of her dignity, her womanhood, and her national leadership by underscoring her femininity while still maintaining a public newsprint presence, and advancing her Black nationalist mission through the *Freeman*.

Further, Shadd Cary's heteroglossic rhetorical strategy disrupts dominant conceptions of early African American leadership that invest in iconography and the singular charismatic (male) leader. As Erica Edwards points out, "black leadership is seductively troped as the motor of black history in a way that always hides and represses the heterogeneity of the movements toward black self-determination."<sup>39</sup> Shadd Cary's heteroglossic representation of the *Freeman's* leadership positions her as both leader and obfuscated activist. She further enforces this position with an 1854 editorial responding to multiple letters to the editor that opened with the salutation "Dear Sir" and also referred to Shadd Cary as "Mr. M.A. Shadd" and "Brother Shadd." Here Shadd Cary corrects her readership: "As our friend is under a misapprehension when addressing us, as *are* many besides, a mistake occasioned, no

doubt, by the habit we have of using initials, we would simply correct, for the future, our error, by giving here, the name in full, (Mary A. Shadd) as we do not like the Mr. and Esq., by which we are so often addressed."<sup>40</sup> Here Shadd Cary's multivocality emerges in her use of the first person plural "we" while referring also to herself. In this individual statement she delineates ostensibly a female collective, all while maintaining a masthead which obfuscates her role as editor. From her visible position behind the screen of male editorship, she argues that Black national salience depends upon the presence, rather than the silence, of Black women in the nineteenth century.

Shadd Cary's approach to Black nationalism and racial uplift serves as a model that broadens our current lexicon of nineteenth-century African American women's literary and political expressivities. And, the more closely we are attuned to the heteroglossic and simultextual capacities of her rhetoric and discourse, the more clearly we see the ways that her work exposes hegemonic notions that Black women's oral and written expressivities can be characterized as hitting one singular, tension free note. Well beyond the large scale of the *Provincial Freeman's* publication, masthead, and editorial leadership, Shadd Cary's political prose often utilizes heteroglossic national rhetoric. These rhetorical structures firmly situate Shadd Cary's Black national politics in her intersectional understanding of Black community formation. In her 1854 article, "The Humbug of Reform," published in the *Freeman*, Shadd Cary indicts White abolitionists' arguments as asserting that "the land of (the Black man's) forefathers would be the best country for him."<sup>41</sup> She further invokes the words of Sojourner Truth, stating that "America is wanted for those whom Sojourner Truth delights in calling the 'Shaxon [sic] race'."<sup>42</sup> She concurrently emphasizes the fact that "sensible people will not allow themselves to be caught up with the chaff of an empty profession, made by men calling themselves abolitionists."<sup>43</sup> Shadd Cary's theorizing of a Black national identity is decidedly feminist, as she counters feminization of women as irrational by insisting that sensible people, herself and Sojourner Truth included, would not join ranks with White abolitionists who do not have Black people's interests in freedom and American citizenship in mind. As Barbara Christian points out regarding 'progressive' White literary critics who claim to have Black women's (literary) interests at heart in their theorizing, "they always harkened back to the masterpieces of the past, again reifying the very texts they said they were deconstructing. Increasingly, [...] *their way, their terms, their approaches* remained central."<sup>44</sup> Over a century earlier, Shadd Cary demonstrated a deep awareness of Christian's concerns, speaking for the rational capabilities of Black men *and* women in fighting for the abolition of slavery within the oppressions imposed even by White people allegedly advocating abolition. In critiquing the operations of White abolitionists by suggesting their motives are not only suspect, but also poor-

ly reasoned, Shadd Cary employs a heteroglossic paradigm—simultaneously contesting masculinist constructs of women as irrational and White efforts to control Black expressivities—to sustain a multipronged narrative of Black racial uplift against both sexism and racism.

Additionally, Shadd Cary's heteroglossic rhetorical maneuvers in "The Humbug of Reform" emerge not only through shifting modes of rhetorical address, and also by employing the perspective of those whose ideologies she opposes. In other words, rather than directly addressing those whom she critiques, Shadd Cary writes as though from their point of view to embody their argument in order to more vehemently hold those nationalists she disagrees with in contempt. This rhetorical maneuver is heteroglossic in that Shadd Cary speaks in the voice of her opposition to create a dialogic through which she can engage the complex debates of Black nation building. For example, Shadd Cary articulates the ideological position of abolitionists whom she critiques, stating, as though in their voice "it (Negro Slavery) works positive evil to the white classes, and, for our own profit, it should be abolished; the inherent wickedness of the system is lost to sight, but *'our'* interests as white freemen, may not be subserved by its continuance."<sup>45</sup> Shadd Cary shifts voices again in order to articulate her own ideological conception of Black nationalism, whatever the popular objections: "we want that the colored man should live in America—should 'plant his tree' deep in the soil, and whether he turns white, or his neighbors turn black by reason of the residence, is of no moment. He must have his rights—must not be driven to Africa, nor obliged to stay in the States if he desires to go elsewhere."<sup>46</sup> The masculinist imagery of planting one's tree and the male pronouns are profoundly undercut by the identity of the women expressing such a mission. In its heteroglossic composition, Shadd Cary's Black nationalist rhetoric represents a bold contestation of her contemporaries' figures of abolition and political reform, by foremost figuring a Black woman's public and political voice at the center of the debate.

