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**African American baseball players from Morris Brown College, with boy and another man standing at door, Atlanta, Georgia circa 1900**

*Courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. (In album (disbound): Negro life in Georgia, U.S.A., compiled and prepared by W.E.B. Du Bois, v. 4, no. 337)*

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# EDITORIAL FOREWORD

## *On Effective History*

AKEL ISMAIL KAHERA, Ph.D.

Narratives that depict raw discursive relations mediate our focus in this issue of the Journal of History & Culture. As Foucault has observed “discursive relations are not...relations that might limit...they offer it objects of which it can speak.” In the present discourse we speak of questions that distinguish between effective history and the self-conscious grasp of the subject. Just like Foucault, Gadamer has argued for the use of effective history, he also “claims that history or tradition is not simply the past, but is in a process of realization. History has effects in terms of conditioning our historical understanding.” Being only one combination among others, effective history is invoked in the narratives that are included in this volume with the view that the richness of cultural subjects brings greater understanding to the reader and makes it possible to understand the past with all of its complexities.

On the other hand the Journal of History & Culture is also committed to the kinds of studies that invoke the value of race, class and gender. In other words, there must be a greater representation of those topics that are subjugated or are absent from the discourse. In rejecting exclusionary language it is important to illustrate the relationship between, truth and human values, therefore, we are tenaciously committed to effectively ‘telling it like it is’ or in the words of Malcolm X “making it plain.” But above all there must also be greater representation in the production of knowledge and the views of those who remain silent or occupy a marginal place in society. Now that the Journal of History & Culture has gained academic recognition by providing critical access to students, researchers and the general public over the past four years, our primary goal is to increase our readership.

This issue of the Journal of History & Culture, marks the fourth year of the Journal’s existence, however, this issue will be the first entirely electronic publication. Our goal is not to compromise the quality and the substance of the discourse and while there are differing views of the value of history we remain committed to the enrichment and the preservation of the history, to enhance and build a repository of historical narratives and to disseminate knowledge, that is most essential to the merits of research and intellectual inquiry. By contrast the autonomous power of language and many forms of balkanized knowledge, can and has been used to reconstruct or govern the epistemological foundation on which history and culture was once thought to rest. In consideration of the role of power and knowledge put forward by Foucault the advantage of ‘telling it like it is’ shapes the four accounts that are presented in this volume. The four essays presented here have the advantage of being specifically

addressed to both the question of effective history and the conclusions drawn from a consideration of social-political contexts.

In “Transformative Leadership” Renate Chancellor analyzes how E.J. Josey (1924-2009) “drew upon his early grounding in family and church in the rigidly segregated South as well as his tenacious spirit in order to overcome the many challenges of racial discrimination.” Chancellor’s description does not merely constitute class or race interests or struggle, even the degree of agency ascribed to African American librarians or the power of the organization is an adversarial alternative to power which provides us with insight into the “leading challenges against discriminatory practices towards African Americans and other marginalized groups.” “If power oppresses and controls and manipulates”, as Edward Said has argued, on this view Jesus Jesse Esparza offers a self-reflective account of the status of Black school age children in West Texas 1925-1960. While “most black school-aged students in San Felipe were considered second-class citizens and like many other districts throughout the country, their education fell second to Mexican Americans and whites.” That is, power circulates through our society, even today in a way that has been traditionally defined in terms of racism, domination and repression. Unlike the Jeffersonian notion of equality—“We hold these truths to be self-evident...”—many citizens have suffered from benign forms of institutional racism even as a commodity of education, which stands to benefit only a few but mar the entire society.

John Venecek’s essay “Processing Racism,” is conceived based on the Carol Mundy collection of African American Memorabilia at the University of Central Florida. Venecek’s emphasis, however and the development of the value of the collection is quite distinct in such a way that the ‘objects’ are effectively defined as having a sociological association to our society. “What is striking about this type of memorabilia is their derogatory or downright racist nature. These include such things as advertisements for anything tooth paste to tobacco, post cards, cartoons, signs, menus, match books, cookie jars, salt & pepper shakers and even objects as seemingly innocuous as door stops and thermometers. The images often depict African Americans as either greatly exaggerated and, at times, demonic characters.”

Our understanding of the historical specificity of Betsy Tyson’s essay “Courage and Determination” offsets this view of the social signification of race, class and gender. Tyson’s essay both distills and expands on subjects presented in *Courage and Determination – A Profile of Pioneering African American Physicians in Texas* on display at the History of Medicine Gallery in the Texas Medical Association 2010-11. It’s the first such exhibit in the nation by a state medical society. The exhibit comes from extensive quoting of documents discussed throughout many of

the schools of medicine in the South that have graduated a fine array of Black Physicians. The exclusion of blacks from medical schools but not from the profession, was widespread, however this essay chronicles the life of many successful Black doctors especially as a reminder of human betrayal rooted in the abuse of power.

Finally, a discussion of effective history must inevitably raise the concept of space, power and knowledge, the literature on this has become personified over the last two or more decades by Foucauldian literary discourses. One only has to think of the historic value of space, power and knowledge in the newly unveiled Martin Luther King's Memorial on the National Mall in Washington D.C. The specificity of meaning and the commensurate value of the memorial for all Americans, has established a fresh view of place on the National Mall, quite simply, a katharsis—a cleansing of the human experience, which opens out onto the landscape. The Martin Luther King's Memorial must therefore purposely deliver, for many of us, once again, the truth about the past; the same point can only convey how we are to conceive of its cultural status and symbolic value.

# TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP: E.J. JOSEY AND THE MODERN LIBRARY PROFESSION

RENATE CHANCELLOR, PH.D.

## Abstract

*E.J. Josey (1924-2009) promoted Library Science as a career to countless individuals and fought to ensure that African American librarians received equal opportunities in state and national library associations. His achievements include successfully passing a resolution that prevented state library associations from discriminating against African American librarians, being a founding member of the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA), and successfully leading challenges against discriminatory practices towards African Americans and other marginalized groups in the (American Library Association) ALA. Josey drew upon his early grounding in family and church in the rigidly segregated South as well as his tenacious spirit in order to overcome the many challenges of racial discrimination. Using oral history interviews with Josey and his colleagues and documentary research, this article chronicles Josey's remarkable career as a librarian, scholar and trailblazer in the modern library profession.*

## Introduction

Segregation did not become a “real” issue for the American Library Association until 1936 when the annual conference was held for the first time in the South. The first published account of discrimination in the ALA occurred at the 1936 Annual Meeting in Richmond, Virginia. In an effort to obtain a large turnout, Black librarians received invitations from the Richmond Local Arrangements Committee to attend the conference. It was not conveyed however, that the participants would endure the segregated conditions of the city. Although African Americans were permitted to use the same hotel entrances as white conferees, they were not allowed access to conference halls or meetings that were held in dining areas in conjunction with meals. Additionally, black members of the Association were given reserved seating in a designated area of the meeting hall, thereby diminishing their capacity to fully take part in the conference. Due to many protests by delegates and state associations, the executive board appointed a committee to formulate policy to ensure that this form of discrimination would not occur again. As a result, signs were posted at future meetings, which stated, “all rooms and halls for conference use would be inclusive to all members.”<sup>1</sup>

African American librarians also faced discrimination that denied them membership in southern library associations. Clara Stanton Jones, former dean of the School of Library Service, Atlanta University, wrote about her experiences when she applied for membership to the Georgia Library Association:

Once, when I submitted a letter to apply for admission and sent the membership fee, the check was returned with a letter stating that the Association at that time did not have provision for me to become a member”<sup>2</sup>

Josey had a similar experience as well. After graduating with his library degree in 1952, he joined the ALA. However, when Josey tried to join the Georgia Library Association he too received a letter rejecting his application. It was not until 1965, after his protest against the southern state library associations that he was allowed membership, becoming the first African American librarian of the Georgia Library Association. It is likely that this rejection fueled his frustration with his profession and provided great impetus for him taking on the Association in the decades ahead.

The ALA Annual Conference held in St. Louis Missouri in July 1964 coincided with the passage of the Civil Rights Act outlawing segregation. However, still vivid in the mind of Josey was the assassination of President John Kennedy several months prior and the incessant civil rights struggle for Blacks. Nevertheless, Josey accepted the invitation to attend the conference to appear on the Association for College and Research Libraries (ACRL) College Library section’s program; one that few Blacks were invited to participate<sup>3</sup>. At the conference, Josey attended the National Library Week Program. During the program, ALA passed a motion honoring the Mississippi Library Association for their National Library Week activities, in spite of their failure to comply with the ALA policies on equal membership to all librarians. Josey was disturbed by this and as he describes it, “I exploded.”<sup>4</sup> He recalls, “I was upset because I remembered that three civil rights workers, Andrew Goodman, James Chaney and Michael Schwerner were murdered and their undiscovered bodies were somewhere in Mississippi and that the Mississippi Library Association had withdrawn from ALA rather than permit membership to Blacks.”<sup>5</sup> Josey openly opposed the award by saying:

I vigorously protest the award of Honorable Mention being bestowed upon Mississippi Library Association for its National Library Week efforts, for two reasons. Firstly, Mississippi has withdrawn from ALA affiliation. Secondly, no state association should enjoy the benefits of membership, and at the same time, repudiate the ideals and bylaws of the American Library Association. Therefore, I request that the award be withdrawn.<sup>6</sup>

Although his resolution was initially rejected, Josey introduced a more comprehensive resolution on the final day of the conference that stated:



**Figure 1**

E.J. Josey, Director of Savannah State  
College Library, 1959-1966

*Courtesy of the Archives Service Center, University of Pittsburgh*



**Figure 2**

I.C. Norcom High School in 1920.

*Image courtesy of Portsmouth Public Schools*

All ALA officers and all staff members should refrain from attending, in their official capacity or at the expense of ALA, the meetings of any state associations which are unable to meet fully the requirements of chapter status in ALA.”<sup>7</sup>

Library Journal editor and executive board member, Eric Moon seconded the motion and as Josey describes it, “all hell broke loose.”<sup>8</sup> With this action, Josey forever transformed the library profession. He forced the ALA to take a stance on discrimination by excluding membership to those state library organizations that would not allow Blacks membership. This was the first of many transformative events that Josey lead throughtout his career. Allowing Blacks membership to state library associations was only the first step in eradicating injustice in the profession. He founded the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA) because librarians were not treatly fairly on their jobs nor were they placed in leadership positions. BCALA was a way for African American librarians to develop leadership skills and to have a collective voice against discrimination and unfair treatment in the workplace. Following the Josey’s lead, other ethnic library associations were formed such as Reforma, the Spanish library association, APALA, the Asian Pacific and American Library Association to name a few.

Josey drew upon his early grounding in family and church in the rigidly segregated South of his youth to overcome many of the challenges of racial discrimination. He was born in the decade commonly referred to as the Roaring Twenties, in an era marked by renewed prosperity and opportunities for America in the aftermath of World War I (WWI).

The 1920s was a significant turning point for African Americans economically and intellectually. After nearly 350,000 blacks served in the armed forces in WWI, there became an excess of jobs for African Americans in the industrial North where higher wages were paid to factory workers and miners.<sup>10</sup> Consequently many southerners migrated to the northern part of the United States to take advantage of these job opportunities. Moreover, this was the time of the Harlem Renaissance, “. . .a cultural movement marked by increased literary, and artistic creativity by African American intellectuals and artists who wanted to challenge the previous stereotypical representation of their image;”<sup>11</sup> these leaders focused on proving the humanity and equality of African Americans and portrayed African people as awakening from the dark days of oppression to the dawn of a new day of opportunity. The Harlem Renaissance opened the doors of opportunity to black Americans in roles that had once been unreachable—university professors, best-selling authors, diplomats, internationally acclaimed celebrities, and more. Despite these successes, the “New Negro”<sup>12</sup> fell short of his most cherished goal—equality.

The Harlem Renaissance had many positive effects. For the first time, African Americans had a chance to express themselves creatively. They produced many firsts: the first Black to have a best-selling novel, the first African American woman to graduate from Columbia University among others. These pioneering efforts opened the door for other Blacks and influenced an entire generation of young professionals and artists. It was in this decade of great progress and growth for African Americans that E. J. Josey was born. This era of unprecedented success for African Americans during the early years of Josey's life set the stage and became the foundation for his efforts to overturn racial discrimination in society. Many of the great Harlem Renaissance icons like W.E.B. Dubois, Marcus Garvey, Alain Locke and Langston Hughes were role models for E.J. Josey.

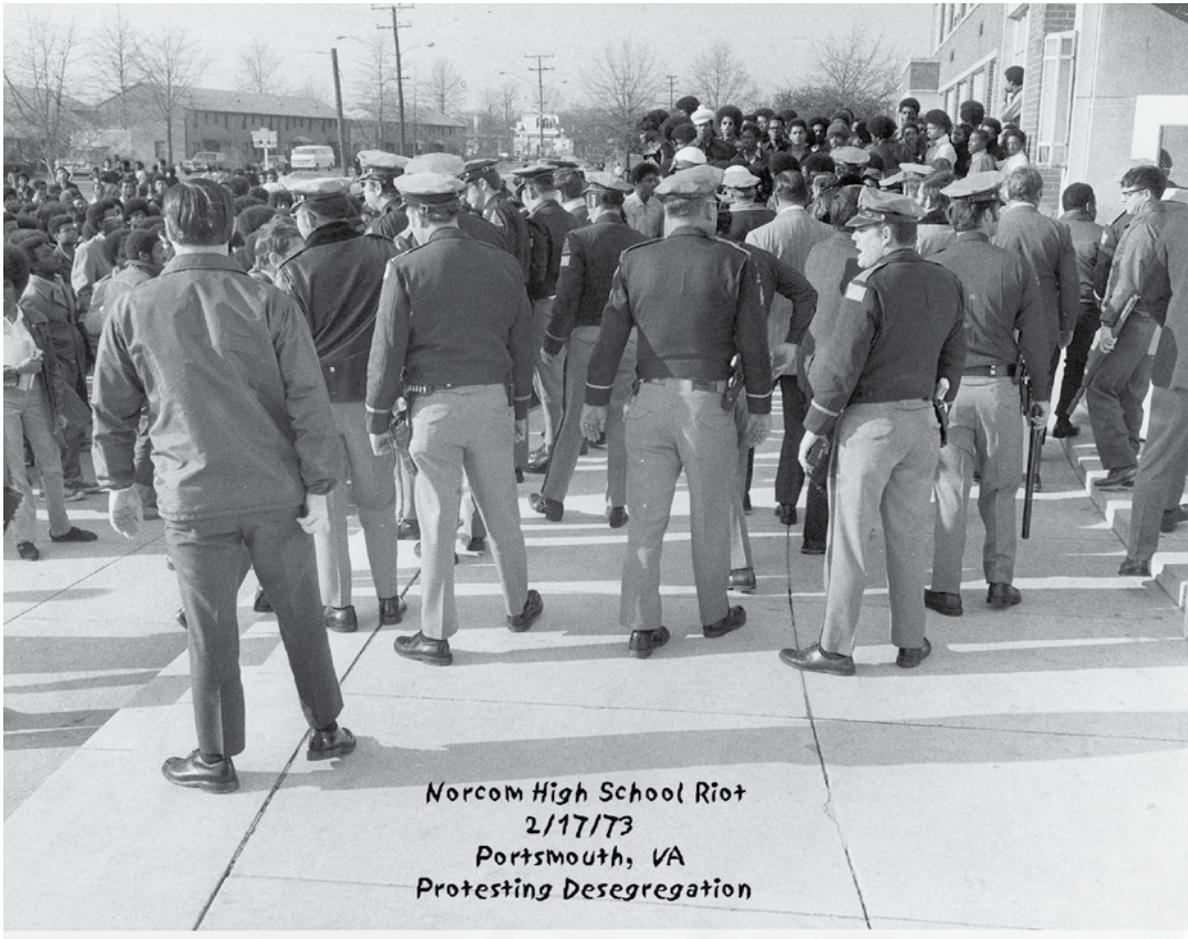
On January 20, 1924 in Norfolk, Virginia, Eltonnie Junius (E.J.) was born to parents, Willie and Frances (Bailey) Josey. Although the 1930 census lists Josey's mother as Fannie, she was commonly referred to by family and friends as Frances.<sup>13</sup>

Like many residents of Portsmouth, Willie and Frances lived in North Carolina, and migrated to Virginia after WWI to take advantage of the burgeoning economy. Frances completed a normal-teacher training school and taught for one year in North Carolina before marrying Willie.<sup>14</sup> Normal school offered students two years of training beyond high school. It was common for African Americans to attend normal school to become teachers because few blacks were able to afford expenses for a college or university education. Many African Americans chose teaching as a career because it was one of the few highly respected professions for blacks.

Willie Josey served in one of the battalions during WWI and upon being discharged from the military; he made a living working at the Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth as a laborer. Josey remembers his father as being hardworking and full of pride, "Even though he could neither read nor write, he was a proud man who often carried a paper under his arm to give the impression that he was educated."<sup>15</sup> Shortly after Josey's birth, his parents moved five miles west of the Elizabeth River to the city of Portsmouth. Both Norfolk and Portsmouth are located in what is commonly referred to as the "Tidewater Region" (also known as the Hampton Roads Region). This southeastern section of the Commonwealth of Virginia includes such cities as Portsmouth, Newport News, Norfolk and Chesapeake.

