“OUR CHILDREN’S CHILDREN LIVE FOREVER”: THE EDUCATIONAL ACTIVISM OF THE SAWYER-FLOWERS-WILSON FAMILY IN AMERICA FROM 1866 TO 1986

by

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ABSTRACT

CHRISTINA JOY THOMAS. “Our children’s children live forever”: The educational activism of the Sawyer-Flowers-Wilson family from 1866 to 1986. (Under the direction of DR. SONYA RAMSEY)

Since slavery, Southern states prohibited the education of Black Americans. Post-emancipation, the first actions of these newly emancipated Black men and women involved the opening of informal and formal schools. The self-determination of Black Americans fueled their desire for an education. Despite major advancements in Black education, white opposition continued to hinder the education of Black children and adults through racial violence, segregation, and limited to no funding for Black schools. In response to these injustices, Black educational activists determined to acquire an equal education for their people’s children. They utilized education as a “weapon of the weak”, or a tool of resistance against white opposition. For one Black American family, the Sawyer-Flowers-Wilson family, educational activists emerged across three generations of their history from Reconstruction to the late twentieth century building Black schools, detesting school boards and their support of segregation, and adapting early childhood education curricula to the needs of Black children. The biographies of grandfather Joseph J. Sawyer, granddaughter Rachel H. Flowers, and great-granddaughter Geraldine L. Wilson, each displayed their familial commitment to Black education.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to Joseph Sawyer, Rachel Flowers, and Geraldine Wilson and their commitment to the education of Black children. You each renewed my love and appreciation of Black history.

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First, I would like to extend a thank you to my thesis committee—Dr. Sonya Ramsey, Dr. Gregory Mixon, and Dr. Cheryl Hicks—for their guidance throughout this thesis writing journey. I am also thankful for the financial support of Dr. Bernardo Michael and the Office of Diversity Affairs at Messiah College in addition to multiple individuals at this institution—librarians Lawrie Merz and Beth Hostetler Mark for their addition assistance throughout my research journey and archivist Glen Pierce for sharing his extensive knowledge of Messiah College's archives and for continuing to make the archives accessible to me as I continued my studies in North Carolina.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge Nandi Wilson, a descendant of this truly remarkable family. After four years of researching this family's history and searching for a living descendant, I recently connected with Wilson who happily embraced my research. I am thankful for her support of my research and entrusting me with her family's history. My hope is that I have done justice to the biographies of your great-great grandfather Sawyer, your great-aunt Rachel, and your beloved aunt Geraldine.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMA	American Missionary Association
AME	African Methodist Episcopal Church
AMEZ	African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
CDGM	Child Development Group of Mississippi
CME	Colored Methodist Episcopal Church
COFO	Council of Federated Organizations
CORE	Congress of Racial Equality
FAS	Free African Society
FCM	Friends of Children of Mississippi
MACE	Mississippi Action for Community Education
ME	Methodist Episcopal
MFDP	Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party
MIECE	Mississippi Institute for Early Childhood Education
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NBCDI	National Black Child Development Institute
NYU	New York University
OEO	Office of Economic Opportunity
PAS	Pennsylvania Abolition Society
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
TIECE	Tougaloo Institute for Early Childhood Education

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

My introduction to the Sawyer-Flowers-Wilson family came from no history book, but through my undergraduate studies at Messiah College in Grantham, Pennsylvania. In a first-year seminar class, my professors asked my classmates and I to find visual representations of diversity around the school. Located across the college were marquees celebrating Messiah's multicultural legacy. On these posters stood images of Meshach Krikorian, one of the first international students to attend the college in 1911; a portrait of Oscar Marshall, a Black dentist who donated his estate to provide scholarships for students; and an image of Rachel Flowers, the first Black student to attend the institution 1916. In the accompanying biography, the last line read, "Although there is much unknown about Rachel, our hope is that her presence will be remembered and that in the future her full story may be told."[1] This sparked my research interest in Rachel as I attempted to understand what brought her to the college, her experience there, and her family's history. Although many of my original research questions remained unanswered, I was left with the history of an influential Black woman who held a commitment to improving the education of Black children.

As I researched Rachel's biography, my interests expanded to the biographies of her grandfather, Reverend Joseph J. Sawyer (1836-1919), and niece, Geraldine Louise

[1] "The Multicultural Century", date accessed April 24, 2017, http://www.messiah.edu/centennial/multicultural_century.html

Wilson (1931-1986). I found that Rachel's dedication to Black education was more than just a personal commitment, but a familial commitment preserved across each generation. Sawyer, Rachel, and Geraldine's commitment expressed the family's self-determination to teach Black children despite white opposition.

Historian V.P. Franklin discussed this phenomenon in *Black Self-Determination: A Cultural History of the Faith of the Fathers*.[2] Franklin's definition of self-determination involved "politically and economically oppressed groups that define themselves as a people or "nation," but do not participate in a meaningful way in decisions affecting their lives and the lives of their children."[3] Scholar W.E.B. Du Bois identified self-determination as one out of three cultural responses of Black people to their predicament in America.[4] Franklin further elaborated on Du Bois' idea of self-determination stating, "The Afro-American firmly believed in the "promise of democracy"; and as he emerged from the nineteenth century, he was hopeful that is would be possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face."[5] Throughout American history, education was one of those doors of opportunity repeatedly closed in the face of Black people. Because of white opposition education became a "weapon of the weak", or a tool of resistance utilized by Black Americans as they continued forward in their long journey to freedom.

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[2] V.P. Franklin, *Black Self-Determination: A Cultural History of the Faith of the Fathers,* (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill and Company, 1984).

[3] Ibid, ix.

[4] Ibid, 24.

[5] Ibid, 15.

Anthropologist James C. Scott originated the term "weapons of the weak" in *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. His ethnography, conducted during the last two years of Malaysia's Green Revolution, 1967-1979, encompassed a period of technological innovation in agriculture.[6] As a class struggle erupted between peasants and wealthy landowners, Scott identified these peasants' various everyday forms of resistance, or weapons of the weak, as foot dragging, sabotage, dishonesty, and desertion.[7] This theory, although applied to Malaysian peasants, transcends beyond this nation to the conditions of Black Americans throughout America's history. Since slavery, Black people utilized everyday forms of resistance against their white oppressors. These "weapons" involved music, religion, rebellion, self-emancipation, and even self-education.[8] They evolved as the door of freedom slowly opened and as educational activism in this family passed from one generation to another.

This thesis starts with the biography of Reverend Joseph J. Sawyer and his educational activism from Reconstruction to the turn of the twentieth century. Sawyer was the root of activism in this family's saga. Born in the world as another man's property, Sawyer, by unknown means, acquired an education by 1866. Among his first actions as a freedman involved the construction of Black schools. A few years later he served in these schools as a teacher and in the community as a pastor. These were his weapons—building Black schools and teaching Black children. This biography reveals the educational activism of Sawyer in the state of Virginia, 1866 to 1870, and next the state of Florida, 1870 to 1900. He taught despite white opposition to his schools. He

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[6] James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), xvii.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

taught despite his transition from teacher to minister. He taught despite his migration from Virginia to Florida. He taught because he wanted his people to acquire an education.

This chapter also studies the agencies which supported Sawyer's educational activism, the New York Society of Friends, a Quaker-based northern missionary society, and the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. His activism expanded beyond teaching Black children to developing an AME-based institution of higher education, Edward Waters College, located in Jacksonville, Florida. The biography of Sawyer deepens our understanding of the post-emancipation movement for Black schools during Reconstruction and the efforts of Black people and the Black church to secure an education for their children during the late nineteenth century. Sawyer's biography also highlights the foundation on which his family's activism rest upon.

From grandfather to granddaughter, Chapter Two reveals the educational activism of Rachel Helen Flowers. As racial violence increased throughout the South and in her home state of Florida, in 1913 Rachel migrated North with her father and seven siblings to Brandtsville, Pennsylvania, a small rural city located outside of Harrisburg.[9] Even migration became a weapon of the weak as nearly six million southern Blacks flocked north for greater economic opportunity and to escape the racial terror prevalent throughout the South. Beyond her achievement as the first Black student to attend Messiah Missionary School and Training Home, Rachel carried out her activism in the city of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Again, throughout Black America historian V.P. Franklin found education to be "highly valued because of its association with

[9] Hilda Wilson's Biography, 1975, Box 2, folder "Family", Geraldine Wilson Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Book Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

advancement, self-determination, and freedom."[10] Even as southern Blacks migrated north for greater opportunities for their families, they confronted the same system of Jim Crow they fled in the South. In Philadelphia, Black children received an education in segregated and unequal institutions. Furthermore, the school board restricted the employment of Black teachers to Black primary schools.[11] Rachel gathered community attention to challenge Philadelphia's Board of Education through mobilizing black journalists, protesters, and civil right organizations including the Philadelphia Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

As the Civil Rights Movement erupted across the nation, Americans glued their eyes to the broadcast of protests, sit-ins, and boycotts. The nation paid close attention to the civil rights activities of Mississippi due to the murder of Emmitt Till, the assassination of civil rights activist Medgar Evers, and the disappearance of the "civil rights trio"—Michael Schwerner, James Chaney, and Andrew Goodman—later found murdered. In the summer of 1964, the nation continued to watch Mississippi as thousands of volunteers, mostly white Northern students, arrived in the state to expand Black voting. Volunteers, including Sawyer's great-granddaughter and Rachel's niece, Geraldine Louise Wilson, challenged white supremacy by registering Black Mississippians to vote and educating Black youth about the Civil Rights Movement and ways to effectively protest. Chapter Three examines Geraldine's educational activism in Mississippi where she initially served as Freedom School teacher and remained in the state after Freedom Summer to continue her work in Black education. This chapter

[10]Franklin, *Black Self-Determination*, 175.

[11] V.P. Franklin, *The Education of Black Philadelphia*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), 86.

mainly studies her work with the Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM) and Friends of Children of Mississippi (FCM), organizations devoted to Black early childhood education through the War on Poverty's Head Start Program. From 1965 to 1969, Geraldine assisted in the training of Head Start teachers and developing curricula rooted in educating Black children on their history and reversing the negative images Black children had developed within themselves due to racial oppression. Her weapons involved civil rights activism, the development of early childhood education curricula and educational programs in Mississippi, and the training of those working with Black children. Geraldine conducted this work as she completed her Masters in Group Dynamics and Human Relations and worked toward her doctorate in Early Childhood Education from New York University. By her death in 1986, she was one of the nation's leading scholars on Black early childhood education facilitating workshops for Head Start centers, community centers, and school boards across the East Coast. [12] From 1866 to 1986, education was the Sawyer-Flowers-Wilson's weapon of choice.

This research consulted several archives, federal records, church records, and publications. Common sources included federal census records, marriage records, and city directories found through Ancestry and Family Search's online genealogical databases. A commonly utilized source also involved historical Black newspapers and journal databases of the AME Church's *Christian Recorder, Philadelphia Tribune*, the *Afro-American Baltimore*, and the *Chicago Defender.* The Black press stood as a cornerstone in the Black community since its emergence in the early nineteenth century. In a world before cable and internet, the Black press, the first form of Black media,

[12] Obituary of Geraldine Wilson, 1986, box 1, folder Papers, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

informed, protected, and defended the Black community. Therefore, these databases provided invaluable information detailing the daily lives and activism of Joseph Sawyer, Rachel Flowers, and Geraldine Wilson.[13]

Archival records formed the basis of Rachel and Geraldine's biographies. For Rachel, the use of Messiah College's archives documented her time at the college from 1916 to 1918, in addition to alumni newsletters. The college's archives also housed the few photos of Rachel Flowers at Messiah capturing her daily life on campus. Chapter Three turned to Geraldine's extensive archival collection at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture located in Harlem. This collection includes her writings, training records, and family records. These papers provided a glimpse into Geraldine's interests beyond education such as poetry, fiction and non-fiction writing, as well as her network of friends including Black feminist and writer Toni Cade Bambara and actress and writer Rudy Dee. Chapter Three also turns to Hilda Wilson's, Geraldine's mother, archival collection located within Tougaloo College's Civil Rights Collection located at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History in Jackson, Mississippi. Her archival collection tells the history of the CDGM and FCM, organizations both women worked with while living in Mississippi.

Beyond her personal story, Geraldine Wilson's collections offer researchers a glimpse of the family's dynamics and history as understood by a descendant. After a training session Geraldine led in the 1970s, she collected her thoughts in a writing entitled, "Our Children's Children Live Forever". During her workshop, a debate arose after a Black mother commented that Black parents taught their children too many

[13] V.P. Franklin, *Black Self-Determination*, 178.

manners. “Of course you teach them manners,” another participant remarked, “Teach them the manners of equality not the manners of servitude.”[14] For Geraldine, this statement brought up memories of her own upbringing. She wrote that she learned from her extended family memories of her grandfather, born in slavery, “who loved Africa where his parents were born”. In Hilda’s biography, Geraldine wrote that her grandfather instilled in his daughter “a value system built on the love of justice and moral right, a belief that children are central to the concern of the family and a deep love and commitment to Afrikan peoples.”[15] Geraldine also reflected on the lessons her family taught her, lessons on how to “support, defend, protect, and love the members of her community”.[16] These teachings set the foundation of her educational activism which originated more than a century ago through her great-grandfather Joseph J. Sawyer and continued with her Aunt Rachel resulting in a family tradition of educational activism.

Lastly, it is also important to note my usage of Black identities throughout each biography. I used the identities in which Sawyer, Rachel, and Geraldine identified with in their own writings. Interchangeably, Sawyer and Rachel used the terms Negro and Black when speaking of themselves or others in the Black community. Geraldine identified as Black, always capitalized, Black American, and occasionally used the term Afro-American.

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[14] “Our Children’s Children Live Forever”, box 5, folder 2, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture Ibid.

[15] Hilda Wilson’s Biography, 1975, Box 2, folder “Family”, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Book Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[16] Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO: "THE LORD IS BLESSING US ALSO": REVEREND JOSEPH J. SAWYER AND THE POST-EMANCIPATION MOVEMENT FOR BLACK SCHOOLS, 1866-1919

On June 30, 1869, a 30-year old Joseph "J.J." Sawyer completed his teacher's report for his local Freedmen's Bureau.[17] In Southampton County, Virginia, he taught 47 Black children six hours a day at a school called Zion. Sawyer served as his student's only teacher, a career punishable by law if held ten years prior. For much of his life, Sawyer's occupation held serious consequences. Prior to the American Civil War, Southern states prohibited the education of any Black person, freed or enslaved. Because of these laws, most enslaved Black people emerged from emancipation illiterate.[18] Still, African Americans desire to receive an education outweighed their previous societal condition. Education walked hand-in-hand with freedom. This desire combined with their self-determination fueled an educational revolution throughout the South.[19] Sawyer served as one of the many black teachers funded by Northern missionary organizations.

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[17] The Freedmen's Bureau set a standard monthly form that teachers were required to submit. These repots documented the teacher's understanding of local sentiment toward Black education and data concerning enrollment, attendance, and student information. See Ronald E. Butchart's *Schooling the Freed People.* "United States Freedmen's Bureau, Records of the Superintendent of Education and of the Division of Education, 1865-1872" database, *Family Search* ((https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.3.1/TH-909-50662-20903-59?cc=2427894 : 1 August 2016), Virginia > Roll 16, Teachers' monthly school reports, May 1869-Aug 1869 > image 774 of 1161; citing multiple NARA microfilm publications (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1969-1978).

[18] J.P. Lichtenberger. "Negro Illiteracy in the United States," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 49 (1913): 177.

[19] V.P. Franklin, *Black Self-Determination: A Cultural History of the Faith of the Fathers* (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill and Company, 1984), 168.

By his death in 1919, Sawyer, born enslaved, took on the title of schoolteacher, businessman, professor, pastor, and bishop. This chapter examines his actions and use of Northern religious groups, the Freedmen's Bureau, and the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church to educate his people.

Beyond his role as a teacher in two Black communities one in southern Virginia and a second in northeastern Florida, Sawyer served within the AME Church owning a shoemaking business and lecturing in the halls of Edward Waters College. Most importantly, Sawyer had the role of husband, father, and grandfather. Multiple limitations existed in this research despite the abundance of primary sources from federal census records to news articles. Thus, aspects of Sawyer's life remain unknown including his early years as a slave, his emancipation, his educational journey, details concerning his personal life (marriage, children, etc.), and exact reasons behind his migration from North Carolina to Virginia and from Virginia to Florida. Only assumptions fill these voids. The earliest primary records about Sawyer are his work as a Freedmen's Bureau teacher. Later records revealed Sawyer the minister; therefore, this biography follows him in these two settings—the schoolhouse and the church. Throughout Sawyer's life his resistance against white opposition to Black education alongside his personal dedication to education served as powerful weapons.

The historiography of post-emancipation education for southern Blacks began in the early twentieth century. W.E.B. Du Bois, the first African American to receive a doctoral degree from Harvard University, commenced the discussion on post-emancipation Black education. Du Bois placed great emphasis on postbellum Black education and promoted an education narrative as an act of justice and tool for

advancement.[20] Mid-twentieth century historians challenged his narrative. White voices dominated the narrative, specifically those of Northern teachers and religious organizations. Historian Henry Swint's *The Northern Teacher in the South, 1862-1870* (1941), Jacqueline Jones' *Soldiers of Light and Love* (1980), and Robert C. Morris' *Reading, 'Riting and Reconstruction* (1981) focused on Northern teachers who moved South to educate former enslaved people. These authors limited their research to the motivations behind Northern sponsoring organizations and the teachers they employed to teach Black southerners. In each of these works, Black voices were absent.

A shift from white voices to Black voices began in the late twentieth century and continued into the twenty-first century. The following historical works play a key role in this paper: historians V.P. Franklin's *Black Self-Determination: A Cultural History of the Faith of our Fathers* (1984), James Anderson's *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1836-1935* (1988) and Heather A. Williams *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (2005). Although Franklin's work broadly testified to the collective African American experience, he devoted a chapter to their pursuit of an education. He traced Black education to the antebellum South and the self-determination of enslaved men and women to become literate despite its severe consequences. Franklin devoted much of his attention to the Black education movement post-emancipation, a movement which survived despite great white opposition. Black voices dictated and narrated this history. Similarly, Anderson examined the public education system developed *by* and *for* Black southerners.[21] Furthermore, his work credited Black southerners for launching the

[20] Ronald E. Butchart, "Outthinking and Outflanking the Owners of the World": A Historiography of the African American Struggle for Education." *History of Education Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (1988): 335.

[21] James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1998), 3.

educational movement that provided a public-school system for Black as well as white children.[22]

Whereas Anderson provided a broad history of Black education, historian Williams discussed Black participation and Black agency solely in slavery and Reconstruction.[23] In both works, southern Blacks served as key actors and active participants in their educational journeys.[24] Now, these authors acknowledged the efforts of Northern teachers and organizations, yet recognized Black self-determination, autonomy, and resistance that fueled this movement. Education essentially served as a weapon for the weak. Still, few authors neglected to recognize the work of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, which sent missionaries south and played a large role in the formation of Black schools and institutions of higher education.

During Reconstruction, Black churches, specifically those under the AME denomination, strove to educate their fellow Black brothers and sisters as a means of liberation.[25] Scholarship on the AME church began through the church's own clergymen. One early major work included former Bishop Daniel A. Payne's *History of the AME Church* (1891). Payne offered an extensive history of the AME Church which spoke to the church's commitment to advancement of Black people by means of education. He detailed the church's devotion to education during the mid-nineteenth century and resolutions passed to make Black education the duty of every AME minister.[26] The AME

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[22] Heather A. Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom*, (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 2005), 4.

[23] Hilary Nicole Green, "Educational Reconstruction: African American Education in the Urban South, 1865-1890," (PhD diss., University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 2010), 14.

[24] Williams, *Self-Taught*, 5.

[25] Clarence E. Walker, *A Rock in a Weary Land: The African Methodist Episcopal Church During the Civil War and Reconstruction*, (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 16.

[26] Daniel A. Payne, *History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church,* (Nashville, Tennessee: Publishing House of the AME Sunday School Union, 1891), 100.

Church's dedication to Black education also stood as a central theme in Clarence E. Walker's *A Rock in a Weary Land: The AME Church During the Civil War and Reconstruction* (1982). Walker highlighted the initiatives of AME Church missionaries who travelled to assist their brethren in the construction of southern Black schools. The author also traced AME Church's devotion to education. To contextualize Joseph Sawyer's ministry in Florida, *Laborers in the Vineyard of the Lord: The Beginnings of the AME Church in Florida, 1865-1935* (2001) provided a detailed account of the church's origins and work in the state. This book studied the church's role in the state's Black community and mission to build the Florida AME Church's institution of higher education including Edward Waters College, where Sawyer taught stenography and shoemaking. The publication of this book marked only the second monograph on the AME Church in Florida.[27]

Each work provides a history of the post-emancipation movement for Black schools and the dedication of Freedmen's Bureau's teachers, staff, and federal agents, Northern missionaries, and the AME Church to Black education. This scholarship focuses on a collective movement and includes the names of many prominent Black men and women. Due to their broad examination, it remains impossible to focus on individual biographies, particularly those of lesser known participants in Black education such as Joseph Sawyer. This chapter highlights the contributions of Joseph Sawyer, an AME minister and one of the 4,213 Black teachers who taught in the postbellum South from 1866 into the twentieth century. It offers greater insight on the historiography concerning

[27] Historian Charles Sumner published the first book on the AME Church in Florida in 1939 entitled, *History of the AME Church in Florida.*

Black education and the AME Church from Reconstruction to the early twentieth century.

Divided in four sections, this chapter interprets education as a tool of resistance and as a weapon of the weak. Weakened by systematic and institutional racism after the Civil War, Southern Blacks sought not only to educate themselves, but to also advance in society. Despite their societal status, they remained strong in mind and spirit. The first three sections of this chapter examine a people who resisted oppression and their use of institutions that strengthened resistance and fight for education-- the Freedmen's Bureau, Northern missionaries, and the AME Church. The final section reveals Joseph J. Sawyer, a man of resistance. He dedicated his life to educating his people's children. Sawyer's dedication passed through his veins and into his children's children and their children in a family mounted against racial and educational inequality.

In 1987, anthropologist James B. Scott applied the term "weapon of the weak" in his ethnography on peasant resistance within a small Malaysian village.[28] He focused on how peasants, or people assumed to be powerless, utilized their everyday lives to resist the powerful. Scott labeled these everyday weapons of relatively powerless or "weak" groups as foot dragging, sabotage, dishonesty, and desertion.[29] This theory, although applied to Malaysian peasants, transcends beyond this Malaysian village to the condition of Blacks throughout American history. Historian Robin D. G. Kelly called the daily, unorganized resistance of the Black working class a neglected part of Black history.[30] His

[28] James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), xvi.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Robin D.G. Kelley, "We Are Not What We Seem: Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South", *The Journal of American History* 80, no. 1 (1993), 76.

analysis showed Black resistance throughout history. Since slavery, Black people utilized everyday forms of resistance against their white oppressors. It took on various forms including music, religion, rebellion, self-emancipation, and even self-education.[31]

The American Civil War resulted in the emancipation of over four million enslaved Black men, women, and children. Despite this achievement, their struggle against slavery started centuries ago. Resistance was both active and passive.[32] Enslaved men and women rebelled by refusing to work, staging slowdowns, and running away. On Sunday, September 9, 1739 in Stono, South Carolina, about sixty slaves obtained guns and proceeded to march toward St. Augustine, Florida.[33] Later overpowered by white militia, forty slaves died in the battle and others fled back to their plantations. For historian Darold D. Wax, this uprising represented "a significant escalation of black resistance to slavery in South Carolina."[34] In December 1854, a young enslaved man, Robert Boston, hid in a neighbor's fodder house to avoid work.[35] This act, although small, also constituted resistance. In her memoir, *Incidents in the Life of a Young Slave Girl*, Harriet Jacobs recounted a story of when her brother William refused to allow their master to whip him. She wrote:

> It seemed that the brother of master Nicholas had pleased himself with making up stories about William. Master Nicholas said he should be flogged, and he would do it. Whereupon he went to work; but William fought bravely, and the young master, finding he was getting the better of him, undertook to tie his hands behind him. He failed in that likewise. By dint of kicking and fisting, William came out

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[31] Ibid.

[32] "Slave History and Revolts", date accessed April 24, 2017, http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtid=2&psid=3045

[33] Darold D. Wax, "The Great Risque We Run": The Aftermath of Slave Rebellion at Stono, South Carolina 1739-1745". *The Journal of Negro History* 67, no. 2 (1982): 136.

[34] Ibid.

[35] John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slave: Rebels on the Plantation*. (Cambridge: Oxford University Press:2000), 205.

of the skirmish none the worse for a few scratches.[36]

Other forms of resistance included an enslaved Texan man who refused to cry when his master whipped him.[37] An enslaved woman prayed for freedom in the corners of her slave cabin.[38] Enslaved people formed their own private church congregations every Sunday in defiance of white imposed services. And Harry Flowers, Sawyer's son-in-law, escaped slavery and joined Union forces during the Civil War. Later, he became sergeant in the 21st United States Colored Infantry.[39] Resistance is an integral theme of African American history.