Shadd Cary further excoriates African American political interests in Haiti in her 1861 "Open Letter to the *Anglo-African*." Her multivocal rhetorical address underscores her conception of a protofeminist US Black nationalism in an argument against emigration to Haiti. Henderson's speaking in tongues and P. Gabrielle Foreman's simultextuality both enable an analysis of Shadd Cary's rhetorical argument against emigration to Haiti as supporting Black protofeminist nationalism. As Foreman differentiates, Henderson's speaking in tongues focuses on Black women authors' "textual expression of multiple subjectivity" and the "ability to speak in the multiple languages of public discourse" while Foreman's concept of simultextuality attends to instances where nineteenth-century Black women authors' tropes are simultextual insofar as these tropes reach "audiences who are formed by

different moments of 'shaped time' that inflect their literary experiences."<sup>47</sup> I suggest that Shadd Cary's rhetoric evinces both of these theoretical concepts pertaining to Black women's rhetorical expressivities. Locating where and how Shadd Cary does this enables a more precise identification of the ways in which Shadd Cary's texts operate as a part of the multivocal tradition of Black women's works while also advancing protofeminist Black national ideations.

If, as Henderson offers, Black feminist heteroglossic discourse realizes "the self-inscription of black womanhood, and the establishment of a dialogue of discourses with the other(s)," I begin by suggesting that this form of heteroglossic rhetoric is precisely what Shadd Cary's "Open Letter" brings about while arguing against African Americans' interests in Haiti.<sup>48</sup> Henderson locates speaking in tongues where Black women's expressivities both disrupt a hegemonic system or discursive field and subsequently respond, re-write, or revise dominant hegemonic narratives to allow for a rereading or a shift in attention to the "other side of the story."<sup>49</sup> Shadd Cary's rhetorical interaction with her audience(s) in her "Open Letter" carries out both the disruption and revision Henderson theorizes as a "progressive model for black and female utterance."<sup>50</sup> Shadd Cary writes the "Open Letter" to the independent Black weekly newspaper and its editor, Thomas Hamilton, to contest Black nationalists and reform activists' support for African Americans' emigration to Haiti. Seeing this interest in Haiti as a "bitter pill of colonization sophistry" disguised as a "sweet morsel" to Black Americans, Shadd Cary exclaims "I have a dim recollection of one noble man called William Lloyd Garrison in such peril. Why cannot there be a strong and manly voice now? [...] why does not somebody speak OUT?"<sup>51</sup> This invective deploys two concurrent disruptions: In one register of her argument, Shadd Cary intervenes in a powerful dominant discourse proffered by Black and White men alike to look to Haiti for Black national empowerment. In a second, though not secondary register, Shadd Cary disrupts the hegemonic patriarchal narrative that she foregrounds in her demand for a strong and manly voice. Shadd Cary's invective calls attention to this disruption as the powerful voice posing a revolutionary Black nationalism is, undeniably, her own.

Shadd Cary's Black protofeminist nationalism also emerges through her employment of simultextual rhetoric in her "Open Letter." In the sense that Foreman's simultextuality identifies as simultextual those literatures that present "interpretive paths that offer equally substantive, often competing, simultaneously rendered reading modalities," Mary Ann Shadd Cary's politically charged contestation of nationalist plans for African Americans' emigration to Haiti is profoundly simultextual.<sup>52</sup> The "Open Letter" appeals to multiple reception communities and alights on different moments and signifiers

of "shaped time," figuring Shadd Cary's own Black national ideology. For example, Shadd Cary's crediting of independent Black print periodicals with powerful influence over nineteenth-century Black nationalist movements offers simultaneous interpretive paths depending upon the reception community. Her "Open Letter" aligns the rise in Black nationalist plans of emigration to Haiti as proportionate to the lapse in publication of the *Anglo-African Magazine* during Thomas Hamilton's transition of the magazine publication to a weekly newspaper, the *Weekly Anglo-African* 1860-1861. This simultextual address reaches multiple reception communities including White supremacist and dominant White discursive communities marketing emigration as the new face on the old rhetoric of the American Colonization Society, African American male nationalist communities that espoused Haiti as a Black nationalist ideal, and African American communities who either never subscribed or stopped subscribing to independent Black publications. Thus, Shadd Cary's "Open Letter" carries out a simultextuality that at once accesses multiple reception communities and positions her own Black profeminist nationalist ideology as that by which her audiences might rectify their mistaken or misguided nationalisms.