It was obvious from the beginning at least among those who knew Josey during his formative years, that he was a unique individual who possessed outstanding leadership qualities. As a child, he was inquisitive, feisty and a visionary.<sup>16</sup> Although his path to prominence was often bumpy, he always maintained optimism even in the most dire of circumstances.

Josey never let the dehumanizing experiences of racism and dismal poverty deter him from achieving his goals. He contended that he became an "incredible dreamer who possessed a tiny spark which refused to die even



Norcom High School Riot  
2/17/73  
Portsmouth, VA  
Protesting Desegregation

when the odds were against me.” This quote by E.J. Josey was inspired by Eldridge Cleaver’s classic biography, *Soul on Ice* (1968). In an autobiographical chapter in *The Black Librarian in America* (1970), Josey quoted the following passage by Cleaver as being descriptive of his own quest to be a man and not a second class citizen:

And why does it make you sad to see how everything hangs by such thin and whimsical threads? Because you’re dreamer, an incredible dreamer with a tiny spark hidden somewhere inside you which cannot die, even which you cannot kill or quench and which tortures you horribly because all the odds are against its continual burning. In the midst of the foulest decay and putrid savagery, this spark speaks to you of beauty, of human warmth and kindness, of goodness, of greatness, of heroism, of martyrdom, and it speaks to you of love.<sup>17</sup>

The twentieth century gave way to Jim-Crowism as the heart of American life. The economic and political achievements of post-WWI were replaced with the creation of an unsympathetic system of segregation. While segregation was nothing new, the hope for equality began fading as it became increasingly obvious that white America would not allow blacks to integrate and incorporate into mainstream America. The economic boom of the twenties was short lived. By the time E.J. Josey was five years old, a dramatic global economic downturn had occurred and the world was on the brink of financial disaster. The world in which Josey and his five younger siblings spent their early years was a stranger to the democracy that President Wilson vowed to defend when he announced the U.S. entry into World War I. Segregation reigned in Virginia and elsewhere in the Deep South. Slavery may have been outlawed after the North won the Civil War, but across the south, many blacks lived in virtual slavery as sharecroppers on farms owned by whites. Blamed for the Civil War and the loss of the “southern way of life” when the Confederacy was vanquished, blacks were separated from whites in almost every aspect of life. By law, the Josey children had to play in separate areas of public parks, drink from public fountains marked “Colored” and sit in separate cars or sections designated for blacks.

The stock market crash on October 29, 1929, was the final blow to the already sluggish economy and ultimately sent America into the Great Depression. The Great Depression of the 1930s reduced industrial employment and the flow of black migrants. The population of Portsmouth declined significantly and it was especially difficult for African Americans. The Josey family resided in the Mount Hermon section of the city. Many residents were strong community leaders and teachers who had significant influence on the children who lived there. They along with the church provided a strong sense of self-worth. Moses Gibson, a former resident of Mount Hermon in the 1930s and schoolmate of Josey recalls that Mount Hermon was a community of “struggling people.” Although the majority of the residents owned their homes, many people did not have jobs at all. Those who did worked at the railroad or the

Naval Yard. Parents stressed the importance of education and, despite the expense; tried to get their children into college.<sup>18</sup> Gibson remembers Josey as being “very smart” and “studious.” The Mount Hermon residents believed that the neighborhood possessed a real sense of community during the 1930s and 1940s.

The church played a major role in the lives of residents in Portsmouth, and particularly in Mount Hermon. Since the nineteenth century, the growth of the protestant religion among African Americans gave birth to what came to be known as the “Black Church” in the United States. From the white Baptist and Methodist missionaries sent to convert enslaved Africans, to the earliest pioneers of the independent black denominations, to the fluent rhetoric of W.E.B. DuBois, the story of the black church is an account of struggle in the midst of constant racism and oppression. It is also a story of constant change, and cultural cohesion among enslaved African Americans to their communities. In Portsmouth, the Black Church served as a breeding ground for black political activism, and a social meeting place since the post-Civil War days when blacks had their separate churches in which to worship but were barred from meeting in other public places.<sup>19</sup> During segregation, the church became an indispensable institution for the residents of Portsmouth. Authors Cassandra Newby-Alexander and Mae Breckenridge-Haywood contend that the “It was through the black church that literary and benevolent organizations and self-help groups emerged as agencies for the improvement of the social and moral conditions of African Americans.”<sup>20</sup> The church had an integral role in Josey’s life. His family attended the second largest Baptist Church in Mount Hermon, Celestial Baptist Church. It was at Celestial where Josey found his love of music. He enjoyed Gospel and classical music and eventually went on to play the organ at neighborhood churches to earn money. Josey continued his membership at Celestial long after he moved away from the city and would often visit whenever he was in town. The current pastor, Reverend Leon Boone remembers how Josey would wave to him from the back of the church when he came to Portsmouth.<sup>21</sup> Fellow parishioner, Marian King remembers how he would “faithfully send \$100 a month to the church as part of his tithe and offering....I think that speaks to the kind of person he is.”<sup>22</sup>

Josey and his siblings attended segregated Mount Hermon Elementary School (grades 1-7). The school was located in the downtown area and experienced great overcrowding during the 1930s. According to the Superintendent’s Report, the Mount Hermon Elementary School was an eight-room building with 14 teachers. To accommodate the overflow of students, they rented two additional dilapidated rooms at a nearby Masonic Temple where students could only attend school part-time.<sup>23</sup> There was also an excess of students where Josey completed his secondary education at I.C. Norcom High School.

As the only high school available to African Americans during the 1930s and 1940s, the school was named

after distinguished educator Israel C. Norcom who migrated to Portsmouth after graduating from Harvard and Yale Universities. Norcom served as the principal at the Chestnut Street Colored School and three years after his death in 1937 it was named in his honor. It was at Norcom where Josey excelled academically. Many of his schoolmates remember him as being very intelligent with leader-like qualities.<sup>24</sup> For example, he was always interested in reading and learning and encouraged his siblings as well as his fellow classmates to do so. He also took a leading role in his chorus group. Not only did he sing, but on some occasions, he directed the choir.<sup>25</sup> Josey credits his dedicated elementary and high school teachers for providing a good educational background even though these schools did not have all the facilities that the white schools did. “They wanted to give us more; they must have believed that we were going to outlive segregation and that someday we were going to be called upon to compete in a multicultural world.”<sup>26</sup>

Josey attributes his mother for “fostering and nurturing his desire for knowledge, wisdom, and achievement.”<sup>27</sup> He recalls his mother reading stories to them, insisting that they read at least one extra book in addition to their school work each week, and making them memorize poetry that she had learned at the private Presbyterian school she attended when she was growing up. He also remembers participating in school and church cultural activities. Although he was raised in poverty, often without enough food or adequate clothing, his mother encouraged the Josey children to pursue their creative talents. Consequently, he and his siblings never felt poor:

The reason we did not feel poor was because my mother gave us a lot of cultural enrichment. She taught us all kinds of music, all kinds of poems and we did not have a radio or television, so we would sing these songs and we would try to recite the poetry and do dramatics. I think it also helped us, all of the children to excel in school because we were doing things outside of school that our teachers had not asked us to do and yet they were beneficial to our growth and development, culturally and educationally.<sup>28</sup>

Unfortunately, Josey and many of his classmates did not have the luxury of using the Portsmouth Public Library while growing up in Mount Hermon. African Americans could not use the “whites only” public library in the city. The only library Blacks were permitted to use was the segregated Portsmouth Community Library which was housed in the Parish House of St. James Episcopal Church near I.C. Norcom High School. Josey recalled: “the only library I used in my hometown was the segregated high-school library presided over by a fine former English teacher, Mrs. Margaret Bond Jackson.”<sup>29</sup> The library was open from 1937-1941, and was ultimately closed due to lack of funding. It was not until several years later that another library was built for African Americans. The Portsmouth

Colored Community Library opened its doors in 1945 and was located in the heart of Portsmouth on South Street near Effingham. This small, one-story brick building was purchased with donations made by Portsmouth Black and White citizens, and subsidized by the city. With the rise of the civil rights movement in the 1960s, and the integration of Blacks in the larger community, there no longer became a need for a separate library. The Portsmouth Colored Community Library closed its doors in 1963, but is presently being renovated so that the library can reopen as a museum dedicated to the history of African Americans in Portsmouth.

Despite Josey's disturbing experiences while growing up in a segregated town, it is remarkable that he would be placed in "the company of other great leaders in the history of American librarianship."<sup>30</sup> Some individuals would argue that Josey had an even bigger impact on international librarianship.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, Josey rose from these humble beginnings to the top of his profession. Adult responsibilities came early for young Josey. His father passed away unexpectedly while he was a sophomore in high-school and as the eldest of five children, he had to help support his family. He graduated from high-school a year early so that he could work. He took on a number of jobs like dishwasher, porter and stock clerk. He also played the organ and piano at churches in the neighborhood until he was drafted in the army to serve in World War II.<sup>32</sup>

World War II blasted its way onto the American scene on the infamous morning of December 7, 1941, when Japanese fighters flew over Pearl Harbor and rained a hail of bombs and bullets on the slumbering United States naval base. After the U.S. declared war on Germany and Japan, a new selective service act required all men ages 18-45 to register for the military draft. Josey was drafted into the Army on May 18, 1943<sup>33</sup> and was stationed in the Deep South. In those days, blacks in the armed forces served in segregated units and were assigned to hard manual labor or menial jobs, such as building fortifications, moving supplies or waiting tables in the officer's mess hall. The white military hierarchy did not believe Blacks had the courage or the intelligence to serve in combat roles. The African American community in the United States resolved on a "Double V" campaign: Victory over enemies on the battlefields abroad, and victory over discrimination at home. Large numbers migrated from poor Southern farms to munitions centers. Racial tensions were high in overcrowded cities like Chicago, Detroit and Harlem in 1943.

Assigned to an all-black squadron, Josey served as an assistant to several chaplains and played the organ for religious services. The soldier experienced two significant events that had a lasting impression on his life. First, it was in the army when he had the opportunity to use his first non-segregated library. This renewed his longtime interest in pursuing a college education. Josey recalls how pleased he was when he learned of his access to reading materials in the military, which he regarded as one of the greatest benefits of serving in the armed forces during

this time. “The opportunity to read a wide variety of materials in the Army caused me to continue my quest for knowledge and revived my desire for a college education.<sup>34</sup> He also had an encounter with overt racism that permanently changed his life:

As I stood in line with hundreds of other soldiers waiting to board the local bus, the bus driver in savage tones said, ‘Boy, step back and let the white soldiers get on first.’ I refused to get out of the line and, in a bewildered and halting voice, said I was a soldier serving my country and had a right to board the bus in my turn. The white bus driver was infuriated and pulled a revolver. I refused to move and he shoved me out of line. After this act, which could have resulted in my death, I became an implacable foe of segregation and second class citizenship.”<sup>35</sup>

Following Josey’s honorable discharge on March 12, 1946 he took advantage of the G.I. Bill and enrolled at Howard University where he was admitted to the School of Music. He later changed his major to History and completed his undergraduate degree in three years. After graduation, Josey decided to pursue teaching as a career; stemming from his admiration of his mother and his own experiences living in a segregated society in which teachers were the major professionals with whom young blacks were best acquainted in their community.<sup>36</sup> While working on a Master’s of Arts degree, he started working at the journalism library at Columbia University where he met a librarian who encouraged him to pursue librarianship.

Josey’s first professional position as a librarian was at the Free Library of Philadelphia. Although he did not have a great deal of experience working in libraries, he relied on the knowledge he had from his Library Science program as well as the experience from working at the New York Public Library; which made him far more advanced than those who had been working in the library for some time. This situation was further complicated by the fact that Josey was the first African American librarian to work at the Free Library. The hostility of the staff made it unbearable for him and he became so disappointed with librarianship and decided to leave the professional completely. A year away from libraries only reaffirmed his love of libraries and his desire to work in them. Therefore, he returned to librarianship a year later and took on the challenge of directing academic libraries at two HBCUs, Delaware State College Library (1955-1959) and Savannah State College Library (1959-1966) where he exhorted, he “disturbed the intellectual sterility” and apathy of academic librarianship.

In 1966, Josey was appointed bureau chief in the New York State Education Department Library, a post he held for eight years until he was promoted to bureau chief of specialist library services in the department, where he worked until 1986. While in New York, Josey began to get politically involved in the fight against racial discrimination. He joined a chapter of the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and became active in the civil rights movement. His venture in eradicating injustice through a national organization later propelled him to fight for justice in the American Library Association.

Upon his departure from New York, he accepted a tenured position at the University of Pittsburgh School of Library and Information Science where he taught courses on academic library management, with an emphasis on the organization and management of college research libraries. As a professor, Josey utilized his role to help mentor and recruit students to become librarians and library educators.

Throughout his career Josey was involved in professional associations and held many offices including: Chair of the Cultural Minorities Task Force of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, and membership of the ALA Committee on Pay Equity, the ALA Committee on Legislation, and the ALA International Relations Committee. Josey was also active in human rights issues outside librarianship. He was a member of the NAACP for more than forty years and served as a faculty advisor to the Savannah, Georgia chapter. He is the recipient of numerous honors including the ALA Black Caucus Award for Distinguished Service to Librarianship and the ALA Equality Award. He was president of the American Library Association from 1983-1984. He is a member of the American Library Association's 50th Anniversary Honor Roll (in recognition of his fundraising and lobbying efforts on behalf of the nation's 116,000-plus libraries) and holds lifetime membership to the ALA.

Following Josey's retirement in 1995, he continued to help catalyze change in the profession through his lectures and his scholarship. He authored over three hundred publications and twelve books related to civil rights and librarianship. On January 19, 2002 at the ALA Midwinter Meeting, the American Library Association Council bestowed on him its highest honor, Honorary Membership in recognition of outstanding contributions of lasting importance to libraries and librarianship.

A recurring theme throughout Josey's life is that he has been in the company of individuals who have been successful. His sister, after leaving the armed forces went on to be a distinguished teacher in Texas. His closest childhood friend, Charles Gray a retired school administrator and later a faculty member at Virginia State College co-authored the book entitled, *Above the Storm* (2004), which details the historic account of the student walkout of the R.R. Moton High School in Prince Edward County, Virginia. This action, *Davis v. Board of Education*,

was one of the cases that led to the 1954 Supreme Court decision, outlawing segregation in public schools. And, several graduates from I.C. Norcom went on to doctoral study; these included Willard Stanback, ABD, who is retired member of the faculty at Norfolk State University and Dr. James Eaton, retired professor of English at Savannah State College and who is listed in the 2000-2002 Who's Who in America. In 1987, E.J. was recognized by the city of Portsmouth as a national notable. This honor placed him in the company of jazz great Ruth Brown and Carl M. Brashear, the first black U.S. Navy diver.

Like most of us, E.J. Josey is best understood within the context of events, place and time. To this end, an appreciation of the reality of his life offers an understanding of his lifelong desire to respond to the inequitable social conditions to blacks created by slavery and exacerbated by segregation and racism. To be African-American in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century was to be alternately encouraged and disillusioned. It is in this era where we saw the emergence of great leaders like Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Dubois and Marcus Garvey, and the collaborative efforts by blacks to neutralize the state of oppression of African Americans like the Niagara Movement, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the National League of Urban Conditions. These years also saw the beginning of the migration of blacks from the agrarian South to the industrial North, and the birth of the Harlem Renaissance. Meanwhile, continued lynching, the development of Jim-Crowism, race riots and overt discrimination in the armed forces prevailed. Thus, the quest for Josey and the formative influences of his development can be traced back to a history of inhumane treatment to blacks. He was born in an era where blacks made significant progress, yet there was still much to be done. Like those who paved the way before him, he too became a visionary, and a leader against inequality.

It was not uncommon for a faction of the blacks in communities to be considered the professional elite. Portsmouth was no exception to this rule. In keeping with the philosophy of Ida B. Wells, who insisted that the African-American community must win justice through its own efforts, several blacks in Portsmouth rose to prominence by struggling against racial oppression. Authors Newby-Alexander and Breckenridge-Haywood (2003) contend that between 1900 and 1960, African Americans in Portsmouth formed a network of "middle-class" professionals to counteract the practices of segregation and exclusion. Efforts from individuals like educator, Israel C. Norcom, Jeffrey T. Wilson, an African-American writer who wrote the column, "Colored Notes" for the city's newspaper, Dr. Helen Mewborn-Watts who was the first black female physician in Portsmouth and the countless others were "the fraternal, political and financial models for blacks in and around Portsmouth."<sup>37</sup> This close-knit insulated community allowed African Americans to sustain themselves during the days of Jim Crow. From this community Josey emerged as a leader, a role model and the ultimate advocate for civil rights in his profession.