Enslaved people also used education as a resistance tool. In the state of Sawyer's birth, North Carolina, the General Assembly passed laws which prohibited educating enslaved people and freed Blacks in 1818. The state strengthened the bill in 1831 with punishments that included thirty-nine lashes on an individual's bare back.[40] Slave-holding whites in southern states generally prohibited Black education due to fears slave uprisings and the access slaves had to the works of abolitionists.[41] Still, this enslaved population sacrificed their personal freedom and safety to gain an education.[42] Historian Helen A. Williams stated that, "Access to the written word, whether scriptural or political, revealed a world beyond bondage in which African Americans could imagine

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[36] Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, (New York: Dover Publications, 2010), 30.

[37] "Slaves' Resistance on Southern Plantations, Selections from the WPA Slave Narratives," Last modified date unknown, http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/enslavement/text7/resistancewpa.pdf.

[38] Ibid.

39 Harry F. Flowers. Compiled Military Service Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served With the United States Troops: Infantry Organizations, 20th through 25th, microfilm, Ancestry.com, Microfilm Serial: M1823; Microfilm Roll: 25

[40] "Slaves and Free Persons of Color. An Act Concerning Slaves and Free Persons of Color." Last date modified October 15, 2016. http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/slavesfree/slavesfree.html

[41] Marilyn Richardson, "Literacy and Resistance: Black Women in the Ante-Bellum South", *The Radical Teacher* 22 (1982): 17.

[42] Williams, *Self-Taught*, 201.

themselves free to think and behave as they choose."[43] Susan King Taylor, first Black army nurse and formerly enslaved woman, attended two secret schools taught by Black women in Savannah, Georgia.[44] Taylor recounted, "We went every day with our books wrapped in paper to prevent the police or white persons from seeing them. We went in one at a time through the gate into the yard to the kitchen, which was the school room."[45]

Some slaves learned through their master's sons and daughters who shared their lessons with their enslaved playmates. Others enslaved people were self-taught and learned through their owner's books or from the literate among them. All of which served as acts of resistance. Their acquired education granted them access to literature and the abolitionist movement, the ability to plan escapes and rebellion, and the ability to teach one another.[46] Education as a tool of resistance continued during and after the war. A largely illiterate Black population began to build schoolhouses immediately after gaining emancipation. Du Bois remarked, "The very feeling of inferiority which slavery forced upon them fathered an intense desire to rise out of their condition by means of an education."[47] Superintendent of Freedmen Education John W. Alvord made a similar observation and asked, "What other people on earth have ever shown, while in their ignorance, such a passion for education?"[48] They wanted to learn; therefore, they relied on one another to accomplish this goal. Despite such self-determination, Southern Blacks

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[43] Ibid, 7.

[44] Susan King Taylor served as the first Black teacher for freed Black students in a Freedmen's School in Georgia. She also volunteered as a nurse in the Union army supporting Black troops. There, she taught many Black soldiers how to read and write. King later wrote *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp With the 33rd United States Colored Troops, Late 1st SC Volunteers,* the only Black woman to publish a memoir of her wartime experiences. Richardson, "Literacy and Resistance", 18.

[45] Ibid, 18.

[46] Ibid, 19.

[47] Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People"*, 2.

[48] Ibid.

recognized the limitations in their resources and even their freedom; therefore, they accepted educational support from a variety of sources and institutions including the Freedmen's Bureau and Northern missionary organizations.

Formally established by Congress in March 1865, the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, commonly known as the Freedmen's Bureau, assisted formerly enslaved people's transition from slavery to freedom. [49] This organization committed to control "all subjects relating to refugees and freedmen from rebel states and from other districts embraced by the operation of the (Union) army."[50] For historian Robert C. Lieberman, "The bureau was intended to perform a comprehensive array of tasks aimed at providing sustenance in the short run and promoting economic independence in the long run."[51] Operating officially from 1865 to 1868, the Bureau played a vital role during Reconstruction and stood as a physical representation of federal authority in the defeated South.[52]

The Bureau's responsibilities also encompassed the supervision of schools, the transportation of teachers, and securing school buildings. Appointed Superintendent of Education for the Bureau, John W. Alvord, a Congregational minister and former member of the American Anti-Slavery Society, made it his priority to tour these schools to assess their needs and document their progress.[53] From 1866 to 1870, Alvord travelled

[49] Mary Farmer-Kaiser, *Freedwomen and the Freedmen's Bureau*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 1.

[50] Majorie H. Parker, "Some Educational Activities of the Freedmen's Bureau," *The Journal of Negro Education* 23, no. 1 (1954): 9.

[51] Mary Farmer-Kaiser, *Freedwomen and the Freedmen's Bureau*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 1.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Christopher M. Span, *From Cotton Field to Schoolhouse: African American Education in Mississippi, 1862-1875*, (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2012), 29.

the South visiting these Bureau schools.[54] Alvord published his findings in nine different reports on Freedmen's Schools. In his report to General O.O. Howard, head of the Bureau, Alvord noted "Throughout the entire South an effort is being made by the colored people to educate themselves. In the absence of other teaching they are determined to be self-taught; and everywhere some elementary textbook, or the fragment of one may be seen in the hands of negroes."[55] At the end of his first tour in 1866, the Bureau supervised 740 schools, 1,314 teachers, and almost 100,000 students.[56] Alvord estimated that much of the school's financial support came from Northern societies.[57]

Due to the war's devastation and extreme post-war poverty, Northern missionaries largely financed Black education.[58] Over twenty-four denominations mobilized Southern missions and opened new freedmen's aid societies to send teachers and books south during and after the Civil War.[59] Most scholarship focuses largely on the efforts of the dominant American Missionary Association (AMA); however, other denominations travelled south as well including the American Baptist Home Mission Society, the Quakers, the Methodist Episcopal Freedmen's Aid Society, and the American Advent Mission Society.[60] In addition to these groups, many secular, volunteer

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[54] John Alvord, *Ninth Semi-Annual on Schools for Freedmen (January 1, 1870),* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1867), 16.

[55] Williams, *Self-Taught*, 81.

[56] Ibid.

[57] John Alvord, *Third Semi-Annual on Schools for Freedmen (January 1, 1867),* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1870), 1.

[58] Robert G. Newby and David B. Tyack, "Victims Without "Crimes": Some Historical Perspectives on Black Education." *The Journal of Negro Education* 40, no. 3 (1971): 194

[59] Butchart, *Schooling the Freedpeople*, 87.

[60] William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, *The Negro Churchl: Report of a Social Study Made Under the Direction of Atlanta University*, (Atlanta, GA: University Press, 1903), 43.

organizations emerged representing either Northern states or regions such as the New England Freedmen's Aid Society and the Pennsylvania Freedmen's Relief Association.[61]

Constantly threatened by southern whites, Northern white and Black teachers lived in constant fear. This resulted in a decline of Northern aid over the years. The Freedmen Bureau received countless reports concerning the burning of Black schools and churches as well as assaults on teachers.[62] These teachers and organizations also faced opposition from Southern Blacks—the population they served over the years. In 1867, white teachers complained of the preference among Blacks to send their children to more costly black-controlled schools as oppose to the less expensive northern white-dominated schools.[63] One teacher noted, "In all respects apart from his competency to teach—they will keep their children out of school, and go to work, organize and [*sic*] independent school and send their children to it."[64] "Home rule for our colored schools" became the Black community's motto as Black leaders, teachers, and administrators pushed for more power.[65] Despite the prevalence of white missionaries in the South, Black northern religious groups sent missionaries south as well. The role and efforts of the AME Church—a church rooted in Black resistance—remained missing from these narratives.

Because of an incident concerning segregated seating at a white Methodist church, Black leaders and congregants, including first elected Bishop of the AME Church Richard Allen, left Philadelphia's St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church around

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[61] Ronald E. Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People: Teaching, Learning, and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 90.

[62] "Indexes to Reports of Outrages in Virginia," last modified date unknown, http://www.freedmensbureau.com/virginia/indexoutrages.htm

[63] Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 12.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid.

1787.[66] Allen recalled the story in the AME's *Doctrine and Discipline* (1817). He wrote, "A number of us usually attended St. George's church and when the colored people began to get numerous in attending the church, they moved us from the seats we usually sat on, and placed us around the wall."[67] Still, white ministers moved in and attempted to seat the Black congregants in the segregated balcony area. For Allen, whites "were no longer plagued with us in [their] church."[68] Although historians, including Richard S. Newman, dispute the actual date of this incident or whether it served as the sole reason behind their exit, a Black exodus occurred from the white dominated Methodist Episcopal (ME) Church. Richard Allen assisted in the development of the Free African Society (FAS) and Bethel Church which answered the demand of a church for Black Philadelphians in 1793.[69] Bethel Church like most Black churches served not only as a place of worship for the community, but also a sanctuary for escaped slaves, as a town hall to discuss Black issues, and as a place of education.

Since the AME Church's creation, education stood at its forefront. For the church, education connected with character building, moral uplift, and the social advancement of Black people.[70] Philadelphia's AME leaders supported educational institutions and addressed issues that arose regarding the subject. At the 1837 AME Church Philadelphia Conference, Black congregants resolved:

> That as education is the only sure means of creating in the mind those noble feelings which prompt us to the practice of piety, virtue, and temperance, and elevate us above the condition of brutes by assimilating us to the image of our Maker; we, therefore, recommend all our preachers to enjoin undeviating

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[66] Richard S. Newman, *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers*, (New York: New York University Press, 209), 14.

[67] Ibid, 64.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid, 53.

[70] Stephen Ward Angell and Anthony B. Pinn, *Social Protest Thought in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1862-1939*. (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 73.

> attention to its promotion, and earnestly request all our people to neglect no opportunity of advancing it, pledging ourselves to assist them so far as it is in our power.[71]

By this time, the AME Church had rapidly grown from its original 400 founding members to nearly 8,000 members; however, much of this expansion took place across the North.[72] Prior to the Civil War, Southern slaveholders banned the AME Church from the South due to fears of slave revolts especially after the hanging of Denmark Vesey, a freed man, and the arrest and hanging of nearly eighty enslaved men in Charleston, South Carolina.[73] In 1822, Vesey planned the largest slave insurrection in the nation involving nine thousands slaves and even the nation of Haiti.[74] They planned to seize arsenal and ships at the harbor, murder state officials and white Charlestonians, and sail to the new Black republic of Haiti.[75] His plan foiled that summer, Vesey and seventy seven of his co-conspiracies where hanged or imprisoned.[76] The majority of these men, like their leader, identified themselves as members of the AME Church. Thus, the city outlawed the denomination which forced remaining church leaders to flee or face death.[77] The Civil War reunited the church with its formerly enslaved brethren.

Shortly after the announcement of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, various Northern congregations of the AME Church in Philadelphia and New York City collected food, clothing, and money for contrabands.[78] One member suggested that teachers be sent

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[71] Daniel A. Payne, *History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, (Nashville, TN: AME Sunday School Union, 1891), 115.

[72] Walker, *A Rock in a Weary Land*, 19.

[73] David M. Robertson, *Denmark Vesey: The Buried Story of America's Largest Slave Rebellion and the Man Who Led It*, (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1999), 4.

[74] Ibid, 4.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid, 5.

[77] Manisha Sinha, "The Long and Proud History of Charleston's AME Church," in *Charleston Syllabus: Readings on Race, Racism, and Racial Violence*, ed. Chad Williams, Kidada Williams, Keisha Blain (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2016), 70.

[78] Walker, *A Rock in a Weary Land*, 48.

to teach Southern Blacks self-reliance and the value of hard work.[79] The church argued in support of this mission, "The teachers of the freedmen should be black…because past Negroes had been educated to look upon their oppressors as a superior race of people whose position in society was inviolate."[80] By 1868, the AME Church enrolled approximately 40,000 children in its normal and Sabbath schools across the South.[81] By 1885, the number rose to over 200,000 children.[82]

AME missionaries saw themselves as instruments of God's will and believed that God gave their church a task to uplift the Black race first in America and then in the world.[83] For historian Clarence E. Walker, Blacks "could develop and utilize their moral and mental faculties in positions closed to them in the larger society."[84] This was their duty, not the white men's.[85] Beyond the creation of normal and Sabbath schools, the AME church also produced Black institutions of higher learning. By the late nineteenth century, the church established almost thirty normal schools and colleges. This included Wilberforce University (est. 1856; Wilberforce, Ohio), Morris Brown College (est. 1881; Atlanta, Georgia), Shorter College (est. 1886; Little Rock, AR), Turner Theological Seminary (est. 1894; Atlanta, Georgia), and Edward Waters College (Jacksonville, Florida).[86] They paved the way for Black denominations to build and maintain colleges for Black students, institutions where Joseph Sawyer would teach for years.[87] But before

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[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid, 52.

[81] Sabbath schools stood as church-sponsored educational institutions. They provided students with basic math and literacy instruction as well as Christian instruction. See Anderson's *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 13.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Walker, *A Rock in a Weary Land,* 44.

[84] Ibid, 51.

[85] Ibid.

[86] David J. Child, "The Black Church and African American Education: The AME Church Educating for Liberation, 1816-1893" (PhD dissertation, Miami University, 2009), 105.

[87] Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 240.

this Sawyer earned the title of college professor, his teaching career began in Virginia in 1866.

The Freedmen's Bureau in 1866 conducted a census of Princess Anne County, Virginia to collect detailed data on its Black residents.[88] This census recorded information on the residents' status before 1863 (freed/enslaved), literacy skills, former owners, and birth places. The census collector marked Joseph Sawyer's status as slave on January 1, 1863.[89] His age—under 50, over 20. His race—Black. His former master—R. Baker, state unknown. His current occupation—laborer. His intelligence—unable to read. This intelligence category followed Sawyer into the 1885 Florida State Census. In this document, a 48 years old Sawyer worked as a farmer from North Carolina unable to read or write.[90] By the 1900 Federal Census, he resided in Florida working as a minister.[91] His intelligence now noted an ability to read and write. Three different census records over thirty-four years expressed different levels of intelligence; however, primary sources from the Freedmen's Bureau placed Sawyer in the classrooms as a teacher in 1866. A greater question emerges—if Sawyer could neither read nor write then why did he teach? Why do numerous Bureau teacher reports between 1866 and 1870 bear his full name?

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[88] Gad J. Heuman and James Walvin. *The Slavery Reader.* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 263.

[89] "Census Returns of Colored Population of Prince Anne County, State of Virginia". Virginia, Freedmen's Bureau Field Office Records, 1865-1872," database with images, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.3.1/TH-266-11125-37854-50?cc=1596147: 25 June 2014), Princes Anne (assistant commissioner) Roll 161, image 61 of 97; citing NARA microfilm publication M1913 (College Park, Maryland: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

[90] "Florida, State Census, 1867-1945," Ancestry.com. Florida, State Census, 1867-1945 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2008.

[91] "1900 United States Federal Census", Year: 1900; Census Place: Jacksonville, Duval, Florida; Roll: 168; Page: 32B; Enumeration District: 0051; FHL microfilm: 1240168 Online publication - Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2004.Original data - United States of America, Bureau of the Census. Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1900. T623, 18

To understand these inconsistencies, it is important to understand the history of census enumerators. White enumerators operated and collected census data that carried the racial biases of their times.[92] The reasoning behind these inconsistencies perhaps lay within the attitudes or bias of enumerators. Historians constantly warn researchers about census data errors and inconsistencies. Although these records serve as a valuable resource in African American genealogy, they hold their own bias. Another reason behind census data inconsistencies includes Sawyer's own fear in speaking of his ability to read or write. During the late nineteenth-century, white opposition to Black education led to the destruction of many Black schools and churches throughout the South. Black educators and leaders lived in fear of retaliation for providing their community with educational opportunities. In 1866, the Freedmen Bureau in Virginia received notifications concerning over sixty incidents that included the burning of Black schools and churches as well as assaults on teachers in Virginia.[93] At the University of Virginia students stoned and interrupted Freedmen's schools in Charlottesville on a daily basis.[94] Sawyer faced similar resistance. If an enumerator inquired about Sawyer's intelligence, it is possible because of racial violence Sawyer stated "none" or remained silent.

The 1900 Federal Census Record revealed much more about Sawyer's life and capabilities. It is the only census that asked for Sawyer's exact birth month and year, his martial year and duration, the number of children born, and the number of children still

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[92] Myra B. Young Armstead, *Mighty Change, Tall Within Black Identity in the Hudson Valley*, (New York: SUNY Press, 2003), 108.

[93] "Indexes to Reports of Outrages in Virginia," last modified date unknown, http://www.freedmensbureau.com/virginia/indexoutrages.htm

[94] Butchard, *Schooling the Freedpeople*, 162.

living by that census year.[95] Sawyer's birth date—May 1839, state North Carolina. He married his wife Susan Sawyer (b. May 1850) of Virginia around 1870. Out of their nine children, only three lived at the time of the census—David (b. 1859) Joseph (b. 1879), and Nancy (b. 1873).[96] There exist no census records for Sawyer in the years of 1870, 1880, 1890, and 1910. Only fragments of the 1890 federal census remain due to a fire at the Commerce Building in Washington D.C. in 1921. For the other censuses, the enumerator possibly missed the family, wrote the wrong head of household, misread the name, or the family moved during the census process.[97] Despite the missing pieces of Sawyer's life, the existing historical evidence capture his character—his resistance, his religious faith, and most importantly his devotion to Black education.

The nation's first unofficial Freedmen's school opened at Fort Monroe, Hampton, Virginia in September 1861.[98] The American Missionary Association (AMA) organized an informal school for contrabands educating children during the day and adults in the evening.[99] Four years later, General Superintendent, John W. Alvord reported, "The colored people of Virginia are fixed in the determination to have education for their children."[100] Although he only visited such urban areas as Hampton, Norfolk, Petersburg, and Richmond and not rural areas, Alvord counted the total number of Black children in

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[95] 1900 US Census, Duval County, Florida, population schedule, Jacksonville, p. 32B, dwelling number 612, family 737, J.J. Sawyer; digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed October 24, 2016, http://ancestry.com.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Franklin Carter Smith and Emily Anne Croom, *A Genealogist's Guide to Discovering Your African American Ancestors: How to Find and Record Your Unique Heritage*, (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2003), 23-4.

[98] John Alvord, *First Semi-Annual on Schools for Freedmen* (January 1, 1866), (New York: AMC Press, 1866), 4.

[99] Ibid.

[100] John Alvord, *Fifth Semi-Annual on Schools for Freedmen* (January 1, 1868), (New York: AMC Press, 1868), 21.

Virginia's ninety schools as 12,898 by January 1, 1866.[101] Black people wanted to be educated and Sawyer stepped forward to meet his people's demand. In this same year, his teaching career started in Amherst County and Augusta County, Virginia. Correspondence between Freedmen Bureau agents revealed Sawyer's request for books and assistance for building more schools; an indication of increased student growth.[102] As for the public's sentiment regarding Black schools, Alvord remarked:

> Some of the better class of white citizens favor the elevation of the negro, and a considerable number of earnest calls have been made by them for teachers and books…It may be said that no practical sympathy or assistance from citizens is to be looked for at present in educating the freedmen, though the religious conventions of the State have passed resolutions acknowledging it to be their duty.[103]

Despite Alvord's claims of general sentiment for Black education, Sawyer confronted strong opposition from the white communities of Augusta and Amherst County evident in his letters to his local Freedmen's Bureau.

On September 10, 1866, Sawyer first complained that Black men disrupted his meetings for unknown reasons.[104] Two months later, Sawyer complained about heavy white resistance toward his schools. In November 1866, he purchased land to develop

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[101] Ibid, 3.

[102] "United States, Freedmen's Bureau, Records of Freedmen's Complaints, 1865-1872," database with images, *FamilySearch*(https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q2QR-S54V : accessed 25 October 2016), Joseph Sawyer, 23 Mar 1868; citing Residence, Churchville, Lewis, Virginia, United States, NARA microfilm publication M1913, Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1861-1880, RG 105, (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.), roll 175; FHL microfilm 2,414,653.

[103] John Alvord, *Second Semi-Annual Report on School and Finances of Freedmen, July 1, 1866*, (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1868)

[104] "United States, Freedmen's Bureau, Records of Freedmen's Complaints, 1865-1872," database with images, *FamilySearch*(https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q2QR-S2MN : accessed 25 October 2016), Joe Sawyers, 1865-1872; citing Residence, Virginia, United States, NARA microfilm publication M1913, Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1861-1880, RG 105, (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.), roll 175; FHL microfilm 2,414,653.

Black schools in Amherst County, Virginia.[105] Reports to the Freedmen Bureau showed white opposition to these schools. Men, who he referred to as "Citizens of the Neighborhood," pulled down his schoolhouses during the course of their construction. Bureau Agent Louis W. Stevenson wrote in his report, "Mr. Sawyer called on me yesterday. I gave him papers which he thinks will protect him from further molestation until I can investigate the case. The act was committed in the night and he is ignorant of who the parties were, [sic] who committed the deed."[106] Despite the "deed," Stevenson concluded, "With this exception the feeling is as good as could be expected between the races."[107]

The incident; however, continued to unfold. In a second report about the Amherst County incident, Stevenson wrote in greater detail:

> Mr. Sawyer informs me that the house he has been erecting for a Freedmen School, has been pulled down, by Citizens of the Neighborhood. I called upon you Sir; as a Magistrate, for protection for Mr. Sawyer in the pursuit of his business, assuring you if the Civil Authorities fail to grant him protection, the, Military Force of the United States, will. I have directed Mr. Sawyer to return, go to work on his house, and if interfered with to notify me at once, and I will appeal directly to Richmond, for the means of protecting his school, and which can assure you will be forte coming. I will be up to investigate the matter, before reporting the case to Richmond.[108]

On December 19, 1866, Stevenson sent another letter to Magistrate J.P. Berry, county unknown, who failed to respond. In this letter, he apologized for not granting this

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[105] "Virginia, Freedmen's Bureau Field Office Records, 1865-1872," database with images, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:FPVK-L6K : 24 December 2014), Sawyer, ; citing NARA microfilm publication M1913 (College Park, Maryland: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.); FHL microfilm 2,414,506.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid.

[108] "Virginia, Freedmen's Bureau Field Office Records, 1865-1872," database with images, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:FPGL-X68 : 24 December 2014), Sawyer, ; citing NARA microfilm publication M1913 (College Park, Maryland: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.); FHL microfilm 2,414,502.

situation his full attention. Again, he challenged Berry to fulfill his promise to protect Sawyer's rights as a citizen and to protect this vulnerable Black community.[109] No other records exist concerning the Amherst County incident.

Only Sawyer knew the opposition he faced, every attack, every insult, documented or undocumented. As historians, we fail to hold this privilege as eyewitnesses. By the time Alvord filed his second semi-annual report, white hostility toward Black schools required a military response. He wrote:

> We cannot conceal the fact that multitudes, usually of the lower and baser classes, still bitterly oppose our schools. They will not consent that the negro shall be elevated. He must, as they conceive, always remain of a caste in all essential respects beneath themselves They have been taught to believe this and this belief now is strengthened by both prejudice and passion. Nothing, therefore by military force for some time to come, over on the alert and instantly available, will prevent the frequent outbreak of every form of violence.[110]

Despite white hostility and the reports of local white attacks against teachers, the burning of schools, and riots, Black schools in the state continued to grow. By January 1, 1868, 207 day and night schools in addition to 136 Sabbath schools existed in Virginia. They served nearly 20,000 children.[111]

Sawyer moved from Amherst County to Churchville, Augusta County, Virginia where he also operated schools; however, little information existed beyond a single document. By 1868, he began to teach near Vicksville, Southampton County either due to an assignment from the Bureau or personal motivations. Alvord evaluated the schools of

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[109] "Virginia, Freedmen's Bureau Field Office Records, 1865-1872," database with images, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:FPGL-XNG : 24 December 2014), Sawyer, ; citing NARA microfilm publication M1913 (College Park, Maryland: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.); FHL microfilm 2,414,502.

[110] John Alvord, *Second Semi-Annual on School and Finances of Freedmen*, 2

[111] John Alvord, *Fifth Semi-Annual on Schools for Freedmen*, 10

M.A. Andrews (Franklin School), Joseph J. Sawyer (Zion School), and Evaline Briggs (White Oak School) in April. On his first visit Alvord commented:

> In my visit to these schools, I have been highly gratified with the progress, order, and general deportment of the pupils. I especially refer to the School at Franklin under the care of Mrs. Andrews. I cannot speak to much for her patience, care, tact and discipline. In addition to these day schools-there are four Sabbath Schools, well attended, and all engaged in the Christian duty of instructing and dispersing the bread of life to the poor benighted ones.[112]

Alvord visited the schools again in June and August 1868. He stated, "These schools are well attended, and parents and children take much interest in them. The Teachers deserve much praise for their fidelity and patience: [sic] and the asst. Sub. Asst. com. is highly pleased with the progress of the pupils."[113] Alvord concluded in a corresponding semi-annual report, "Many see clearly that without education their political and social position, as well as material interests, will never be advanced." He referred to a postbellum movement for education as a long walk due to the great sacrifices of the Black community to secure an education.[114] Physically, students and teachers travelled great distances to these Black schools and teachers received low wages for six-hour work days. Black students met oftentimes in a one room schoolhouse, church, or another makeshift

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[112] "United States, Freedmen's Bureau, Records of the Superintendent of Education and of the Division of Education, 1865-1872," database with images,*FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q2QP-8SNY : accessed 25 October 2016), Jos J Sawyer, 30 Apr 1868; citing Residence, Richmond, Virginia, United States, NARA microfilm publications M1053. Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1861 - 1880, RG 105. (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1969-1978); roll 14; FHL microfilm 1,549,591.