Further, the simultextuality of Shadd Cary's vehement critique of White abolitionist and emigration advocate, James Redpath, outlines, by contrast, her own profeminist Black nationalist ideology, one based in collaboration between men and women, focused on integrated education, and equal opportunity for property ownership. She characterizes Redpath as a scurrilous leader who capitalizes on the revolutionary histories of African Americans and radical White abolitionists such as John Brown, but whose emigration plans are contrary to the best interests of Black Americans: "a few agents, using the name of Brown and talking Redpath have, by working upon an imaginative and hitherto overworked people, set afloat stories of genial skies, plenty to eat, and little to do" in Haiti.<sup>53</sup> Given the various audiences this statement addresses, the path of interpretative modality for each reception community certainly differs. And the necessary interpretation of the simultextual aspects of Shadd Cary's rhetoric enables also a perspective of the multiple strands of her concept of US Black nationalism. So, insofar as Shadd Cary's statement critiques those abolitionists who follow Redpath's mission for African Americans' emigration to Haiti, Shadd Cary's nationalist ideology is decidedly grounded in North American soil. Insofar as her statement compels Black readers and abolitionists to differentiate between Redpath and Brown so as to emulate the more radical Brown, Shadd Cary's nationalist ideology is one founded not only on integrationist politics but also Black Americans' active resistance to unequal rights. She is, after all, the woman whom renowned Black nationalist Martin Delany compelled to recruit Black soldiers in the Civil War.<sup>54</sup> And, insofar as Shadd Cary is a Black

woman writing an open letter critiquing the actions of White and Black men, her multivocality figures herself and women such as herself at the center of nation building.

### *Conclusion*

Thus, foregrounding the heteroglossic and simultextual capaciousness of Shadd Cary's editorship and political writing reframes prior positioning of Shadd Cary as anomalous in her discursive convergence from the many Black women writers who confronted their audiences "within the constraints of nineteenth-century gender etiquette."<sup>55</sup> Rather than codifying Shadd Cary as singular, exceptional, and other, refocusing our attention on Shadd Cary's multivocality situates her as one part of a dynamic and varied collective of nineteenth-century African American women writers and speakers who collectively disrupted conventionality according to the specific constraints of their contexts. For rather than setting her apart, Shadd Cary's struggles against marginalization echo the ostracism that Marilyn Richardson notes Maria W. Stewart lived out in fleeing Boston, that Frances E. W. Harper experienced in statements catalogued by William Still that "she is a man" and "she is not colored, she is painted," and to be sure, that many nineteenth-century Black protofeminist nationalists faced as they lived.<sup>56</sup> As Kathy Glass points out, many early African American women, "[f]orced to operate in marginalized national spaces because of their politics and their perceived social identities [...] developed heterogeneous concepts of community."<sup>57</sup> Thus, suggesting that Shadd Cary or any of these women were unconventional, rather than perhaps part of a tradition of early African American protofeminist nationalism we simply do not know enough about yet, limits the questions that we can ask.

Reading and viewing Shadd Cary with this focus teaches us simultaneously about nineteenth-century African American women's specificity while also instructing us about the multivalent threads that connect Black women's works. Foregrounding this duality of specific and collective in our approach to African American women's texts challenges the flattened perceptions of Black women's identities and expressivities in the nineteenth century that too easily pervade our contemporary reflections. It enriches our classrooms and our scholarship, offering one more way to ensure that Black lives are considered with all of the complexities and tensions denied them in White supremacist contexts.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Jane Rhodes, "At the Boundaries of Abolitionism, Feminism, and Black Nationalism: The Activism of Mary Ann Shadd Cary," in *Women's Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery in the Era of Emancipation*, ed. Kathryn Kish Sklar et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 351.

<sup>2</sup> See Jane Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary: The Black Press and Protest in the Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998); Jim Bearden and Linda Jean Butler, *Shadd: The Life and Times of Mary Ann Shadd Cary* (Toronto: NC Press, 1977); Peter Raymond et al., *Breaking the Ice: The Story of Mary Ann Shadd*, directed by Sylvia Sweeny (Icarus Films, 1997) DVD; Joycelyn Moody, "'We Wish to Plead Our Own Cause': Independent Antebellum African American Literature, 1840-1865," in *The Cambridge History of African American Literature*, ed. Maryemma Graham et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 134-153; Carol B. Conaway, "Mary Ann Shadd Cary: A Visionary of the Black Press," in *Black Women's Intellectual Traditions: Speaking Their Minds*, ed. Kristin Waters et al. (Burlington: University of Vermont Press, 2007), 216-245.

<sup>3</sup> I use the term protofeminist, rather than feminist to acknowledge that while the nineteenth-century African American women's works that I address portray Black women as both individually and collectively struggling for autonomy against patriarchal and racist ideologies, their works were not yet part of a temporally and formally identified Black women's movement in the same way that we recognize Black feminist movements from the mid-to-late twentieth century.

<sup>4</sup> Hazel V. Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 6.

<sup>5</sup> Shirley J. Yee, "Finding A Place: Mary Ann Shadd Cary and the Dilemmas of Black Migration to Canada, 1850-1870," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 18 (1997): 11.

<sup>6</sup> Carol B. Conaway, "Racially Integrated Education: The Antebellum Thought of Mary Ann Shadd Cary and Frederick Douglass," in *Life Stories: Exploring Issues in Educational History Through Biography*, eds. Linda C. Morice et al. (Charlotte: Information Age Publishing, Inc., 2014), 3-11. Conaway's chapter provides nuanced insights into the ways that Shadd Cary's social class standing, access to education, and lighter skin afforded her certain social and economic advantages even as she simultaneously endured discrimination based on her race and gender.

<sup>7</sup> Yee, "Finding a Place," 1.