Chronology of the Life and Career of E.J. Josey

1924 January 20	Born Norfolk, VA
1940	Graduated from I.C. Norcom High School, Portsmouth, VA
1943 - 1946	Served in the United States Army
1947 - 1949	Attended Howard University, Washington, D.C. and majors in History
1950 - 1952	Earned Master's Degree in History at Columbia University  Worked part-time in the Journalism Library at Columbia; became interested in Library Science as a profession after being encouraged by a supervisor, Basil Miller.  Joined ALA
1953 - 1954	Earned a Master's in Library Science at New York State University at Albany  Worked at New York State Library as Technical Assistant while a student  Accepted first job as Librarian at the Free Public Library of Philadelphia
1954 - 1955	History Instructor at Savannah State College
1955 - 1959	Director of the Library and Professor at Delaware State College
1957	Attended first ALA Conference
1959 - 1966	Returned to Savannah State as Director of the Library  At Savannah State University Library, Josey established: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Library Lecture Series</li> <li>• Great Books Discussion Group</li> </ul>

- National Library Week Programs
  - Developed the Student NAACP Student Chapter
- 1960 Denied membership to the Georgia Library Association
- 1960 - 1966 Georgia State Youth Advisor, NAACP
- Spoke before ALA conference to congratulate ALA for adoption resolution on individual and chapter
- 1962 Spoke at the ALA Conference to congratulate them for adopting a resolution that prevented discriminatory practices towards individuals in southern states
- 1962 - 1964 Savannah State University Libraries received John Cotton Award
- 1964 Drafted and submitted a resolution that won approval for a motion that disallowed ALA staff members from attending, in their official capacity or at the expense of the ALA, the meetings of state associations unable to meet fully the requirements of chapter status in the ALA
- Savannah State College Chapter, NAACP Award
- 1964-1965 Actions to make ALA live up to its commitments to its Black members and for the library associations in AL, GA, LA, and MS to admit African Americans
- ALA ostracized segregated state associations (Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Mississippi) from official activities and in 1965 the state associations desegregated their membership policies and admitted Josey as the first African American member
- 1965 Award from the National Office of the NAACP
- 1965 - 1969 Chaired the Committee on Community Use of Academic Libraries, Association of College and Research Libraries

- 1966 Accepted position of Associate in the Academic and Research Libraries in the N.Y. State Education Department Savannah Chatham County Merit Award for Work on Economic Opportunity Task Force
- Georgia NAACP Conference Award
- 1966 - 1976 Associate/Chief of the Bureau of Specialist in the Academic and Research Libraries in New York Department of Education
- 1966 Savannah State College Award for distinguished service to Librarianship
- 1968 Award from *Journal of Library History* for best piece of historical research to appear in the *Journal* in 1969
- Josey along with Effie Lee Morris discussed their mutual distress with the slowness of the ALA to address African American librarians' concerns
- 1968 - 1986 Promoted to Chief Bureau of Academic & Research Libraries at the N.Y. State Department of Education
- 1969 - 1970 Appointed to ALA Nominating Committee
- Assembled Black Librarians for a meeting at the 1970 ALA Midwinter meeting to discuss the need to identify African American candidates and responsible White candidates to run for ALA Council in the 1971 elections; this resulted in the formation of the BCALA
- 1970 Elected to ALA Council
- Black Caucus of ALA formed
- The Black Librarian in America* published
- 1971 The Black Caucus succeeded in having ALA Council pass a resolution; put ALA Council pass a resolution; put ALA on the record as deploring the new private schools throughout the South avoiding integration
- 1972 Published *What Librarians Are Saying*

- 1973 Shaw University conferred Honorary Degree of Doctor of Human Letters (D.H.L.)
- 1975 Published *New Dimensions for Academic Library Service*, Scarecrow Press
- 1976 - 1986 Instrumental in establishing the state's 3Rs program, a regional approach to cooperative library networking geared to the needs of research and university scholars, and oversaw the implementation of the NY State Interlibrary Loan Program. Established him as a national leader in the field
- 1979 ALA Black Caucus Award for Distinguished Service to Librarianship
- 1979 - 1983 Moved from ALA Council to ALA Executive Board
- 1980 Received the Joseph W. Lippincott Award for his service in the ALA. The citation states: "his fervent advocacy was a major factor in eradicating racial discrimination from many library facilities and services, and from a number of professional associations. As founder of the Black Caucus in ALA, and as its leader throughout the group's formative years, he gave a new strength, unity, purpose and hope to many minority members of our profession."
- 1981 Elected Vice-President of the Albany New York branch of the NAACP
- Led in opposing South African apartheid by spearheading protests (in Albany) with entertainers who had performed in South Africa
- Received Distinguished Alumni Award for Contributions from the School of Library and Information Science at State University of NY
- 1982 Distinguished Service Award, Library Association of the City University of New York
- 1983 Elected President of the ALA. The second Black and first African American male to head the Association; assuming presidency in June 1984 - "Forging Coalitions for the Public Good" was the theme for his presidency

- 1984 Returned to Executive Board following his presidency
- 1985 Received a Capital Tribune from Congressman Major Owens and the Congressional Black Caucus Brain Trust; New York State Legislative Resolution; Ohio House of Reps Resolution; and a U.S. Congressional Resolution for his contribution to the profession and his leadership as ALA President
- 1986 NAACP President's Award Albany Board of the NAACP Award  
  
New York Library Association Award for significant contributions to special populations in New York State
- 1986 - 1995 Professor at the University of Pittsburg School of Library and Information Science  
  
*Course Taught:*  
 Librarianship and Libraries in Society  
 Management of Libraries and Info Systems & Services  
 Library Services to Special Populations - the Aging  
 Academic Library Management  
 Politics and Libraries  
 World Librarianship  
 Professional issues
- 1987 Received the Doctor of Public Services (D.P.L.) Honoris Causa from University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
  
Invitation to be an advisor to Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, and Zambia, on Library and Information Science by the U.S. government
- 1988 Editor of Humanities, Honoris Causa, from North Carolina Central University
- 1991 Received the ALA Equality Award
- 1992 A Festschrift in honor of his legacy in the ALA

- 1995 Doctor of Letters Degree from Clark Atlanta University
- 1996 Honored at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the ALA Washington Office for his contribution to the Legislative Program
- 1998 Awarded with the Distinguished Service Award from the Pennsylvania Library Association
- John Ames Humphrey Award from Forest Press and OCLC “in recognition of significant contributions to international librarianship”
- 1999 Honored at the Celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the Office of Intellectual Freedom for his outstanding contributions
- 2001 Doctor of Humane Letters, Clarion University of Pennsylvania
- 2002 Received ALA’s highest award, Honorary Membership
- 2009 Died July 3, 2009

**ENDNOTES**

- <sup>1</sup> American Library Association, “Report of the committee on racial discrimination,” *ALA Bulletin*, January 1937, 31, 37-38.
- <sup>2</sup> Clara Stanton Jones, “E.J. Josey: Librarian for all seasons,” in *E.J. Josey: An activist Librarian*, ed. Ismail Abdullahi (New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1992) 39.
- <sup>3</sup> E.J. Josey. *The Black Librarian in America* (New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1970) 313.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 314.
- <sup>5</sup> E.J. Josey, personal interview, March 7, 2001.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 314.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 314
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 314
- <sup>9</sup> Beth Bailey and David Farber, “The ‘Double-V’ Campaign in World War II Hawaii: African Americans, Racial Ideology, and Federal Power,” *Journal of Social History*, 26, 4.
- <sup>10</sup> Stephen P. Hardy and Sheila Jackson Hardy, *Extraordinary People of the Harlem Renaissance*. (Canada: Children’s Press, 2000).
- <sup>11</sup> Ethelene Whitmire, “Breaking the Color Barrier: Regina Andrews and the New York Public Library”. *Libraries and the Cultural Record*, 2007,42, 2.
- <sup>12</sup> A movement coined by philosopher, Alain Locke that refers to the transformation of African Americans by ridding themselves of all of racial and social impediments that obstructed black achievement.
- <sup>13</sup> United States Census Bureau, 1930.
- <sup>14</sup> E.J. Josey, personal interview, April 8, 2007.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 298.
- <sup>16</sup> Willard Stanback, Personal Interview, December 11, 2007.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 297.
- <sup>18</sup> Moses Gibson, personal communication, November 21, 2007.
- <sup>19</sup> M. Adrine, “Churches traditionally forums for blacks”. *Currents*, February, 16, 1986, 4.
- <sup>20</sup> Cassandra Newby-Alexander and Mae Breckenridge-Haywood, *Black America Series: Portsmouth, Virginia*, (South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2003) 10.
- <sup>21</sup> L. Boone, Personal interview, December 11, 2007.
- <sup>22</sup> (M. King, Personal Interview, December 12, 2007).
- <sup>23</sup> Annual Report of Public Schools, 1937.
- <sup>24</sup> Ann Stancil, Personal Interview, December 1, 2007; Williard Stanback, Personal Interview, November 23 2007; M. Todd, Personal Interview, December 9, 2007; J. Eaton, Personal interview, December 14, 2007).
- <sup>25</sup> Willard Stanback, Personal Interview, November 23, 2007.
- <sup>26</sup> E.J. Josey, Personal Interview, March 29, 2001.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid, 1970, 298.

<sup>28</sup>E.J. Josey, Personal Interview, February 14, 2001.

<sup>29</sup>E.J. Josey, Personal Interview, March 10, 2001.

<sup>30</sup>Clara Stanton Jones, "E.J. Josey: Librarian for all seasons," in E.J. Josey: An activist Librarian, ed. Ismail Abdullahi (New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1992) 1.

<sup>31</sup>Ismail, Abdullahi, Personal Interview, August 8, 2007; Al, Kagan, Personal interview, April 9, 2007.

<sup>32</sup>E.J Josey, Personal Interview, February 14, 2001.

<sup>33</sup>U.S. World War II Army Enlistment Records. 1938-1946.

<sup>34</sup>E.J. Josey, Personal Interview, April 10, 2007.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid, 1970, 299-300.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid, 1970, 298.

<sup>37</sup>Cassandra Newby-Alexander and Mae Breckenridge-Haywood, *Black America Series: Portsmouth, Virginia*, (South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2003) 8.

# LA ESCUELA NEGRA: THE STATUS OF BLACK SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN IN A WEST TEXAS MEXICAN AMERICAN SCHOOL DISTRICT, 1925-1960

JESUS JESSE ESPARZA, PH.D.

## **Abstract**

*The city of Del Rio is located approximately 150 miles west of San Antonio, Texas along the Mexican-U.S. border.<sup>1</sup> Since it's founding, the city had been divided into two halves, east and west.<sup>2</sup> The west side of town was designated the Anglo side of town or el pueblo Americano as Mexicanos often called it.<sup>3</sup> Respectively, the east side of town was called San Felipe and was made up mostly of Mexican and Mexican Americans.<sup>4</sup> This section of town had actually evolved around the mid-1800s and was the undeveloped, unincorporated section of town burdened by a lack of physical infrastructure such as running water, electricity, or paved streets. The area would eventually begin to develop these things but it would not be until the late 1890s when the region began to undergo permanent settlement and growth.*

*The earliest schools in San Felipe were escuelitas-small, private, Spanish-speaking schools taught by local community members. Other early schools were parochial ones that were usually sponsored by local church organizations.<sup>5</sup> An official school system would eventually come to that community in 1885 following demands by parents for more formal education. Officially called the San Felipe County School District, it would serve the entire eastern section of town that was made up almost entirely of Mexican and Mexican Americans.<sup>6</sup> In 1929, residents from that community would incorporate their schools forming the San Felipe Independent School District, perhaps the first and only Mexican American controlled ISD in the history of the state.<sup>7</sup> Making up that district was a small contingent of African Americans who had long settled into the San Felipe community.*

## **The Black Community**

Various military fortifications into Del Rio and the surrounding areas would be responsible for introducing a black population into town. The earliest black settlers in the city would be a combination of Seminole Scouts, Buffalo Soldiers, and other Negro soldiers that made their way into Del Rio from neighboring cities.<sup>8</sup> In 1890, the 10th

Cavalry, a fighting unit made up entirely of black troops, was stationed at a military base in Del Rio.<sup>9</sup> When the base was abandoned a few soldiers remained and contributed to the growth of a black community.<sup>10</sup> A good majority of Del Rio's early black settlers also came by way of Mexico.<sup>11</sup> Looking to provide their children an American education many Afro-Mexican families immigrated to Del Rio.<sup>12</sup> As a result, the city would have the largest concentration of black residents for the entire county.<sup>13</sup> And depending on when they arrived, the majority of black immigrants typically settled in San Felipe, most likely because of cultural reasons. After all, they were arriving from Mexico and spoke Spanish fluently. Some settled there because of the cheaper housing available, others, however, were segregated or gerrymandered into that side of town.<sup>14</sup>

The region in which blacks lived was known as *la colonia negra*, which translated into the black colony.<sup>15</sup> It was called that because it was the section of town with the largest concentration of homes owned or occupied by Negro families.<sup>16</sup> The majority of these families spoke Spanish and their children often played with Mexicanos from neighboring homes.<sup>17</sup> In fact, blacks and Mexicanos interacted daily at almost every level, as such, their time spent in San Felipe would be relatively peaceful, however, quarrels would occasionally take place.<sup>18</sup>

### **The Negro School**

Some of the earliest educational opportunities afforded to blacks in Texas date back to 1865, following the Civil War, when the United States government instituted the Freedman's Bureau, under Reconstruction, to supervise the education of Negro Americans.<sup>19</sup> Operating mainly in the American Southeast, the Bureau offered instruction from the elementary level up through college. By 1886, Texas had 90 Bureau schools operational.<sup>20</sup> In Del Rio, the earliest schools for black school-aged children were formed a few years after the establishment of the County School Systems. Like its neighboring district, San Felipe ISD also segregated its black student population into separate schools.<sup>21</sup> The official Negro school in San Felipe was called Langston Elementary. It was possibly named after Langston Hughes, Negro poet and scholar. The actual building was originally a residential home but the record is not clear when it was converted into a school house for Negro children.<sup>22</sup> The school was a one-story, two-room, wooden building of modest quality.<sup>23</sup> Painted white on the exterior and cream color on the inside, it had wood floors and used kerosene lamps for light.<sup>24</sup> The building had three windows and was a long structure that extended towards the backyard.<sup>25</sup>

Inside the school, classes were held in the largest room.<sup>26</sup> The smaller room was where supplies, coats, and lunch sacks were kept.<sup>27</sup> The school did not offer a free lunch program for its students and so everyone was



**Figure 1**

Early Mexican and Mexican American dwellings in San Felipe

*Courtesy of Whitehead Memorial Museum, Del Rio, Texas*



**Figure 2**

One of the many private schools (escuelitas) in San Felipe, circa 1900

*Courtesy of Whitehead Memorial Museum, Del Rio, Texas*

expected to bring something from home.<sup>28</sup> Upon entering the school, the teacher's desk sat to the right while student's desks, lined in a row, faced the teacher.<sup>29</sup> It had two chalkboards; one behind the teacher's desk and the other on a back wall near the coats and lunch table.<sup>30</sup> There was no inside restroom facility; students had to use an outhouse located behind the school.<sup>31</sup> There was one sink used for washing up and an iron stove used mostly to burn wood for heat during the winter months.<sup>32</sup> On rainy days students were forbidden from going outside and so everyone usually stayed in and listened to the radio; most likely to stations KDLK and Mexico's XERF, which was known for it's lively, radio host and DJ, Wolf-Man Jack.<sup>33</sup>

School days were usually Monday through Friday from 9:00 in the morning to 3:00 in the afternoon.<sup>34</sup> No after school programs were offered. The school term was slightly shorter than the term used by the district.<sup>35</sup> Holidays and festivals celebrated by the district were recognized at Langston, however, the same could not be said of the district. The Langston school always celebrated Juneteenth, the nickname given to June 19, 1865 when some 250,000 slaves were officially freed in the state of Texas.<sup>36</sup> Although not an official district holiday and never really recognized by district officials, Langston students always commemorated the day with small festivities which ranged from goodies to eat in class and special games during recess, to using arts and crafts to retell the history of emancipation day in Texas.<sup>37</sup>

The earliest teacher, to memory, employed at Langston Elementary was Mrs. Henry.<sup>38</sup> Serving as teacher after Mrs. Henry, who became violently ill and eventually retired, was Mrs. Frances Thompson.<sup>39</sup> Recruited from San Antonio, Mrs. Thompson took over Langston Elementary in 1950 and would remain there until the school's closure following the 1954 Brown ruling.<sup>40</sup> Mrs. Thompson was a short stern woman around her middle years at the time of her hire.<sup>41</sup> Upon arriving to Del Rio, she along with husband settled not more than one block away from the Langston School.<sup>42</sup> Serving as a substitute and at times as a teacher's aid was Mrs. Daniels, an elderly woman originally from Brackettville; a small town some 32 miles east of the city.<sup>43</sup> Most teachers earned anywhere from \$60 to \$80 per month.<sup>44</sup> Custodial staff, when available at Langston Elementary, was paid \$7 a week.<sup>45</sup>

At any given time there could be between 5 to 30 students attending Langston, all within grades 1st and 8th.<sup>46</sup> There was no pre-school program available. Younger students had to be potty-trained to be able to attend the school especially since children had to use the outhouse.<sup>47</sup> If someone became ill say due to the flu or a bad cold then they would be sent home. If no one was there to supervise them, as was often the case since both parents worked, then the child was kept in a corner until someone could be notified.<sup>48</sup> Since multiple grade levels were taught simultaneously, teachers had to come up with a way to provide instruction for everyone. In most cases they

would get upper grade students, usually 8th graders, to help start elementary-level students on their work and move upward to the next grade level and so forth.<sup>49</sup> At times teachers would bounce back and forth from grade level to grade level throughout the day. What usually helped make the teaching situation easier was dividing each grade level into its own separate row. Eight graders, for example, all sat in one row, as did the seventh and sixth graders.<sup>50</sup> In most cases, especially since there were never more than 30 students enrolled at the same time prior to 1960, rows were sectioned off into early elementary grade levels (grades 1st through 3rd); intermediate grade levels (4th through 5th and sometimes 6th grades); and middle or junior high levels (grades 7th and 8th).<sup>51</sup>