[113] "United States, Freedmen's Bureau, Records of the Superintendent of Education and of the Division of Education, 1865-1872," database with images,*FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q2QP-Z1RQ : accessed 25 October 2016), J J Sawyer, 30 Jun 1868; citing Residence, Vicksville, Southampton, Virginia, United States, NARA microfilm publications M1053. Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1861 - 1880, RG 105. (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1969-1978); roll 14; FHL microfilm 1,549,591.

[114] John Alvord, *Second Semi-Annual Report on Schools and Finances of Freedmen*, 2.

structure. Their desire to learn came at a cost, but everyone understood the importance of an education.

It proved to be a long walk for Sawyer. From 1868 to 1870, he settled at Zion School outside of Southampton County, Virginia following years of work in Augusta and Amherst County. Under his direction Zion School transitioned into a Sabbath school, most likely due to Sawyer's religious affiliation. One record placed Sawyer with the Presbyterian Church another with the AME Zion Church. His monthly reports indicated no specific Christian denomination. Oftentimes, preachers led Sabbath schools and taught both adults and children alike.[115] Despite the school's religious affiliation, they provided basic educational lessons to its students including reading, writing, arithmetic, and geography.[116] Sawyer submitted his first monthly teacher report in June 1869 and his last in May 1870. In each report, he marked Zion as a Sabbath school. These reports provide great insight into Sawyer's classroom.

Approximately 20 Black boys and 27 Black girls filled Zion Sabbath School on June 30, 1869. Zion stood as both a traditional day school and Sabbath school for the county's Black community. Three other Black schools existed in the region.[117] Sawyer taught six hours a day and 20 days that month. When asked about last month's

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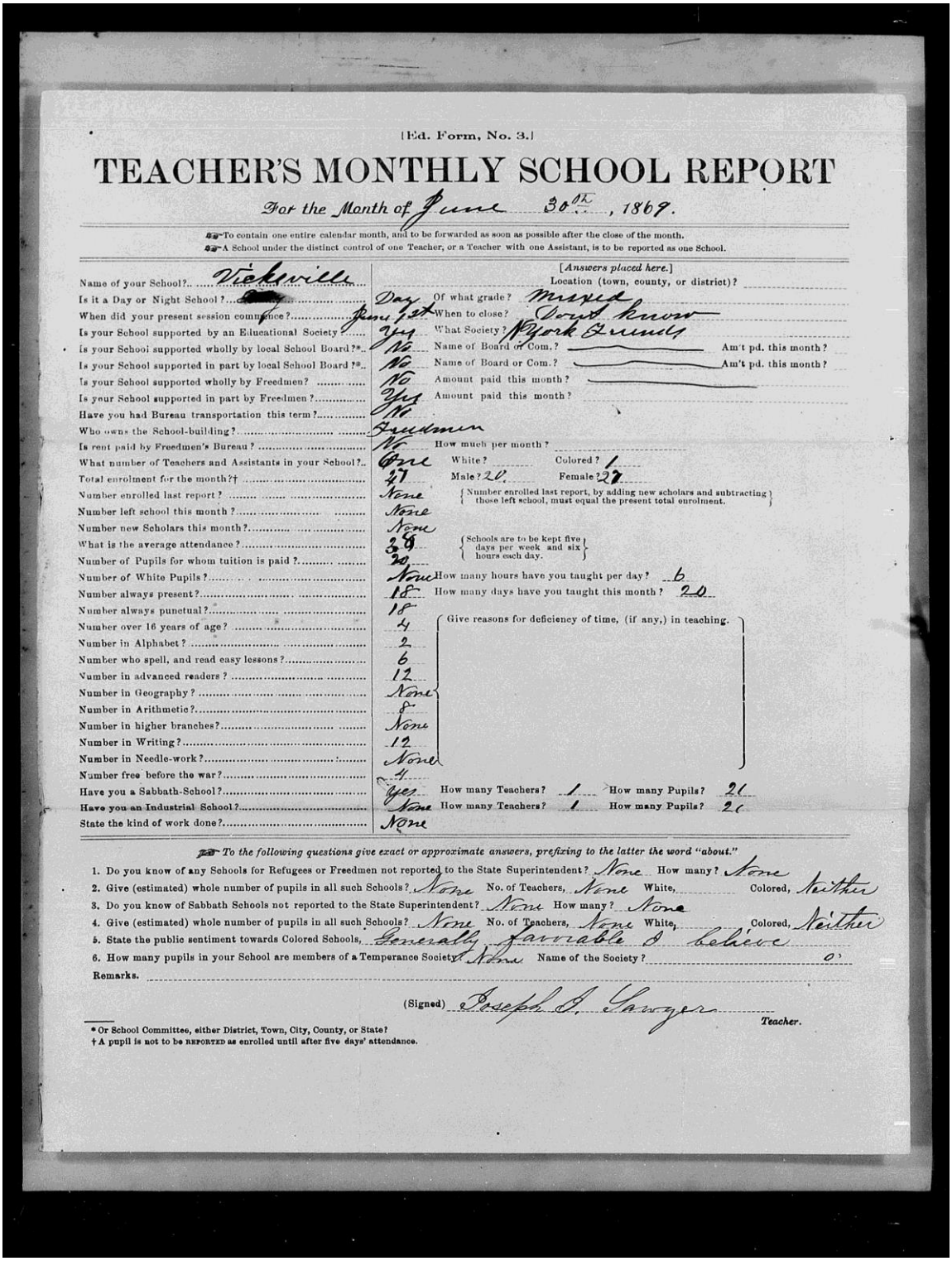
[115] James M. Campbell and Rebecca J. Fraser, *Reconstruction: People and Perspectives*, (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 151.

[116] Hilary Green, *Educational Reconstruction: African American Schools in the Urban South, 1865-1890*, (Cambridge, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016), 20.

[117] United States, Freedmen's Bureau, Records of the Superintendent of Education and of the Division of Education, 1865-1872," database with images, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q2QP-Z1RQ : accessed 25 October 2016), J J Sawyer, 30 Jun 1868; citing Residence, Vicksville, Southampton, Virginia, United States, NARA microfilm publications M1053. Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1861 - 1880, RG 105. (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1969-1978); roll 14; FHL microfilm 1,549,591.



[Ed. Form, No. 3.]

TEACHER'S MONTHLY SCHOOL REPORT

For the Month of June 30th, 1869.

☞ To contain one entire calendar month, and to be forwarded as soon as possible after the close of the month.
☞ A School under the distinct control of one Teacher, or a Teacher with one Assistant, is to be reported as one School.

[*Answers placed here.*]

Name of your School?	Vicksville
Is it a Day or Night School?	Day
When did your present session commence?	June 1st — Of what grade? Mixed
Is your School supported by an Educational Society?	Yes — When to close? Don't know
Is your School supported wholly by local School Board?*	No — What Society? N York Friends
Is your School supported in part by local School Board?*	No — Name of Board or Com.? ——— Am't pd. this month?
Is your School supported wholly by Freedmen?	No — Name of Board or Com.? ——— Am't pd. this month?
Is your School supported in part by Freedmen?	Yes — Amount paid this month?
Have you had Bureau transportation this term?	No
Who owns the School-building?	Freedmen
Is rent paid by Freedmen's Bureau?	No — How much per month?
What number of Teachers and Assistants in your School?	One — White? — Colored? 1
Total enrolment for the month?†	47 — Male? 20 — Female? 27
Number enrolled last report?	None — {Number enrolled last report, by adding new scholars and subtracting those left school, must equal the present total enrolment.}
Number left school this month?	None
Number new Scholars this month?	None
What is the average attendance?	38 — {Schools are to be kept five days per week and six hours each day.}
Number of Pupils for whom tuition is paid?	20
Number of White Pupils?	None — How many hours have you taught per day? 6
Number always present?	18 — How many days have you taught this month? 20
Number always punctual?	18
Number over 16 years of age?	4 — {Give reasons for deficiency of time, (if any,) in teaching.}
Number in Alphabet?	2
Number who spell, and read easy lessons?	6
Number in advanced readers?	12
Number in Geography?	None
Number in Arithmetic?	8
Number in higher branches?	None
Number in Writing?	12
Number in Needle-work?	None
Number free before the war?	1
Have you a Sabbath-School?	Yes — How many Teachers? 1 — How many Pupils? 21
Have you an Industrial School?	None — How many Teachers? 1 — How many Pupils? 21
State the kind of work done?	None

☞ *To the following questions give exact or approximate answers, prefixing to the latter the word "about."*

1. Do you know of any Schools for Refugees or Freedmen not reported to the State Superintendent? None How many? None
2. Give (estimated) whole number of pupils in all such Schools? None No. of Teachers, None White, Colored, Neither
3. Do you know of Sabbath Schools not reported to the State Superintendent? None How many? None
4. Give (estimated) whole number of pupils in all such Schools? None No. of Teachers, None White, Colored, Neither
5. State the public sentiment towards Colored Schools, Generally favorable I believe
6. How many pupils in your School are members of a Temperance Society? None Name of the Society? 0

Remarks.

(Signed) Joseph J. Sawyer
Teacher.

* Or School Committee, either District, Town, City, County, or State?
† A pupil is not to be REPORTED as enrolled until after five days' attendance.

FIGURE ONE: Joseph J. Sawyer's Monthly Teacher Report (July 1869), United States, Freedmen's Bureau, Records of the Superintendent of Education and of the Division of Education, 1865-1875

enrollment, he wrote 'none'.[118] The school possibly just reopened following the spring term. According to this document, the school began its operation in June 1869, despite its appearance in records as early as 1868. On an average day, 38 students filled the classrooms, only four over the age of sixteen. Number in alphabet-2. Number who spell and read easy lessons-6. Number of advanced readers-12. Number in arithmetic-8. Number in writing-12. Number free before the war-4. At Zion, New York Friends, a Quaker organization formed by a group known as the Hicksites, funded and supported Sawyer's educational endeavors.[119]

The Society of Friends, or Quakers, had a strong history serving the African American community. Named after Quaker Elias Hicks, the Hicksites quickly involved themselves in educational efforts for the freed people during the early nineteenth century. In 1864, the Hicksites formed the New York Friends Freedmen's Association to support southern Black schools.[120] Unlike other religious organizations, the Hicksites only served these communities financially meaning they allowed the Black community to build their own schools and provide their own teachers.[121] The Association supported each school in Southampton County. Their teachers included Harriet A. Gregory, Amanda D. Montier,

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[118] "United States Freedmen's Bureau, Records of the Superintendent of Education and of the Division of Education, 1865-1872" database, *Family Search* ((https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.3.1/TH-909-50662-20903-59?cc=2427894 : 1 August 2016), Virginia > Roll 16, Teachers' monthly school reports, May 1869-Aug 1869 > image 774 of 1161; citing multiple NARA microfilm publications (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1969-1978).

[119] "United States, Freedmen's Bureau, Records of the Superintendent of Education and of the Division of Education, 1865-1872," database with images, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q2QP-8Q4Z : accessed 25 October 2016), Joseph J Sawyer, Jun 1869, Southampton, Virginia, United States, NARA microfilm publications M1053. Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1861 - 1880, RG 105. (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1969-1978); roll 16; FHL microfilm 1,549,593.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Hugh Barbour, *Quaker Crosscurrents: Three Hundred Years of Friends in the New York Yearly Meetings,* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 196.

M.A. Andrews, Mary M. Counell (sp?), and Sawyer.[122] The New York Friends also supported schools in Westmoreland, Virginia and Rockbridge, West Virginia. With their support, Sawyer received a salary in addition to funds for school supplies and the school's building rent of $10 a month.[123]

The chart below displays data from Sawyer's monthly teacher reports during his last known school term, January 1870 to June 1870. His first documented class in June 1869 showed 47 children in his classrooms. By March 1870, Zion's student enrollment peaked at 74 children.[124] Black children and adults entered the classrooms ready to learn. Outside of this data, little is known about Sawyer's teaching style, his students' stories and background and his overall experience, but he educated his people's children and met their needs in Southampton County, Virginia from 1868 to 1870. Southampton made its way into history through the infamous Nat Turner Rebellion in August 1831, which resulted in a statewide ban on enslaved and free Blacks from attending religious services.[125] Ironically, nearly forty years later, Sawyer, a Black minister, utilized the church where he held services and revivals as a school for Black children.

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[122] "United States, Freedmen's Bureau, Records of the Superintendent of Education and of the Division of Education, 1865-1872," database with images, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q2QP-ZK8L : accessed 6 February 2017), Joseph J Sawyer, Jun 1870; citing Residence, Vicksville, Southampton, Virginia, United States, NARA microfilm publications M1053. Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1861 - 1880, RG 105. (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1969-1978); roll 11; FHL microfilm 1,549,588.

[123] Ibid.

[124] "United States, Freedmen's Bureau, Records of the Superintendent of Education and of the Division of Education, 1865-1872," database with images, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q2QP-ZG95 : accessed 26 October 2016), Joseph J Sawyer, Mar 1870; citing Residence, Vicksville, Southampton, Virginia, United States, NARA microfilm publications M1053. Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1861 - 1880, RG 105. (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1969-1978); roll 11; FHL microfilm 1,549,588.

[125] Hillary J. Moss, *Schooling Citizens: The Struggle for African American Education in Antebellum American*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 98.

TABLE 1: Joseph J. Sawyer's Teacher Monthly Report from January to June 1870 in Southampton County, Virginia

Month of Operation	Jan. 1870	Feb. 1870	March 1870	April 1870	May 1870	June 1870
Total enrollment	59	72	74	61	42	38
Number enrolled last report	35	50	72	74	61	42
What is the average attendance?	44	58	47	42	26	34
Number of White Pupils	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number always Present	55	50	55	40	35	30
Number over 16 years of age?	7	9	17	5	1	1
Number in Alphabet?	1	2	2	2	4	3
Number who spell and read easy lessons?	58	70	72	59	38	35
Number of advanced Readers?	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number in Geography?	14	12	15	11	15	8
Number in Arithmetic?	15	12	15	11	15	8
Number in Writing?	40	34	32	34	26	25
Number free before the war?	16	18	17	20	4	8

In September 1869, Sawyer taught six hours a day and only sixteen days out of that month.[126] He wrote of his absence that, "a revival of Religion which lasted eight days in the schoolhouse prevented the school but I was preaching and there were several converts."[127] Sawyer not only taught, he preached in the town's Black community. This was the first record of Sawyer's involvement in the Black church. According to church

[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid.

records, Sawyer's involvement began through the state's African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church. Quite similar to the AME Church, the AMEZ Church informally emerged due to racial discrimination from the white dominant ME Church in New York during 1796.[128] Originally called the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the denomination named their first chapel Zion under the leadership of minister Peter Williams.[129] In an effort to distance themselves from the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Zion members reorganized as the AMEZ Church in 1848.[130] With the same commitment to uplifting southern Blacks, the AMEZ Church assisted enslaved Blacks utilizing the Underground Railroad and sent missionaries south to educate this emancipated population.[131] In the early 1870s, the Thirteenth Session of the Virginia Conference of the AMEZ Church convened where Sawyer attended with several delegates and ministers from the region.[132] Sawyer then made two major transitions. First, he shifted his religious affiliation from the AMEZ Church to the AME Church. Second, by 1875, Sawyer left his teaching position in Virginia migrating further south with his wife whom he married around 1870 and his two young children to Fernandina, Florida.[133]

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[128] John Jamison Moore, *History of the AME Zion Church in America. Founded in 1796, in the City of New York*, (York, PA: Teachers' Journal Office, 1884), 16.

[129] C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 57.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Paul Finkelman, *Encyclopedia of African American History, 1896 to the Present,* (Cambridge, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009), 61

[132] John Jamison Moore, *History of the AME Zion Church in America,* (York, PA: Teacher's Journal Office, 1884), 275.

[133] J.J. Sawyer, "Florida Communication", *The Christian Recorder,* April 22, 1875.

The task of bringing the AME church to Florida fell onto the shoulders of William G. Stewart, a former enslaved man from Palatka, Florida. [134] In just three weeks, Presiding Bishop Daniel A. Payne and church elders educated Stewart in the ways of the AME Church and appointed him head pastor of the Florida AME Church on May 22, 1865.[135] Nine months later, Charles Pearce, a minister and friend of presiding Bishop Payne, joined Stewart in the grand task of developing the denomination in the state. As his former secretary, Sawyer remembered Pearce as a "sincere lover of the African M.E. Church and a faithful advocate of its doctrines and claims."[136] When Pearce arrived in Florida, he inspected Stewart's churches and sought to immediately build more churches and expand existing building, open Sunday schools, and develop schools for Black Floridians.[137] By the end of the year, the AME Church thrived in Florida, despite the Black Codes and severe white hostility.[138]

Many Black Floridians viewed their state as a sanctuary. AME minister John R. Scott expressed it best, "I wish that the great mass of my own race, now struggling for a living in the cold regions of the North and West be told of this land of promise, here they may secure beautiful and happy homes, and the means for educating their children."[139] Perhaps Sawyer heard his call. The AME Church played a vital role in the creation of this sanctuary through its promotion of farm and home ownership stressing the importance of

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[134] Larry Eugene Rivers and Canter Brown, Jr. *Laborers in the Vineyard of the Lord*: *The Beginnings of the AME Church in Florida, 1865-1895*, (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2001), 24.

[135] Ibid, 25.

[136] Ibid, 33.

[137] Ibid, 34.

[138] Walker, *A Rock in a Weary Land*, 15.

[139] Paul Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed: The Hidden History of Black Organizing and White Violence in Florida from Reconstruction to 1920*, (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 20.

hard work and Black independence.[140] By 1870, nearly four thousand Black Floridians owned land.[141] A year later the state's AME convention praised the landownership efforts of Blacks and their avoidance of plantation labor:

> Resolved by the convention of ministers and laymen of the African Methodist Church in Florida, that we congratulate our people upon the rapid progress they have made in the past six years, and upon the rapid progress they have made in the past six years, and upon the increase of mixed industry, homestead and small farms in opposition to the ruinous plantation system…we proudly point to these facts a refutation of the slanders by our natural-born enemies, the democrats, that freedmen do not work.[142]

Florida's Black communities embraced their own autonomy worked their own land, built their own schools, and fought for government representation. Sanctuary came with its own limitations. White violence, predominately from the Ku Klux Klan, plagued Florida as well as severe Black Codes, which suppressed this population's civil rights. Still, Black Floridians resisted and gained political office and the numbers of Black schools and landowners continued to rise. A local Black reporter wrote of Florida as the "Negro's new Jerusalem."[143] Within this new Jerusalem, Black resistance stood as the city's motto in the form of education and religion. Two values Sawyer understood as he quickly aligned himself with Florida's AME Church.

In 1872, around the time Sawyer joined the church, the Florida AME Church boasted a membership of 12,280.[144] In 1875, Sawyer pastored a church in St. Fernandina, the northeastern region of the state near the Georgia border. *The Christian Recorder*, the

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[140] Ibid, 20.
[141] Ibid, 19.
[142] Ibid, 20.
[143] Ibid, 18.
[144] Rivers and Brown, *Laborers in the Vineyard*, 85.

AME Church weekly bulletin, published Sawyer's first church report in 1875.[145] On April 15th, Sawyer wrote,

> It pleased Bishop Ward to send us here this year, and we are doing the best we can. Fernandina is a beautiful place in many respects, with about two thousand inhabitants. St. Fernandina is warmed by a genial sun and fanned by the waves of the sea. There are in the city two flourishing Baptist Churches, one M.E. North, a strong colored membership in the Roman Catholic Church. A few intelligent and influential members in the Protestant Episcopal and our Church. Now unlike every other place in the state we are the fifth, numerically, and the wall of prejudice would seem to a beholder impenetrable, yet it yields.[146]

As the church spread and grew across Florida more issues hindered its progress. When Sawyer joined the Florida AME Church, a statewide economic depression nearly financially exhausted the church. Droughts, hurricanes, and pest infestation also damaged churches and destroyed crops which severely affected the church's ministry in the state.[147] During this same stressful period, membership fell drastically and congregations failed to provide weekly offerings due to both statewide and nationwide economic depression. By 1875, negative news and reports overwhelmed any positive news.[148] Nearly two thousand members quit. As Black Floridians sought government representation and economic relief white hostility rose throughout the state. Even Sawyer lamented in his first editorial to the *Recorder*, "Our church here has been surrounded by unfavorable circumstances from its organization except a period of two years when elder John R. Scott had charge of the congregation."[149]

As Reconstruction formally ended in 1877 for Floridians and the economic panic eased, the AME Church launched their own "Reconstruction" plan across the state.[150]

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[145] J.J. Sawyer, "Florida Communication", *The Christian Recorder*, April 22, 1875.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Rivers and Brown, *Laborers in the Vineyard*, 90.
[148] Ibid, 98.
[149] J. J. Sawyer, "Florida Communication, *The Christian Recorder*, April 22, 1875.
[150] Rivers and Brown, *Laborers in the Vineyard*, 110.

East Florida ministers sought to distance themselves from the churches in Middle Florida. Ministers from these regions blamed each other for their misfortune. For East Florida ministers, Middle Florida's "political preachers" enforced strict codes of morality causing many of their members to leave on top of the economic depression.[151] Sawyer worked within the Live Oak District (Middle Florida) at the Monticello Station region under presiding elder Josiah H. Armstrong.[152] East Florida church delegates received approval to proceed with a split from the Florida Conference during the next annual session of the Florida Conference. The East Florida Conference commenced at Palatka on February 27, 1878.[153] Sawyer left his appointment at Live Oak to join the East Florida Church.[154] He travelled to Palatka where he received his pastoral assignment at Bethel AME Church in February 1877.[155] Bethel's former pastor John R. Scott remarked, "Elder J.J. Sawyer is moving things temporally and spiritually at Palatka. During our Quarterly Portracted [sic] meeting 45 joined the church, and 16 or 18 have been converted, the good work is still going on."[156] Sawyer later submitted the following update about his new church to the *Christian Recorder*:

> MR. EDITOR: - Palatka a beautiful and healthy town, is situated on the St. John's River, 75 miles above Jacksonville. It is not very large, it is however a place of considerable importance; particularly as a winter resort for pleasure and health seeking travellers... Our people are doing very well here. They are buying and building homes. The hammers and trowels, and paint brushes have played no small part in our community since the season is over. In the midst of Palatka, we have a church (33 x 54) the foundation of which was laid two years ago; soon after Rev. F. Carolina was appointed to the change. Through his labors it was weather boarded, covered and floored, so that the first sermon ever preached in

[151] Ibid, 112.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Ibid, 119.
[154] Ibid, 109.
[155] J.J. Sawyer, "Palatka", *The Christian Recorder*, July 26, 1877.
[156] Rev. John R. Scott, "Marriage and Church News in Florida", *The Christian Recorder*, July 26 1877.

> the church was by him after my appointment; the next was mine. From the favorable impression he had left upon the minds of the people about their coming preacher, a great many met me, among them some Methodist ministers of your own city who would not leave the church until they had invoked the blessing of God on me and encouraged the brethren to stand by me... I reached here in the latter part of Feb., and during the season my congregations (mostly white) were large and the collections good. On one occasion a minister of John St. Church, M.E. New York, added considerable worth to a sermon which I had preached by an exhortation, and after liberally contributing for himself gave $5 on behalf of his church…[157]

Unlike his previous AME editorial, Sawyer presented a thriving and growing church. It also revealed a great amount of detail about his congregation and the Black Palatka community: "Our people are doing well here they are buying and building homes."[158] Surprisingly, white people filled the majority of his pews especially in a predominately Black county; however, this was no anomaly. At times, the AME Church worked with white ministers such as Reverend Robert L. Wiggins of the ME Church.[159] At the dedication of St. James AME Church in 1895, Bishop Abram Grant noted, "Quite a number of the white friends" thus "showing their interest in the good work our colored friends."[160] Despite this small detail concerning his congregants, Sawyer provided no other information about his church. He only concluded with the words, "The Lord is blessing us also."[161]

Sawyer felt the Lord's blessing across Florida's Black communities. Due to increase construction of railroads statewide, masses of Black laborers migrated to East Florida to work on the rails.[162] White businesses also hired Black Floridians in high

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[157] J.J. Sawyer, "Palatka", *The Christian Recorder*, July 26, 1877.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Rivers and Brown, *Laborers in the Vineyard*, 167.
[160] Ibid, xv.
[161] Ibid, 167.
[162] Ibid, 123.

paying laborer jobs and other professions. This led to the development of a Black middle class of teachers, contractors, carpenters, merchants, and hotel workers. Jacksonville became the financial and spiritual heart of urban Florida by the 1880s.[163] This provided Jacksonville's Black residents with steady work and access to Black churches, schools, and businesses; however, racism constantly remained them of their place, but they fought back. In April 1882, when AME Bishop Daniel A. Payne refused to ride in the back of the train, a white conducted kicked him off the train. Payne had to carry his bags several miles to his destination. In protest, Black ministers met in Jacksonville to protest and later discouraged all travelling by railroads.[164]

With a growing Black community, Florida also experienced shift Black religious affiliation. Black membership increased in the Colored Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church and the Baptist Church.[165] The 1870 census listed a total of 88 Black churches—19 Baptist, 49 AME, and 18 Methodist in Florida. Although, the AME Church held a significant presence in Florida, Black Floridians were now attracted to the CME and Baptist Church.[166] Known today as the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, both the AME Church and the CME Church held similar beginnings. Established in the state in 1870, the CME Church quickly gathered a large cohort of trained ministers, something the AME Church failed to do immediately.[167] The AME Church labelled the CME Church as both the "rebel church" and the "old slavery church" due to its close ties to the dominant white ME Church, a church founding Bishop Richard Allen quickly separated

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[163] Ibid, 124.