<sup>8</sup> Mia Bay, "The Battle for Womanhood Is the Battle for Race: Black Women and Nineteenth-Century Racial Thought," in *Toward an Intellectual History of Black Women*, ed. Mia Bay et al. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 75-92.

<sup>9</sup> Claudia Tate, *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire: The Black Heroine's Text at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 9.

<sup>10</sup> Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary*, 73.

<sup>11</sup> Moody, "'We Wish to Plead Our Own Cause,'" 139. For the foundations of respectability politics with regard to race and gender see Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race" in *Signs* (1992): 272. And, for contemporary development of these foundations see



Susana M. Morris, *Close Kin and Distant Relatives: The Paradox of Respectability in Black Women's Literature* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014).

<sup>12</sup> Henry Bibb was a previously enslaved man who fled north from Kentucky. Mary (Miles) Bibb was a free born African American woman who married Henry Bibb in 1848 and fled to Canada with him after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. The Bibbs became entrenched in anti-slavery activism in Canada through their newspaper, the *Voice of the Fugitive*, as well as their separatist education and settlement projects.

<sup>13</sup> Shirley J. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828-1860* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 70.

<sup>14</sup> Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary*, 54.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>18</sup> Carla L. Peterson, *"Doers of the Word": African-American Women Speakers & Writers in the North (1830-1880)* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 100.

<sup>19</sup> Douglass, *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, July 4 1856. For more on the complex activist and ideological relationship between Mary Ann Shadd Cary and Frederick Douglass see Conaway, "Racially Integrated Education," 3-21 and Ousmane K. Power-Greene, *Against Wind and Tide: The African American Struggle against the Colonization Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 147-148.

<sup>20</sup> Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (1966): 151-174.

<sup>21</sup> Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary*, xi.

<sup>22</sup> Power-Greene, *Against Wind and Tide*, 9.

<sup>23</sup> Peterson, *"Doers of the Word,"* 112.

<sup>24</sup> Conaway, "Mary Ann Shadd Cary," 229.

<sup>25</sup> Carolyn Calloway-Thomas, "Cary, Mary Ann Shadd," in *Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. Darlene Clark-Hine et al., (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 225; Yee, "Finding a Place," 5; Conaway, "Mary Ann Shadd Cary," 229.

<sup>26</sup> Jacqueline Jones Royster, *Traces of a Stream: Literary and Social Change Among African American Women* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), 4.

<sup>27</sup> Jennifer Bernhardt Steadman, *Traveling Economies: American Women's Travel Writing* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2007), 86.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>29</sup> Shirley Wilson Logan, *We Are Coming: The Persuasive Discourse of Nineteenth-Century Black Women* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), xiv.

<sup>30</sup> Moody, "We Wish to Plead Our Own Cause'," 135.

<sup>31</sup> Mae Gwendolyn Henderson, "Speaking in Tongues: Dialogics, Dialectics, and the Black Woman Writer's Literary Tradition," in *Changing Our Own Words: Essays on Criticism, Theory, and Writing By Black Women*, ed. Cheryl Wall (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 21-22.

<sup>32</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson et al., (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 272.

<sup>33</sup> Tate, *Domestic Allegories*, 108; Moody, "We Wish to Plead Our Own Cause," 137; Peterson, "Doers of the Word," 9; P. Gabrielle Foreman, *Activist Sentiments: Reading Black Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 4; Cheryl Wall, *Worrying the Line: Black Women Writers, Lineage, and Literary Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 16.

<sup>34</sup> For more on associative and dissociative rhetoric see especially Shirley Wilson Logan, *We Are Coming: The Persuasive Discourse of Nineteenth-Century Black Women* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 44-69.

<sup>35</sup> Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary*, 70.

<sup>36</sup> Moira Ferguson, "Mary Ann Shadd Cary," in *Nine Black Women: An Anthology of Nineteenth-Century Writers from the United States, Canada, Bermuda, and the Caribbean*, ed. Moira Ferguson (New York: Routledge, 1998), 204; Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary*, 70.

<sup>37</sup> Melina Abdullah, "The Emergence of a Black Feminist Leadership Model: African-American Women and Political Activism in the Nineteenth Century" in *Black Women's Intellectual Traditions: Speaking Their Minds*, ed. Kristin Waters et al. (Lebanon, NH: University of Vermont Press and University of New England Press, 2007), 330.

<sup>38</sup> *Provincial Freeman*, May 27, 1854.

<sup>39</sup> Erica R. Edwards, *Charisma and the Fictions of Black Leadership* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 11.

<sup>40</sup> Shadd Cary, *Provincial Freeman*, August 26 1854.

<sup>41</sup> Shadd Cary, "The Humbug of Reform," *Provincial Freeman*, May 27, 1854.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Barbara Christian, "The Race for Theory," in *The Black Feminist Reader*, eds. Joy James et al. (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 16.

<sup>45</sup> Shadd Cary, "The Humbug of Reform," *Provincial Freeman*, May 27, 1854.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Foreman, *Activist Sentiments*, 7-8.

<sup>48</sup> Henderson, "Speaking in Tongues," 21-22.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>51</sup> Shadd Cary, "Open Letter to the Weekly Anglo-African," *Weekly Anglo-African*, September 28, 1861.

<sup>52</sup> Foreman, *Activist Sentiments*, 20.