Subjects offered at this school included reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, history, home economics, and a few advanced English and math subjects.<sup>52</sup> Each teacher was responsible for teaching all the subjects for every grade level. Sometimes teachers would use upper classmen (7th and 8th graders) to help teach or supervise the younger students but for the most part, teachers worked alone.<sup>53</sup> There was no principal or secretary at that school either and although the high school principal would sometimes come to visit Langston, the only adult would be the teacher unless she had a teacher's aid.<sup>54</sup> In terms of the daily activities; the Langston school operated on a strict regiment. Each morning students would recite the Pledge of Allegiance, hold a small prayer, and then sing a short gospel.<sup>55</sup> Thereafter the class assignments would start. During the morning session students received instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic.<sup>56</sup> After lunch they would receive instruction in history, home economics, geography, and, depending on the grade level, instruction in advanced English and math such as Algebra.<sup>57</sup> The district provided textbooks but they were usually outdated ones or second-hand books at best.<sup>58</sup> Texts were not allowed to leave the school. Fearing that students might lose the very few books the school did have, teachers kept them secured on book shelves along the walls near the back of the room.<sup>59</sup> Supplies for teachers and students, however, were not provided by the district. Everyone had to bring their own school supplies from home, including teachers. Students usually stored their pens, pencils, and paper in shoeboxes also brought from home.<sup>60</sup> Parents often donated supplies, although sometimes at the request of the teacher, to the school as well as sporting equipment such as balls and jump ropes so that their children could enjoy themselves during recess and other school breaks.<sup>61</sup>

Because the Langston School offered no high school instruction students who wanted to receive higher grade levels of instruction had to attend the Negro school in DRISD; the Tarver School.<sup>62</sup> The other option would be to attend a Negro high school located elsewhere, perhaps in a different city. San Antonio, for example, certainly offered a positive educational alternative for blacks in Del Rio.<sup>63</sup> Some students could have possibly attended the high school in San Felipe especially if they were outstanding athletes but most did not; at least not prior to 1954.<sup>64</sup> The



**Figure 3**

School Number 1, San Felipe Common School District, circa 1895

*Courtesy of San Felipe Exes Memorial Museum, Del Rio, Texas*



**Figure 4**

Segregation existed everywhere in the city. Whites Only Sign.  
Moody Park, Del Rio, Texas

*Courtesy Val Verde County Historical Commission*

reality was that many of the Negro students in SFISD simply stopped going to school past the 8th grade. For those that did go past the 7th or 8th grades and that decided to attend the Negro school in Del Rio ISD, they had to pay tuition. Charging tuition fees for students from different districts was common place but instead trying to collect those fees from parents, DRISD officials tried to collect them from SFISD instead. In 1932, for example, School Trustees for DRISD made a formal request to SFISD asking that it pay the tuition fees for all of its Negro students attending the Tarver School but SFISD refused to comply.<sup>65</sup> As a result, DRISD implemented a policy in which all Negro students from SFISD were to be denied entrance and returned home. Furthermore, it filed a suit against San Felipe for outstanding claims.<sup>66</sup> This put pressure on school officials to eventually start making payments. The San Felipe School Board offered to pay less than half of the total amount requested by Del Rio but that offer was rejected.<sup>67</sup> In the end, SFISD had to pay all tuition fees for its students enrolled in the Tarver School.<sup>68</sup> By 1935, SFISD owed DRISD some \$600 in tuition fees for all its black students attending the Tarver School.<sup>69</sup> That fee would not be met until February 1937.<sup>70</sup> By May of that same year, school officials would dish out an additional \$625 for tuition purposes.<sup>71</sup> Needless to say, this created major problems for an already financially strapped San Felipe, however, that a poor district chose to pay hundreds of dollars in tuition fees instead of allowing those students to attend its own high school, especially since their presence would have increased state funds, is a clear indication that SFISD held similar ideas of black inferiority, especially in terms of education, prevalent throughout the country.

Perhaps it was less expensive to pay tuition to DRISD than to provide a better schoolhouse for a handful of black students.<sup>72</sup> The least expensive route would have been to incorporate those students into their own high school, but then that would have gone against their own conventional thinking about blacks and education. But because blacks were not considered a high priority for school officials, it was easy to neglect them and spend their school resources elsewhere. A similar situation would present itself again in 37' when the Langston school temporarily closed. In January of that year, the Board ordered, perhaps due to the economic pressures brought on by the depression years, the lights in the colored school disconnected and the school abandoned.<sup>73</sup> As a result, San Felipe would be forced to send all their black students to school in Del Rio until Langston could reopen. What that also meant was it would rather pay tuition fees for its transfer students than absorb them into their own schools; again upholding conventional thinking about blacks and education. For the most part, students from Langston, prior to integration, either transferred to the Negro school in Del Rio or elsewhere like San Antonio, or stopped going to school altogether after the 8th grade.

## Clubs and Organizations

Clubs and organizations like Student Council or University Inter-scholastic Leagues (UIL) or any other extra-curricular activities at Langston were non-existent. For one thing, the student population was not large enough to make up such teams. But even if there were enough students a lack of funds to manage any such clubs was far from a reality.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore there was a shortage of chaperones and a shortage also of other schools and teams willing to play or compete against Langston. Yet even if all those factors were in place, parents would still be reluctant to allow their children to go to other towns for exhibitions in fear that they may get hurt, especially in towns less accepting of colored student athletes or club members.<sup>75</sup> Any sports played or clubs made by Langston students were done strictly on school grounds for recreational purposes only and not for official school competition events. Sometimes, however, a few students from Langston would be able to play for the sports teams in the other San Felipe schools because although the district had a long history of segregating its black student population, for those with advanced athletic abilities, attending the Negro School was hardly a reality. Instead, they would attend school with other Mexicanos. District officials usually overlooked their own conventional thinking about blacks and education and even bypassed the district's regulations concerning racial segregation especially if those black athletes were capable of improving the overall performance of the school's athletic teams.<sup>76</sup> All black students with noticeable athletic talent received similar treatment.<sup>77</sup> For those students, moving back and forth over the color line was relatively easy but usually within the boundaries of San Felipe since whites on the other side of the creek viewed this arrangement somewhat differently and ascribed to uncompromising segregationist politics. For the rest of Langston's students, no special treatment was given unless district officials saw them as valuable.

The Langston school did have a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) assisting it. Meetings were held once a month in the schoolhouse.<sup>78</sup> The purpose of the Langston PTA was to financially assist the school. Most often parents would hold baked goods sales going door-to-door selling homemade cookies and cupcakes.<sup>79</sup> At times, members of the PTA would visit the school during class time to help out the teachers but mostly with disciplinary problems.<sup>80</sup> Aside from the Negro PTA, the Langston School was virtually on its own. Sometimes district superintendents or high school principals would come and visit the school but those instances were few and far in between. Parents, for the most part, were the ones who maintained the school. Roscoe Blanks, a local plumber and member of the Langston PTA, for example, would often come and do some of the ground maintenance for the school.<sup>81</sup> He would take care of everything from plumbing to replacing old floor boards and he did it all for free.<sup>82</sup> Mr. Blanks would never accept a fee for his services but students would usually fundraise via baked goods sales and purchase for him a tie or a belt as a show of their gratitude.<sup>83</sup>



**Figure 5**

Langston school children in district parade, circa 1952-1953

*Courtesy San Felipe Exes Memorial Museum, Del Rio, Texas*



**Figure 6**

Sid Blanks, SFISD Graduate and Houston Oiler, 1979

*Courtesy San Felipe Exes Memorial Museum, Del Rio, Texas*

## Integration

It would not be until the mid-1950s, with the passing of the Brown decision, that the district began providing instruction for black students in grades above the elementary and junior high levels. Following this ruling, SFISD Trustees planed out a strategy for integrating its black students into the district, but that integration would be both a long and slow process.<sup>84</sup> The district would continue segregating its black students until late 1956.<sup>85</sup> The approach for integrating its black students was a gradual one. Using a staggered integration process, school officials opted to integrate one grade level at a time or at least a few grades at a time for over a two-year period.<sup>86</sup> Certainly it could have absorbed its Negro students all at once but it chose to integrate them slowly.<sup>87</sup> The district did this because they were concerned about how parents, teachers, community members, and students both Mexicano and black would react if everyone were thrust together abruptly. School officials did not want the problems that came along with integration that other cities were experiencing. It especially did not want violence to erupt in its schools. A slow process they figured might help everyone get accustomed to the changes. And for the most part it worked; there were no major problems once students began attending the same schools.<sup>88</sup>

In 1956, the Langston School housed 1st graders only.<sup>89</sup> The following year, it had officially closed once there were no more students to integrate.<sup>90</sup> It remained abandoned for some two years before being sold.<sup>91</sup> At present, a few private residential homes sit where the Langston Elementary School once stood. As for Mrs. Frances Thompson, the teacher at Langston in 1954, she, perhaps unable to find a teaching position in an already crowded SFISD and bearing the burden of desegregation, returned to San Antonio.<sup>92</sup> By 1960, segregated schools for Negro students in the city of Del Rio were no more. Yet although integration was relatively peaceful, it was still a challenge for black students from San Felipe to attend an all Mexicano school and understandably so since they now were plunged into an entirely different school with different students, teachers, different rules and regulations, as well as student expectations.<sup>93</sup> Certainly some students adjusted well while others struggled. Lighter-skinned blacks were sometimes accepted faster than darker-skinned individuals.<sup>94</sup> Those who spoke Spanish also had an easier transition process than those who did not.<sup>95</sup> And obviously those who excelled in extra-curricular activities such as sporting events were accepted the fastest regardless of their skin tone or Spanish fluency.<sup>96</sup> Popularity and athletic ability often allowed individuals to transcend existing racial and cultural boundaries.

Most black students had no trouble joining organizations and other student clubs following integration. In fact, the only time Negro students found opposition was when they traveled with their clubs or teams out of the

city to other parts of the state less welcoming of blacks.<sup>97</sup> In some cases, Negro students, while away at sporting events, would find themselves unable to avoid physical confrontations. But whenever that happened, all students from San Felipe, not just blacks, would participate in the mayhem.<sup>98</sup> Certainly there were individuals in San Felipe that would insult blacks or shout racial slurs towards them but they were usually a minority. Most Mexicanos, however, were accepting of black students in their schools following integration and worked towards fostering greater solidarity.<sup>99</sup>

## Conclusion

In summary, most black school-aged students in San Felipe were considered second-class citizens and like many other districts throughout the country, their education fell second to Mexican Americans and whites. While the district celebrated its formation and accomplishments for being perhaps the first and only Latino-controlled school district in Texas, it also held similar ideas of black inferiority prevalent throughout the country, especially in terms of education, and was content with providing black students with the bare essentials. Anything to the contrary would have gone against their own conventional thinking about blacks and education. Moreover, very little is on record concerning the status of black students from the San Felipe school district.<sup>100</sup> This invisibility, of course, is a reflection of the lack of priority that was given to these students and their educational experiences.<sup>101</sup> The Langston school was literally ignored, deliberately left out of district care, and was essentially left to care for itself.<sup>102</sup> The district, it seemed, was content with providing black students the bare minimum.<sup>103</sup> But in spite of that neglect, parents and teachers from Langston persisted in their efforts to develop an educational system that met the needs of their children. Their commitment to education was strong. Sure they could have used more resources but they would have preferred to be left alone.<sup>104</sup> Yes they were segregated and yes they were poor but they made due with what they had.<sup>105</sup> They were inventive and crafty and excelled at making the classroom exciting.

Furthermore, because of the neglect from district officials, the Langston school would also become an autonomous institution, one that provided all types of services for black community members. Langston was more than a school; it was a meeting hall, a voting poll, a childcare facility, a sanctuary, and the center of black cultural festivities. The school was where individuals went if they were displaced from their homes; it was where they learned to organize and form protest committees. It was where food and clothing drives were held and where families could get medical services. The school, although poor and dilapidated, was their most celebrated building and came to also provide a whole host of social services for the black community in San Felipe. Needless to say,

teachers, parents, and even students would come to espouse a strong sense of ownership over the school. Teachers and parents to a degree were in charge of the instruction that took place in the school and were responsible, therefore, for determining the achievement of their students. As such, the people of Langston, despite the poverty and neglect, would come to develop a powerful sense of educational autonomy.<sup>106</sup> Having to get things done with virtually no resources, they were able to successfully fend for themselves. Following integration, however, they would lose their sense of ownership and would become an even more invisible minority within the district.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The town's sister city in Mexico is Villa Acuña more commonly known as Ciudad Acuña which was first settled in 1877 by a group of Mexican colonists. In 1880, the settlement received town status under its first name Garza Galan. In 1884, the name changed to Congregación Las Vacas and then changed once more to Villa Acuña. Archival Records and Files, Mexican Consulate, Del Rio, Texas.
- <sup>2</sup> The city would form during the mid-1800s but would not officially incorporate until May 6, 1905. "Del Rio was Incorporated First in 1905" Del Rio Evening News, June 1933, Page 6.
- <sup>3</sup> This study will apply a variety of terms to identify the community under investigation. The term "Mexican American" will be used most frequently but other expressions such as "Mexicano," "Mexican Immigrant," "Tejano," "Chicano," and "Latino" will also appear periodically to avoid excessive repetition. For the most part, all terms listed above will be used interchangeably to describe those living in San Felipe; both citizen and non-citizen alike. The term "Chicana/o" refers primarily to youth who developed a different identity from their parents and the few individual activists that harbored elements of racial awareness and a militant Mexican American nationalism following the start of the Chicano Movement. The older generation of Mexican Americans in San Felipe, both immigrant and native to the U.S., did not identify themselves as Chicanas/os but as Mexicanos or Mexican Americans. Although some adopted the term Chicano, most, even the activists, identified themselves as Mexican American. In many instances, the term Mexicano will be used as an umbrella term to describe the community of San Felipe in general. To identify anyone of African origin, the term "Black" will be used most frequently but other expressions such as "Negro," "African American," "Black American," and "Negro American" will also appear periodically and be used interchangeably, again, so as to avoid excessive repetition. The terms "Anglo," "white," or "Anglo American" will also be used to describe the non-Mexican-origin and non-African-origin populations of Del Rio, Texas.
- <sup>4</sup> John M. Jones, Jr., ed. *La Hacienda: An Official Bicentennial Publication*. Del Rio, Texas, Whitehead Memorial Museum and the Val Verde County Historical Commission, 1976, page 3.
- <sup>6</sup> County officials would designate this district Common School District Number 2. Anglos would have a separate school district established on their side of town. Known as Common School District Number 1, it was intended to serve Anglo children only but would come house and segregate the few Mexican American and Black school-aged children who resided on that side of town. As a result, the city of Del Rio would have two separate Common School Districts, one primarily for Anglos and the other for Mexicanos. See Minutes Commissioner's Court, County Clerk's Office, Val Verde County, Del Rio, Texas, Book 1, Pg. 1. In 1890, they would convert their District into an independent one; the Del Rio Independent School District, and would have complete control over the segregation of their non-white students. See Minutes Commissioner's Court, Book 1, July 1890, County Clerk's Office, Val Verde County, Del Rio, Texas.
- <sup>7</sup> The San Felipe Independent School District (SFISD) would officially be incorporated on July 27, 1929. See Minutes Commissioner's Court, July 27, 1929, Book 1, County Clerk's Office, Val Verde County, Del Rio, Texas.
- <sup>8</sup> Established as a frontier fort in 1852, Fort Clark (Brackettville) was located 28 miles east of Del Rio and housed nearly 100 scouts

most of whom were the descendants of runaway slaves that had intermarried with Florida Seminoles as well as Buffalo Soldiers. See “Seminoles Negro Scouts” Val Verde County Historical Commission, Del Rio, Texas. Fort Duncan in Eagle Pass, some 50 miles south of Del Rio along the Rio Grande, as early as 1870, also housed Negro military units specifically Seminoles Scouts. See “African Americans in Texas: Historical and Cultural Legacies,” Pamphlet by the Texas Historical Commission.

<sup>9</sup>Known as Camp Del Rio, the task of this unit was to fend off Indian raids in west Texas. See John M. Jones, Jr., ed. *La Hacienda: An Official Bicentennial Publication*. Del Rio, Texas, Whitehead Memorial Museum and the Val Verde County Historical Commission, 1976.

<sup>10</sup>Steven W. Prewitt, “We Didn’t Ask to Come to This Party: Self Determination Collides With the Federal Government in the Public Schools of Del Rio, Texas, 1890-1971.” Ph.D. Diss., University of Houston, 2000, 32.

<sup>11</sup>Towns such as Musquiz and Nacimiento, both in the state Coahuila and some three hours south of Del Rio were famous for a growing black rancher class. Bertha Fey Benson Personal Interview, March 2, 2007, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>John M. Jones, Jr., ed. *La Hacienda: An Official Bicentennial Publication*. Del Rio, Texas, Whitehead Memorial Museum and the Val Verde County Historical Commission, 1976. Del Rio would always have the largest concentration of black residents for all of Val Verde County. By 1920, it had 10,600 blacks living within its city limits versus the County’s 12,705. In 1930, there were 10,695 blacks in Del Rio to the 14,925 blacks in the County. The population trends for African Americans in Del Rio and Val Verde County by 1940 included 13,350 in Del Rio and 15,455 in the County. Those figures increased to 14,211 for Del Rio and 16,635 for Val Verde County during the 1950s. By the 1960s, there were 18,612 blacks living in Del Rio and 24,461 in the county; by 1970 some 21,330 blacks were living in Del Rio and 27,471 throughout the county. See *Negro Distribution and Scholastic Census, 1920-1970*, Box 1994/38-8, Texas Education Agency Files, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Library Reading Room, Austin, Texas.