[164] Wali R. Kharif, "Black Reaction to Segregation and Discrimination in Post-Reconstruction Florida." *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (1985): 163.

[165] Joe M. Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida, 1865-1877*, (Tallahassee, FL: Florida State University, 1965), 85.

[166] Ibid, 86.

[167] Rivers and Brown, *Laborers of the Vineyard*, 67.

the AME denomination from.[168] In comparison to the AME Church, the Baptist Church accomplishment much more in Florida. In their early years, Florida's AME ministers, including Josiah Haynes Armstrong, Charles H. Pearce, and John Willis Menard, focused on gaining and maintaining political power in the state legislature. The Baptist Church had an advantage the AME Church lacked, a school, the Florida Institute established on October 1, 1880.[169]

The AME Church made several attempts to construct a divinity high school and college. In February 1872, Florida's state legislature chartered Brown Theological Institute, a school organized by AME minister Pearce who also served as senator. That July Pearce held a dedication ceremony at the institution's construction site in Jacksonville.[170] He continued making progress with the school yet, major financial setbacks halted Pearce's work. The AME Church entrusted white ME minister Dr. R.O. Sidney with the school's operation and finances for the institute freeing Pearce to focus on other personal and political matters for the regional church. Instead of paying construction workers, Sidney withheld the money for his personal use. "He failed to pay the carpenters; used the money for self aggrandizement [sic] and ran away," Bishop Pearce lamented, "but for his dishonest deeds to the people who had just been made freed, was over taken in a storm, and the great God of the heavens strangled him to death beneath the maddening waters of Atlantic, to await the judgement trumpet of the Arch Angel."[171] Sidney's cause of death remains unknown, but for Pearce he died as a result of divine providence.

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[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid, 125.
[170] Rivers and Brown, *Laborers in the Vineyard*, 80.
[171] Ibid, 96.

The mission of erecting a school building moved into the hands of Black Florida Congressman Josiah Thomas Walls.[172] One of Walls' many interests involved Black education and a land-grant state for an agricultural college. On February 3, 1872, Walls, in his first major floor speech, stated:

> I believe that the national Government is the guardian of the liberties of all its subjects. Can [African Americans] protect their liberties without education; and can they be educated under the present condition of society in the States where they were when freed? Can this be done without the aid, assistance, and supervision of the General Government? No, sir, it cannot.[173]

His bill passed with amendments protecting state-sanctioned segregation; however, funds excluded Black schools such as Brown Theological Institute. In December 1873, Walls introduce a measure in Congress to grant Brown one million acres of public land in Florida; however, his bill failed to pass the 43rd Congress.[174] An AME elder in response cried, "The people became disheartened and refused to give any more money toward the building, the carpenters sued the board of trustees and obtained a judgement in the court; the building was sold to the highest bidder…thus ended Brown Theological Institute and Brown University."[175]

On July 29, 1880, AME Reverend Robert Burn Books revived the church's education mission with "An Appeal to the Ministers and Members of the AME Church, of the State of Florida." Brooks wrote, "One of the most needy and pressing demands of our church in the State is the establishment of an institution of learning where our children can be educated among professors of our won denomination."[176] In reference to

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[172] Ibid, 75.

[173] Office of History and Preservation, *Black Americans in Congress 1870-2007*, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2008), 90.

[174] Rivers and Brown, *Laborer in the Vineyard*, 99.

[175] Ibid, 100.

[176] Rev. R.B. Brookins, "An Appeal", *The Christian Recorder*, July 29, 1880.

the progress made by other denominations, he continued, "The other Christian denominations of the world have learned that the only way through which their faith can be sustained is to educate their children in their own institutions…"Knowledge is power," is no longer a deniable fact, and we must educate, or the South will be as it is now and has been, a prey for other denominations."[177] In this same appeal, Reverend Brookins asked each minister to raise $0.25 per member and forward this money to Sawyer "who is authorized to start the schools as soon as he can."[178] Two year earlier, Sawyer had urged the 1876 Florida Conference to fund a conference high school. According to one minister, Sawyer's "project died aborning" as the presiding elders expressed little support for his effort, yet Sawyer, as the conference's elected secretary, resisted and continued to fight for a conference high school and the restoration of Brown Theological Institution.[179] In 1880, assistance came his way in the form of a new AME Bishop of Florida, Alexander Wayman, a strong advocate of Black education. For Wayman, this campaign for a school exemplified the AME Church's commitment to social advancement through education.

Minister T.C. Denham noted, "The [Baptists] have their high schools going on in this State. While we can boaset of our number, we have nothing to speak of in that direction."[180] In February 1881, Wayman endorsed building Sawyer's Palatka high school. and two years later the East Florida Conference named it East Florida Divinity School.[181] A year later, the Conference selected Sawyer, the conference's secretary until

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[177] Ibid.

[178]Rev. R.B. Brookins, "An Appeal", *The Christian Recorder,* July 29, 1880.

[179] Rivers and Brown, *Laborers of the Vineyard*, 128.; Bishop Wayman, "Notes by the Way", *The Christian Recorder,* March 16, 1882.

[180] Rivers and Brown, *Laborers of the Vineyard*, 128.

[181] Ibid, 136.

1883, as East Florida Divinity School's principal.[182] By 1884, the school moved from Palatka and operated in Jacksonville with 125 students. Unfortunately, financial issues continued to plague the AME Church. Enrollment dropped to one hundred despite Sawyer's financial campaigns throughout East Florida. In an attempt to save the school, new AME Bishop Payne revised the divinity school's structure to include classical and industrial education.[183] East Florida Divinity School became the Florida Normal and Divinity High School.[184] Although the church tried to strengthen the institution, the school floundered due to the loss of Black political power in the region to the Democratic Party, an increase in racial violence, a yellow fever epidemic resulting in 400 deaths, and the retirement and/or death of pivotal AME leaders, such as Bishop Thomas M.D. Ward and Charles Pearce, committed to the denomination's educational mission.

From the late nineteenth century into the early twentieth century, Florida stood as the nation's most lynch-prone state as Democrats and the Knights of Labor, comprised of white working-class men, regained political power.[185] The elections of 1886 resulted in the removal of all Black politicians from the state legislature. The newly elected Bishop of the Florida AME Church, Benjamin W. Arnett, faced a vast number of issues, yet he first sought to restore the Florida Normal and Divinity School. At the East Florida Church Annual Conference, Arnett promised to do all in his power to promote the school's success.[186] To revive the church's spirit, the Bishop also invited Frederick Douglass to speak who exclaimed:

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[182] Reverend C.S. Smith, "Communications", *The Christian Recorder*, April 27, 1882.
[183] Rivers and Brown, *Laborers in the Vineyard,* 150.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Ibid, 152.
[186] Ibid, 168.

> We see today a new heaven and a new earth in comparison with that of fifty years ago. Why, it really seems to me that the sun rises and sat in a different place from where it used to. The very air seems changed. We breathe freer; we breathe deeper; we have aspirations higher than we ever dreamed of in those days. The change is so great, so vast, so wonderful, so complete, so sudden that we hardly know what to make of it.[187]

By fall 1889, the *Christian Recorder* received positive reports out of East Florida. The church held 8,019 members, 113 ministers, 171 churches, 192 Sunday schools, one divinity high school, and new plans for a college.[188]

The Florida Conference and its multiple sub-conferences officially organized the Edward Waters College in the city of Jacksonville in 1890. The Florida Normal and Divinity School merged with Edward Waters. An article in the *Recorder* observed, "So no more Divinity school in Jacksonville, but instead Edward Waters College will expand the intellect, enlighten the mind, cultivate the brains, train the hands, direct the heart and purify the morals of the coming sons and daughters of Afro-Americans."[189] Confusion nevertheless continues to exist in regards to the institution's founding date.[190] Historians Larry Eugene Rivers and Canter Brown Jr. placed the college's establishment in February 1892, although Black newspapers wrote about Edward Waters College as early as 1891.[191] This paper sets the college's founding date in the early 1890s in support of articles published around the time of the school's opening. The *Freeman,* a historic Black newspaper located in Indianapolis, Indiana, noted the school's opening, "The desire for a thorough education deserves encouragement and the fact that colored people themselves

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[187] Ibid, 170-171.
[188] Ibid, 172.
[189] Reverend A.J. Kershaw, "Education in Florida: Quarto-Centenary Celebration," *The Christian Recorder,* June 19, 1890.
[190] "Self-Helping Institution, How the Edward Waters College at Jacksonville," *The Freedmen* (Indianapolis, Indiana), May 30, 1893.
[191] Rivers and Brown, *Laborers of the Vineyard,* 182.

are organizing to realize that desire, must be hailed as a most hopeful sign of the times. It has in it the promise of a better future for the next generation."[192] Reverend John R. Scott served as the school's first principal.[193]

Despite Sawyer's work in establishing Edward Waters College, the East Florida Conference offered him no administrative role. Instead, Sawyer returned to the classroom to support the school's mission to give Black men and women a thorough education and trade for ministers, teachers, and others "for greater and wider fields of uselfulness".[194] Sawyer taught courses in phonography, shoe-making and repair, and stenography.[195] During this time, he pastored St. Paul AME Church in the city of St. Augustine. AME Reverend J.H. Welch described Sawyer in his report on AME churches as a "model Christian gentlemen and polished and cultured minister" who "deserves great credit and the highest praise for his grand work" at St. Paul AME Church.[196] He also pastored a second church in Madarin, Florida, located in northeastern Florida, where he was "beloved by his entire congregation".[197]

Years earlier, on Saturday, May 24, 1890, Bishop Benjamin W. Arnett, Presiding AME Bishop of South Carolina and Florida, introduced Reverend J.J. Sawyer at the AME Church's Quarto-Centennial Conference in Charleston, South Carolina.[198] By this time, Sawyer was a key member of the Florida AME Church preserving the AME

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[192] "Self-Helping Institution, How the Edward Waters College at Jacksonville," *The Freedmen* (Indianapolis, Indiana), May 30, 1893.

[193] John Russell Hawkins, *The Educator: A Condensed Statement of the Department of Education of the African Methodist Episcopal* Church, (Kittrell, NC: African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1906), 96.

[194] Ibid, 96.

[195] Self-Helping Institution, How the Edward Waters College at Jacksonville," *The Freedmen* (Indianapolis, Indiana), May 30, 1893.

[196] Reverend J.H. Welch, "Jacksonville, Fla. District", *The Christian Recorder*, July 2, 1891.

[197] Ibid.

[198] Benjamin W. Arnett, "Proceedings of the African M.E. Church, of South Carolina, at Charleston, S.C., May 15, 16, 17, 1889", (Philadelphia: AME Church, 1890), 454.

Church's early history and presenting biographies of the church's key leaders in a conference paper entitled, "The Pioneer Workmen."[199] He concluded, "All I can say when I think of them is there are giants in these days."[200] These giants created the most important Black religious organization in Florida.[201] Men such as Sawyer joined their ministries in an effort to spread the Gospel and to advance their fellow Black brothers and sisters as Christians through education and social justice. Sawyer also had his own legacy in the Florida AME Church's history. Bishop Alexander Wayman honored him in his *Cyclopaedia* [sic] *of African Methodism* in 1882 with a short biography. The entry read, "SAWYER, J.J., a member of the East Florida Conference, was educated for a Presbyterian minister. He subsequently entered the AME Church, and is now the Principal of the Conference High School.[202] He continued his work with the AME Church until a great rebellion took place in 1897 that Sawyer played a significant role in.

On March 2, 1897, Sawyer organized the Independent AME Church in his Jacksonville shoe shop.[203] Out of this newly formed, fifty-member denomination, his congregants elected him Presiding Bishop. The AME Church sent Presiding Elder T.T. Gaines to report on Sawyer's "great rebellion of the State".[204] Gaines concluded that Sawyer's failed to attend the AME church's conferences under the leadership of Bishop J.C. Embry because "he wanted something better than the bishop had for him."[205] Gaines continued, "It is a fact the conferences are overloaded with a lot of these disgruntled and

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[199] Rivers and Brown, *Laborers in the Vineyard*, 33.
[200] Benjamin W. Arnett, "Proceedings of the African M.E. Church", 180.
[201] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida*, 84.
[202] Alexander Walker Wayman, *Cyclopaedia of African Methodism*, (Baltimore: Methodist Episcopal Book Depository, 1882), 144.
[203] T.T. Gaines, "The Florida Situation Described", *The Christian Recorder*, April 29, 1897.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid.

mischievous preachers, hanging on to the conference with nothing for them to do and hence as we have no employment for them, the devil employs them."[206] The East Florida Conference expelled Sawyer and other members from the AME Church as a result of their rebellion.[207]

Other factors also fueled Sawyer's decision. By the 1890s, the East Florida Conference boasted 8,019 members, 113 ministers, 171 churches, and 192 Sunday Schools.[208] As white violence against Black Floridians increased, congregants looked to the AME for solutions, but the church failed to provide them with an adequate response.[209] Compared to the AME Church's earlier responses to racial injustice, the church sang a quieter tune. In the 1870s, the Florida AME Church advocated on behalf of their people; however, in the 1890s, the AME Church rarely spoke out against white violence.[210]

What remained constant in the Florida AME Church was their continuous financial misfortunes. In 1895, Presiding Bishop Abram Grant informed the East Florida Conference that "the scarcity of money in all parts of the country shows itself in the shortage of the church's finances."[211] The AME's financial situation constantly affected Edward Waters College.[212] College trustees grew frustrated and no longer appreciated the school as it became more and more of a burden to operate.[213] The church's shift in focus, to dealing with the financial distress, along with the lack of opportunity for its

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[206] Ibid.
[207] "Bishop Gaines' Address", *The Christian Recorder*, March 10, 1898.
[208] Rivers and Brown, *Laborers of the Vineyard,* 172.
[209] Ibid, 189.
[210] Ibid, 177.
[211] Ibid.
[212] Ibid, 190.
[213] Ibid, 197.

congregants, each of these factors in Sawyer's decision to leave. No records exist regarding Florida's Independent AME Church's evolution and its dissolvement; however, in 1906, Sawyer returned to the AME Church joining its Lake City Church Conference.[214] Sawyer remained a Floridian with his wife Susan until his death in 1919.[215]

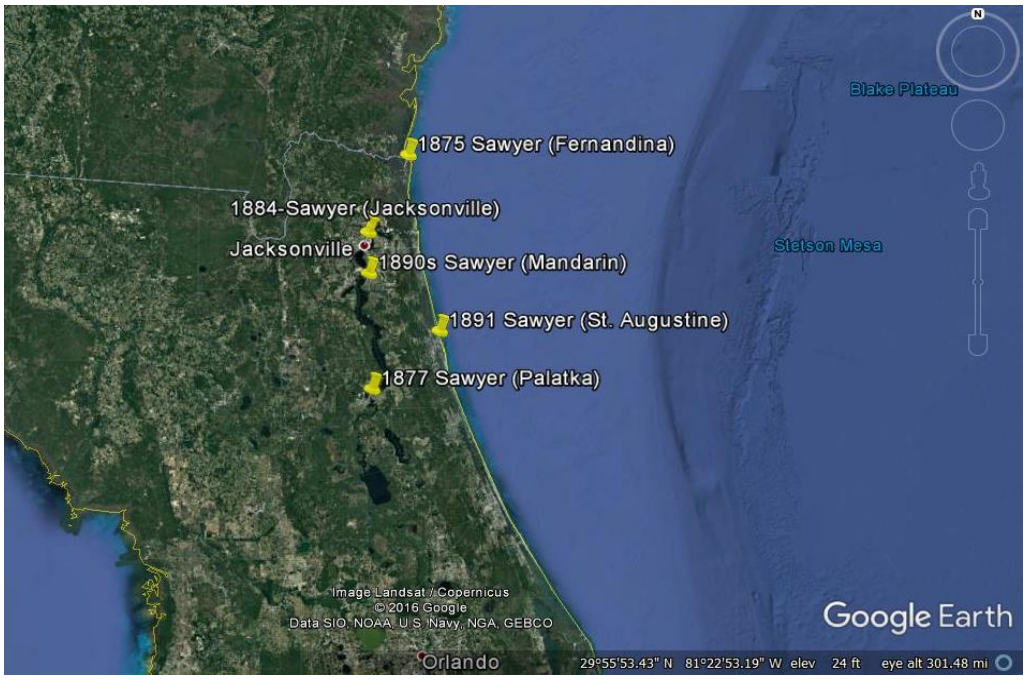

FIGURE TWO: Map detailing Sawyer's movements in Florida from the 1870s to the 1890s

Sawyer's association with the AME Church beyond 1902 remains vague. The *Christian Recorder* archives only holds records from 1861 to 1902, despite the duration of the *Recorder* to today. For a man who led an anti-church crusade, but also devoted a good deal of his life to the AME Church, neither an obituary or celebratory article bears

[214] Wright, *Centennial Encyclopaedia of the AME Church*, 310.

[215] "United States Census, 1900," database with images, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M3DB-4TR : accessed 16 April 2017), Joseph Sawyer in household of J J Sawyer, Precinct 21 Jacksonville city Ward 7, Duval, Florida, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) 51, sheet 32B, family 737, NARA microfilm publication T623 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1972.); FHL microfilm 1,240,168.

his story in 1919. Sawyer chose to write the words "the Lord is blessing us also" in his second church report to the *Christian Recorder* in 1877. This personalized statement epitomized Joseph J. Sawyer's life. Sawyer, a former enslaved man, evolved to a respected Virginia teacher, founding AME Church pioneer in the Florida, rebel and leader of a church dissident, and Bishop of the Independent AME Church. Resistance characterized Sawyer's work. In 1866, he developed Black schools during the Black education movement education despite Black and white objections. As historians, we cannot fully measure the impact of his work. Regardless of who they became, Sawyer equipped his people's children in Virginia and Florida with a dangerous and powerful weapon—education. Black education, once denied during slavery and taught in secrecy amongst the slave quarters, was a right challenged and often denied even after emancipation. His pupils went on to educate their own children solidifying a continuous cycle of educating future generations of Black people, a process Sawyer passed on as a family commitment.

As Sawyer migrated from Virginia to the state of Florida in the 1870s, he focused on his two "ministries"—the church and the schoolhouse. Within the church, he assisted in the formation of the AME's first school for Black Floridians—Florida Normal and Divinity School and Edward Waters College. Sawyer's support and advocacy church's first institution of higher education in Florida also extended to him teaching courses on phonography, stenography, and shoe-making. He never stopped teaching. In 1894, before Sawyer's departure from the AME Church, Bishop T.M.D Ward stated in his tour of the Jacksonville district, "The influence of Charles Pearce, W.W. Sampson, John Scott Sr.,

J.J. Sawyer, and Joseph E. Lee will never be obliterated."[216] Sawyer's ultimate resistance came in the anti-AME rebellion he led against his beloved AME church. Elected Bishop of the Independent AME Church, he turned away from his mother church for its failures in the 1880s and 1890s. Sawyer returned to the AME Church in the early 1900s.

His children watched all of these events as their father experienced heartache, stress, frustration, joy, and happiness. They witnessed the legacy of a great man in the classroom and church. His struggles became their struggles as they advocated for equal Black education. Sawyer's oldest daughter, Nancy Jeanette, married carpenter Harry Florence Flowers, former slave and 21st United States Colored Troop sergeant, on December 9, 1891, in St. Johns, Florida.[217] By 1910, the couple had given Sawyer eight grandchildren: Chauncey Sawyer (1895-1936), John Carrolis (1898-?), Fred L. (1899-1982), Rachel Helen (1900-1988), Theodore W. (1903-1933), Vincent Allen (1906-2002), Gladyce (1908-1988), and Hilda Clifford (1910-1975).[218] Sawyer's resistance and educational advocacy passed onto his grandchildren. Whereas, Sawyer utilized the weapon of the weak to educate African Americans through the establishment of schools, Sawyer's grandchildren picked their own weapons. Chauncey fought during the First World War in the esteemed 351st Heavy Field Artillery regiment of the 92nd Division of the Army, an all-Black regiment.[219] In 1923, Vincent was the first Black student to attend

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[216] Bishop T.M.D. Ward, "Florida and It's Work-Then and Now", *The Christian Recorder*, April 19, 1894.

[217] Florida, County Marriages, 1830-1957, database with images, FamilySearch (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:FWH4-6JT : accessed 1 November 2016), Henry F. Flowers and Nannie J. P. Sawyer, 09 Dec 1891; citing , St. Johns, Florida, United States, State Archive, Tallahassee and clerk of courts, various counties; FHL microfilm 964,735.

[218] 1910 U.S. census, Duval County, Florida, population schedule, p. 23A, dwelling #, family #, N.J.P Flowers; digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed October 31, 2016, http://ancestry.com

[219] U.S. World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918, Henry Sams, Registration State: Pennsylvania, Registration County: Philadelphia; Roll 1907606, Draft Board: 6, digital image, Ancestry.com (accessed April 10, 2014)

Messiah Academy in Grantham, Pennsylvania and nearly thirty years later, filed a civil case against a restaurant in Philadelphia after a waiter refused to provide him service because of his race.[220] Hilda worked with the Philadelphia Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) during the Civil Rights Movement and travelled to Mississippi to work with Head Start centers. This next section examines Sawyer's granddaughter Rachel Helen Flowers who also chose her grandfather's weapon of education in addition to pen and paper, marching feet, and organizing. In Sawyer's words, each generation of the family rose as "giants in their days".[221]

[220] "Stroudsburg Innkeeper Arrested, Denied Service", Philadelphia Tribune, August 29, 1950. 65

[221] Benjamin W. Arnett, "Proceedings of the African M.E. Church, of South Carolina, at Charleston, S.C., May 15, 16, 17, 1889", (Philadelphia: AME Church, 1890), 454.

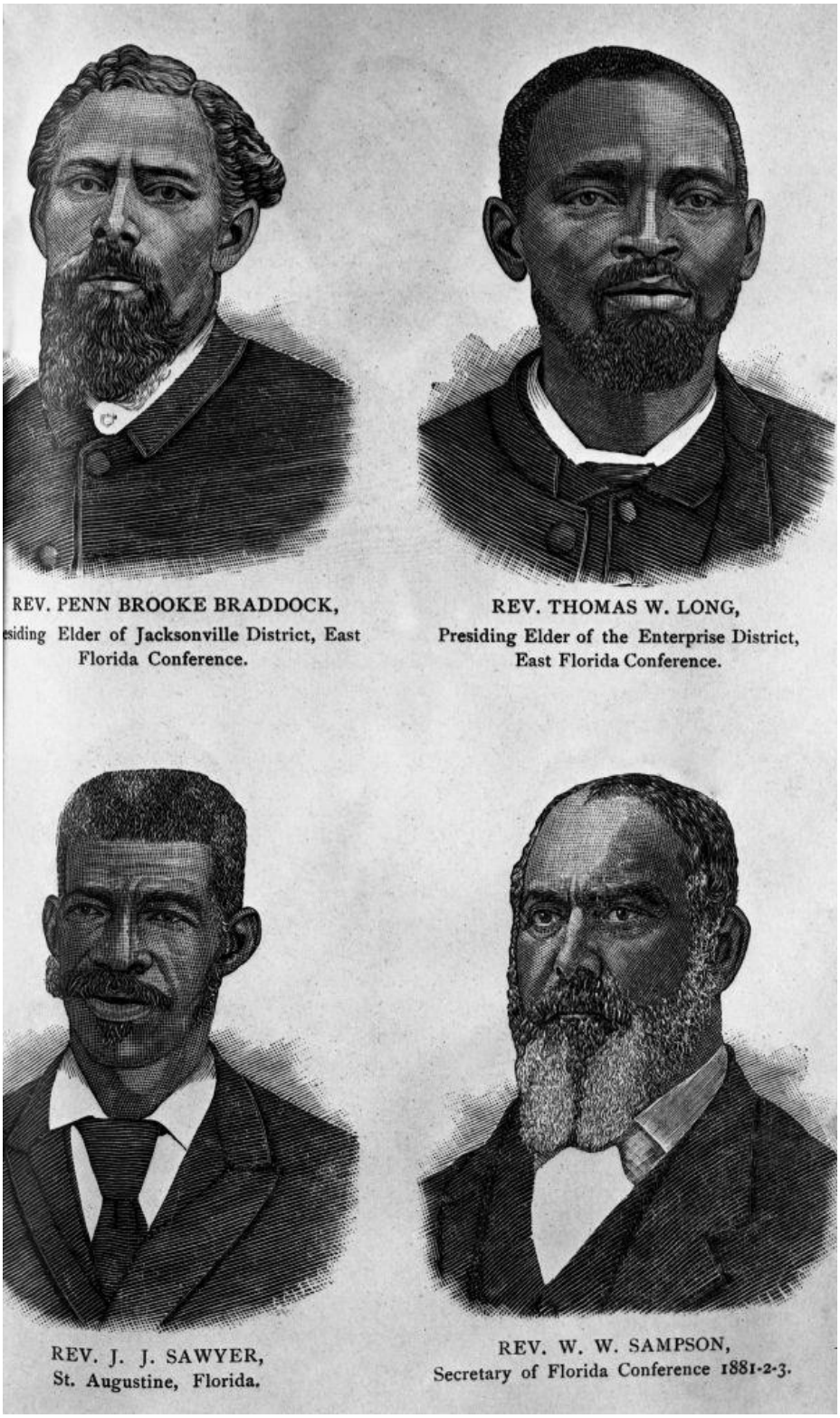

FIGURE THREE: Ministers in the African M.E. Church, in Eastern Florida. From the "Proceedings of the Quarto Centennial Conference of the African M.E. Church of South Carolina at Charleston, S.C. May 1, 16, and 17, 1889. Source: Photographic Collection, Florida State Archives.