<sup>53</sup> Shadd Cary, "Open Letter to the Weekly Anglo-African," *Weekly Anglo-African*, September 28, 1861.

<sup>54</sup> Raymont et al., *Breaking the Ice*, DVD.

<sup>55</sup> Mia Bay, "The Battle for Womanhood," 77.

<sup>56</sup> Marilyn Richardson, *Maria W. Stewart, America's First Black Woman Political Writer: Essays and Speeches* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); William Still, *The Underground Railroad: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, and Letters &C., Narrating the Hardships, Hairbreadth Escapes and Death Struggles of the Slaves in Their Efforts for Freedom* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872), 552.

<sup>57</sup> Kathy L. Glass, *Courting Communities; Black Female Nationalism and "Syncretic-Nationalism" in the Nineteenth-Century North* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 3.

## **Interview: Lora Helvie-Mason**

**Lora Helvie-Mason**  

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*Tarleton State University*

*Conducted by Assistant Editor Alison Reeves*

### *Editor's Note*

The International Society for Educational Biography and its journal, *Vitae Scholasticae*, have been fortunate to attract graduate students and emerging scholars as well as members of long standing. On the invitation of *Vitae Scholasticae*, Lora Helvie-Mason agreed to an interview in which she reflected on her decade-long affiliation with ISEB. She joined the organization as a graduate student at Ball State University and continued as an assistant professor at Southern University at New Orleans. Today she is Associate Professor of Communication Studies and Director of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at Tarleton State University. Helvie-Mason is also Treasurer of ISEB, a member of the Executive Committee, and a *Vitae Scholasticae* author.



*Lora Helvie-  
Mason*

**AR: How did you first become involved with ISEB?**

LH-M: I was a doctoral student at Ball State University, and my advisor, Dr. Thalia Mulvihill, was a member of ISEB's executive committee. She partnered her class with ISEB on some activities that would allow us to explore educational biography and learn about academic conferences. Dr. Mulvihill's approach made the work really engaging. There were opportunities to explore and be dynamic in our own interests, and we weren't so tightly reined that we viewed the work as merely an assignment. As we became

more interested in the people we were researching, and the methods we were exploring—even some auto/ethnography approaches—I got hooked. When Dr. Mulvihill started to talk about the upcoming ISEB conference, I worked closely with her. As her graduate assistant, I helped do the layout and design the conference agenda. I read all of the presentation titles, and something just woke up inside of me about the idea of biography, stories, narrative, and narrative inquiry. Then an opportunity came. We had some good graduate student funding for travel, and I was able to present at ISEB. I was terrified, but it was such a friendly group that graduate students had a safe place to explore and learn and grow. So my first conference felt like going home. I was talking to people who believed and understood why history and education are so entwined and what that means for biographical studies. And that is a little taste of how I got started, and gosh, it has been over 10 years at this point, and I've been really honored to continue my involvement.

**AR: What drew you to biography, and how has it enriched your academic work?**

LH-M: I always viewed the study of biography as the fun part of my academic research. My field is communication studies, which includes a lot of technology, social mediated communication, computer mediated communication, and pedagogical studies. I focus on how are we engaging in the classroom, the issue of immediacy, and how are we serving underrepresented populations. I have always seen communication studies as a part of education, although perhaps a little more mechanical. As I became more involved with biography, it was just the same story, playing out through different media. So I was able to link the core of my research with more historical, foundational aspects of education and pedagogy. And it just created a symbiotic relationship between my own studies and who I am, what I enjoy, and how I research and engage within the classroom. In biography, I can feel close to people I have never met or who have been deceased for a long time. Studying people and becoming part of their lives—even when there is a 100 to 200 year gap—creates a link in history to what you are researching and doing in the classroom at that moment. And to me, that is the exciting part about biography. You feel linked and connected to all aspects of your field. It creates a depth.

**AR: You have written biographical and autobiographical essays that have been published in *Vitae Scholasticae*. How do you envision they would be useful to readers?**

LH-M: Lucy Bailey and I wrote an autobiographical essay for *Vitae* on the experiences of two junior faculty on the road to tenure. I hope the article has helped new faculty find agency and achieve balance amid the “push and

pull” of the various demands of academic life. I also published a biographical essay in *Vitae* on Marion Talbot (1858-1948), co-founder of the American Association of University Women and dean of women at the University of Chicago. I became a little bit obsessed with understanding some things I could not figure out through archival research and through others’ writing about her life. I learned that you can’t always understand why a biographical subject did something in that moment. Without the lens of the actual person, you may use an interpretive frame to figure out what was happening. If we use a modern interpretive frame, we are assuming a lot, since things were very different then and perceptions were also different. It helps me to see these different layers, and I have tried to convey that point to readers.

**AR: For a number of years you have served as Treasurer of ISEB and also as a member of the Executive Committee. How has the organization changed over the years?**

LH-M: I think the organization has really developed an interesting focus on current trends and events within the last several years. In conference presentations I have noticed more connections between historical concepts and current trends, as well as explorations of how these connections inform biography, autobiography, and other types of qualitative research. For example, some paper presentations at ISEB conferences in the last couple of years have dealt with social justice issues and have centered around post-Ferguson initiatives. We are seeing new academic approaches, especially among graduate students and newer scholars, that do not focus on a single biographical subject. These scholars are finding inroads through a current event that leads them to history. And that to me is really compelling, when we can find a moment we are curious about and then trace it back through the person, or the impetus, or the moment that matters in history and explore that.