<sup>14</sup>Earlene Jones Personal Interview, March 8, 2007, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>15</sup>Alicia Paz Personal Interview, April 18, 2006, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>16</sup>Robert Lee Jones Benson Personal Interview, March 2, 2007, Del Rio Texas.

<sup>17</sup>Alicia Paz Personal Interview, April 18, 2006, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>18</sup>Earlene Jones Personal Interview, March 8, 2007, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>19</sup>Val Verde County Genealogical Society, LDS Family History Center, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>The Negro School in DRISD was originally called Breckenridge and was located in the Mexican quarter of town. It was renamed the Tarver School in honor of a long-time teacher and principal of Del Rio ISD who had grown ill and passed away. See Ruby L. Barnett and Rachel L. Moore. “A History of Del Rio Independent School District, 1890-1953.” Del Rio: Unpublished Paper, 1953, Page 160. The pseudo-orange adobe structure was a much larger building than Langston with the space to house four different teachers and about 30 to 40 students. Earlene Jones Personal Interview, March 8, 2007, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>22</sup> Earlene Jones Personal Interview, March 8, 2007, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Lee Jones Benson Personal Interview, March 2, 2007, Del Rio Texas.

<sup>24</sup> Earlene Jones Personal Interview, March 8, 2007, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>25</sup> Because the school lacked a front yard recess was held behind the schoolhouse and was separated into different time-slots so that not all students went on break at the same time. Teachers would usually send older students out with younger ones to ensure that no one would get hurt. Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Lee Jones Benson Personal Interview, March 2, 2007, Del Rio Texas.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Earlene Jones Personal Interview, March 8, 2007, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> A survey of black schools conducted by the State Department of Education found that the average school terms for blacks was only about four days shorter than the length of school term for white children. State Superintendent of Public Instruction, S.M. Mares and State Supervisors of Negro Education, G.T. Bludworth and D.B. Taylor, *Negro Education in Texas: Special Activities and Industrial Aid*, Bulletin Number 212, State Department of Education, October 1926, Texas Education Agency Files, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Library Reading Room, Austin, Texas.

<sup>36</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "JUNETEENTH," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/JJ/lkj1.html> (accessed April 21, 2008).

<sup>37</sup> Both Negro schools in town were known to observe this historic event. At first most celebrations were held on school grounds. Over time, especially after 1957, celebrations were held at local parks or in large banquet dance halls. The types of events also changed. Included as part of the festivities were parades, beauty pageants, scholarship awards, poetry readings, musical performances, plays, and speeches by city officials. See Diana Sotelo Zertuche. *The Spirit of Val Verde: Texas Sesquicentennial Yearbook of Val Verde County, Texas, 1836-1986*. Del Rio, Texas, 1986, pg. 260.

<sup>38</sup> School records mention no teachers assigned to the Langston school prior to WWII. Rosemary Fey Blanks Personal Interview, March 2, 2007, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>39</sup> Earlene Jones Personal Interview, March 8, 2007, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>40</sup> Texas Public School Directory, Austin, Texas, State Department of Education, 1953-1954.

<sup>41</sup> Earlene Jones Personal Interview, March 8, 2007, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. Leona McBride was possibly another substitute teacher at Langston. Rosemary Fey Blanks Personal Interview, March 2, 2007, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>44</sup> A survey of black schools conducted by the State Department of Education found that the state spent about a third less on teacher's salaries for Negro teachers. State Superintendent of Public Instruction, S.M. Mares and State Supervisors of Negro Education, G.T. Bludworth and D.B. Taylor, *Negro Education in Texas: Special Activities and Industrial Aid*, Bulletin Number 212, State Department of Education, October 1926, Texas Education Agency Files, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Library Reading Room, Austin, Texas. Salaries for teachers at the Negro School in DRISD averaged \$85.00 per month for a nine month term. School Board Minutes, Del Rio Independent School District, July 2, 1929.

<sup>45</sup> School Board Minutes, San Felipe Independent School District, September 5, 1935, Book 1.

<sup>46</sup> In 1918, San Felipe recorded only 7 black school aged children enrolled in the Langston school. See Texas Public School Directory, Austin, TX: State Department of Education, 1918-1919, pg. 42. By 1927, that number increased to 9. Texas Public School Directory, Austin, Texas, State Department of Education, 1927-1928, pg. 72. After district incorporation in 1929, Langston reported having 20 Negro students enrolled in its school. Similar to the district following the construction of the new high school, Langston also witnessed an increasing number of students enrolling in higher numbers than ever before. Texas Public School Directory, Austin, Texas, State Department of Education, 1931-1932, pg. 87.

<sup>47</sup> Earlene Jones Personal Interview, March 8, 2007, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>48</sup> The Langston School lacked a school nurse much less medical quarters. Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Rosemary Fey Blanks Personal Interview, March 2, 2007, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Earlene Jones Personal Interview, March 8, 2007, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> A survey of black schools conducted by the State Department of Education found that the state spent about a third less for the education of blacks than for whites including spending less on textbooks and supplies. State Superintendent of Public Instruction, S.M. Mares and State Supervisors of Negro Education, G.T. Bludworth and D.B. Taylor, *Negro Education in Texas: Special Activities and Industrial Aid*, Bulletin Number 212, State Department of Education, October 1926, Texas Education Agency Files, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Library Reading Room, Austin, Texas.

<sup>59</sup> Earlene Jones Personal Interview, March 8, 2007, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> A.E. Gutierrez Personal Interview, March 29, 2006, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>63</sup> As early as 1902, that city had in operation one of the state's first upper-level school houses for Negro students. The Frederick Douglass School, which was originally established in 1869 for the purpose of educating black children of all ages, was remodeled and made exclusively for African-American senior high students. In 1923 the Frederick Douglass School, following the creation of a Junior High system in the San Antonio Independent School District, became the first Junior High/High School in the state designed specifically for black Americans. A decade later, a new high school building for African-Americans was built also in San Antonio. Officially called Phyllis Wheatley High School, this new school replaced the high school section of the Frederick Douglas School and became a magnet for Negroes from around the region looking for state accredited high school instruction; including a few from San Felipe. "Frederick Douglass School" Bexar County Historical Commission, San Antonio, Texas, 1999.

<sup>64</sup> Rosemary Fey Blanks Personal Interview, March 2, 2007, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>65</sup> School Board Minutes, Del Rio Independent School District, September 3, 1932.

<sup>66</sup> School Board Minutes, Del Rio Independent School District, February 3, 1934.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> School Board Minutes, San Felipe Independent School District, October 16, 1935, Book 1.

<sup>70</sup> School Board Minutes, San Felipe Independent School District, February 23, 1937, Book 1.

<sup>71</sup> School Board Minutes, San Felipe Independent School District, May 3, 1937, Book 1.

<sup>72</sup> Steven W. Prewitt, "We Didn't Ask to Come to This Party: Self Determination Collides With the Federal Government in the Public Schools of Del Rio, Texas, 1890-1971." Ph.D. Diss., University of Houston, 2000, 120.

<sup>73</sup> School Board Minutes, San Felipe Independent School District, January 6, 1937, Book 1.

<sup>74</sup> Earlene Jones Personal Interview, March 8, 2007, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Johnny Felton attended the Mexican schools in San Felipe because he was an outstanding football and basketball player. *El Conquistador*, 1941, San Felipe High School Yearbook, San Felipe Independent School District, San Felipe Exes Memorial Center, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>77</sup> One family in particular has been very promising for the district, the Blanks family. The Blanks athletic tradition is rooted deep in San Felipe. Among the standout athletes were Sydney Blanks who played football for the SFHS Mustangs then for the Texas A&I Javelinas, and later for the Houston Oilers. See Rowland Garza, "Crystal McBrady Continues the Blanks Family Legacy" *Southwest Texas Live*. Vol. 2, Issue 6, June 2007, Page 32. A native to San Felipe, Sid Blanks attended the Langston School until the 7th grade but because he was such a prolific athlete, he was allowed to enroll in the High School so that he could play for the Mustangs. See Carl Guys, "Del Rioan in Pro Ranks." *Del Rio News Herald*, May 20, 1979. Another standout Blanks athlete was Roger Blanks who played football as a Mustang and with Wharton College and Texas A&I. Later he would become the head coach for the Del Rio Rams baseball team serving at that position from 1976 to 1987. Larvell Blanks would also become a professional athlete playing

baseball from 1972 to 1980 with the Atlanta Braves, the Cleveland Indians, the Texas Rangers, and the Pittsburgh Pirates. There was also Lance Blanks who played basketball first for the Mustangs then for the University of Texas before being drafted as a first round pick into the National Basketball Association to play professionally with the Detroit Pistons. He would also play for the Minnesota Timberwolves. See Rowland Garza, "Crystal McBrady Continues the Blanks Family Legacy" *Southwest Texas Live*. Vol. 2, Issue 6, June 2007, Page 32.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> School Board Minutes, San Felipe Independent School District, July 5, 1955, Book 2.

<sup>85</sup> P.A. Tanksley, "A History of Desegregation in the Del Rio Public Schools," Del Rio, Texas, undated, Jacob I. Rodriguez Papers, LULAC Collection, Box 5 Folder 3, Rare Books and Manuscript Reading Room Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin. See also Charles A. Garabedian. "The Wildcats vs. the Mustangs: The Consolidation of the San Felipe and Del Rio Independent School Districts." Master's Thesis, Sul Ross University, 1994, Pg. 94.

<sup>86</sup> Rosemary Fey Blanks Personal Interview, March 2, 2007, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>87</sup> "Del Rio Schools to Integrate" *Del Rio News Herald*. April 11, 1956, Page 1.

<sup>88</sup> DRISD would take similar steps in integrating its Negro students. Their integration efforts officially began in September of 1956 for grades 1 through 8 only; the high school portion of the school remained segregated. Similar to SFISD, integration was designed to occur gradually and aside from the elementary grades which were absorbed immediately in 56', integrating high school students for DRISD was a slower, longer process than it was for SFISD. The strategy included integrating one to two grades per year. During the 56'-57' school year, for example, Tarver housed grades 9th through 12th; grades 11th through 12th the next school term (1957-1958); and only the 12th grade the year after that (1958-1959). By 1959, all grades were expected to be integrated. But unlike the integration process for SFISD, teachers located in the Tarver School would be re-assigned throughout the Del Rio district as well. School Board Minutes, Del Rio Independent School District, April 9, 1956, Book 3.

<sup>89</sup> School Board Minutes, San Felipe Independent School District, July 10, 1956, Book 2.

<sup>90</sup> Texas Public School Directory, Austin, Texas, State Department of Education, 1957-1958. On the eve of *Brown*, SFISD had a total of 15 black school aged children enrolled in its district. Texas Public School Directory, Austin, Texas, State Department of Education, 1952-1953. In 1956, that number almost doubled totaling 36 students. In 1955 SFISD had 14 Negro students. Texas Public School Directory, Austin, Texas, State Department of Education, 1955-1956. By 1958, SFISD recorded having 46 Negro youth. Texas Public School Directory, Austin, Texas, State Department of Education, 1958-1959. As the 1950s came to a close, it had 56 Negro students in its integrated schools. Texas Public School Directory, Austin, Texas, State Department of Education, 1959-1960.

<sup>91</sup> Rayfield Medcall, Pastor of New Light Baptist Church, in August of 1959 petitioned the San Felipe Board for permission to buy the former Langston School. See School Board Minutes, San Felipe Independent School District, August 3, 1959, Book 2. He would eventually acquire the building in September of the same year for an amount of \$3,500. School Board Minutes, San Felipe Independent School District, September 15, 1959, Book 2.

<sup>92</sup> Earlene Jones Personal Interview, March 8, 2007, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>93</sup> Rosemary Fey Blanks Personal Interview, March 2, 2007, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Nancy Fey Personal Interview, March 2, 2007, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Of all the former teachers, administrators, and community members interviewed for this project, only a handful could speak of the Langston school. Most never knew the teachers employed at that school or could recall if any black students were in their classes following the 1954 *Brown* case.

<sup>101</sup> Steven W. Prewitt, "We Didn't Ask to Come to This Party: Self Determination Collides With the Federal Government in the Public Schools of Del Rio, Texas, 1890-1971." Ph.D. Diss., University of Houston, 2000, 123.

<sup>102</sup> Established to support Negro schools was the Rosenwald Fund, which was responsible for building hundreds of school buildings specifically for African Americans. Established by Sears President Julius Rosenwald who took particular interest in the plight of African Americans, the purpose of the foundation was to donate monies to public schools for Negro children. See State Superintendent of Public Instruction, S.M. Mares and State Supervisors of Negro Education, G.T. Bludworth and D.B. Taylor, *Negro Education in Texas: Special Activities and Industrial Aid*, Bulletin Number 212, State Department of Education, October 1926, Texas Education Agency Files, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Library Reading Room, Austin, Texas. This Fund was the largest school building program for black Americans in the South since Reconstruction. Developed around 1913 and continued up until 1932, it distributed over \$28 million dollars to poor, rural Negro schools throughout some 15 different mainly southern states. By 1932, Rosenwald buildings included 464 schoolhouses, 31 houses for teachers, and close to 32 vocational shops throughout Texas alone. Funds for constructing these facilities were allotted to the state following an arrangement between the Rosenwald Foundation and State Superintendent of Public Instruction. See Directory of Classified and Accredited High Schools, Vol. 8, No. 7, July 1932. A.M. Blackman, Chief Supervisor of High Schools, Bulletin, State Department of Education, Austin, Texas. The Foundation would match donations of land and labor made by local community members with financial contributions. The Rosenwald Foundation was successful in providing support for Negro schools in the state but unfortunately for the Langston School, no Rosenwald funds ever reached it. So while the Foundation contributed to the construction of over 5,357 school buildings, over 200 homes for

teachers, and at least five industrial high schools for blacks across the American South, none of it came to the city of Del Rio. See State Superintendent of Public Instruction, S.M. Mares and State Supervisors of Negro Education, G.T. Bludworth and D.B. Taylor, *Negro Education in Texas: Special Activities and Industrial Aid, Bulletin Number 212*, State Department of Education, October 1926, Texas Education Agency Files, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Library Reading Room, Austin, Texas.

<sup>103</sup>The district did have, however, an insurance policy of \$2,500 on the schoolhouse but nothing for its students. See School Board Minutes, San Felipe Independent School District, June 6, 1935, Book 1.

<sup>104</sup>Robert Benson Personal Interview, March 2, 2007, Del Rio, Texas.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid.

<sup>106</sup>See Adam Fairclough's *A Class of Their Own: Black Teachers in the Segregated South*, (2007), for a discussion of forced autonomy. He argues that black teachers enjoyed more autonomy than whites ones but that it was forced onto black teachers and schools because of the neglect from whites. Page 291.

# PROCESSING RACISM: AFRICAN AMERICAN MEMORABILIA AND THE THREAT OF INFINITY <sup>1</sup>

JOHN VENECEK

## **Abstract**

*For a better part of the past year, I have been responsible for processing the Carol Mundy collection of African American Memorabilia at the University of Central Florida (UCF). Ms. Mundy has been an avid collector of African Americana since the early 1990s when she purchased a copy of the 1901 edition of *The Complete Life of William McKinley and Story of His Assassination* that included a rare correspondence from the U.S. army to the 10th Cavalry of “Buffalo Soldiers.” This discovery was just the first step in a journey that would take her around the country in her quest to preserve African American culture. This quest ultimately led to the acquisition of thousands of items including books, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, scrapbooks, photo albums, military records, music, artwork and other ephemera dating from 1720 to the present.*

## **The Mundy Collection**

In 2009 Carol Mundy donated the paper-based portion of her collection to the University of Central Florida (UCF) where, once the collection is fully processed and digitized, it will be of great value to researchers studying the African American experience in the United States in general or Central Florida in particular. The crowned jewel of her collection is an 1872 muster roll from the 24th infantry of Buffalo Soldiers that is signed by Colonel Abner Doubleday who is often mistakenly credited with having invented baseball. Other highlights include a Civil War-era lantern slide, a collection of lithographs from the 1800s depicting scenes of slave life, the personal papers of Ella Walls who was immortalized in Zora Neal Hurston’s novel *Mules and Men*, and a collection of photographs that document Bishop William T. Vernon’s years as an A.M.E missionary in Cape Town, South Africa during the early 1920s.