CHAPTER THREE: "NEGRO DESIRES AMERICAN PRIVILEGES": RACHEL HELEN FLOWERS, THE BLACK PRESS, AND THE FIGHT FOR EDUCATION EQUALITY IN THE JIM CROW NORTH

As the granddaughter of Reverend Joseph J. Sawyer, Rachel grew up attending his grandfather's church, playing at his home in Jacksonville, Florida, and receiving her grandfather's lessons of resilience and passion for Black education. As her grandfather devoted his life to Black education, Rachel took on this same struggle and became her generation's educational activist, fighting for the needs of Black children and teachers in Philadelphia. Decades earlier in 1860, Reverend Sawyer witnessed a ninety-five percent illiteracy rate among his people. [222] In the *Philadelphia Tribune,* one of the oldest running Black newspapers, his granddaughter praised the near reversal—a ninety percent black literacy rate. Rachel wrote, "In 1910 literacy among the Negro population was calculated as 69.5 per cent: the figure for 1930 was 90 per cent."[223] "Enrollment in public schools increased from 1,670,000 to 2,289,000 in the same period," she continued, "Only 1500 Negro students were attending college in 1910. In 1920 there were 22, 478."[224]

By the year of the article's publication in 1933, Black Americans had achieved monumental milestones in education during the early twentieth century. Despite these

[222] James Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 1988), 12.

[223] Rachel H. Flowers, "Negro Desires American Privileges", *Philadelphia Tribune,* October 26, 1933.

[224] Ibid.

major accomplishments, the educational issues Reverend Sawyer confronted during Reconstruction, including separate schools, white opposition, and limited funding, continued to plague his granddaughter's generation in the new century. This was no southern phenomenon. As southern Blacks fled Jim Crow in the South, they encountered the same discriminatory laws in their self-proclaimed 'Promised Land'. Across the United States, white opposition and institutionalized educational inequality took the form of poor quality schools for Black children and adults, segregation, and funding disparities imposed to protect white educational institutions.[225]

By 1923, Philadelphia had a total of two hundred schools for students with only eleven schools for Black students. Furthermore, the city's school board prohibited Black teachers from educating white students; therefore, the city restricted their employment to these eleven schools.[226] For W.E.B. Du Bois, the mission of educational activists across the North, specifically in Philadelphia, was to oppose segregated schools and "honor and appreciate the colored teacher in the colored school."[227] The National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and other local organizations, such as the Educational Equality League, took charge of this mission in 1923, when the city designated Cheney Training School for Teachers as the state's normal school "for Negroes." Black leaders saw this as a further validation of Jim Crow. In addition to Cheyney's designation as a segregated school for Negroes, the Black migrant population entering Philadelphia worsened the conditions of Black schools creating even more overcrowding. Still, debate arose over whether segregated schools provided a better

[225] C. Eric Lincoln. "The Relevance of Education for Black Americans." *The Journal of Negro Education* 38, no. 3 (1969): 218-23. doi:10.2307/2294004.

[226] W.E.B. DuBois, "The Tragedy of Jim Crow", *The Crisis*, August 1923, 170.

[227] Ibid.

education to Black students as oppose to integrated opportunities. After decades of protest, rallies, and meetings, the Philadelphia Public School system was more segregated in 1929 than in 1899.[228]

Rachel understood the importance of a proper education. Rachel arrived in Philadelphia during the late 1920s. As a former educator, she confronted segregation and the restrictions placed on Black teachers. Within her definition of a proper education, Black teachers received equal pay and had the freedom to teach in any school. A proper education provided Black students with an equal education in integrated schools, meaning the city provided students with new textbooks, a safe building structure, and the same educational tools granted to white students. Lastly, a proper education advanced the Black race.[229] This chapter studies Rachel's educational activism from the late 1920s to the 1940s in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her weapons included pen and paper, the Black press, and participation in local and national civil rights organizations. These served as the tools of a Black educational activist—a person devoted to fighting for racial equality in America's public school systems.

Although Rachel spent her childhood in Jacksonville, Florida, much of her activism took place in the City of Brotherly Love, Philadelphia, which boasted one of the largest urban Black communities in the nation.[230] The seeds of resilience she gathered from her elders bloomed in this city. She migrated to the state of Pennsylvania around 1913 with her father and siblings and three years later Rachel became the first Black

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[228] V.P. Franklin, *The Education of Black Philadelphia*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), 86.

[229] Rachel H. Flowers, "What Have You to Say? A System That Breeds Prejudice," *Philadelphia Tribune*, October 8, 1931.

[230] V.P. Franklin, *The Education of Black Philadelphia*, xvii.

student to enroll at Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home in 1916.[231] Beyond personal educational achievements, Rachel advocated for the desegregation of Philadelphia's public school system. This study of her educational activism reveals not only Flowers' personal biography, but also a larger history of the Jim Crow North and the reality southern Black migrants faced in their new Promised Land.

This biography intersects with several historiographies concerning Black education and the Black experience in the Jim Crow North. Historian C. Van Woodward has asserted, "One of the strangest things about the career of Jim Crow was that the system was born in the North and reached an advanced age before moving South in force."[232] A common myth surrounding Jim Crow and the Civil Rights Movement included a trend to isolate these periods of history to the South. Historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall touched on this historical injustice in her article "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past."[233] Hall argued, "By confining the civil rights struggle to the South, to bowdlerized heroes, to a single halcyon decade, and to limited, noneconomic objectives, the master narrative simultaneously elevates and diminishes the movement."[234] Hall pushed for a broader narrative of a "long civil rights movement" which "took root in the liberal and radical milieu of the late 1930s" and "stretched far beyond the South."[235] Her narrative called for the inclusion of men and women such as Rachel Flowers and their work in the 1930s and 1940s. Although millions

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[231] "Messiah College Celebrates A "Multicultural Century", http://www.messiah.edu/centennial/multicultural_century.html

[232] David A. Canton, "A "Case Involving Human Rights": The Berywn School Desegregation Struggle, 1932-1934", *Pennsylvania Legacies*, vol. 10, no. 2 (2010): 7.

[233] Jacquelyn Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past", *The Journal of American History*, (March 2005): 1233.

[234] Ibid.

[235] Ibid.

of southern Blacks migrated north to escape Jim Crow, many encountered similar discriminatory laws and practices that defined the South from 1910 to 1970.

Quite similar to Hall, historian Thomas J. Sugrue portrays the North as a battleground for civil rights in *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North*.[236] In this broad history of the northern civil rights struggle, Sugrue has argued that since the 1920s, "Northern blacks lived as second-class citizens, unencumbered by the most blatant of southern-style Jim Crow laws, but still trapped in an economic, political, and legal regime that seldom recognized them as equals. In nearly every arena, blacks and whites lived separate, unequal lives."[237] Sugrue termed this as an informal set of Jim Crow laws.[238] He aligned with Hall's sentiment regarding Civil Rights Movement historiography where historians focused on pivotal moments between white Southerners and nonviolent protesters contesting southern Jim Crow laws. Surgue called for a broader history of Jim Crow recognizing its national presence. Historian Davison M. Douglas echoed Hall and Surgue's concern for the Civil Rights Movement historiography and called for a regional shift in *Jim Crow Moves North: The Battle Over Northern School Segregation 1865-1954*. Whereas, Sugrue analyzed several facets of Jim Crow throughout major Northern cities since the 1920s, Douglas primarily focused on public school segregation as a national phenomenon from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century.[239]

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[236] Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North*, (New York: Random House Paperbacks, 2008), 1.

[237] Ibid, xv.

[238] Ibid.

[239] Katrina M. Sanders-Cassell. "Review of *Jim Crow Moves North"*. *The Journal of African American History* 92, no. 2 (2007): 299.

Douglas also defined the North as a battleground for civil rights beginning in the nineteenth century. In a state-to-state analysis, he argued, "Government-sponsored school segregation—such as the assignment of black children to separate colored schools or classrooms—persisted in open defiance of state laws in many northern communities until the late 1940s and early 1950s."[240] Both authors argued that a strong case existed for what they described as the Jim Crow North. Although his landmark research predates this biography, Du Bois' *The Philadelphia Negro* described Philadelphia's school system and Black population during the late nineteenth-century providing preliminary context to Rachel's new home.[241] Both *Jim Crow Moves North* and Du Bois' sociological study of Black Philadelphia studied the city's complex and long history of Black education. Unfortunately, Du Bois' addressed the Black Philadelphia experience up to 1900, decades before Rachel Flowers moved to the city in the late 1920s.

In a study of post-1920 Black education in Philadelphia, *The Education of Black Philadelphia: The Social and Educational History of a Minority Community, 1900-1950* draws on historian V.P. Franklin's monograph concerning community education.[242] Franklin traced the beginnings of Philadelphia's public school system to the city's colonial years in the eighteenth century and specifically examined the city's history of Black education during the first half of the twentieth century. Franklin also studied civil rights organizations that emerged in response to the poor quality of Philadelphia's Black schools. His work became "the first book-length study of the education of a minority

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[240] Davison M. Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North: The Battle Over Northern School Segregation, 1865-1954*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 8.

[241] W.E.B. Du Bois and Elijah Anderson, *The Philadelphia Negro*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 1.

[242] V.P. Franklin, *The Education of Black Philadelphia*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979).

group in the United States" and Franklin viewed education during this period as not a tool of social advancement, but as an obstacle.[243] Franklin addressed northern Jim Crow. Due to segregation and the inferior physical conditions of Black schools, Philadelphia's educational system according to Franklin, reinforced the idea that Black people were an inferior race. The biography of Rachel Flowers tells this history of one Black Philadelphian's response to these injustices and the use of the Black Press and Black organizations as a weapon of resistance.

This chapter also involves the historiography of the Great Migration and its use as a tool of resistance for African Americans. The Great Migration involved the mass influx of rural Blacks from the South to the urban North, Midwest, and West during the twentieth century. Traditionally, most historians placed the Great Migration between 1915 and 1970; whereas, others placed the Great Migration as occurring in 1910.[244] Nevertheless, from 1900 to 1970 over six million Black men and women fled the South.[245] Recently, historians pushed the Great Migration narrative further back to the Middle Passage and antebellum America.[246] Historian Sarah-Jane Mathieu interpreted the Great Migration as occurring in three waves—from 1865 to 1896; 1910 to 1940; and 1940 to 1970. Her interpretation includes the period in which the Flowers left Florida. In "The African American Great Migration Reconsidered", Mathieu called for historians to recognize Black mass migration before the Great Migration including the migration of

[243] George A. Levesque. "The Education of Black Philadelphia (Book Review)". *The American Historical Review* 85, no. 4 (1980): 1004.

[244] Ira Berlin, *The Making of African America: The Four Great Migrations*, (New York: Viking, 2010), 153.

[245] Ibid, 155.

[246] Joe William Trotter, *The Great Migration Perspectives: New Dimensions of Race, Class, and Gender*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), 1.

newly emancipated slaves North.[247] Early sociological and anthropological approaches also downplayed the role of Black southerners in shaping their own migration. Black southerners fled racial discrimination and violence and sought greater economic opportunities beyond farming and sharecropping. In better terms, Black Americans sought to control their own future. Historian Bernadette Pruitt examined the Great Migration and its correlation to racial autonomy in *The Other Great Migration: The Movement of Rural African Americans to Houston, 1900-1941*. Despite her focus on Black Texans and the Great Migration, her work spoke to ways in which Black southerners utilized migration as a form of resistance and as a means for greater opportunity.[248]

This chapter studies Flowers' life through three periods: her early life in Florida and Pennsylvania (1900-1916), her enrollment at Messiah Bible School (1916-1918), and her post-graduation years and activism in the city of Philadelphia (1918-1970). The study begins with Rachel's birth on August 2, 1900 and concludes not at her death in 1988, but in the late 1970s.[249] The significance of Rachel's story transcends her family history of resilience and calls for a deeper understanding of Northern civil rights activities by Black Americans during the mid to late twentieth century. From antebellum America to Rachel's twentieth-century Philadelphia, Black people continued to receive a separate and unequal education. As her grandfather struggled to construct Black schools in South during the late nineteenth century, Rachel struggled against an educational system which

[247] Sarah-Jane Mathieu. "The African American Great Migration Reconsidered." *OAH Magazine of History* 23, no. 4 (2009): 19.

[248] Ibid, xiv.

[249] This is due to the decline of the Black press and privatization laws making the latter part of Rachel's life difficult to construct. In the United States, there is a 72-year rule in regards to releasing personally identifiable information about an individual, this includes federal census records. Therefore, post-1950 federal census record will not be available to the public until 2032.

accepted segregated schools and placed restrictions on the employment of Black teachers. Essentially her grandfather's struggle became her struggle. As the North failed to become her family's promised land, Rachel sought to transform her new home into such.

Born to former Civil War Sergeant of the 21st United States Colored Troops and carpenter Harry Florence Flowers and Nancy Jeanette (Sawyer) Sams, from 1900 to 1913 Rachel Helen Flowers spent her childhood in Jacksonville, Duval County, Florida. [250] She grew up on her family's farm alongside her seven brothers and sisters—Chauncey Flowers, John Flowers, Fred Flowers, Theodore Flowers, Vincent Flowers, Gladys Flowers (Stevenson), and Hilda Flowers (Wilson).[251] By 1910, Harry possibly travelled between Pennsylvania and Florida, most likely for greater economic opportunity.[252] Between 1890 and 1970, nearly seven million Black Americans left the South and travelled to the North for jobs, quality education, voting rights, and other civil liberties.[253] During this time period in northeastern Florida, scholars noted a period of drought which possibly factored into Harry Flowers' decision to find more stable income. This left his wife as the head of the household in the 1910 federal census. Several items listed on this census provided great insight into the family's life. This included Harry and Nancy's marriage date, their children who lived/passed away, places of birth, education levels, and landownership.

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[250] Number: *160-26-7142*; Issue State: *Pennsylvania*; Issue Date: *Before 1951.*Ancestry.com. *U.S., Social Security Death Index, 1935-2014* [database on-line]. Provo, Utah, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2011.

[251] 1910 U.S. Census, Duval County, Florida, population schedule, Election Precinct 27, Sheet #6A, dwelling 418, family 422, N.J.P Flowers; digital image, Ancestry.com; date accessed January 4, 2017, Ancestry.com.

[252] Ancestry.com. *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

[253] Bernadette Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration: The Movement of Rural African Americans to Houston, 1900-1941*, (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2013), 3.

The family owned their farmland in Florida, a strong indication of their wealth and class.[254] The Flowers also had an agricultural schedule, an indication that their farm provided a significant amount of revenue for the family. Agricultural schedules accompanied federal census records for farm owners detailing his or her name, race, tenure, acreage, value of farm and improvements, protect acreage, its quantity and value, and number and value of livestock.[255] Unfortunately, Congress ordered the destruction of the 1900 and 1910 agricultural schedules leaving only the 1850, 1860, 1870, and 1880 agricultural schedules available for researchers. Before their destruction, the United States Department of Agriculture collected statistical data on each state's agricultural schedules. In Duval County, 303 "Negro and other nonwhite" people owned land. Furthermore, 14,721 "Negro and other nonwhite" individuals operated farms out of a total of 50,016 farmers in Florida with 7,298 owning his or her land.[256] Florida's cash crops included the following: corn, sweet potatoes and yams, cotton, peanuts, hay, and oats.[257] The Flowers potentially harvested these crops or other plants. Even without these documents, the Flowers' land ownership symbolized an act of bravery particularly in the state of Florida due to racial tension in the region.

During Reconstruction, Florida represented a haven for Black Americans. African Methodist Episcopal Church Reverend John R. Scott remarked, "I wish that the great mass of my own race, now struggling for a living in the cold regions of the North and West could be told of this land of promise. Here they may secure beautiful and happy

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[254] 1910 U.S. Census, Duval County, Florida, population schedule, Election Precinct 27, Sheet #6A, dwelling 418, family 422, N.J.P Flowers; digital image, Ancestry.com; date accessed January 4, 2017, Ancestry.com.

[255] U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Statistics of Agriculture", http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/usda/AgCensusImages/1900/05/01/1835/33398096v5ch1.pdf, 285.

[256] Ibid, 286.

[257] Ibid, 292.

homes, and the means for educating their children."[258] Born enslaved, Rachel's father possessed no power in his choice of residence; however, he chose to return to Florida after the Civil War for reasons unknown today. As for Rachel's maternal side, Scott's remarks perhaps influenced the Sawyers' decision to migrate from Virginia to Florida. During the late eighteenth century, Black Floridians, specifically pastors, strongly encouraged residents to own land and acquire an education, two symbolic acts of autonomy and a dismissal of plantation labor.[259] By 1900, the state documented nearly seven thousand black landowners.[260] White opposition greeted this accomplishment with anger and rage. Government officials felt black landownership tarnished the state's image and discouraged wealthy white migrants.[261] They wanted Black Floridians to remain powerless and landless, a goal they accomplished through the Ku Klux Klan and lynching.[262] Between 1882 and 1930, Florida had the highest lynching rate in the United States.[263] Black Floridians experienced racial terrorism for simply organizing unions, registering to vote, owning land, and failing to accept the *status quo*.[264] The Flowers migrated from Florida in the early 1910s and these incidents of racial violence in Florida most likely factored into their decision.

Rachel's parents divorced between 1910 to 1912.[265] The stress from racial tension in the area perhaps fueled their decision as well as Harry's absence, due to traveling for employment; however, there was also a near thirty-year age gap between Harry Flowers

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[258] Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed,* 19-20.
[259] Ibid.
[260] Loren Schweninger, "A Vanishing Breed: Black Farm Owners in the South, 1651-1982", *Agricultural History* 63 (1989): 58.
[261] Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed,* 20.
[262] Ibid, 61.
[263] Ibid.
[264] Ibid, 63.
[265] "Hilda Flowers: A Biography", Schomburg Center, *Geraldine Wilson Papers*

(b. 1846) and Nancy Sawyer (b. 1873). Following this divorce, Harry and his eight children migrated North in 1913.[266] Nancy continued to reside in Florida and by 1930 migrated to Philadelphia with her second husband, Henry Sams, and their son.[267] The Flowers travelled along with millions of other southern Blacks to the North during the Great Migration. Southern Blacks fled racial violence and discrimination in the South seeking greater economic opportunities and social conditions up North.

Sociologist Stewart E. Tolnay considered the Great Migration to be one of "the most significant demographic events in U.S. history."[268] This migration reflected Black Americans' quest and desire for freedom, jobs, and social justice in a region assumed to be their Promised Land.[269] Migration essentially became a "weapon of the weak." Black families refused to tolerate the violent and oppressive ways of the South and made the decision to move North whether sending a family member up one at a time or selling their possessions for funds to travel together. *The Crisis*, a magazine founded by Du Bois in 1910 and the official magazine of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, NAACP, founded a year earlier in 1909, supported the Great Migration as "the only effective protest [weapon] that the Negroes *en* masse can make against lynching and disfranchisement."[270] Northern industries boomed during the First World War (1914-1918) which coincided with the Flowers' migration as Harry soon found

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[266] Nancy remained in Jacksonville, Florida and moved North during the 1930s with her husband Henry Sams and their son, Henry Sams Jr. See, "Hilda Flowers: A Biography", Schomburg Center, *Geraldine Wilson Papers*

[267] 1930 U.S. Census, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, population schedule, Philadelphia, p. 10, dwelling 70, family 90, Henry Sams; digital image, Ancestry.com; date accessed January 4, 2017, Ancestry.com.

[268] Stewart E. Tolnay, "The African American "Great Migration" and Beyond." *Annual Review of Sociology* 29 (2003): 209.

[269] Joe William Trotter Jr.. "The Great Migration." *OAH Magazine of History* 17, no. 1 (2002): 31.

[270] Ibid.

employment as a carpenter.[271] The North indeed became a Promised Land because migrating Blacks saw no Jim Crow, no lynching, and no discrimination; therefore, it seemed to be a place of racial harmony. Southern Black migrants thus sought large metropolitan areas such as Chicago, Detroit, New York, and Philadelphia—the focus of many studies on the Great Migration and their pursuit of opportunity.

Unlike most Black migrants, the Flowers embarked on this journey before its climax. Outside of southern racial terror, boll-weevil infestations, droughts, and floods destroyed crops. Black farmers and farmhands experienced huge economic loss. But during this time, the Flowers received two supplemental income streams during this time—Harry's Civil War pension and profits from his carpentry work.[272] Historians also noted Florida's boll weevil infestation between 1915 to 1916 and 1923 to 1925, but this was years after the Flowers' exit from the state.[273] During the early twentieth century, approximately 40,000 Blacks left northern Florida which included cities such as Jacksonville.[274] Due to its function as a major railroad transportation center, Black Floridians left Jacksonville in significant numbers, specifically the city lost 6,000 Black residents at the beginning of the Great Migration.[275] Black Floridians continued to emigrate with the majority settling in New York, New Jersey, Illinois, and Pennsylvania.[276] Overall, racial terrorism and economic hardships fueled the Black

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[271] Milton C. Sernett, *Bound for the Promised Land: African American Religion and the Great* Migration, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 46.

[272] "United States Civil War and Later Pension Index, 1861-1917", database, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:NH4T-WNB : 24 March 2016), Harry F. Flowers, 1908.

[273] Ibid, 52.

[274] Jerrell H. Shofner, "Florida and the Black Migration", *The Florida Historical Quarterly,* Vol. 57, No. 3 (1979): 267.

[275] Ibid.

[276] Ibid, 271.

migration to the Promised Land and factored into Harry Flowers' decision to move his children.

Black migrants moved to Northern urban areas such as Chicago, Philadelphia, New York City, and Detroit. Unlike the vast majority of Black migrants, the Flowers moved to the small rural town of Brandtsville, Pennsylvania as opposed to the state's larger cities of Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Harrisburg. Harry secured employment as a carpenter in the local area.[277] No records exist suggesting that the decision to settle in a small town was because of relatives in the region; however, due to the limitations of African American genealogy and Harry's antebellum enslavement recovering his genealogy has been difficult. Perhaps with his Civil War pension, Harry thought smaller non-urban communities held more economic opportunities as oppose to larger cities. Also at seventy years of age, he needed a community that addressed the needs of his children and he accomplished at least one of his objectives—to move them out of the South. But why settle in Brandstville?

Brandstville was an unincorporated community within Monroe Township, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania. Located in the state's south central region, this township historically lacked racial diversity, however, the county had a unique history of slavery, antislavery activism, and served as a stop on the Underground Railroad.[278] Nearby Harrisburg, the state's capital, also stood as the region's center of abolitionism. From the pulpit of the Harrisburg's Wesley Union AME Zion Church, the Flowers' future church home, Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison preached on the

[277] Ancestry.com. *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

[278] David G. Smith, *On the Edge of Freedom: The Fugitive Slave Issue in South Central Pennsylvania*, (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2014), 14.

importance of antislavery and honored the city's antislavery activism.[279] Within Cumberland County, emancipated Blacks remained in the region and built a community which aided fugitive slaves travelling toward freedom. Despite the region's history, the Flowers had no known ties to Cumberland County, Pennsylvania.

The region's vast and diverse history never transcended to its population. In every federal census from 1860 to 2010, Monroe Township was predominately white averaging ninety percent white residents. In the 1920 Federal Census, the Flowers were one of two non-white families out of 361 families who lived in Monroe Township.[280] The Flowers worshipped in Harrisburg at Wesley AME Zion Church and the Flowers children attended local public schools.[281] Rachel Flowers attended Boiling Spring High School.[282] In September 1916, she enrolled at Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home. Rachel was Messiah Bible School's first Black student. Although two other Black educational institutions existed in Philadelphia including Cheyney Training Schools for Teachers, today known as Cheyney University. Pennsylvania's second historically black institution, Lincoln University, would not accept women until the 1950s. Rachel chose Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home, a white religious institution associated with the Brethren in Christ Church, or the Brethren. The Brethren Church, rooted in the Anabaptist, Pietism, and Wesleyan traditions of the Christian Church, founded Messiah Bible School in 1909 to fulfill the church's desire to offer denominational education. Only miles from her home in Brandtsville, her father's old age

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[279] John Weldon Scott and Eric Ledell Smith, *African Americans of Harrisburg*, (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2005), 15-16.

[280] 1920 U.S. census, Monroe Township, Pennsylvania, population schedule, Cumberland County, p. 3 (stamped), dwelling 30, family 33, Harry Flowers; digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed January 1, 2016, http://ancestry.com.

[281] "Obituary of Harry Flowers," *Harrisburg Telegraph*, July 28, 1928.

[282] Rachel Flowers' Transcript, Messiah College Archives, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania.

and her siblings' youth greatly factored into her decision to attend Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training home.