We have also embraced technology and some new inroads for sharing the cool work we are doing. That involved creating and working with the website, using social media pages and Twitter, Facebook, and Google Communities; we have some opportunities to engage with some of the international part of the International Society for Educational Biography, even those who can’t make it to the conference, and we have found that it has been really engaging for connecting with *Vitae*, and the articles, and linking to the Society as a whole. The technology piece is something that I like. I typically will research for a conference and if they don’t have some of those pieces, I am going to wonder about attending, or getting my information, so I feel that has been a great change.

We have a Google Community for *Vitae*, and we have tried to raise awareness on our new website. Now you can Google *Vitae*, and you have an opportunity to have a direct link, which makes the website more searchable

than it was previously. Now we should be popping up at the top of search engines and should be easily encountered. We are not on Instagram, but we are on Twitter and Facebook. I think Facebook is outdated but a lot of people still use it, and they look at the Facebook page, which says things like “we are now accepting articles, please see our notes to authors, here is our submission information,” and it will link back to the page of the website.

**AR: What innovations do you envision in the future?**

LH-M: I would really love to start recording or archiving since we are so focused on biography and looking at history and respecting history. I would like to start doing that a little bit more with our conference as a whole. We are over 30 years old and have some members who have been with us the entire time. Losing that information about our own history would be tragic. We need to make sure that we are maintaining our own record keeping in the way that we wish some of our biographical subjects had maintained their records. I would like to do that. I would like to record, archive, and link all of that to our website, so you could see snippets of presentations, and we could maybe share authors reading parts of their articles in *Vitae*. I think that there is a tangibility to that type of access that creates a human link with one another and builds the relationship. ISEB is all about the relationships with folks who have similar passion. If we have accessible articles, and if we have snippets of authors approaching and reading and talking, all of a sudden we go from a flat web presence to a dimensional web presence. So we can live what we are talking about, and if people can hear the passion in the voices of the people who are presenting and writing, they will want to submit to the journal.

**AR: What keeps you coming back to ISEB?**

LH-M: The people and the topics keep me coming back. When we see each other we ask about how research is going on a topic someone may have been working on for decades, or at least the last several years. I don't want to miss it! I want to hear what new things people have uncovered, or how their biographical research links to another concept. We have so many really, really, focused scholars who are doing profound work, and it is an honor to sit and listen to them read their papers, and have a discussion with them about the way they are doing research. One year, for example, Lucy Townsend talked about going through obituaries, emphasizing all of the rich work that can be mined by reading what is said and noticing what is not said. I remember, as a young scholar, finding all these little tidbits on ways to research to be very useful. I felt that every year I found a new golden ticket to the next step of making my research more involved and more detailed. And every year there were beautiful moments where my research was enhanced if I imple-

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mented something that someone else was talking about. I don't get that at every research conference that I go to. ISEB is the one conference where I walk away with the biggest notebook and the most opportunities to grow my own personal relationship with research.

**AR: Is there anything else you would like to add?**

LH-M: I would encourage folks to pull a copy of *Vitae*, read a few articles, and if you have questions, contact members of the editorial board or look at the International Society for Educational Biography's website. If you are not sure, you can certainly come to a conference and learn more about ISEB, and see the work that people are doing. I also would encourage folks to collaborate. That is something we don't do enough of in biographical research. There are a lot of people looking at the same points in history, or at similar people in history. Why don't we talk to each other? So don't be afraid to connect with one another and to dive in and explore some new topics or avenues for your research. ISEB is a great place for that.

**Book Review:**  
**McCluskey, *A Forgotten Sisterhood:***  
***Pioneering Black Women Educators and***  
***Activists in the Jim Crow South***

Donyell L. Roseboro

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Audrey Thomas McCluskey. *A Forgotten Sisterhood: Pioneering Black Women Educators and Activists in the Jim Crow South*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014. ISBN 978-1-4422-1138-4. 180 pages.

In *A Forgotten Sisterhood: Pioneering Black Women Educators and Activists in the Jim Crow South* by Audrey Thomas McCluskey, we enter the world of four Black women educators who worked with missionary zeal to construct resilient educational spaces in segregated times. From the outset, McCluskey frames these educators as pioneering activists with remarkable networking, communication, and teaching skills. Theirs was a classroom with purpose, connected to a larger history and driven towards a hopeful future. Their stories are not new, nor are they entirely forgotten. Their sisterhood, however, has been under-researched. McCluskey's text establishes this sisterhood as the vehicle by which these Black women educators transformed a nation.

McCluskey's text chronicles the interwoven lives of Lucy Craft Laney (1854-1933), Mary McLeod Bethune (1875-1955), Nannie Helen Burroughs (1879-1961), and Charlotte Hawkins Brown (1883-1961). The first chapter summarily captures the history of the Jim Crow South, yet McCluskey carefully constructs a collective narrative that counters the singularly oppressive history typically told of this era. She does so framing these educators as witnesses, cast by circumstance but visionaries of possibilities. McCluskey illuminates ways that gender, race, class, and geography intersected to inspire



these educator activists. They operated with a clarity of purpose that cleared persistent obstacles, forged unpredictable alliances, and demanded unparalleled excellence. McCluskey's focus on their overlapping narratives forces us to revisit their histories from intersecting pivot points, the points at which their individual work became collective and simultaneous.