Most of the items described above fall generally into the category of African American memorabilia. These are primarily objects that were produced by African Americans, originally for private use and are now being preserved in public archives thanks to donors such as Carol Mundy. However, there is another type of memorabilia that often gets lumped in with these collections and promoted as African Americana. More specifically, these are artifacts that

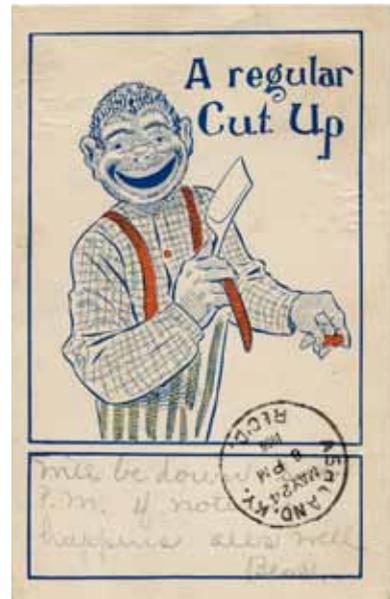
were typically produced by white people and for a white audience. What is striking about this type of memorabilia is their derogatory or downright racist nature. These include such things as advertisements for anything tooth paste to tobacco, post cards, cartoons, signs, menus, match books, cookie jars, salt & pepper shakers and even objects as seemingly innocuous as door stops and thermometers. The images often depict African Americans as either greatly exaggerated and, at times, demonic characters (see figures 1-5). Not only are these images extremely negative, often the characters in them are seen as existing in negative space – primitive locations often without even the most basic creature comforts. Other common themes include exaggerated images of people eating giant pieces of watermelon and children being chased by alligators (see figures 6 & 7). As the digitization craze continues to grow, racist images like those described above are bound to become more prominent and will continue to be tied together with and promoted as African American heritage.

Even though there have been efforts to purge such items from the market – most notably in the years following the Civil Rights movement – the value of racist memorabilia has skyrocketed and become increasingly coveted by private collectors.<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Goings, author of *Minnie and Uncle Mose*, says that, although the price of these “collectibles” has been rising steadily since the late 70s, many critics point to the popularity of Spike Lee’s 2000 film, *Bamboozled* – a satire about a modern day minstrel show that prominently features racist ephemera – with a market value that Goings says “ha[s] no relationship to reality.”<sup>3</sup> Lyn Casmier-Paz, a critic who is concerned with the rise in popularity (and value) of racist memorabilia, cites *Bamboozled* with making her aware that there was, in fact, a market for this type of memorabilia and that these derogatory items are actively sought out by African Americans, including Spike Lee himself, a renowned collector of African Americana. In the film, Casmier-Paz notes, “blackface minstrelsy and Aunt Jemima cookie jars serve as complex symbols of African American wealth, as well as battlegrounds for class struggle and violence.”<sup>4</sup> She further claims that, while artifacts such as aunt Jemima cookie jars are certainly historical, their value as collectibles “indicates the extent to which urban, economically privileged blacks feel themselves disconnected from the current discrimination and violence experienced by less privileged African Americans. For ultimately the most important role of black memorabilia is to provide a fantasy of black community in the racism of historical icons.”<sup>5</sup> She describes those who deal in these types of artifacts as “bourgeois African American collectors” and asserts that such items belong in a museum where “history becomes priceless” and that “violence belongs to its site of origin: America’s historical and racist neuroses, for which there is no dollar value.”<sup>6</sup>



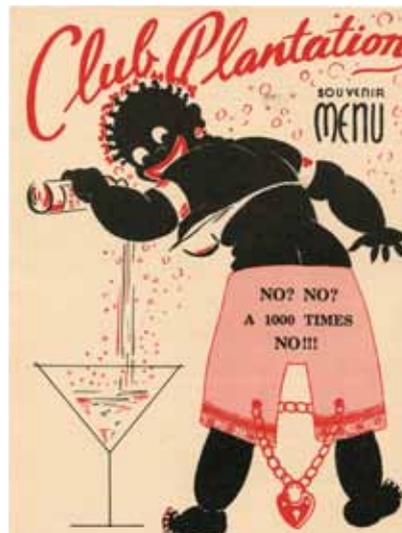
**Figure 1**  
Content

*Courtesy of The Carol Mundy Collection*



**Figure 2**  
Content

*Courtesy of The Carol Mundy Collection*



**Figure 3**  
Content

*Courtesy of the University of Central Florida*

It is worth noting that Carol Mundy has never paid more than twenty dollars for a single item and has never sold anything for profit. Most of the items in her collection were purchased for a few dollars at most. As a long-time employee of the airline industry, Mundy spent much of her adult life traveling around the country like a modern day flaneur exploring yard sales, flea markets and thrift shops for anything related to black culture. For a long time, her entire collection was stored in her Central Florida home, which she turned into a sort of personal museum. In a 2006 interview with Mundy for the Orlando Weekly, Theresa Everline noted that:

Every flat surface in the room -- indeed, in just about Mundy's whole house -- is covered with African-American memorabilia, mementos and historical items ... The dining room packed with "derogatory stuff" is enough to make anyone surprised, uncomfortable or more than a little disappointed in humanity. . . Mundy has copies of a 1901 New York Times half-page cartoon called "Pore Lil Mose" framed on her walls; the black title character's "family crest" includes a watermelon, dice and a switchblade. "Coloreds only" signs lie here and there. Sitting everywhere are cookie jars, salt shakers and product packaging with blacks grinning, looking foolish or looking lewd -- always with dark, dark skin, thick, thick lips and bulging eyes.<sup>7</sup>

Mundy freely admits that not everyone approves of the environment she has created at home and notes that some of her friends think she "should be smashing the stuff, not displaying it." However, she believes she is preserving history: "I want my grandchildren to understand what my grandfather saw," she says, "I want them to understand what [seeing] this must have been like." She approaches her task with the utmost professionalism going so far as to preserve and catalog every item in her collection with all the care of an archivist. She recognizes that it is easy to become overwhelmed by the negativity of some of the images in her collection, or artifacts such as the slave shackles that she keeps on her kitchen table, but to be truly appreciated, the collection has to be considered in its full context. "For Mundy," writes Everline, "the juxtaposition of demeaning images on the tobacco tins with the impressive accomplishments found in the books, photographs and civil-rights memorabilia teaches a valuable lesson in strength."<sup>8</sup>

### **Black Memorabilia**

The range of responses to this interview helps illustrate why this is such a controversial issue. In the discussion section following the online version of the article, several readers applauded Mundy's efforts to preserve both the good and bad parts of their heritage rather than just the "feel good stuff." As "Roxie" states, "We should be looking at some of these images not with shame, but with pride in how much our ancestors have overcome and how much we

can overcome in the future.” Conversely, a reader named “Mzuri” calls her “delusional” and suggests Mundy donate her materials to a museum and encourage her family to read instead of creating a negative environment for them at home. And finally, “Femrenoir” makes an interesting point when she says that she too had purchased a derogatory black doll and taken it upon herself to make some modifications by removing the stereotypical Aunt Jemima apron and scarf and replacing them with yarn hair. She recognizes that the modifications devalued the doll as a collectible, but adds that she found the process “liberating.”<sup>9</sup>

Many of these responses are in keeping with the opinions cited throughout Casmier-Paz’s article. For example, she quotes Jan Lindenberg, author of *More Black Memorabilia: A Handbook with Prices*, who states that “African Americans want to show their children how other races viewed them, and how times and attitudes have changed.”<sup>10</sup> She further cites Julia Bond who says these images “represent yesterday’s promise partially filled today, and hold a pledge that tomorrow will be better.” However, these sentiments, according to Casmier-Paz, indicate how “Black memorabilia no longer signals an immediate connection to racism; the collections are history.” As such, collections of African American memorabilia have located themselves at “moved distance from the victimization that the objects represent.”<sup>11</sup> She notes two key reasons why she believes these items have become of such strong interest to African American collectors: “First, because the racist representations properly belong to those who were victimized by the stereotypes and violence they represent, and, second, so that white people will not be able to claim the racism – in some frighteningly nostalgic way – as their own”<sup>12</sup> Her point is that, by assuming ownership of these items, the perception is that African Americans can usurp the power of the images that were used against them for so long. In so doing, they regain control of their history and how their story is told. Although this idea may seem simple enough, it is one that is fraught with paradox.

While there may not seem to be a strong break between this statement and those made by Carol Mundy, the catch for Casmier-Paz is that, in her view, “This is not our history and our culture. This is nothing we did to ourselves; just how we were depicted.”<sup>13</sup> She further claims that, “the brutality of these images positions the spectator as eyewitness to a crime, the narrative for which is urgent and necessary. For without an immediate explanatory narrative, the violence embodied in the object can be mistakenly attributed to the collector – and not to history.”<sup>14</sup> However, she points out that the narrative created by the collector – what she refers to as the “heritage preservation narrative” – never fully replaces the object’s earlier racist narrative, which “helped the dominant culture to understand its own racial identity by projecting opposite and distorted characteristics onto consumer goods, and then to exploit those characteristics to target consumption of specific products.”<sup>15</sup> Rather, the collected objects



**Figure 4**

*Courtesy of The Carol Mundy Collection*



**Figure 5**

*Courtesy of the University of Central Florida*



**Figure 6**

*Courtesy of the University of Central Florida*

provide “the clearest evidence that African American culture is absent from black memorabilia’s racist iconography and perpetuation of white-supremacist culture and identity.”<sup>16</sup> No matter how hard collectors try to manipulate, arrange and re-contextualize their collections, “grotesque black memorabilia must always deal with narratives that African American collectors cannot control. For the larger story of grotesque artifacts is that which belongs to the racist imagination.”<sup>17</sup> While collectors may try to purge the original negative connotations of these images and artifacts by assuming ownership of them, preserving, organizing and even altering them in an attempt to liberate themselves from the harm that was done in the past, Casmier-Paz believes that “these historical images are not as easily defused or manipulated as collectors believe them to be.” She refers to this process as “paradigm recycling” and states that, “the irony of black collectibles produces not so much a change in thinking as a recycling of old views.”<sup>18</sup> Her point is illustrated by the final scene in *Bamboozled* in which Delecroix finds himself haunted by the objects in his collection and ends up smashing it to pieces.

Michael D. Harris follows this line of thinking when he states that, “the line crossed when one traverses from ‘knowing’ to collecting.” His claim is that “collection is not an act of exorcism, it is an act of commodification.”<sup>19</sup> In making his case, he cites Karla Holloway who says:

“Knowing what others may imagine they see when they look at us is necessary and critical information. Without this awareness, we behave as if our bodies and our color do not provoke a certain stereotype and initiate a particular response. And we turn over to others, who do not have our best interests at heart, the power of the image.”<sup>20</sup>

Holloway’s logic is in line with Carol Mundy’s assertion that her collection serves as a reminder of what previous generations had to endure. However, Harris notes that, “terminology has more potential inversion than imagery. The term black is mutable to some extent, but a derogatory image cannot become an affirmation.” Racist artifacts contain the same racial signifiers they always had “regardless of a change of scenery or circumstance,” and because the original racist sentiments have not yet been fully purged from society, “they represent active attitudes; they are not yet relics of a not-to-be forgotten past.”<sup>21</sup> Many of the objects we have been discussing may seem to be absurdly exaggerated, “kitschy” and, therefore, somewhat removed from reality, Harris reminds us that they are still remnants of a time when “whites resisted the recognition of African humanity and, through commercial products, they reiterated the usefulness of blacks as objects (commodities) within commercial enterprise.”<sup>22</sup>

## The World of Ephemera

While some of the ideas expressed above about the power of and potential violence associated with this type of imagery – especially with respect to Casmier-Paz’s claim that viewing racist memorabilia is akin to witnessing a crime – may sound extreme, they are not without precedent. Robin Chandler, for example, refers to “racist kitsch” as a form of “visual terrorism.”<sup>23</sup> Tavia Nyong’o further claims that this type of kitsch holds a special place within the world of ephemera. While most ephemeral materials – such as advertisements, post cards, programs and play bills – tend to lie at the periphery of our vision, racist kitsch “holds our gaze, stops our conversations, and in its demand for attention in spite of itself, is an equal embarrassment.”<sup>24</sup> She also asserts that the embarrassment and disgust we experience when we view these items instills in us a drive to restore our dignity: Our disgust tells us that we are not the audience solicited by the object, that we are not the people who would find the object harmless fun . . . Strong disgust demands an immediate tactic or gesture to reassert dignity. This gesture to reassert our dignity creates a sort of “oppositional distance,” which allows us to view the memorabilia in a new context, one in which the item has been “re-signified” and “becomes a totem of our racial survival.”<sup>25</sup>

Earlier in this article, I made the point that much of what falls under the umbrella of “African American Memorabilia” is actually quite distinct from what we might call true African American heritage. More specifically, many of the derogatory images under consideration here were produced by and for a white audience, often for commercial purposes and/or public display in things like advertisements, cartoons and minstrel shows. Conversely, ephemeral items such as letters, scrapbooks, and photo albums were produced by and for African Americans, typically for private purposes with no larger aesthetic project intended. The distinction between these two sides can perhaps best be seen in the photograph collections, most of which were salvaged by Carol Mundy from various flea markets and thrift stores. Most of the pictures in these collections fall into the category of vernacular photography, a branch of photography that typically deals with pictures produced by amateurs that depict the kinds of daily activities and domestic situations that one might expect to find in a family photo album. In the case of African American vernacular photography, the images provide a sharp contrast to those found in the types of racist memorabilia we have been discussing here and have the ability to, as Deborah Willis says, “transform the public image of African American and to challenge the stereotypical images that showed blacks as subordinate to the dominant culture.”<sup>26</sup>

Most of the pictures in Carol Mundy’s photograph collections are, unfortunately, anonymous because, as is often the case with “found” photographs, they were discarded by their original owner and salvaged by a collector without a lot of substantial information about their origin. In this case, we have a batch that originated in San Diego,



**Figure 8**

*Courtesy of The Carol Mundy Collection*



**Figure 9**

*Courtesy of The Carol Mundy Collection*

one in North Dakota, one from Bishop College in Texas, and one, the only one about which we have substantial information, is the collection of Bishop William T. Vernon photographs from his missionary in Cape Town, South Africa. Although we don't have precise information about the origins of these collections, and only approximate date ranges, they are still able to provide a wealth of information about how African Americans chose to depict themselves using the relatively new medium of photography. As opposed to the derogatory images that are essentially products of the white imagination, these photographs are remarkable for the insight they provide into how African Americans saw themselves: often in even the most basic of domestic situation, they will be well dressed with men often wearing suits and posing proudly alongside a prized personal possession like a car and women in dresses, hats and scarfs and are rarely seen in the kind of primitive conditions described above (see figures 8-12).

Many of the portraits from this era were taken in studios featuring adornments like overstuffed chairs, classical columns and drapery – environments in which the individual's "idealized self" could be realized. According to Brian Willis, "Photographs did much more than record the presence of black men and women in America; they became a communal image of prestige and power."<sup>27</sup> Further, Willis cites Robin D.G. Kelley whose states:

Study these photographs and you'll discover in the gaze and gestures of ordinary African-Americans a complex and diverse community too busy loving, marrying, dancing, worshipping, dreaming, laughing, arguing, playing, working, dressing up, looking cool raising children, organizing, performing magic, making poetry to be worried about what white folks thought about them.<sup>28</sup>

Wallis goes on to claim that this type of vernacular photography fits in with a campaign undertaken by W. E. B. DuBois and other African American leaders "to affirm the culture and intelligence of African Americans." This campaign would favor "images that showed successful and self-confident African Americans. Their intention was not simply to reverse the stereotypes but to challenge the visual perceptions of difference that supported prejudice."<sup>29</sup> For Du Bois, these images typified a "new social ideal," an ideal that is on full display especially in photographs taken from the late-1800s through the mid-1900s (the basic date range of Carol Mundy's photograph collection). This is a time during which Wallis claims that African Americans "flocked" to studios to have their portraits taken, portraits that depict "African Americans doing ordinary things and feeling proud in the shadow of white supremacy." Further, Wallis once again quotes Robin Kelley who says, "As modern visual poets, they were equally concerned with locating and reproducing the beauty and fragility of the race, the ironic humor of everyday life, the dream life of the people."<sup>30</sup> These photographs provide a sharp contrast to the racist images that were so prominent and are

still very much in keeping with the points made above by Tavia Nyong'o and Michael D. Harris. Specifically, they show a drive – either conscious or unconscious – to assert both the dignity and humanity of their subjects, or, as Wallis suggests, their dream life.

### **Collecting and Classifying**

I have been focusing on photographs that are able to provide glimpses into the lives of people who were too often the subjects of stereotypes. However, many of these same principles can be applied to other types of ephemera found in the collections of Carol Mundy and other likeminded collectors. These tend to be common, everyday objects that generally were not intended to have a long lifespan and have survived, either in private or public collection, only by chance. Mary-Elise Haug notes that collecting ephemera “invariably includes classifying it, providing new meaning and context for the artifacts.”<sup>31</sup> This drive toward classification can be seen in the case of Carol Mundy who organized and kept a meticulous inventory of every item in her collection often including notes about when and where she purchased each item. The organization and classification of ephemeral materials not only extends their lifespan but, as Haug points out, it also provides “new meaning and context for the artifacts.”<sup>32</sup> Collecting and classifying moves ephemeral material from what Michael Thompson calls the “rubbish phase” into the “durable phase” where they acquire “some monetary and/or historical value, which increases with collecting activity and scholarly use.”<sup>33</sup> The items in question take on a new identity and new meanings when they are removed from the original context and placed into the artificial context of the collection, then this process is repeated again when the collector donates his or her materials to a university archive where the collections are once again rearranged and classified in accordance with institutional standards. This process further removes the items from this context of origin and places them in a setting where they will be viewed as part of and in relation to other collections held at the same institution.