The Brethren in Christ Church emerged in 1778 in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania under the denominational direction of German Mennonites and Anabaptists. By 1788, several members left the region due to economic reasons. The church spread from Lancaster to other parts of Central Pennsylvania, Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, Kansas, Oklahoma, and California during the 1790s.[283] The foundation of the Brethren Church's doctrine largely rested on its belief in a distinct separation from the world, the ungodly kingdom, and their devotion to the kingdom of Christ. The Brethren initially saw education as the way of the world leading young Christians away from the church.[284] By 1881, the General Conference, the denomination's body, ruled that members were not allowed to attend public schools unless he or she obtained permission from church officials.[285]

By the 1890s, the Brethren Church slowly changed their views on public education as more schools developed across the nation and as parents pressured the Brethren in Christ Church to move out of religious isolation. Members made this shift a reality as they simultaneously remained Brethrens further pressing the Brethren Church to allow more members to broaden their training and education. Furthermore, as the Brethren Church sent missionaries to western Africa and India, Brethren officials realized the importance of an education and sought to develop a school to train young people for the Brethren's missionary work.[286] In 1897, the General Conference developed plans for

[283] E. Morris Sider, *Messiah College: A History*, (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Press, 1894), 10.
[284] Ibid.
[285] Ibid.
[286] Ibid, 13.

Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home fulfilling the Brethren's mission of establishing a religious institution of higher education.[287]

Bishop Samuel Rodgers, S.R., Smith, the institution's first president, developed the school's curriculum and rooted it in both Biblical and "secular" subjects.[288] The General Conference elected the Incorporating Board to assist Smith in developing the Brethren's collegiate school. This Board stressed the importance of courses in foreign language skills, math, education, and business, all subjects needed for mission field. The incorporation of such secular subjects such as philosophy, science, and non-religious history, also allowed the new school to recruit non-Brethren in Christ students. For Incorporating Board member Charles Baker, welcoming students from other religious backgrounds was essential for the institution's growth and future survival in the future. The Incorporating Board's other responsibilities included managing the school's finances, securing buildings and teachers, and most importantly admitting students. Many Board members argued for a centralized location of the school because church membership was generally located in the Midwest and West. After considerable deliberation, the Board decided to start the school in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Smith's hometown.[289] Messiah Bible School's founding mission was:

> To educate men and women for home and foreign mission or evangelistic work; for the dissemination of a knowledge of the bible [sic] and Christian spiritual training, according to the faith and discipline of the Brethren in Christ Church; and to give men and women an opportunity of preparing themselves in secular studies for future occupations, especially for religious work.[290]

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[287] Sider, *Messiah College*, 26.

[288] These secular subjects included arithmetic, grammar, language, history, vocal music, and science. See Sider's *Messiah College: A History* page 29.

[289] Ibid, 33.

[290] Ibid.

For Brethren students, the school pushed for missionary and evangelical work. For non-Brethren students, like Rachel, the school provided them with the preparatory skills required in their field of study. The Incorporating Board met for two days in Buffalo, New York in 1907 to finalize details concerning Messiah Bible School. At this meeting, the board wrote the institution's foundational document. This document included a vital statement which perhaps never allowed race to affect Rachel's admission. Section five of stated:

> Applicants for admittance to the school may be admitted irrespective of race, color, sex, creed or faith, who believe in the deity of Jesus Christ under the following conditions:
> (A) Who are not members of secret or oath-bond societies excepting they promise to release or relinquish their affiliation with the same.
> (B) Who do not make use of profane or vulgar language and who are not addicted to the use of intoxicants in any form, opium products, narcotics, or the use of tobacco in any form, excepting they for themselves or their parents or guardians for them will sign a pledge to relinquish the use of or abstain from all these as long as they are members of the school.[291]

As for faculty members, they had to be in "good standing, of unquestionable moral character, sound in faith and in the established doctrine and tenets of the church."[292] In 1909, the school opened its doors at Bishop S.R. Smith's home to eight local Pennsylvanian students in Harrisburg.[293] Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home opened as a junior college, an institution which offered students "not wishing to spend four years on the college level to an opportunity to take a broad program…and yet proceed later to a degree program if they wished."[294] By 1910, enrollment had increased to nearly forty students and the college needed facilities that would accommodate the

[291] Brethren in Christ Church, "Minutes of the Incorporating Board of the Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home as authorized by General Conference of The Brethren in Christ under Article 25 etc.". Buffalo, NY, June 18-20, 1907, 14.
[292] E. Morris Sider, *Messiah College*, 35.
[293] Ibid, 40.
[294] E. Morris Sider, *Messiah College*, 62.

institution's current and future growth. Most students came from central Pennsylvania with a few travelling from Canada to attend the school. With an expanding enrollment, Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home moved ten miles southwest of Harrisburg to Grantham, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania in 1911.[295]

At Messiah Bible School's rededication ceremony in Grantham, pastor and board member J.R. Zook stated, "This school stands for the intellectual, moral and spiritual education and training of our sons and daughters…this institution stands for all Bible truths and doctrines, as well as a thoroughness in the sciences and arts. It shall educate mind and soul."[296] From the school's beginning, administrators embraced a liberal arts education. Rachel was not the first student of color to attend the institution. In 1911, President Smith funded the education of four Armenian students, Meshach Krikorian, Samuel Krikorian, Jacob Agop Ekmekjian, and Hrant Athansian, who fled Christian persecution in Turkey. These men remained at the school until 1913, three years before Rachel's admission.[297] Rachel studied the Commercial Course track—"constructed to compare favorably with that of the best commercial colleges."[298] This track's course description read:

> In the complete commercial course we are prepared to give a thorough training in business fundamentals. In the bookkeeping department the student is taught the theory of accounts, banking, office routine, and general business practice and is made competent to open, conduct, and close in either single or double entry according to scientific principles and established usage, the books of any kind of business.[299]

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[295] Ibid, 50.

[296] "The Dedicatory Sermon of the Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home," *Evangelical Visitor,* January 22, 1922, 10.

[297] Seventh Annual Catalogue of Messiah Bible School and Training Home, 1916-1917, (Grantham, PA: Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home, 1916), 2.

[298] E. Morris Sider, *Messiah College*, 60.

[299] Eight Annual Catalogue of Messiah Bible School and Training Home, 1917-1918, (Grantham, PA: Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home, 1916), 14.

Rachel also took courses in Latin, Bible, Biology, Sight Singing, Spelling, Physical Culture, Chorus, and English.[300] Her peers where not only from the local south central Pennsylvania region, but also Ohio, California, Kansas, Michigan, Illinois, and Ontario, Canada. Although Rachel was the school's first Black student, this monumental act garnered little attention from the school's administration.

No document speaks to Rachel's experience or points to administrators raising questions concerning her enrollment and presence on campus. Neither President Smith nor the Board of Trustee's addressed her enrollment in journals or meetings. Still, this research is at the mercy of primary sources and what the Board chose to write in their minutes. Again, the lack of discussion about Rachel's enrollment perhaps indicates the college's lack of viewing the event as significant, yet in the same year of her enrollment, 1916, the college faced multiple issues. First, the institution witnessed the unexpected death of its president, S.R. Smith before the fall term. The *Evangelical Visitor,* the Brethren in Christ's church journal, the school reported, "It is with sadness that the school work is opened for the season by virtue of the sudden death of president Bish. S.R. Smith."[301] The report continued, "He was the dominating factor in shaping the policies of the school and we trust that the principles he upheld along conservative lines will be maintained in the future."[302] With Smith's passing, the school had lost one of its founders and its first president. This same report revealed another issue the institution faced low

[300] Rachel Flowers' Student Records, Messiah College Archives, Grantham, Pennsylvania.
[301] "School Notes", *Evangelical Visitor,* Grantham, Pennsylvania, October 2, 1916.
[302] Ibid.

FIGURE FOUR: Rachel Flowers' Class Photo at Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home [between 1916-1918]. (Courtesy of the Messiah College Archives)

enrollment. During the 1916-17 school year, enrollment plummeted, tuition increased, and the college drowned in debt.[303] Perhaps the institution recognized or briefly discussed Rachel's enrollment; however, the Board had other more pressing matters to address that superseded the public debate about race.

Rachel participated in various class pictures which depicted her as a studious person and a beloved classmate. She chose not to adopt the traditional Brethren/Mennonite bonnet her female peers chose to wear; therefore, neither Rachel nor her family were associated with the Brethren Church. Rachel, nevertheless, joined several student clubs including the school's literary society, which taught students public speaking skills, and the women's choir.[304] Although she participated in these organizations and appeared to have a good college experience, Rachel never returned after she graduated, although she lived a few miles from the school, and she never spoke

[303] Sider, *Messiah College,* 71.

[304] Eighth Annual Catalogue 1917-1918, Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home, Grantham, Cumberland County, PA.

of her time at Messiah Bible School. Despite Rachel's disconnection from the school, Rachel's youngest brother, Vincent Allen Flowers, became the first Black student to attend Messiah Academy, the Messiah's high school. More than a decade passed before Messiah Bible School enrolled a second Black student, Martha Bosley, in 1931. Messiah College historian Paul W. Nisly wrote of their collective experience, "Little has yet been discovered about the Messiah campus experiences of these early "pioneers.""[305] This is because little documentation exists in the Messiah College archives. Only recently, in 2009, Messiah College learned of these Black pioneers through the efforts of former Director of Multicultural Programs, Hierald Osorto. He called this an amazing discovery given Rachel's acceptance and admission eight years following the college's creation.

After graduating from Messiah Bible School in 1918, Rachel returned home to care for her father and young siblings.[306] Prior to 1920, much of the primary sources that tell Rachel's life story come from federal census records and academic records from Messiah College. Beyond 1920, a new primary source emerged—newspaper articles from the Black-owned press. Rachel found herself in several newspapers, predominately the *Philadelphia Tribune* and the *Baltimore Afro-American*. She also appeared in the *Chicago Defender*, the newspaper that largely influenced the Great Migration, and periodically Rachel appeared in the *Patriot News*, a local mainstream Harrisburg newspaper.[307] The Black press stood as a cornerstone in the Black community

[305] Paul W. Nisly, *Shared Faith. Bold Vision. Enduring Promise: The Maturing Years of Messiah College*, (Grantham, PA: Messiah College Press, 2010), 30.

[306] 1920 U.S. census, Monroe Township, Pennsylvania, population schedule, Cumberland County, p. 3 (stamped), dwelling 30, family 33, Harry Flowers; digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed January 1, 2016, http://ancestry.com.

[307] Ethan Michaeli, "Bound for the Promised Land", *The Atlantic*, January 11,, 2016.

FIGURE FIVE: Various photos of Rachel Flowers at Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home [between 1916 to 1918], Courtesy of Messiah College Archives

in the Black community since its emergence in the early nineteenth century. Vernon Jarrett, stated in *The Black Press: Soldiers Without Swords,* a documentary by director and producer Stanley Nelson,

> We didn't exist in the other papers. We were neither born, we didn't get married, we didn't die, we didn't fight in any wars; we never participated in anything of a scientific achievement…But in the Black Press, the Negro press, we did get married. They showed us our babies being born. They showed us graduating. They showed our PhDs.[308]

In a world before cable and internet, the Black press, the first form of Black media, informed, presented, protected, and defended the Black community. Black newspapers also embodied Black cultural values and emphasized racial pride and Black solidarity.[309]

Black newspapers also held a historical relationship to Black protest movements.[310] Historian Martin E. Dann stated, "During the first six decades of its existence, the black press established itself as an indispensable part of the developing black community." He continued, "The black press was the focal point of every controversy and every concern of black people representing as it did the strengths and re-inforcements [sic] which united the black community."[311] Black newspapers called for the abolition of slavery, they called for the Great Migration of southerners North, and pushed for an end to segregation, Jim Crow laws, and other forms of racial inequality throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Nelson correctly entitled his documentary "The Black Press: Soldiers Without Swords" for despite the absence of physical weapons, Black newspapers stood as a powerful force within the Black community. Flowers utilized Black newspapers, specifically *The Philadelphia Tribune*,

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[308] " The Film Transcript", accessed January 18, 2017, http://www.pbs.org/blackpress/film/

[309] V.P. Franklin, *Black Self-Determination*, 178.

[310] Charlotte G. O'Kelly, "Black Newspapers and the Black Protest Movement: Their Historical Relationship, 1827-1945." *Phylon (1960-)* 43, no. 1 (1982): 1.

[311] Ibid, 5.

as a platform to speak out against racial injustices in the Philadelphia public school system. Essentially, the *Tribune* became Flowers' weapon as she wrote articles to dismiss either the actions of the city's Board of Education or Black community leaders who supported school segregation and the limitations placed on Black teachers.

The *Philadelphia Tribune* stood as the city's most important Black newspaper since its creation in 1884.[312] For *Tribune* founder Christopher James Perry, Sr. the newspaper served as "a staunch advocate for the rights of the Negro."[313] "The *Tribune* is a paper of the people and for the people," a supporter wrote, "It is the organ of no clique or class. As its purpose is to lead the masses to appreciate their best interests and to suggest the best means for attaining deserved ends."[314] It published Black news and events while simultaneously providing the community with a space to speak about issues they faced not only in the city, but in the nation.[315] This newspaper also serviced the mass of new migrants and provided families with information on adjusting to the city with such information as places to live, job announcements, as well as relatives' locations.

As Philadelphia's Black population increased from 62,613 in 1900 to 134,224 in 1920, racial violence also increased in the city. The *Philadelphia Tribune* reported on these incidents and assisted with promoting local boycotts and working with Black organizations in the city to inform its readers. From 1912 to 1941, the *Tribune* provide "thorough coverage of the social, religious, political, and economic news of the

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[312] V.P. Franklin, "In Pursuit of Freedom: The Educational Activities of Black Social Organizations in Philadelphia, 1900-1930," in *New Perspectives on Black Educational History*, ed. Vincent P Franklin and James D. Anderson, (Boston, MA: G.K. Hall and Company, 1978), 113.

[313] V.P. Franklin, "Voice of the Black Community:" The Philadelphia Tribune, 1912-1941." *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 51, no. 4 (1984): 261.

[314] Ibid, 262-3.

[315] V.P. Franklin, *The Education of Black Philadelphia*, xviii.

Philadelphia and neighboring black communities."[316] This newspaper published nearly every detail of Rachel's life from her activism, sickness, and even NAACP meetings she failed to attend.[317] The *Tribune's* coverage of Rachel's life spanned from 1922 to 1947 and 1970 to 1979. As Vernon Jarrett stated in *Black Press: Soldiers Without Swords*, the Black pressed filled a void mainstream media failed to address—Black American achievements of Black Americans, their organizations, and the daily issues which affected them daily.

In 1922, Rachel moved to Sudlersville, Maryland, located in the state's northeastern region, where she taught in the public schools.[318] Although Messiah Bible School offered a teaching track, Rachel never studied education, however, education was one of her life's passions. Around 1927, she permanently relocated to the City of Brotherly Love for unknown reasons. The *Tribune* reported Rachel's church membership at Wesley AME Zion Church and her participation in the church's Christian Endeavor Society.[319] The *Tribune* and the *Patriot News* recorded her frequent visits to the family's country home for a weekend or weeklong visit. On November 3, 1927, the *Tribune* noted, "Miss Rachel H. Flowers was suddenly called to her home at Harrisburg to attend her father who is ill." Nearly a year later, Harry died at his home in Brandtsville on July 7, 1928.[320] His funeral took place at the Flowers' home church, Wesley AME Church (Harrisburg). From her father, Rachel inherited his Civil War pension and their family's

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[316] [316] V.P. Franklin, "Voice of the Black Community:" The Philadelphia Tribune, 1912-1941.", 270.

[317] "Other 12", The *Baltimore Afro-American,* December 15, 1934.

[318] "Personal Notes," *Patriot News* (Harrisburg, PA), September 14, 1922.

[319] "Wesley Christian Endeavor Society Gives a Social", *Philadelphia Tribune,* November 3, 1927.

[320] "Obituary of Harry F. Flowers", *Harrisburg Telegraph,* July 14, 1928.

home.[321] She remained in Philadelphia and used the Brandtsville house as a vacation home and entertainment space particularly for Black school teachers. Published in 1928, the article "Entertains Teachers at Country Home" read:

> Miss Rachel H. Flowers entertained on Saturday afternoon some of Harrisburg's most prominent school teachers at her beautiful country home, "Greenview Dwelling" at Boiling Springs, Pa., where she is spending the summer. The inclement weather upset plans for a lawn party, hence the afternoon was spent indoors.
> A large bouquet of roses formed the centerpiece in the old fashioned dining room, and large vases of peonies roses and iris artistically placed in the living room [sic], soon made the guests forget the unfavorable weather. The afternoon was very pleasantly spent in "500" and dancing. A delicious repast was served.[322]

Rachel's social events brought Black educators together from New Jersey, western Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York, and even the country of Bermuda. In October 1932, she hosted a Halloween party for Bernice Joell and Ida Tucker of Bermuda. Tucker's eldest sister, Adele Tucker, founded the Bermuda Union of Teachers (BUT) in 1919 to address the grievances of Black teachers including unequal pay, overcrowded schools, and segregation.[323] Throughout the North, Black teachers shared the same grievances.

These events stood as two examples showcasing Rachel's social status and influence within the community of Black teachers in Harrisburg and Philadelphia. In 1929, the *Tribune* even covered a trip Rachel and her younger siblings, Hilda and Vincent, took with musician Louise King Motely through the Pocono Mountains, Niagara Falls, Toronto, Canada, and the Bear Mountains in New York.[324] The article went on to

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[321] "United States Veterans Administration Pension Payment Cards, 1907-1933," database with images, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:K6C3-RLP : 12 December 2014), Rachel H Flowers in entry for Harry F Flowers, 1907-1933; citing NARA microfilm publication M850 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.); FHL microfilm 1,634,784.

[322] "Entertains Teachers at Country Home", *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 12, 1928.

[323] "A Brief Synopsis on the History of the Bermuda Union of Teachers", last modified January 2017, http://www.but.bm/about-us/history.html

[324] "Return From Motor Trip," *Philadelphia Tribune*, September 19, 1929.

state, “Miss Rachel Flowers also visited friends and relatives in Harrisburg and Mechanicsburg and spent some time at their country home, “Greenview Dwellings”, Boiling Springs, Pa.”[325] All articles appeared under the newspaper’s “Social Notes” column; either Rachel or one of her acquaintances submitted these articles to the *Tribune.* Her events featured esteemed Black violinists and pianists attended by prominent leaders of the Black middle class. Rachel rented a home in Philadelphia and owned a home outside of Harrisburg. Her father had moved with eight children North while most families moved North in small numbers overtime, he also ensured each of his children received an education. Compared to other Black Americans, the Flowers enjoyed the privileges that came with being members of the Black middle class—access to quality public and private education, vacations, and a high quality social life.

The Black middle class emerged toward the end of the twentieth century.[326] In less than a century, this class grew from a small group of free Blacks to a “sizable stratum of the Black population” because of industrialization, Black urbanization, greater skilled and semi-skilled work opportunities, educational opportunities, and business entrepreneurship.[327] For sociologist Elijah Anderson, any Black person with a superior status in the Black community “were strongly encouraged to embrace the idea of leadership of the black community.”[328] Therefore, any individual among the Black middle class had an expectation to advance their race and create conditions for the Black lower class to elevate themselves.[329] Still, the Black middle class had limited powers in

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[325] Ibid.

[326] E. Frazier Franklin, *Black Bourgeoisie*, (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1957), 29.

[327] Thomas J. Durant and Joyce S. Louden. "The Black Middle Class in America: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives." *Phylon (1960-)* 47, no. 4 (1986): 254.

[328] Ibid.

[329] Ibid.

their community and continued to face racial discrimination. Sociologist E. Franklin Frazier further elaborated in *Black Bourgeoisie* that the Black bourgeoisie, or the Black middle class, "wields no political power as a class in American society" or "exercise any significant power within the Negro community as an employer of labor".[330] "Its power within the Negro community," Franklin continued, "stems from the fact that middle-class Negroes hold strategic positions in segregated institutions and create and propagate the ideologies current in the Negro community."[331] Members of the Black middle class held these "strategic positions" within the Black church, social and civil rights organizations, and Black educational institutions. Rachel served as her church's Osiris Club, or women's club, president, presided over many social clubs including the Business and Women's Professional Club and Las Buenas Amigas, and she received a private education from Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home.

Despite her lavish lifestyle, Rachel worked as a domestic cook for Nancy K. Chandler, neighbor of Philadelphia mayor, Harry A. Mackey during the 1930s.[332] Due to limited teaching opportunities for Black Philadelphians, Rachel probably worked as a cook to provide for herself; however, Rachel had enough money to keep her family's home in Brandtsville.[333] She resided with her youngest sister, Hilda, in a boarding house on North Frazier Street in West Philadelphia. The Flowers sisters continued to attend Wesley AME Zion Church in Philadelphia where Rachel lectured on the vast history of

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[330] E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie,* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1957), 86.

[331] Ibid.

[332] 1930 U.S. census, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, population schedule, Philadelphia, p. 32 (stamped), dwelling 4B, family 141B, Nancy K. Chandler; digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed January 1, 2016, http://ancestry.com.

[333] 1930 U.S. census, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, population schedule, Philadelphia, p. 31 (stamped), dwelling 223, family 286, Rodman Smith; digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed January 1, 2016, http://ancestry.com.

Christianity, served as a choir director, and even portrayed Naomi in an Easter play.[334] She involved herself in the community socially, religiously, and educationally.

By 1930, Pennsylvania-born Black Americans comprised 30 percent of the city's black population while southern-born migrants constituted the majority.[335] The same Jim Crow laws and racial violence southern Black migrants fled from welcomed them in their new Promised Land. Many white Philadelphians viewed the rush of Black migrants as threatening toward their jobs, homes, and educational institutions. In 1927, Du Bois exclaimed, "[Philadelphia is] the best place to discuss race relations because there is more race prejudice here than in any other city in the United States."[336] For Rachel, Du Bois' words rang true in regards to the city's public school system as well as the educational systems in neighboring counties and states. In Philadelphia, Black teachers only taught in the city's eleven Black schools and Black students learned in segregated and dilapidated institutions. Their education was separate and unequal.

Historically, education, once denied to enslaved Black people, held great importance to this population as a means of liberation and social advancement.[337] Rachel's grandfather, Reverend J.J. Sawyer, understood the educational need in the Black community post-emancipation. From 1866 to 1870, he developed and taught in Black schools throughout the state of Virginia. Rachel's own father ensured his daughters and sons received an education and Rachel's first employment was in the public-school

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[334] "The "Easter Promise" Given at Wesley", *The Philadelphia Tribune*, April 27, 1933.

[335] Frederic Miller, "The Black Migration to Philadelphia: A 1924 Profile," in *African Americans in Pennsylvania: Shifting Historical Perspectives*, ed. Joe William Trotter Jr. and Eric Ledell Smith (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State Press, 1997), 289.

[336] James Wolfinger, *Philadelphia Divided: Race & Politics in the City of Brotherly Love*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 11.

[337] V.P. Franklin, "In Pursuit of Freedom: The Educational Activities of Black Social Organizations in Philadelphia, 1900-1930," in *New Perspectives on Black Educational History*, ed. V.P. Franklin and James D. Anderson (Boston, MA: G.K. Hall and Company, 1978), 114.

system of Sudlersville, Maryland. No documents pointed to the development of Rachel's interest in Black education in Philadelphia; however, her interest potentially arose due to her family's educational advocacy. With such activism in her family, Rachel refused to turn a blind eye to the educational injustices occurring in her new adopted home of Philadelphia. Rachel also associated with several Black educators in the city and Northeastern region. In these shared spaces, she learned of the woes of Black education in the Jim Crow North.

Pennsylvania became the first state to abolish slavery in 1780.[338] This abolition act called for gradual emancipation where "all children born to slaves in the state were to become freed at the age of twenty-eight years of age, and all slaves not registered with the state government by 1 November 1780 were to be free."[339] By 1800, Philadelphia only reported 85 enslaved people and nearly 7,000 freed Black Philadelphians. Despite the presence of slavery in the state, no laws existed prohibiting educating enslaved or freed Black Philadelphians, yet their education only took place in separate and private institutions as early as 1740.[340] The Pennsylvania Abolition Society (PAS), which lobbied for the Act of Gradual Manumission of 1780, reorganized to include a Committee for the Improvement of the Condition of the Free Negroes in 1790 which encompassed a subcommittee on Black education.[341] This subcommittee, later known as the Board of Education, oversaw the provision of Black schools in Philadelphia providing financial assistance to schools operated by Black leaders in the state and opened schools for free

[338] Richard S. Newman, "The Pennsylvania Abolition Society: Restoring a Group to Glory." *Pennsylvania Legacies* 5, no. 2 (2005): 7.
[339] V.P. Franklin, *Black Education in Philadelphia*, 5.
[340] Ibid, 29.
[341] Newman, "The Pennsylvania Abolition Society: Restoring a Group to Glory", 7.

Black Philadelphians between 1790 and 1826.[342] For example, the Free African Society of Philadelphia, founded by abolitionist and the first Black Episcopal Church minister Absalom Jones, founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Richard Allen, and many other prominent local Black leaders, operated schools in the city during the late 1790s and early 1800s funded by PAS.[343] Allen's Bethel AME Church also operated day and Sunday schools for the Black community without funding from PAS. Enrollment in private schools by Black Philadelphians and Black churches dropped as segregated Black public schools opened in the 1820s.