In chapters two and three, McCluskey chronicles the work of Lucy Craft Laney. Laney founded Haines Normal and Industrial Institute in Augusta, Georgia, in 1883. In her drive to locate resources for the school, she secured a \$10,000 grant from the Presbyterian Church and \$1,000 from Madam C.J. Walker. As her social network grew, so did her financial support. The intersection of these two spheres, social and financial, strengthened her activism. Hers was an activism centered on motherhood for racial uplift. She fundamentally believed that Black women could raise a generation in freedom with an ethic of care that demanded justice. Her influence on other Black women educators, including Mary McLeod Bethune, fueled an evolving activist educator spirit that vehemently opposed segregation, telling her students and staff, "don't pay to be kicked."<sup>1</sup>

McCluskey summarizes the work of Mary McLeod Bethune in chapter four. Bethune, who opened the Daytona Literary and Industrial Institute,<sup>2</sup> shared Laney's commitment to educating young Black women. Her welcome message for girls was "Come in, little girl, we've been expecting you. I hope you'll be happy with us."<sup>3</sup> This message captures the essence of McCluskey's analysis—Bethune, Laney, Burroughs and Brown educated with a core purpose to raise race leaders, to nurture those leaders in tumultuous times, and to build extended kinship networks that would construct a culture of excellence across geographic boundaries. Bethune's message was much more than a greeting. It was a call to action from one Black woman to another. It evoked a sense of belonging and expectation, both central components to the mission of Bethune's school. McCluskey's analysis captures Bethune's importance as an "institution builder," one who constructed educational spaces beholden to specific collective values.<sup>4</sup> Bethune used school space and collective values to inspire students, garner donor support, and transform the political landscape.

As McCluskey continues to narrate the lives of these women, she introduces Charlotte Hawkins Brown, close friend to Mary McLeod Bethune. It is this friendship that McCluskey highlights (through chapters five and seven) as important to both women's emotional fortitude, innovative practice, and political savviness. Through their correspondence, we learn of their genuine support of one another. In those letters, they question, critique, and defy a world that otherwise devalued them. In their competitiveness, they pushed farther, demanded more, and fiercely believed that their collective work mattered. Brown, who founded Palmer Memorial Institute in Sedalia, North

Carolina, came to be known for her persistent emphasis on etiquette. Though students valued the academic training they received at Palmer, they vividly recall her talks on the social graces. While Brown's politics of respectability would not survive the coming of the Black Power movement, in hindsight, McCluskey argues that we must not label her any less political. She, like Laney and Bethune, established elaborate support networks, raised incredible amounts of money from White and Black donors, and shaped the lives of her graduates in ways they would recount as alumni.

Finally, McCluskey describes the life and work of Nannie Helen Burroughs. As founder of the National Training School for Women and Girls in Washington, D.C., Burroughs wanted the school to be a "beacon of light for Black women."<sup>5</sup> Though the school's curriculum included both classical and vocational training, Burroughs also educated with clear Christian principles. She was a prolific writer who penned editorials that directly confronted the absurdity of segregation. Her insistence that her school be centrally located in Washington, D.C. demonstrates her belief that the education of Black women could become a unifying endeavor. Such a school could bring people together from different regions of the country just as it educated them to return to those communities as change agents. In the end, McCluskey characterizes Burroughs as unendingly resourceful, always political, and forever committed to education as a medium of justice.

Although the text covers the more widely known versions of their narratives—the founding of each of their respective schools, their political alliances, and their gendered ethos—McCluskey layers that scope with more substantive history related to their respective fundraising efforts and cultivation of solidarity through the written word. In each of these spheres, Laney, Bethune, Burroughs, and Brown worked with political finesse and absolute purpose. They understood financial security as a means to political impact. And they understood their written networking as much more than letter writing. Theirs was a layered network of support that connected them to each other, allowed for strategic planning, and begrudgingly embraced critique—their letters demonstrate their remarkable capacity to cross boundaries, disrupt discourse, and, ultimately, to create more in community.

This is a powerfully compact text appropriate for undergraduate or graduate classes. Given the brevity in the biographies, students will need some background knowledge of the educators. The strength of this text, however, comes from McCluskey's telling of the sisterhood—the intricate support networks forged by these women. Although McCluskey illuminates the narrative of this sisterhood, it is a narrative that needs additional research. McCluskey reminds us that while we must continue to extend our primary source explorations to construct deeper biographies of these women, we must also examine more carefully the ways their lives intersected. We are who

we are as a people and as a country not because of who these women were in their singularity, but because of who they came to be together.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Britt Edward Cottingham, "The Burden of the Educated Colored Woman: Lucy Laney and the Haines Institute 1886-1933," (master's thesis, Georgia State University, 1995), 79 as cited in Audrey Thomas McCluskey, *Pioneering Black Women Educators and Activists in the Jim Crow South* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 25.