Mary-Elise Haug goes on to cite Susan Stewart who claims that this progression from the private to the public realm does more than just change the context of origin, it destroys it: “Collections represent the total aestheticization of use value as objects are reframed within a world of attention and manipulation of context. In the collection, history is replaced by classification, making the collection ahistoric.”<sup>34</sup> Stewart further distinguishes the individual object from the complete collection. An individual item “is not simply an object appearing out of context, an object from the past incongruously surviving the present; rather, its function is to envelop the present within the past.” However, “The collection does not displace attention to the past; rather, the past is at the service of



**Figure 10**

*Courtesy of the University of Central Florida*



**Figure 11**

*Courtesy of The Carol Mundy Collection*

the collection, for whereas the souvenir lends authenticity to the past, the past lends authenticity to the collection.” Further, “The collection replaces history with classification, with order beyond the realm of temporality.”<sup>35</sup> In her view, the goal of the collector and the collection is not to restore or preserve the context of origin, it is to create new ones. The origin in this case – the site of the objects original creation and/or use – is all but obliterated. The new origin becomes the site of acquisition, and all time is then “synchronous within the collection’s world.”<sup>36</sup> These points raise obvious problems for both collectors and archivists regarding the ability of these objects to help us understand the past.

The principles of Stewart’s argument can easily be seen at play both in the rationalization of and various reactions to the racist memorabilia we have been discussing here. Whether critics are for or against collecting and preserving such items, one common theme that runs throughout the discussion is the proper context in which these items should be viewed. Carol Mundy, it will be recalled, chose not to hide anything in her collection no matter how negative or offensive others might find it. Rather, she had her collection on full display in her home, a decision she rationalized by stating that her goal was to insure that her children and others would never forget the injustices that their ancestors had to endure. The lynchpin in Mundy’s approach seems to be the importance of both preservation and memory, which is natural in the world of archives where a great deal of time and effort is geared toward preserving memory by making more material available through institutional repositories and digital collections. The benefits of such endeavors can, of course, be profound: a greater amount of information is made much more easily accessible to a larger audience in these online collections. Researchers, in turn, can be more efficient by no longer having to travel to archives in hopes of finding a hidden treasure. Likewise, individual archives can connect to other like-minded institutions to increase the visibility and impact of their collections.

Despite these endeavors, all of which are geared toward preserving history by making an unprecedented amount of information available online, Susan Stewart wants us to acknowledge that the end result may not be what we believe it will be. More specifically, she says that it might not be memory that we are preserving. Rather, in a point that seems counter-intuitive at first, she claims that the point of collecting may, in fact, be to forget:

While the point of the souvenir may be remembering, or at least the invention of memory, the point of collection may be forgetting – starting again in such a way that a finite number of elements create, by virtue of their combination, and infinite reverie.<sup>37</sup>

Elsewhere, she calls forgetting the “counter force of memory” and says that forgetting “is so powerful an instrument of adaption to reality because it gradually destroys in us the surviving past – a past that is in perpetual

contradiction to it.<sup>38</sup> By applying this line of thinking to the subject at hand, we can see that, according to Stewart, the drive to collect and preserve the past is not so much an act of remembering, as common wisdom would hold. Rather, these “forms of nostalgia that so relentlessly surround us are devices of forgetting in the costume of memory.”<sup>39</sup> Abstract as they may be, these points do shed light on the issues raised early in this essay, most notably, what motivates people (especially African Americans) to collect racist memorabilia and why are the responses to these collections so varied? Lyn Casmier-Paz, it will be recalled, stated that these types of collections are located at a “moved distance from the victimization that the objects represent”<sup>40</sup> and she doubted the ability of collectors to control the narratives that surround the objects. In her view, they will always belong to “the racist imagination.”<sup>41</sup> However, Stewart believes that this is exactly what happens through the act of collecting. It is only after the object has been severed from its original context that new narratives and meanings are possible, narratives and meanings that will be framed by the selectivity of the collector and the boundaries of the collection. The key principals at work here are control and containment in response to what Stewart calls “the threat of infinity.”<sup>42</sup> Further, while individual objects will always be associated with their original contexts, collections, which can be controlled and contained by the collector, are about consumption. Therefore, their proper context of origin becomes the site of acquisition.

### **The Act of Preservation**

What Stewart is getting at is something that anyone who has spent any time with a serious collector already knows. Specifically, the satisfaction they glean from the items in their collection rarely has anything to do with the meaning of any one piece. For example, it is unlikely that anyone would pay thousands of dollars for a first edition of *Moby Dick* just because they happen to like the story of Ahab chasing the white whale. Rather, the significant story for them is their own quest: where they found their copy, how long they had been looking for it, how much they paid, what the condition was, etc. Further, a collectible that is found serendipitously is likely to have more value than something the collector paid top dollar for in the marketplace. To this point, we should recall that Carol Mundy has never been active in the market that has driven up the value of African American memorabilia. Further, in many cases, what is more interesting than the actual objects in her collection are the stories about how and where she found the objects... and there is always a story. In telling her tales, she rarely discusses her views on the meaning of individual objects, but she can recount in great detail everything that happened when she made her purchase, and this is exactly what Susan Stewart is describing above: once an object becomes a collectible, the meaning shifts from

its original context to the acquisition. This move paradoxically does some of the work that had been suggested to Mundy by her friends. The act of preservation, to some extent, becomes an act of destruction. By obliterating the original context, the collector is able to assume control of the narrative by making it about their personal project, the collection, which will be further defined by the acquisition of more objects, the creation of new series, and the formation of more classification schemes. In this way, we see how collecting and preserving controversial and painful artifacts may, for the collector, be more about forgetting than remembering.

ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>All images are from the Carol Mundy Collection of African Americana, Special Collections & University Archives, at the University of Central Florida Libraries, Orlando, Florida.

<sup>2</sup>Morrison, Toni. "It's Like Growing Up Black One More Time: Rediscovering Black History." *New York Times (1923-Current file)*: 220. *Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2007)*. ProQuest. Aug 11 1974. Web.

<sup>3</sup>Everline, Theresa. "How Does One Uplift Racial Pride?" *Thumperscorner.com*. May 27, 2006  
[http://www.thumperscorner.com/cgi/discus/boardadmin.cgi?action=quick&do=print&HTTP\\_REFERER=11222/11550&postindex=52793](http://www.thumperscorner.com/cgi/discus/boardadmin.cgi?action=quick&do=print&HTTP_REFERER=11222/11550&postindex=52793).

<sup>4</sup>Casmier-Paz, Lynn. "Heritage, Not Hate? Collecting Black Memorabilia." *Southern Cultures* 9.1 (2003): 43-61.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 56

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Everline, How Does One Uplift Racial Pride?"

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>All reader responses are taken from the discussion section to Theresa Everline's article at *Thumperscorner.com*. May 27, 2006.

<sup>10</sup>Casmier-Paz, Heritage, Not Hate?, 48

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 48

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 49

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 50

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 50

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 53

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 54

<sup>19</sup>Harris, Michael D. "Memories and Memorabilia, Art and Identity -- Is Aunt Jemima Really a Black Woman?" *Third Text*. 12.44 (1998): 25-42.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 26

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 27

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 30

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# COURAGE AND DETERMINATION – A PROFILE OF PIONEERING AFRICAN AMERICAN PHYSICIANS IN TEXAS

BETSY TYSON

## **Abstract**

*This article both distills and expands on subjects presented in Courage and Determination – A Profile of Pioneering African American Physicians in Texas on display at the History of Medicine Gallery in the Texas Medical Association 2010-11. It's the first such exhibit in the nation by a state medical society. The distillation comes from some historic connections not clear to me when the exhibit was created. The expansion comes from extensive quoting of some documents used in the initial research and on display. Some of the language may be painful or distressing. It's a story that will remain with me always.*

Before the Civil War, the idea of medical school was something few African Americans dared dream. The first to earn a medical degree, James McCune Smith of New York, was forced to travel to Europe for study, where he graduated in Scotland from the University of Glasgow Medical School in 1837. Only nine American medical schools were willing to accept African American applicants. Few applied and fewer finished. The first was Robert Peck of Pittsburgh, who graduated in 1847 from Benjamin Rush Medical College in Chicago. In the South the study of medicine was not something that could be pursued, even among those who were free.

After the Civil War, the South became an educational hub for African American medical students. From the Reconstruction era to the end of the 19th century, eleven medical schools opened specifically for former slaves and their children, though all races were welcomed. Nine of these medical schools were south of the Mason-Dixon line, the de-facto North/South border. They were: Howard University in Washington, D.C.; Straight University Medical Department and Flint Medical College in Louisiana; Meharry Medical Department, Hannibal Medical College, Knoxville College Medical Department, and University of West Tennessee in Tennessee; Leonard Medical School of Shaw University in North Carolina; and Louisville National Medical College in Kentucky. The importance of these schools was highlighted by an 1895 study authored by W.E.B. Dubois who found only twenty-seven African American physicians had attended medical school outside the South.

Only two of these early schools are still open: Howard and Meharry. Howard University was part of the Freedman's Bureau, a federal agency and initiative begun under President Abraham Lincoln to help freed slaves adjust to society. Education was an important component of Freedman's Bureau programs along with food, housing, and reuniting refugee families. Howard Medical College opened in 1867 with the first class graduating in 1870. The Methodist Episcopal Church and Freedman's Aid Society founded Meharry in Nashville in 1876. Its first class graduated in 1877. Nineteenth and early Twentieth century Meharry catalogues list students and alumni from Africa, North and South America, and some island nations.

The failure of the other historically black medical schools was not due to a lack of interest by the students, but because of reforms in medical education called for in the 1910 report of Abraham Flexner, Ph.D. The noted educator was asked by the Carnegie Foundation to visit and review every medical school in the United States and Canada. Of the 155 schools Dr. Flexner visited, less than half would remain open. His report identified not only "diploma mills" with no admission requirements and no laboratories but also those schools with course work and clinical training he deemed inadequate. Dr. Flexner found problems in every state. Only two medical schools in Texas would remain open: The University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston and Baylor University College of Medicine in Dallas. Baylor survived only by expanding its laboratories, strengthening its entrance requirements and affiliating with a teaching hospital. The Flexner Report strengthened medical education in America, then considered inferior to medical education in Europe, but at the expense of some worthy schools that could not attract the funding needed to improve their curriculum, labs, and clinical training.

In 1882 Meharry graduate Quinton Belvedere Neal of Bowling Green, Kentucky, opened the first African American medical practice in Texas – in Goliad. Until 1894, when Thomas Everett Speed, originally from Mississippi, graduated from Flint Medical School in New Orleans and opened his practice in Jefferson, every pioneering doctor in Texas was Meharry-trained. Dr. Speed was also noteworthy because he established the first nurses training at Bishop College in Marshall. Founded by Black Baptist ministers in 1881, it was the first to train nurses needed by these pioneering doctors.

Meharry School catalogues and mailings to alumni were the glue that allowed these brave young doctors to stay in touch, to know who the new arrivals were and where they settled. These connections and words of encouragement from Meharry helped them practice medicine during a period that could be both dangerous and discouraging in the Jim Crow South. In the years ahead, threats of lynching would cause some doctors to leave the state or relocate.

By 1883 Dr. Neal was in Austin and Dr. Edwin B. Ramsey had opened a pioneering practice in Houston. By 1884, Dr. John Henry Wilkins, was in Galveston. In 1885 the Meharry Medical Department reported proudly and with encouraging words on its alumni with nine responses from Texas:

Dr. J. F. McKinley, after his graduation here (1879), attended the Medical Department of Michigan University, and was afterward demonstrator and Prof. of Physiology in his Alma Mater. He is now one of the prominent physicians of Austin, Tex.

Dr. E. B. Ramsey, since his graduation (1880), has practiced in Kansas, Georgia, and Texas. He is now located in Houston, Texas, and is succeeding finely.

Dr. J. H. Wilkins, (1880) has a flourishing practice in Galveston, Texas: he has a wife and three fine boys.

Dr. Q.B. Neal (1881) is successfully following his chosen profession, and is surely and steadily gaining a reputation as a good physician in Austin, Texas where he has been nearly since his graduation.

Dr. R.F. Robey (1883) has been attending the lectures and enjoying the clinical advantages of the College of Physicians and Surgeons at Chicago, Ill. and intends graduating the present session. We expect to hear of his brilliant success in the Lone Star State where he thinks of locating. (He chose Houston.)

Drs. Middleton and Townsend (both 1884), who entered the practice of medicine as partners, write us from Oakland, Texas: . . . We are doing nicely, having a practice, which in summer monopolizes our time. The last named gentleman thinks soon of having a better half with whom to consult when cases become critical.

Dr. Vandavell (1884) has hung out his shingle at Waco, Texas, informing the people that Meharry has endowed him with sufficient skill to treat their diseases, and from what we hear they are trusting him not in vain.

Dr. Starnes of Victoria, Texas, (1884) writes: "I have nothing of which to complain save my constant going." Never murmur, Doctor, as long as you are physically able to go.

The first native-born Texan, Monroe A. Majors, graduated in 1886 from Meharry. Born in Waco, he had come to Austin in 1874 at age ten to serve as a page at the Texas Legislature and stayed on to attend Tillotson College (now Huston-Tillotson University) before completing medical school. Soon after opening his practice in Brenham, Dr. Majors traveled to Galveston to join fellow Meharrians in the office of Dr. Wilkins. There, they formed the Lone Star State Medical Club. As reported on June 24, 1886 in the *Galveston Daily News* other founders present were Greene J. Starnes, San Antonio, Reed Townsend, Victoria; Ernest M. Blakney, Columbus; N. Hill Middleton, Oakland; William H. Scott, Helinora, and Edwin B. Ramsey, Houston.

These eight young physicians hoped members of their club would be allowed to join the Texas State Medical Association. But they were rejected just as others would be rejected by state medical societies in every Southern state, because of Jim Crow laws and customs designed to keep the races apart. Undaunted, their fledging club would become the Lone Star State Medical, Dental, and Pharmaceutical Association (LSSMA), with Dr. Starnes as the first president. This was the first state medical association in the nation for African Americans, preceded only by the Medico-Chirurgical Society founded in 1884 in Washington, D. C.

Because these physicians found themselves not welcome in already-established county medical societies, they formed their own associations often honoring their state leadership such as the Waco doctors who organized the McLennan County Medical, Dental and Pharmaceutical Association. Some local medical associations were later renamed to honor early pioneers. The Dallas County Medical, Dental, and Pharmaceutical Association became the C. V. Roman Medical Society, an organization that still exists.

Meharry graduate Charles Victor Roman was the first African-American eye, ear, nose, and throat specialist in Texas. In 1904, Dr. Roman of Dallas became the fifth president of the National Medical Association (NMA). Several Meharry graduates led by Drs. Robert F. Boyd and Miles V. Lynk at a meeting in Atlanta had founded the NMA in 1895. Membership in the American Medical Association (AMA) was not available to African Americans



**Figure 1**

Dr. Emory Owens

*Courtesy of the John B. Coleman Library Special Collection Archives,  
PrairieView A&M University*



**Figure 2**

James M. Franklin, MD

*Courtesy of the John B. Coleman Library Special Collection Archives,  
PrairieView A&M University*

who practiced in the South, because eligibility was based on membership in the already-established state medical societies. After his year as NMA president, Dr. Roman established the Eye, Ear, Nose, and Throat Department at Meharry and became its first instructor. He also founded and edited the influential Journal of the NMA.

White legislators in the Jim Crow South steadily eliminating the political rights granted after the Civil War. In 1891 the Texas Legislature enacted what Texas historians consider the most important of the state's segregation statutes. It required separate railroad cars for African Americans and was known as the Jim Crow Law. The last of 42 African Americans to serve in the Texas Legislature in the nineteenth century, Robert L. Smith of Colorado City, ended his legislative career in 1897. By 1914 all Southern states had enacted laws to separate the races in every aspect of life. From schools to cemeteries to waiting rooms in doctor's offices to sidewalks or to water fountains, law or custom separated the races. If an African American physician was called to the home of a non-African patient, the physician had to enter through the back door.

Dr. Wilkins presented a history of the founding of the Lone Star State Medical Society's (LSSMA) at its 25th annual meeting in Dallas in 1911. His reference to the "Color Line" in medicine may reflect knowledge among Meharrians that the first Jim Crow law had passed in Tennessee in 1881. Dr. Wilkins' recollection was subsequently printed in the Journal of the National Medical Association.

**Excerpts of the Dr. Wilkins:**

This noble Association had its birth in my office on Market Street. . . We formed ourselves into a temporary organized body, at that time, with the intention of offering ourselves as a body to the State Medical Association of Texas. As we understood medicine at that time, there was no Color Line drawn, and we decided that we needed the good of organized association as other people. Our plan was if we were rejected, we would organize ourselves into a permanent organization. This was done at our next annual meeting. If my memory serves me rightly, Dr. Starnes of San Antonio presented our case to the white Medical Association at San Antonio before our next regular meeting. I was informed that the white association discussed the matter of our admission for several hours; and at times, it was thought it would be accepted, but the opponents injected into the discussion the social function of the organization, that the people had tendered them at their annual gathering, and on that proposition the opponents won out.

I wish to state that the Lone Star Medical Association is not unlike other organizations of its kind. It has had its rise and fall; and at times, it seemed that it was dead. . .for some time before and up to 1900 after the great Galveston storm had heaved your humble servant into the city of Houston. When we seemed more dead than alive, we gathered about us the Houston doctors, and began to talk organization to them, and with some persistent effort, we succeeded in organizing a County Medical Association; then we began to inquire about the old Lone Star Medical Association, and during the winter of 1900, we succeeded in getting a number of doctors in different portions in Texas, and we reorganized the Lone Star Medical Association with your humble servant as President... which met at Austin in 1901.