In 1790, Philadelphia had a Black population of 2,489. By 1820, this population reached beyond ten thousand due to fugitive enslaved men and women escaping to the city.[344] Legislative acts passed by the Pennsylvania General Assembly set the foundation for Black public schooling. After schools opened for poor whites in 1818, the Pennsylvania Abolition Society (PATS) and the local Black community lobbied for public schools for Black children in the city. In April 1822, the city announced that "it is expedient that a school or schools be established for the free instruction of indigent coloured people."[345] On September 6, 1822, the Mary Street School opened to 199 Black students.[346] By 1850, eight "colored public schools" existed in Philadelphia and the schools experienced issues of overcrowding and lack of public funding. Another major issue arose—only white teachers received assignments to all-Black schools. These issues led to a decline in Black public school enrollment as Black parents boycotted to schools

[342] V.P. Franklin, *The Education of Black Philadelphia*, 30.
[343] Ibid, 31.
[344] Ibid, 8.
[345] Ibid, 32.
[346] Ibid.

and demanded Black teachers. The Institute for Colored Youth, an industrial school for Black students founded in 1838, moved to Philadelphia to offer a teacher-training program to promote Black teacher training of Black teachers, yet their efforts proved fruitless as discriminatory practices from the school board prohibited the hiring of the school's graduates. By the twentieth century, Black teachers were slowly gaining the right to teach within Black public schools in Philadelphia.

From 1906 to 1914, Superintendent Martin G. Brumbaugh took charge of the Philadelphia public school system and the "problem of the colored child." For Brumbaugh, Philadelphia "sends a larger group of colored children to the public schools than any other city in the country." Surprisingly, only 2,335 of the 7,559 Black children in elementary school attended the nine separate Black schools in the city.[347] Other children attended these predominately Black schools due to the schools' proximity to their homes. Yet Brumbaugh supported separate schools which "has given the colored child a better opportunity to move at his own rate" and "it has enabled the Board of Education to give employment to a group of deserving members of the colored race, who by industry and capacity have won their certificates to teach in the public schools of the city."[348] He continued with the following statement:

> Here a really difficult situation presents itself. The fact is that when the percentage of colored children reaches thirty or more the other children begin gradually to withdraw from the school. This fact, coupled with the additional fact that there are a number of qualified colored teachers in the city who are not at the present time in the employment of the Board of Education, leads me to suggest that wherever possible separate schools should be inaugurated for the colored children…[349]

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[347] Ibid, 37.
[348] Ibid.
[349] Ibid.

Under Brumbaugh's leadership, a mixed school shifted to a Black school after the percentage of Black students in the school reached around 95 percent. White teachers transferred to "whiter" schools and the top eight Black teachers on the "colored eligibility list", created for Black teachers who hoped to gain a teaching position, moved to these new Black schools.[350] Segregated spaces also affirmed intelligent testing Brumbaugh had sociologist Howard W. Odum conduct on Black students from 1910 to 1911. Over 150,000 students enrolled in the city's schools; 8,192 or 5.3 percent were Black children.[351] Odum determined from a comparison of white and Black students' ages, writing, reading, and math skills, and attendance that "from the study of these ages of white and Negro children in the grades it will be seen that there is a high percentage of retardation among Negro children."[352] "According to the teachers," Odum continued, "Negro children find most difficulty in arithmetic and studies that require compound concentration and prolonged application."[353] Odum concluded that segregated institutions served the best interest of Black children. With this study and Brumbaugh's actions, the Board solidified and increased school segregation in the Philadelphia.

In 1920, over 16,000 Black children filled Philadelphia's public schools, more than a fifty percent increase from the 8,192 Black students in the public school system ten years prior.[354] This was largely due to the Great Migration. By 1925, 24,286 Black children populated Philadelphia's schools. During this same period, Philadelphia's Board of Education documented the Black student to teacher ratio as 40:1. No data existed

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[350] Ibid, 4.

[351] Howard W. Odum, "Negro Children in the Public Schools of Philadelphia." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 49 (1913): 186

[352] Ibid, 190.

[353] Ibid, 194.

[354] V.P. Franklin, *Black Education in Philadelphia*, 50.

concerning the number of Black school teachers during this time. Outside of overcrowding issues, school buildings serving Black students were first constructed in 1866. These schools received little or no repairs by 1920. Daniel Brooks, Philadelphia Black school teacher, described these schools' conditions as "old, frame buildings, gas-lighted with coal stoves in many rooms, and out-door water closets."[355]

Black parents shared Brook's sentiment about the physical conditions of their children's schools. After a community meeting with Superintendent Brumbaugh, the *Philadelphia Tribune* reported, "The general public ought to know that the Superintendent, aided by a few sly colored men, is determined to make the colored people of our city endure the objectionable [segregated] system." For Black community leaders and parents who continued to protest deteriorating school structures in addition to separate and unequal schools, the board shifted the blame from themselves to the Black community claiming that "colored citizens requested them", a jab at previous protests concerning employing Black teachers, the quality of education provided by non-Black instructor, and the overall treatment of Black students in mixed schools.[356] *Tribune* editors concluded, "The public schools teach in a most effective manner what children shall think. They train white children to believe themselves superior to colored people. They instill in the minds of colored children that they are different—inferior…It does its job remarkably well."[357]

This was the Philadelphia Rachel migrated to during the late 1920s. As a former educator, peer of Black teachers across the North, and member of the Black community,

[355] Ibid, 49.
[356] Ibid.
[357] Ibid.

Rachel refused to stand idle. She utilized her voice through articles she published within the *Philadelphia Tribune* and her leadership within a grand network of Black social and civil rights organizations, such as the city's chapter of the Study of Negro Life and History, the Philadelphia Heath Council, and the Civic League, from the late 1920s to the early 1950s. The *Tribune, Baltimore Afro-American*, and the *Chicago Defender* published a total of eighty-four articles about Rachel's participation in social and civil rights events in addition to her passion for golf across the city of Philadelphia. Rachel published three of these articles herself under the editorial column of the *Tribune* concerning the Philadelphia public school system's educational injustices especially its embrace and use of segregation.

Philadelphia's Black community and Black Americans across the nation constantly debated whether segregated schools benefited or hindered Black children. On September 24, 1931, local Philadelphian Jas [sp?] A. Newby supported segregated schools as well as the Black teachers placed in solely Black schools. He argued, "Don't you think that the best interest of the Negro children is served under Negro teachers? Do you think any white person is as anxious to see the Negro advance as a Negro teacher?"[358] Newby closed, "Yes, where we have a hundred and twenty and a hundred and fifty graduating high school in Philadelphia we would have a thousand or fifteen hundred if the Negro children were taught by Negro teachers."[359] His argument called for a continuation of segregation in Philadelphia. A month later the *Tribune* published Rachel's two column response entitled, "A System That Breeds Prejudice". She spoke

[358] Jas Newby, "On Negro Teachers," *The Philadelphia Tribune,* September 24, 1931.
[359] Ibid.

not only against Newby's statements, but against the city's Board of Education and their acceptance of segregated schools. She wrote:

> The old proverb, "Strike while the iron is hot," is as full of truth today as in the days of old. It is quite obvious that the seed of prejudice was sown by the Board of Education when Negroes were appointed to teach in schools comprised only of Negro children. The acceptance of these positions was the acceptance of segregated schools…Undoubtedly, the Board also awaited [sic] until this pill was well digested and since there was no noticeable reaction, a second and worse attempt is made to dupe the public into the belief that the Negro teacher's limitation is the sixth grade...
> The theory, "the best interest of the Negro children is served under the Negro teacher," (quoting Jas A. Newby in a recent issue in this column) is all the "bunk" and only tends toward greater discrimination. On the contrary, the best interest of the American children is served under the efficient teacher, irrespective of race or color. The Negro teacher will then be given the proper place. The competent Negro will be appointed to teach, not only in colored schools, but in mixed, junior and senior high schools and colleges in Philadelphia and elsewhere.
> The poisonous venom of prejudice is largely practiced in schools. Hence if we will oust segregation in the school system, segregation as a whole is doomed. However, the conclusions show with unmistakable clearness, when the minds of youth are instilled with the idea that the government of this country exists for the protection and preservation of its people—the things to which we are so bitterly opposed—segregated schools, segregated movies and segregated politics, will dissolve, as it were, into utter oblivion.[360]

Although, Rachel sought segregation's end primarily in the schools, she also called for desegregation of other public spaces. Complete integration was her end goal in addition to the reversal of a 1931 decision to limit the employment of Black teachers to elementary schools.[361] This decision blocked Black teachers from their "proper place" in the school—the opportunity to teach in integrated primary and secondary educational institutions. For the *Tribune,* which supported desegregated school spaces, separate educational spaces injured the minds of both white and Black children "restricting the development of an entire group of your teaching force with your [the Board of Education]

[360] Ibid.
[361] V.P. Franklin, *Black Education in Philadelphia*, 143.

policy of discrimination."[362] Equal education for the *Tribune* and pro-desegregation supporters like Rachel meant equal resources for both Black and white students, integration, and the placement of qualified teachers across the city's public schools irrespective of race.

From 1931 to 1935, the Educational Equality League, a Philadelphian-based organization which focused on the educational needs of the Black community, protested the school's board decision to limit Black teachers. [363] John Francis Williams, an attorney and member of the League, argued this prohibition of Black teachers in secondary schools "is working a hardship and is discouraging some of our group from going to college."[364] Rachel's relationship with the Educational Equality League remains unknown. Throughout the year, Rachel continued to meet and travel with local schoolteachers as well as New Jersey teachers. By 1932, Black educational activists in the city faced another pressing issue, racism not only in the schools, but in their students' history books. Floyd Logan, founder of the Educational Equality League, led this battle.[365]

In 1932, Logan wrote a series of articles to the *Tribune* concerning the injustices within Black schools. Logan's first article, "The Letter Which Started the Action" to *Philadelphia* Board of Education Superintendent William Rowen, stated:

> Your attention is hereby directed to the high school text, "Problems of American Democracy." Its chapter on the American Race Problem which deals with the Negro race, is in most part derogatory. In fact it seems strange that the Board of Education adopted the text without first requiring the authors to revise the chapter in question.

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[362] The Philadelphia Tribune Company, "An Open Letter to the Philadelphia Board of Education," *Philadelphia Tribune*, September 24, 1931.

[363] V.P. Franklin, *Black Education in Philadelphia*, 144.

[364] Ibid, 144.

[365] V.P. Franklin, *Black Education in Philadelphia*, 119.

> For instance, the statement tha [sic] he [sic] Negro's ignorance and superstition are proverbial, and that his uncleanliness exacts a terrible toll, is extremely misleading. It leads one to think that such is true of the entire race. And a further statement that the Negro in the South is legally kept from voting, not because of race, but by reason of illiteracy, is not confirmed by any actual survey of that condition in the southern part of the country.
> It is the dissemination of such propaganda as is contained in 'Problems of American Democracy' that has not only poisoned the minds of many white people against us, but in addition thereto has brought aboun[sic] misunderstanding of the Negro and a consequent maltreatment of him in every department of American social and economic life.[366]

Logan's proposed two simple solutions—one, revise to *Problems of American Democracy* or two, remove the textbook from the schools. Although the board never read his letter, Logan pressed on and soon they heard Logan and the Educational Equality League's demand through pressure from the *Philadelphia Tribune* and the city's Black community.[367] Rachel commended Logan's actions in a short article to the *Tribune*. "It is certainly illuminating and conspicuously refreshing to know that we have a man who is unafraid to denounce the Board of Education for the use of a textbook in the Philadelphia high schools," she wrote and continued, "Mr. Floyd L. Logan cannot be complimented too highly for his stand in the matter."[368] In response to their protest, Superintendent Broome announced a special meeting to review in response to Logan's protest. Surprisingly, Broome formed the special review committee comprised of Black educators from Cheyney State Normal School and principals in local schools.[369] The Educational Equality League's fight, spearheaded by Logan, began on January 14, 1932, and by January 28th the school board suspended use of the book.[370]

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[366] Floyd Logan, "The Letter Which Started Action," *Philadelphia Tribune*, January 14, 1932.
[367] "Won't Tolerate Such A Book, Says Broome," *Philadelphia Tribune*, January 14, 1932.
[368] "Commends Logan for Fight," *Philadelphia Tribune,* January 14, 1932.
[369] "Can't Ignore Protest," *Philadelphia Tribune*, January 21, 1932.
[370] "To Remove Text Book From Schools," *Philadelphia Tribune*, January 28, 1932.

Due to the League's success in removing *Problems of American Society* from the city's public school curriculum, the organization set forth a series of objectives to improve Black education. These objectives included studying all textbooks in local schools for racial biases, increasing the number of Blacks on the Board of Education, improving the relations with Black working-class parents and the schools, and advocating on the behalf of the Black teacher.[371] By the 1930s, Jim Crow segregation persisted in nurturing dilapidated buildings, decreased funding for Black schools, and overall a lower quality education for Black students in comparison to white students. Black students read from old, passed down textbooks from white students. Black schools lacked simple supplies including a blackboard, chalk, and enough desks for each student.

Years before Brown v. Board of the Education, Black leaders and organizations had demanded desegregation in Philadelphia thus transforming the city into a battleground for educational civil rights as the Berwyn School Case unfolded in nearby Chester County. In Chester County, Black parents, with assistance from the League and NAACP, fought to desegregate the county's schools. In 1933 President of the Easttown-Tredyffrin District of Chester County school board, Norman J. Greene Jr., announced the opening of a new $250,000 white elementary school.[372] Black children in both districts attended a crowded one room schoolhouse with no projections of new institutions.[373] The opening of a new white school infuriated the district's Black community and the community turned to their local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to pursue a legal case against the school board. Local Black business

[371] "Burch Insists Books Based On Actual Facts," *Philadelphia Tribune*, April 14, 1932.

[372] "Bryn Mawr Jim Crow School Bd. Head Quits Job: Thought Experiment Will Collapse; Parents to Continue Fight", *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 17, 1933.

[373] V.P. Franklin, *Black Education in Philadelphia*, 139.

owner and parent, Primus Crosby, declared, "I came from a segregated school in the South. I'll not stand for it."[374] Black protesters filed their first official complaint in April 1933 with the support of Logan's Educational Equality League, the NAACP, and local Black Philadelphians.[375] Easttown-Tredyffrin's Board of Education rejected Black parents' complaints which resulted in a two-year boycott of public schools involving 200 Black students.[376]

In response to this boycott, President of Cheyney Leslie Pinckney Hill angered several members of the Black community including Rachel following his anti-desegregation comments. Hill called for protesters to abandon this battle and asked them "not to contend for their rightful places to teach white boys and girls."[377] Hill supported segregation as the best place for Blacks students and for the second time found himself at the center of the segregation debate. Formerly known as the Institute for Colored Youth, Cheyney Training School for Teachers, served the social, economic, and educational needs of Black Philadelphians and neighboring communities.[378] In 1923, the school nearly divided the city's Black community as Hill sought to rename the school Cheyney Training School for Negro Teachers. Several Black leaders in the community questioned his support for "Jim Crow" institutions, but Hill clarified his stance in the April 1923 issue of *The Crisis*. "First, I believe in no kind of enforced segregation, and in no kind of Jim-crowism," Hill wrote, "But I believe completely in the right of any group of Negroes to organize by themselves, alone, or in co-operation with white friends, for any proper

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[374] Ibid.

[375] V.P. Franklin, *The Education of Black Philadelphia*, 139.

[376] David A. Canton, "A "Case Involving Human Rights": The Berywn School Desegregation Struggle, 1932-1934", *Pennsylvania Legacies* 10, no. 2 (2010): 9.

[377] J. Saxon, "Dr. Hill's Philosophy Very Dangerous", *Philadelphia Tribune*, October 5, 1933.

[378] V.P. Franklin, *The Education of Black Philadelphia*, 71.

ends which they themselves may voluntarily choose to further."[379] For Hill, the most dangerous predicament for a Black child was his or her placement in an integrated school. Hill wrote, "Something happens to a colored child in some mixed school, some colored teacher fails of appointment, colored children suffer from inconvenient transfers, some colored student in a normal is denied rights and privileges."[380] Cheyney gathered few supporters with NAACP leaders and even Du Bois denounced his opposition to desegregation. A decade later, Hill's comments again gathered little support among the Black community when *Tribune*'s 'Letter to the Editor' section challenged Hill's views on segregation.

One respondent, who named him/herself "Proud Negro", countered Hill's "stick-to-a-tiveness" stance and shared, "It would be a miracle if any one [sic] with a closed mind should understand why a competent Negro teacher would want to teach in a mixed school or a high school or any other kind of school. We have two or three so-called educated Negros who don't understand it…and think it wise to advise others to do so."[381] On October 26, 1933, the *Tribune* published Rachel's response to Hill entitled, "Negro Desires American Privileges". It read:

> For over two generations the Negro in America was isolated by slavery. As a result his contributions to the national life were nil. The third generation, over a period of seventy years of freedom, has revealed to the world the kind of material of which it is made.
> In 1910 literacy among the Negro population was calculated as 69.5 per cent: the figure for 1930 was 90 per cent. Enrollment in public schools increased from 1,670,000 to 2,289,000 in the same period. Only 1500 Negro students were attending college in 1910. In 1930 there were 22,478. Approximately one-third live in metropolitan areas and one in one hundred are property owners.

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[379] Leslie Pinckney Hill, "The Cheyney Training School for Teachers", *The Crisis* vol. 26 (April 1923): 252.

[380] Ibid, 253.

[381] "A Proud Negro", *Philadelphia Tribune*, October 19, 1933.

> The Negro has excelled in music—having created the only music native to America—the spiritual: literature, poetry, art, and fiction. What profession is there today that the Negro is not capable of filling? He is optimistic, race conscious and desires the rights and privileges granted to other Americans.
> The pronouncement, by Dr. Leslie Pinckney Hill that Negroes lack race pride, that they should stop fighting segregation and segregated schools and that isolation will be the means of the Negro finding power, is impertinent. It borders on radicalism and should be ushered to the limbo of effete and empty fiction. Assuming that one will practice in one's own life what one preaches to others, it is quite obvious that there is a Negro who approves pre-Civil War isolation. Next, please?[382]

For Rachel, history showed the resilience of the Black race, their contributions to the arts, and their desire to hold the same privileges granted to white Americans. Rachel also directly challenged Black pro-segregationist Leslie Pinckney Hill whose philosophy undermined their fight for desegregation. Hill provided no response to Rachel's article.

In the nearby Easttown-Tredyffrin district, one black student graduated from the town as more than two hundred other students continued with their strike.[383] As Black students remained out of school, parents faced significant fines and even arrests throughout 1933. A year later after much economic and social pressure, the Easttown-Tredyffrin school board ordered the desegregation of the district's schools and reinstated all Black students.[384] Despite this victory, the *Tribune* continued to report multiple strikes throughout the latter half of 1934 from not only Black students, but Italian students as well. Although Pennsylvania was the first state to abolish slavery, their fight for desegregation in public schools continued well beyond the mid-1930s.

Rachel utilized the Black press as a powerful weapon to showcase not only her daily life and social engagement, but also her activism. Her writings displayed her stance

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[382] Rachel H. Flowers, "Negro Desires American Privileges," October 26, 1933.
[383] "200 Students on Strike; School Has One Grad", *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 15, 1933.
[384] "Main Line School Strike Is Broken", *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 3, 1934.

against segregation and her cries for Black children to receive a proper education in integrated schools. Her activism also involved the rights of Black teachers and their freedom to teach in all primary and secondary schools. Rachel not only wrote, but stood as a woman of action through her participation in a wide array of athletic, social, and civil rights organizations in Philadelphia. From the late 1920s to the mid-1950s, Rachel participated in the first Black golf clubs of Pennsylvania, the Fairview Golf Club and the Quaker City Golf Club.[385] Black Amateur and professional golfers such as Frank C. Gaskin, who was the first amateur golfer to win the United Golfer Association's (UGA) National Championship, played for both golf clubs and participated in tournaments across the East Coast and Midwest.[386] These clubs assisted with UGA tournaments, a golf association comprised of Black golfers, and pressured the PGA, the Professional Golfers Association, to lift their racial discrimination ban that prohibited Black golfers from participating in their tournaments.[387] In 1941, Rachel led the Philadelphia division's golf team at the UGA Championship in Boston, Massachusetts.[388] Professional boxer and golfer Joe Louis was also competing at this event.

Beyond golf, her membership extended to the "Y" Players and the Association of Business and Professional Women of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), NAACP, the John Brown Memorial Association, the North Philadelphia Voters League, the Philadelphia Branch of the Negro History Association, the Dra-Mu Opera Guild, the Philadelphia branch Association for the Study of Negro Life and

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[385] "Golf Club Fetes Auxiliary Members", *Philadelphia Tribune,* October 27, 1938.

[386] "Frank C. Gaskin, Golfer, Passes", *Philadelphia Tribune,*

[387] Marvin P. Dawkins and Graham C. Kinloch, *African American Golfers During the Jim Crow Era,* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishing, 2000), 58.

[388] "Boston Ready for National Golf Championships: Joe Louis Sends in Entry", *The Chicago Defender,* August 9, 1941.

History, Q.C. Charity Club, the French Club, Las Buenas Amigas, the Osiris Club, the Philadelphia Health Council, and Philadelphia's Civic League. In 1931, the *Tribune* reported that Rachel sang two solos at the annual pilgrimage to the grave of John Brown at Lake Placid, New York.[389]

The John Brown Memorial Association had three objectives: the promotion of a John Brown "cult", the promotion of an annual pilgrimage, and the erection of a John Brown monument.[390] Articles also showed Rachel serving as a choir director at St. Phillips Lutheran Evangelical Church, raising funds for Philadelphia's Black hospital, and performing in theatre productions with the Dra-Mu Opera Guild. Pictures accompanied her articles showing Rachel standing before her home in 1942, selling fundraising tickets to singer Marian Anderson, and participating in social events.

The 1950s marked the decline of Black newspapers. During this time, Rachel's name rarely appeared in the *Tribune*, *Chicago Defender*, or *Baltimore Afro-American*. With the emergence of television as well as *Jet* and *Ebony* magazines, Black people began to receive their news from other platforms; however, mainstream news outlets scarcely covered Black news and if so, not from a Black perspective.[391] As the 1950s Civil Right Movement unfolded throughout the nation, the publication of Black newspapers increased as well as mainstream coverage on Black issues. Mainstream newspapers and news outlets began to heavily recruit Black editors and journalists. As

[389] "Plan Pilgrimage to John Brown's Grave", *Philadelphia Tribune*, April 27, 1937.

[390] John Brown Memorial Association. Letter from The John Brown Memorial Association to W. E. B. Du Bois, March 21, 1925. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries

[391] Robert Fay, "The Press: The Story of the African American Press," *The Crisis*, July 1999, 47.

Black journalists left Black newspapers, their publications declined and this ultimately "devastated the black press".[392]

It took nearly thirty years for Rachel's name to reappear in either the *Tribune* or *Baltimore Afro-American*. Somewhere between 1945 to 1959, Rachel married and took on the surname Ellerbee. In 1945, she sold her family's home to an Edward Miller of Boiling Springs and remained permanently in the Philadelphia area.[393] Despite past news articles concerning her parties or her absences from events, neither Rachel's wedding nor her death made the *Tribune* news—only her continued devotion to Black history organizations in the 1970s. Rachel served as corresponding secretary to the Philadelphia Chapter of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History known today as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH). Founded by historian and "Father of African American history" Carter G. Woodson in 1915, this organization held four major purposes: "to promote historical research, to publish books on Negro life and history, to promote the study of the Negro through clubs and schools, and to bring about harmony between the races."[394] Rachel assisted her chapter in bringing Black history into the classrooms.[395] This not only included assisting teachers with their curriculums, but organizing events and pamphlets for the annual Negro History Week. Their mission was to inform Black students of the achievements and contributions of their ancestors.[396] The *Tribune* praised this organization as the most knowledgeable

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[392] Ibid.
[393] "Home News", *News Comet*, April 13, 1945.
[394] Jacob U. Gordon, *Black Leadership for Social Change*,
[395] "Photo Standalone 5—No Title," *Philadelphia Tribune*, March 13, 1973.
[396] "This Column is Dedicated to Negro History Week," *The Philadelphia Tribune*, January 28, 1961.

organization in the field of Black history in the United States.[397] In December 1979, the *Tribune* published Rachel's last featured article. Rachel received the ASALH's Distinguished Citizen Award alongside Emmy award winning television journalist Malcolm Poindexter Jr., civil rights activists, ministers, and educators at the organizations' 50th anniversary celebration in Philadelphia.[398]

Beyond 1979, no Black newspapers published Rachel's name, nothing existed to reconstruct the latter years of her life. Rachel's educational activism began in Philadelphia where she advocated for desegregation and the proper education of Black children. Her definition of a proper education involved the equal education of Black students within integrated and well-constructed classrooms where their education served as a tool of social advancement. Her activism extended beyond students to Black teachers as they fought for their rightful employment beyond Black schools and beyond the sixth-grade classrooms. Her last documented work involved educating Black children on their Black history through annual Negro History Weeks and year-around programs promoting Black history. Rachel's dedication to Black history and education continued through her niece, Geraldine Wilson, and her work in developing African and Black American-centered educational curriculums for Black children in Mississippi's Head Start schools.