<sup>2</sup> The school later became the Daytona Educational and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls.

<sup>3</sup> Rackham Holt, "Mary McLeod Bethune: A Biography—A Life Devoted to the Cause of Racial Equality," New York: Doubleday, 1964, 59 as cited in Audrey Thomas McCluskey, *Pioneering Black Women Educators and Activists in the Jim Crow South* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 59.

<sup>4</sup> McCluskey, *Pioneering Black Women Educators and Activists in the Jim Crow South*, 69.

<sup>5</sup> Audrey Thomas McCluskey, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible: Black Women School Founders and Their Mission," *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society*, 21 no. 1, 403-26 as cited in Audrey Thomas McCluskey, *Pioneering Black Women Educators and Activists in the Jim Crow South* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 102.

**Book Review:**  
**Eaton, *The Education of Alice M. Jordan:***  
***Navigating A Career in***  
***Children's Librarianship***

Leslie Holt

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*University of Washington*

Eaton, Gale. *The Education of Alice M. Jordan: Navigating A Career in Children's Librarianship*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014. 234 pages. ISBN 978-1-4422-3647-9 (paper) ISBN 978-1-4422-3648-6 (ebook).

*The Education of Alice M. Jordan* describes the life and work of a pioneer in children's librarianship. Jordan lived from 1870 to 1960. She grew up in Maine and Massachusetts and went to work at Boston Public Library in 1890 and remained in its employ until 1940. During this time the "modern" public library emerged and children's services became recognized as an essential library service. Library workers became professional with more education and better pay, and female library workers became respected leaders in the field. *The Education of Alice M. Jordan* uses a chronological format to trace Jordan's personal growth, the growth of librarianship, the history of Boston Public Library, the emergence of children's librarianship, and library education as well as the changing role of women in the workplace. Eaton has used a biographic format to honor an individual leader as well as to discuss the history of libraries in the United States.

The book draws on extensive archival research including Jordan's correspondence, documents from the Boston Public Library, the archives of the American Library Association and correspondence and articles from *Horn Book Magazine*. She also interviewed Jordan's students. Eaton adds appropriate demographic information so the reader better understands the context of

events of each decade.

This is a book that is first about Alice Jordan herself. Eaton makes that clear when she is speculating about events or feelings of the protagonist. Eaton starts with the private and family life of her subject as it resonates with her personally, and that is the way she organizes the information on nineteenth and twentieth century librarianship. This works well as the reader is drawn into events in context to the times and the person and is less likely to judge public or children's libraries with today's values. The weakness to this approach is that though Jordan was an avid correspondent, she was a private person. As Eaton says, Jordan navigated through life "in a quiet way" so her private life seems boring compared to her professional life. One is less interested in Jordan's summers in Maine than the founding of *Horn Book Magazine*.

Jordan's professional life was a gem, though. She was a good and patient manager, she was hugely knowledgeable about both children and their literature, and she was a tireless multitasker. Jordan helped form the modern Children's Department at the Boston Public Library. She was an early adopter of storytelling as a way public libraries could introduce books to children. She taught at the Simmons Library School and helped found the training program at Boston Public. She worked with schools to foster cooperation among teachers and librarians and never missed an opportunity to improve children's lives through reading and library use. Jordan also worked tirelessly to form and maintain professional organizations that supported knowledge of children's literature and library work with children. She was president of the Children's Services Section of the American Library Association, she formed the New England Round Table of Children's Librarians, and she reviewed children's books for many different publications, most notably *Horn Book*.

The heart of the book is the work that Jordan did to move public libraries in general and the education and service to children specifically. What fun to read about how alike library issues in the early twentieth century are to those we are dealing with a hundred years later! Any librarian who has worked in a big city public library will sympathize with the issues of internal and external politics that Jordan and her colleagues faced. We worry today about library education and training for public library work—more because library schools are moving to the study of information rather than library service. Many of us who work in children's service understand that we have to have a training program in-house, as Jordan developed, to have the staff we need to do a good job.

Other issues Jordan faced are important today. Public and school cooperation is important today for the same reason it was one hundred years ago. Schools are disbanding their libraries and children need help finding the right books and information to be successful students. And, of course, there

are all the issues revolving around finances. Public libraries are often underfunded, and with the growth of e communications more of the library's funds go to computers, networking, and data management and less to book collections. Public librarians don't get competitive salaries (and we no longer get our summers off).

Jordan's passion for "good" literature for children is still important, but plays out a little differently today. There is no longer any great interest or demand for classic literature for children. But this is mostly because there are more choices of stories written for children and a better understanding of the developmental needs of children. With the advent of Common Core learning and teaching standards it will be as important as ever to match reader and book and to give children the opportunity to read books for the enjoyment of the story in addition to reading to build competency.

*The Education of Alice M. Jordan* is a solid history of library work with children and the professionalization of library work with children. Librarians, library school students, and library educators can gain some perspective on our current issues by learning more about Alice Jordan and her work. Reading teachers may be interested in Jordan's work with reading engagement, and social historians will find the description of the change in work and the status of women who work to be useful.

There are no famous librarians (except for Melville Dewey of decimal fame), but quiet people like Jordan typify the best of the profession. We gain from knowing about her.

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# Vitae Scholasticae

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