By 1900 there were at least fifty-six African American physicians and 600,000 African Americans in Texas. The leading cause of death in America was tuberculosis, with the death rate for African Americans three times that of other Texans and higher in East Texas. All Texas doctors sought to educate the public on how the infection spread but for African American physicians the options were limited. Treatment was limited to a few beds or separate hospital like the Colored Unit of the Jefferson County Tuberculosis Hospital in Beaumont. The State Tuberculosis Sanitarium near San Angelo that opened in 1911 was for whites only.

Repeatedly, African American physicians lobbied state officials to open a similar facility. Their diligent efforts are part of the Lone Star State Medical Society's papers at Texas Tech as preserved by a former LSSMA president and historian Dr. Joseph Alvin Chatman of Lubbock. A 1933 letter that is part of this collection underlines their struggle. Written in the required diplomatic language of a less powerful group and addressed to the Speaker of the Texas House, these physician leaders offered the eventually persuasive argument that Tuberculosis respects no color line. The ideas are expressed firmly with courage and dignity.

**Excerpts from the 1933 Letter:**

We the public health committee of the Afro American Medical Association of Harris County. . .takes (sic) this method of expressing the membership's ideas and views on the dire and undeniable need of a Tubercular Hospital for Negroes in this State.

As physicians who come in contact with the Negro at the bedside and otherwise, we feel that we are in position to see, learn, and know more about the need and conditions of the Negro than, perhaps, our white friends. We find that the Negroes are subject to Tuberculosis and its transmission due to many things, viz., the overcrowded conditions, poor ventilation, and non-isolation. Therefore we entreat this august body to establish a Tubercular Hospital, in Texas, for Negroes.

The reasons are far more numerous than we have space and time to mention. One is it will be a means to prolong and in many instances save the lives of human beings. Negroes all over the state act as servants to white people. They go in and out of their homes daily. They act as body-guards and nurses to their children and it is almost a matter of impossibility for a disease as easily transmitted as is Tuberculosis to be hovered in the body of a nurse or cook and the family, or especially the children, for whom they are associated not to become a victim of the disease, for Tuberculosis is no respecter of persons. For this reason, if for no other, we feel that your honorable body should be willing to establish a Tubercular Hospital in Texas for Negroes.

Written on LSSMA letterhead, this appeal was signed by Houston Drs. Rupert Roett; Benjamin J. Covington, and French F. Stone.

The Kerrville State Sanatorium for Negroes finally opened in 1937 with 100 beds. Despite early promises of support, it would close within ten years due to the lack of adequate state funding. But a lesson had been learned and a valuable ally found: Pansy Nichols, who fought tuberculosis with outreach to African America and Hispanic groups. The year the sanatorium opened in Kerrville, she brought together representatives of groups in support of advanced medical training for African American physicians. The coalition included the Texas Department of Health, The Texas Tuberculosis Association, Prairie View College (now Prairie View A&M University), the LSSMA, and the Julius Rosenwald Foundation to do some planning. This resulted in the first postgraduate assembly for medical professionals at Prairie View College in 1937, an annual event for some thirty years.

Integral to the coalition was Dr. Connie Yerwood, the first African American hired by the Texas Department of Health. The 1933 cum laude Meharry graduate had studied public health at the University of Michigan before returning to Texas. In 1940 she prepared a report on the success of the endeavor, possibly to assure continued

funding and support. Her report, also contained in the Chatman Collection, describes the state of medicine within the African American community in 1940.

**Excerpts from the Yerwood report:**

There are approximately 178 Negro physicians practicing medicine in Texas. Ninety-eight percent of these are graduates of Meharry Medical College and Howard U. The other two are from the various medical colleges of the north and east.

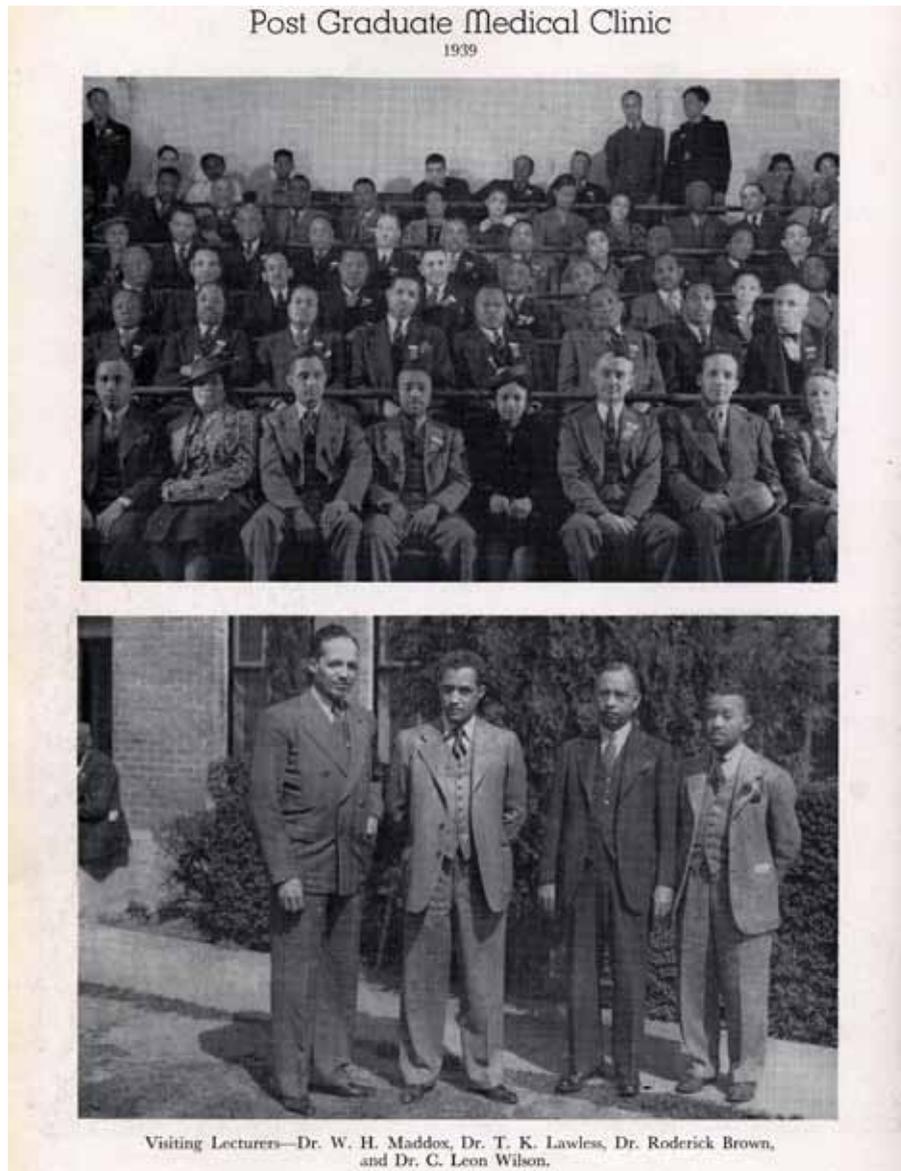
Medicine is a growing science and to keep abreast with the rapid advances of the healing art it is necessary that all physicians, at stated intervals, take on some form of postgraduate work during the whole of his professional career.

A few physicians of our group have somehow managed to do some graduate work in the medical centers of the north and east.

Negroes occupy the lowest bracket in the American economic scale. Negro physicians are unable to demand from these people the handsome fees enjoyed by the other group, hence it works a hardship on the colored profession to be compelled to go north and east for his training.

The leading medical minds of the country have all agreed that the health of the Negro can better be cared for by his own physicians. The health of no country though is safe until the lowest citizen has proper medical care. Diseases know no station in life nor draw any color line. To properly care for the more than 1,000,000 Negroes in Texas some provision has to be made for adequate postgraduate training for their physicians.

For many years our state medical association, at its annual conventions, have conducted clinics for two mornings. The local leading specialists readily lent their aid. One or two invited guests from the medical centers of the north and east were present. This was far from our needs, but it proved to the group we are interested in modern medicine.



**Figure 3**

Post Graduate Medical Clinic 1940 Yearbook

*Courtesy of the John B. Coleman Library Special Collection Archives, Prairie View A&M University*

It was left to a white woman to make the first serious step toward adequate training for Negro physicians in postgraduate medicine. I refer to Miss Pansy Nichols of the Texas Tuberculosis Association.

Prairie View had from the beginning provided leadership in advancing the educational need and goals of free people. The U.S. Freedman's Bureau ended in 1869, but its effort to emphasize educational opportunities for slaves and their children that resulted in the historically black medical schools in the South also inspired the Texas Legislature during the Reconstruction Era. In 1876, the same year Meharry was established in Tennessee, the Texas Legislature authorized funding for Alta Vista Agricultural and Mechanical College for Colored Youths in Prairie View. The name was changed to Prairie View State Normal College when teacher training was added in 1879.

A 1910 graduate Leonard Medical School, Dr. John Granville Osborne, came to Prairie View to head the Biology Department in 1918 and then led the college. He soon added nurses training and later courses for pre-med study. He also hired Dr. James Franklin to oversee construction of a new modern hospital that would further benefit nurses training and would offer desperately-needed space for postgraduate training in a hospital setting needed by the new African American medical residents that was rarely available to them. After the new hospital opened in 1929, Dr. Franklin reported on this important achievement in the *Journal of the National Medical Association* and provided an overview of Prairie View's efforts of educate more of the health professionals so sorely needed.

**Excerpt from *Journal of the National Medical Association*:**

A new \$100,000 hospital was opened at Prairie View State Normal and Industrial College. . . It is modern in every detail of construction and probably the largest in the Southwest for Negroes. The hospital is an outgrowth of work carried on systematically and aggressively for the last twelve years. . . At first the nurse training school gave a two-year course. . . approved and recognized by the Texas State Board of Nurse Examiners. . . Only graduates from standard high schools are admitted to the Nurse Training School. The hospital is open to patients of any regular physician or dentist for treatment when associated with a regular member of the staff. With the enlarged and modern up-to-date equipment the very best hospital service is available to the Negro public in this section.

Dr. Franklin concluded his article by naming donors who made the new modern hospital possible, noting “It was through the untiring efforts of these men that the only state supported institution now existing for training Negro nurses and to further the development of Negro physicians and dentists in Texas. . .”

The new hospital at Prairie View filled two important needs. The lack of available slots for African-American medical residencies was a serious problem in the first half of the twentieth century, as was the dire lack of available beds for African American patients in the Jim Crow South. During the Jim Crow years African American Doctors were not allowed staff privileges in local hospitals. Dr. George Conner of Waco remembered having to pay a white doctor \$75 to operate on his patient. This prevented physicians from utilizing modern medical services offered in these hospitals, such as expensive x-ray machines and clinical laboratories.

Dr. Conner never tried to build his own hospital, but his nephew, Meharry graduate Dr. Beadie Conner, was instrumental in securing needed state and federal funds with the help of then-Representative Lyndon B. Johnson of Austin, to rebuild and modernize Holy Cross Hospital of Austin in 1948. The letters relating to this effort are housed in the LBJ Presidential Museum and Archives. Among other Black-owned hospitals established in the first half of the twentieth century were those in Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, Galveston, El Paso, Bryan, Marshall, Lubbock, Amarillo, Hawkins, and Taylor.

Dr. Beadie Conner’s effort coincided with a story that made national news. This was the year that Edith Irby became the first African American to integrate a white medical school in the South when she entered the University of Arkansas Medical School in Little Rock. Dr Edith Irby Jones moved to Houston after graduating to complete her residency in internal medicine. She is still practicing medicine there. Dr. Jones is a charter member of the Physicians for Human Rights, which won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997. She was the first woman to lead the NMA.

The Civil Rights movement was bringing change to America including the practice of medicine in Texas. Herman A. Barnett, III, of Austin, became the first African American to graduate from the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, entering medical school in 1949 after service as a Tuskegee Airman. In 1954, St. Paul’s Hospital in Dallas integrated its medical staff by adding five African American physicians. First among them was Meharrian Dr. Lee Gresham Pinkston, who had opened Pinkston Hospital in Dallas in 1927.

In 1955 the TMA House of Delegates, after the five-year campaign of a former president, Dr. Tate Miller of Dallas, voted to remove “white” as a membership requirement. The first to apply and be admitted was Dr. C. B. Fuller of Wichita Falls.

In 1964 in addition to the Civil Rights Act, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Medicare and Medicaid Acts. While this ended segregation in any hospital wishing to admit patients covered by Medicare or Medicaid, it did not end segregation in all hospitals in Texas for a decade or more. A high percentage of African American physicians who practiced in Texas well into the last half of the twentieth century remained Howard or Meharry graduates, with Meharry still the predominate school.

In 1977 Dr. John Brady Coleman of Houston, a Howard graduate, was the first African American appointed to the Texas A&M System Board of Regents. He saw to it that for the first time Prairie View got its fair share of funding from the A&M system.

Dr. William Fleming, III, of Houston was first to lead the TMA in 2009-10. While many African Americans in Texas are members of the TMA and the AMA, others continue joint membership in both national medical associations. The percentage of African American physicians as compared to the total number of physicians practicing in Texas and nationally remains small, though efforts continue to encourage more to pursue a medical degree.

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The Texas Black History Preservation Project (TBHPP) is documenting the comprehensive history of African Americans in Texas through a series of books and interactive DVDs. This is a landmark project in that no one has ever attempted a project of this magnitude and scope in regard to Black history in Texas. While there have been numerous works about various segments of the Black community in Texas, there is nothing that ties those stories together, nothing that brings those stories together in a central location.



The project will have a profound effect on education, specifically in the teaching of Black history. We will conduct scholarly research and promote the history of African Americans in Texas to the benefit of teachers, students, historians and also the general public, across racial lines, in Texas and beyond. We feel there are still large gaps in the teaching of Black history, and it is our hope that the fruits of this project will have a direct impact in classrooms, enhancing and increasing the ability of teachers to offer in-depth lessons about the statewide African American experience, and to present those lessons well beyond the boundaries of Black History Month.

Culturally, what we do will give African American youth an increased sense of self and pride, and a deeper knowledge of what generations before them have contributed to the growth of Texas.

The series will be presented in five volumes:

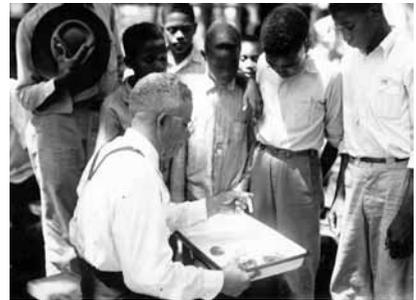
Volume 1 – 1528-1700

Volume 2 – 1700-1800

Volume 3 – 1800-1900

Volume 4 – 1900-2000

Volume 5 – 2000-Present



The series will span from Estevanico (Esteban, Stephen the Moor) wading ashore at Galveston Island with the Spanish explorer Cabeza de Vaca in 1528, to the triumph of Texas native Lovie Smith, who in 2006-07 became the first African American head coach to lead an NFL team to the Super Bowl. These are but two among hundreds of biographies, profiles, and interpretive essays from prominent scholars and historians that will address the people, places and events central to the African American experience in Texas.



Heading the project, as co-editors-in-chief, will be veteran journalists Roxanne Evans (Des Moines Register, Austin American-Statesman, deputy press secretary to Gov. Ann Richards) and Michael Hurd (USA Today, Austin American-Statesman, Houston Post, and noted Black college football historian).

For more information, visit the TBHPP web site: [www.tbhpp.org](http://www.tbhpp.org).

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# TIPHC JOURNAL OF HISTORY & CULTURE 1:5

## CALL FOR PAPERS

The next issue of **The Journal of History & Culture (JHC)** will focus on the relevance of culture, preservation, sustainability and pedagogy in architectural education. *JHC* seeks to explore a multitude of themes through a discussion about pedagogy. What role does education play within current pedagogy, professional practice, and knowledge? What is the value of *heritage*? How do we educate future practitioners, and what are the projects that may serve as paradigms and why?

*JHC* is a peer-reviewed publication for exploring issues related to African American, Latino, Hispanic, Native American and other Diaspora communities. Submissions that stretch and challenge the disciplinary boundaries of architecture and community development will be considered for publication. Contributions from all fields of scholarship are welcome. We invite submissions on the following topics with the aim of cultivating a broad readership and interactive academic network.

- Architecture, Diversity & Culture
- Sustainability & Heritage preservation
- Typologies of Black Architecture
- Black Builders & Furniture Crafts
- Freedmen's Communities
- Community Development
- Architecture & Pedagogy at HBCU Institutions
- Human Activity & Symbolic Structures

**TEXT FORMAT:** Manuscripts for review should be no more than 5,000 words. Text must be formatted in accordance with The Chicago Manual of Style. All submissions must be submitted electronically, via e-mail to [tiphc@pvamu.edu](mailto:tiphc@pvamu.edu). Text should be saved in Microsoft Word format. Any accompanying images should be sent with a resolution of at least 300 dpi. Image captions and credits must be included with submissions. It is the responsibility of the author to secure permissions for image use and pay any reproduction fees. A brief author bio must accompany the text.

**SUBMISSIONS DUE:** March 30, 2012

Please send materials or correspondence to: ([tiphc@pvamu.edu](mailto:tiphc@pvamu.edu)) Dr. Akel Kahera, Editor, *JHC*; School of Architecture; Prairie View A&M University; Box 519 MS 2100; Prairie View, TX 77446.