As Rachel vanished from Black newspapers, her memory also faded at Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home, known today as Messiah College. In 2009, former Coordinator of Multicultural Programs at Messiah College, Hierald Osorto, discovered Rachel Flowers photos in the archives and identified her as the first Black

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[397] "Experts Needed to Write Record of Negro Achievement in Textbooks," *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 22, 1965.

[398] "Phila. Branch ASALH Observes 50th Anniv.," *Philadelphia Tribune*, December 7, 1979.

student to attend the institution in 1916. For nearly a century, Rachel received no recognition for her monumental enrollment. Because of Osorto's work in addition to this research which began in 2012, Messiah College honored Rachel at their centennial celebration in 2009. In 2014, jazz composer Roy Mitchell wrote *Rachel Flowers Suite*, a jazz musical documenting Rachel's activism in Philadelphia, and performed by the college's jazz ensemble. Two years later, the Messiah College established the R.H. Flowers scholarship and mentor program for students of color devoted to racial reconciliation as the college continues to navigate conversations of racial and cultural issues affecting the nation today. This was a fitting honor to Rachel Flowers, an educational activist who worked alongside Black leaders in Philadelphia to ensure Black students and Black teachers received the same rights granted to white students and white teachers.

CHAPTER FOUR: WHAT SHALL I TEACH MY CHILDREN WHO ARE BLACK?: GERALDINE LOUISE WILSON AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN MISSISSIPPI

And Black adults will continue to
mourn the children they must inevitably lose
in a racist society;
Suffer with those young ones who fall under
the weight of societal injustice:
Begin anew the battle for a "good education"
when their young begin to go to school;
Anguish in fear and great pride with those
Valient ones who resist;
Protect all Black children to the best of
their ability;
Cry with the young when there is
community sorrow;
Punish them when sacred community taboos
Are broken;
Laugh with their children in joy;
Cop a plea for those in trouble;
Rap with them in bedroom, on stoop, porch
and corner;
And defend their Black children's right to
be themselves.

Geraldine Wilson, "Our Children's Children Live Forever", undated.

Geraldine Louise Wilson, early childhood education specialist, began anew her family's battle for a "good education" for Black children. At the Symposium on Multicultural Approaches to Non-Sexist Early Childhood Education, Geraldine presented on curriculum development and planning to educators at New York University. She began with the Ghanaian proverb, "A single hand cannot lift the full calabash to the

head." For Geraldine, this proverb transcended to the cooperation required in education particularly the retraining of teachers who worked with diverse populations. She challenged her audience stating, "It takes many hands to change perceptions and former training of staff in early childhood programs, as well as the curriculum. We can, if we will, choose cooperation as our collective mode of work."[399] Geraldine travelled across the nation educating others on how to cater early childhood curricula to the needs of Black children. With this, she continued her family's commitment to Black education.

Geraldine's genealogy displayed a family of educators and activists since 1866. Her great-grandfather, Joseph Sawyer, developed Black schools in Virginia during Reconstruction and later assisted in the development of an AME Church school in Florida. Her grandfather, Harry Flowers, former slave and sergeant in the 21st United States Colored Troop, ensured his children received an education. During the 1960s, Geraldine's mother, Hilda Flowers Wilson, worked as the secretary of Philadelphia Friends of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), a civil rights organization supporting the activism of SNCC volunteers in the South, and field consultant for Friends of Children of Mississippi (FCM), a grassroots movement birthed in 1965 from the Civil Rights Movement in support of Project Head Start.[400] Additionally, her aunt Rachel—Black educator, socialite, and educational activist in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania during the 1930s and 1940s—was the first Black student to enroll at Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home in 1916 and protested for

[399] Presentation at the Symposium on Multicultural Approaches to Non-Sexist Early Childhood Education, 1977, box 2, folder 22, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[400] Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Wilson (Hilda C.) Papers' Description, accessed April 9, 2017, http://opac2.mdah.state.ms.us/tougaloomanuscripts/t033.html.

equal education in Philadelphia. From her family, Geraldine gained their weapons of resilience and educational activism and utilized them in her work in Black early childhood education throughout the late twentieth century.

Over a decade earlier in 1955, Geraldine graduated from Temple University with a degree in early childhood education. From that moment on, Geraldine spent her lifetime in the classrooms both teaching students and leading teacher workshops for instructions working with children of color. In 1955, her teaching career started in Philadelphia's public schools where she also participated in civil rights organizations such as the Philadelphia Friends of SNCC, which provided funding and supplies to SNCC activists of Mississippi. As the Civil Rights Movement progressed throughout the nation, particularly in Mississippi, Geraldine travelled South alongside thousands of other volunteers to register Black voters in the state. She primarily worked with Freedom Schools, educational institutions that connected children and teenagers to the civil rights activities in 1964. As the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project concluded in August 1964, Geraldine would stay in the state to continue her work with SNCC at Tougaloo College, a local Black educational institution.

The next year, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty launched Project Head Start, a preschool program for low-income communities.[401] As civil rights activists implemented Head Start in Mississippi, Geraldine's responsibilities involved developing Black awareness and history workshops and providing educational consultation to Mississippi's nearly 200 Head Start Centers. From 1964 until her death in

[401] Jaime Fuller, "The 2nd Most Memorable SOTU: LBJ Declares War on Poverty", *The Washington Post*, January 27, 2014. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2014/01/27/the-2nd-most-memorable-sotu-lbj-declares-war-on-poverty/?utm_term=.1b33946a0d96

1986, Geraldine Wilson served as an educational consultant for the two organizations which supported Mississippi's Project Head Start—the Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM) and the Friends of Children of Mississippi (FCM). Geraldine volunteered with these organizations while simultaneously pursuing her master's and doctorate degrees in Early Childhood Education at New York University (NYU).[402] By the time of her death in 1986, Geraldine had risen to become one of the nation's leading educators on Black early childhood education.

Beyond her work with Head Start, in January 1969 Geraldine also co-founded the first early childhood education program at Tougaloo and Mary Holmes College alongside educator and civil rights activist Mary Emmons. This program provided Head Start teachers a place to obtain a two-year degree.[403] They called the program the Mississippi Institute for Early Childhood Education (MIECE). Tougaloo College's early childhood education program continues today. Despite Geraldine's involvement in curriculum development and educational workshops, teaching was her passion. In 1967, Geraldine recounted in her Master's degree application at NYU:

> I am, though, a teacher; at heart. I love teaching. I had a really nice thing happen to me when I was visiting San Francisco last year. One day I was one of the first of a big crowd to board a bus around 4:00 PM. The bus stop was in a rather well-to-do neighborhood and a big high school was across the street. Two older Black women who appeared to be domestics on their way home, boarded the bus, as well…One of the women reached over the man sitting next to me, touched my shoulder to get my attention. She said in a declarative way, "You a teacher, ain't you?" I smiled and said, "Yes ma'am, I am". She tossed her hand and said to her friend (and everybody else on the bus), "See, I told you, I can tell'em. The ones that are teachers and the ones that like it and the ones that don't. She one of them that LOVE it. See how she grins. I learned all I need to know about teachers in

[402] Geraldine Wilson's Resume, 1974, box 1, folder 1, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[403] Geraldine Wilson's Speech at Tougaloo College, June 1976, box 4, folder "Speech at Tougaloo", Geraldine Wilson Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

> Georgia where I grew up." Don't know how she knew, but it's true. I love teaching. That's my primary interest.[404]

In 1973, as Geraldine continued with her doctoral work, she accepted a position Director of the Regional Training Office position at New York City's Head Start Center where she provided technical assistance and training to Head Start Centers in New York's five boroughs.[405] During this time, she also worked with early childhood programs in upstate New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Indiana, Illinois, South Carolina, California, and of course Mississippi.[406]

Despite her extensive educational work, Geraldine was much more than an educator. She also enjoyed writing short stories and poetry. In fact, a third of the boxes in her archival collections contain her literary productivity. She wrote African folk tales, told family stories, and shared Black history. Her works appeared in *Elan*, *Ebony*, and *Essence* magazines in the 1970s and 1980s.[407] Geraldine was also a member of the National Academy of Poets and the International Women's Writing Guild.[408] Throughout her life, Geraldine maintained a commitment to the Black community educating Black children and used teaching as a mechanism to enhance Black children's self-image and self-esteem.

This chapter focuses on Geraldine's Mississippi Head Start work from 1965 to 1969. It also chronicles her rise as a leading figure in Black early childhood education. The chapter additionally explores civil rights history in regards to the Mississippi

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[404] Geraldine Wilson's Statement of Purpose, 1967, box 2, folder 4, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[405] Geraldine Wilson's Resume, 1974, box 1, folder 1, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[406] Geraldine Wilson's Obituary, 1986, Box 1, Folder 1, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[407] Ibid.

[408] Ibid.

Freedom Summer Project of 1964. Any study of the Civil Rights Movement is essentially a study of what anthropologist James C. Scott referred to as "weapons of the weak", or the oppressed tools of resistance against his or her oppressor. Civil rights activists chose such nonviolent weapons of nonviolent including protests, boycotts, sit-ins, voting registration drives, desegregation of libraries and universities, and educating Black children. The historiography of civil rights and education in Mississippi involves a history of white resistance and protest as Black Mississippians joined by national civil rights organizations and activists who jointly sought racial equality. This biography will not study the success or failures of CDGM, FCM, or Project Head Start, but will focus on Geraldine Wilson's role in these organizations and program. The study enriches the current Freedom Summer historiography as well as work Project Head Start. Through the biography of Geraldine Louise Wilson, a Black Northern-born civil rights activist, who unbeknownst to many scholars played a pivotal role in developing Black early childhood education first in Mississippi and later nationally. Wilson carried her family's tradition of teaching and service beyond the local into the national stage.

In the 1960s, Black Mississippians faced not only racism and lack of educational opportunity, but poverty largely due to the limited economic opportunities beyond sharecropping and domestic work.[409] During this time, advancements in agriculture such as mechanical cotton pickers resulted in the unemployment of many Black sharecroppers and farm workers. In the Mississippi Delta, the northwest region of the state between the Mississippi and Yazoo Rivers, three-fourths of all Delta families' incomes fell below the

[409] John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*, (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 124.

$3,000 poverty line.[410] In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty created greater economic opportunities for Black Mississippians. On January 8[the] in his State of the Union Address, Johnson declared an "unconditional war on poverty in America" with an aim to "not only to relieve the symptom of poverty, but to cure it and, above all, to prevent it."[411] Initially, Johnson's War Against Poverty produced programs such as Medicaid, Medicare, federal work study programs, Job Corps, the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), and a score of other programs designed to alleviate poverty. After OEO director Sargent Shriver learned that children comprised half of the nation's poor and furthermore, six million were under the age of six, he directed educators and officials to focus on a preschool educational program.[412] This program not only prepared children for Kindergarten, but also provided impoverished children with healthy environments, good nutrition, and medical treatment. The result was an eight-week program known as Project Head Start. In August 1965, Johnson announced funding for a year-around Head Start Programs.[413] Civil rights activists used these programs as a platform to continue civil rights efforts including Project Head Start—their form of Freedom schools for Black preschoolers.[414]

The historiography of the Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM) and Project Head Start in Mississippi began shortly after the program's start in 1965. In that

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[410] Ibid, 125.

[411] Jaime Fuller, "The 2nd Most Memorable SOTU: LBJ Declares War on Poverty", *The Washington Post*, January 27, 2014. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2014/01/27/the-2nd-most-memorable-sotu-lbj-declares-war-on-poverty/?utm_term=.ce2a663221e1

[412] Crystal R. Sanders. "More Than Cookies and Crayons: Head Start and African American Empowerment in Mississippi, 1965–1968." *The Journal of African American History* 100, no. 4 (2015): 587.

[413] Ibid.

[414] Frank Stricker, *Why America Lost the War on Poverty—And How to Win It*, (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 2011), 70.

same year, educator Donald W. Robinson published a short article in the journal of *Phi Delta Kappa*, a professional teachers' organization, entitled "Head Starts in Mississippi".[415] Published only three months after the program's beginning, Robinson provided a detailed narrative of the successes and failures of the program. Mississippi's Head Start proved to be the nation's oldest and largest program and Robinson was the first to tell its history. Robinson began with how Project Head Start started within the hands of the CDGM in addition to that organization's history. Robinson concluded his four-page analysis with the organization's success in spite of heavy resistance from white Mississippians.[416] Four years later, in 1969, one of the CDGM's founders, Polly Greenburg, published *The Devil Has Slippery Shoes: A Biased Biography of the Child Development Group of Mississippi*.[417] Greenburg presented CDGM's history and Head Start's successes and failures. Unfortunately, her biased definitely showed not only through the title, but as an employee of the federal Head Start program and founding CDGM member. Nonetheless, she provided the only comprehensive organizational history documenting CDGM's first four years and its work with Black Mississippians.

After Greenberg's 1969 publication, no other comprehensive CDGM history or Head Start in Mississippi appeared. In 1998, journalist and author of Fannie Lou Hamer's biography, Kay Mills, published *Something Better for My Children: The History and People of Project Head Start.*[418]Mills visited a series of Head Start centers in the nation's poorest cities and devoted a short chapter to Mississippi's Head Start program entitled

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[415] Donald W. Robinson, "Head Starts in Mississippi." *The Phi Delta Kappan* 47, no. 2 (1965): 91-95. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20371480.

[416] Ibid, 95.

[417] Polly Greenburg, *The Devil Has Slippery Shoes: A Biased Biography of the Child Development Group of Mississippi*, (London: Collier-Macmillian, Ltd., 1969).

[418] Kay Mills, *Something Better for My Children: The History and People of Project Head Start*, (New York: Dutton, 1998).

"Mississippi: The Fight for Control". Mills' chapter detailed anti-Head Start white opposition. Mills also highlighted the CDGM and FCM (Friends of Children of Mississippi) histories and provided readers with the success of Head Start centers across the state in the late 1990s.[419] However, Mills did not provide a rich program analysis. She defended Head Start and encouraged continued federal support.

In 2004, Kenneth T. Andrews published an extensive and critical study of civil rights in Mississippi in his *Freedom is a Constant Struggle: The Mississippi Civil Rights Movement and Its Legacy*.[420] Andrews also devoted a chapter to what he entitled "The Politics of Poverty" providing context to Project Head Start's development especially emergence out of President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty. Andrews referred to the history of CDGM and Head Start as "an essential point of departure for an analysis of the movement and the War on Poverty in Mississippi, revealing the successes and obstacles faced by movement activists.[421] Additionally Andrews noted the Civil Rights Movement historiography presenting its "depth and breadth" as well as its disproportionate focus on national leaders, organizations, and limiting its key moments to the years 1954 to 1965. Andrews transcended the dominant historiography studying the full consequences of the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi and the important struggles which occurred thereafter.

In 2016, historian Crystal R. Sanders published the first historical scholarship exclusively focusing on CDGM and Mississippi's Head Start Program.[422] Her work not

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[419] Ibid.

[420] Kenneth T. Andrews, *Freedom is a Constant Struggle: The Mississippi Civil Rights Movement and Its Legacy*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

[421] Ibid, 138.

[422] Crystal Sanders, *A Chance for Change: Head Start and Mississippi's Black Freedom Struggle*, (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 2016).

only explored the role of the Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM) in Head Start, but also their employment of 2,000 working-class Black women as Head Start sought worked with the local Black community. Sanders sought to tell the history of an overlooked group in history which involved Head Start's most nationally successful program.[423] According to Sanders, the CDGM tailored Head Start to meet the needs of Black Mississippians and made the program an extension to earlier Mississippi civil rights work.[424] Head Starts in Mississippi provided its children with a radical education. In the eyes of the state government, Head Start was out of local and state white control and in the hands of those "civil rights people."[425] CDGM also employed the Black community. Former sharecroppers became classroom teachers, former domestic workers served as field advisors, and formerly unemployed men and women sat on Head Start committees. Saunders's *A Chance for Change* provided a shift in the Project Head Start narrative with a microscopic examination of its role as a vehicle for Black early childhood education and empowerment in Mississippi.

This study of Geraldine Wilson focuses on her direct involvement with CDGM and FCM from 1965 to 1969. She was an employee for each organization, yet neither a resident of Mississippi nor a member of its working class. She served as one of the few Northern-born Black volunteer and employee. How did her experience differ from other volunteers? How did she connect with Black Mississippians as a Black Philadelphian? How did her role in this Southern-based organization lead to her rise as a prominent early childhood educator? Geraldine Wilson's archival records provide answers to each of

[423] Ibid, 6.
[424] Ibid, 71.

these research questions. Sources utilized in this chapter include Geraldine Wilson's papers located at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City. This nineteen-box unprocessed collection consist of materials documenting her early life, speeches, bibliographies, training and workshop sessions, and her civil rights activism in Mississippi during the 1960s.[426] Most importantly, her papers featured several resumes which detailing her education, employment, teaching, and consultation work from 1955 to 1980.[427] These documents provided great insight into her civil rights work and vast nature of the workshops she developed and presented. In addition to this archival collection, Hilda Wilson's collection within the Civil Rights Collection at the Mississippi State Archives and History Department documented Geraldine's work in the state as well. This chapter also includes digital archival records documenting the history of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the Mississippi including Duke University's Digital SNCC Gateway, the Civil Rights Movement Veterans website, and the Wisconsin's Historical Society's Freedom Summer Digital Collection.

Divided into four sections, this chapter begins with Geraldine's early life and her educational activism as a member of the NAACP and Philadelphia Friends of SNCC from 1955 to 1964.[428] It continues with her migration to Mississippi to volunteer with the 1964 Freedom Summer Project as well as her extended stay in the region to develop the CDGM's and FCM's Head Start curriculum (1965-1966). This next section examines Geraldine Wilson's Black history workshops (1968) and the development of the Mississippi Institute of Black Early Childhood Education in 1969. The final section

[426] Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, NY.
[427] Ibid.
[428] Mississippi Summer Project Application, 1964, box 2, folder "Mississippi", Geraldine Wilson Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

explores Geraldine's educational work beyond Mississippi and her rise as an educational consultant across the nation. This chapter concluded with Geraldine's other interests, mainly her literary work, her prominence in Harlem, and her death in 1986. Geraldine's biography begins in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Although Geraldine's parents announced her younger brother's, Herbert Wilson Jr., birth in the *Philadelphia Tribune,* Geraldine Louise Wilson entered the world unannounced to the Black Philadelphia community in December 1931.[429] Hilda Flowers Wilson, like her eldest sister Rachel Flowers, was a Black Philadelphia socialite. The *Tribune* continually showed the Flowers sisters' quick popularity in Philadelphia, despite their recent move from Brandtsville to Philadelphia in the late 1920s. Hilda Wilson's name appeared frequently in the *Philadelphia Tribune* covering her attendance at social clubs including the Philadelphia Women's Club, the city's Bridge Club, and the Quaker City Golf Club. On December 24, 1930, Hilda's older sister, Gladyce Flowers Stevenson, hosted a formal dinner party. The corresponding *Tribune* article commented, "The black taffeta of Miss Hilda Flowers had a full skirt of snug bodice with a deep "V" décolletage."[430]

After the death of her father in 1928, Hilda moved to Philadelphia joining her sister Rachel at the age of nineteen. Together, they resided in a boarding home on North Frazier Street, located in West Philadelphia.[431] According to the 1930 Federal Census,

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[429] "It's A Boy", *Philadelphia Tribune,* July 16, 1936.

[430] "Other", *Philadelphia Tribune*, December 25, 1930.

[431] "United States Census, 1930," database with images, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHWN-558 : accessed 26 March 2017), Hilda Flowers in household of Rodman Smith, Philadelphia (Districts 0251-0500), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 463, sheet 18A, line 20, family 286, NARA microfilm publication T626 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2002), roll 2121; FHL microfilm 2,341,855.

Hilda had no employment. With her father's pension and her sister's employment, she perhaps found no need to acquire a job or had difficulty obtaining one due to the Great Depression. After three years in the city, the *Baltimore Afro-American* announced Hilda's marriage to Hebert Wilson of Quaker City, Pennsylvania in September 1931,

> Miss Hilda Clifford Flowers, daughter of the late Harry F. Flowers, of Harrisburg and Brandtsville, and Mrs. Alexander H. Sows [*sic*], of Philadelphia, became the bride of Herbert Wilson on Sunday, at the St. Augustine Church in Harrisburg. The Rev. Father Corbin officiated. The marriage was quite simple, with only a few intimate friends and the members of the immediate families in attendance. Miss. Rachel Flowers attended her sister as maid of honor and John Jarvis, of Philadelphia served as best man.[432]

The writer of this article concluded, "The bride is one of the most popular of the younger set, and Mr. Wilson is a clerk in the postal service in the Quaker City."[433] This closing line indicated Hilda's popularity among middle class Black Philadelphia as well as the popularity of the family. Herbert continued to work with the United States Postal Service until his death in 1955 and Hilda worked for the Marine Corps Supply Activity as a sewing machine operator until 1959.[434]

Four months after their marriage, Herbert and Hilda welcomed their first child—Geraldine on December 28, 1931. The couple had two other children as well, Hebert Jr. (1932) and Harry, named after his late grandfather. Geraldine spent her entire childhood and young adulthood in Philadelphia. She attended Philadelphia's High School for Girls graduating in 1951. Philadelphia High School for Girls had many notable alumni including Marian Anderson, famous Black opera-singer, Elaine Brown, first woman leader of the Black Panther Party, Constance Clayton, the first woman and Black

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[432] "Pat to Pansy," *Afro-American Baltimore*, September 26, 1931.
[433] Ibid.
[434] Hilda C. Wilson Paper's Description, date accessed March 30, 2017, http://opac2.mdah.state.ms.us/tougaloomanuscripts/t033.html

Superintendent of Schools in Philadelphia, and civil rights activist C. Delores Tucker. Brown recalled in her autobiography, *A Taster of Power: A Black Woman's Story*, that Philadelphia High School for Girls was "the perfect haven for a perfect girl" and to attend "one either had to have a high I.Q. or pass an entrance test."[435] Studentsof this prestigious institution were among the *créme de la créme*, or the smartest young girls in Philadelphia.[436] In the 1950 Philadelphia High School for Girls' Yearbook, accompanying Geraldine's senior picture was the following words—"amiability, kindness, thoughtfulness, and the heartiest kind of laugh characterizes this member of our class."[437]

In fall 1951, Geraldine began college at Temple University majoring in Elementary Education. Throughout her four years at Temple, she joined several student organizations including Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc., Temple's Modern Dance Club and Concert Group, the University Christian Movement, the Canterbury Club, the Panels of American, and the Early Childhood Education/Elementary Education Club.[438] By her final year at Temple, the university named Geraldine an outstanding senior—a high honor for graduating students who held significant academic achievements and involvement with Temple and the greater Philadelphia community. In May 1955, Geraldine graduated from Temple University and continued her education at the graduate

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[435] Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story*, (New York: First Anchor Books, 1994), 51.

[436] Ibid.

[437] Philadelphia High School for Girls, Milestone, (Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia High School for Girls,1950),http://www.classmates.com/siteui/yearbooks/4182733312?yearbookViewerEnabled=true&swipeEnabled=true (date accessed March 26, 2017), 30.

[438] Temple University, The Templar, (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University, 1954), Temple University Digital Archives, http://digital.library.temple.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p245801coll12/id/70402/rec/33, (Date accessed March 26, 2017), 68.

level.[439] Shortly after graduating, Geraldine quickly gained employment as a schoolteacher working in the public school system. She taught Kindergarten music and remedial classes from September 1955 to June 1959.[440]

In the summer of 1959, Geraldine transitioned into the role of Director of Children's Program with the United Neighborhood Association's House of Industry (UNA). UNA operated as a settlement house and community service organization.[441] Within three years, the UNA promoted Geraldine to the position of House Director, where she supervised community project workers and managed the House of Industry's daily operations of the House of Industry.[442] Her daily responsibilites included bookkeeping, supervision of students and full-time/part-time staff, program planning, recruitment of volunteers, and program assessment.[443] Despite her full-time employment with UNA, Geraldine remained an active member of the Philadelphia community. Geraldine was a member of the Philadelphia Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. and chair of the chapter's Job Opportunities Committee.[444] In January 1962, Wilson's committee hosted a career conference for local middle schoolers in which students networked with Black professionals.[445] Two years later, Geraldine's committee in conjunction with the Pennsylvania State Employment Service sponsored a Job Opportunity Clinic for students at a local Philadelphia high school.[446] Geraldine also

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[439] "4 Graduate from Philly Law Schools", *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 21, 1955.

[440] Geraldine Wilson's Resume, 1974, box 1, folder 1, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[441] Lisa Levenstein, *A Movement Without Marches: African American Women and the Politics in Postwar Philadelphia*, (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 2009). 151.

[442] Walter Lewis Smart, "A Study of the History and Development of United Neighbors Association" (Thesis, Atlanta University, 1956), 27.

[443] Geraldine Wilson's Resume, 1974, box 1, folder 1, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[444] "Lord Fauntleroy at JHS Job Clinic", *Philadelphia Tribune*, February 11, 1964.

[445] "Students at Wanamaker Hear Top-Rate Consultants," *Philadelphia Tribune*, January 23, 1962.

[446] "Lord Fauntleroy at JHS Job Clinic", *Philadelphia Tribune*, February 11, 1964.

volunteered with Teen-Aid Inc., a program conducted under the Philadelphia Juvenile Court which provided "voluntary probation services dedicated to the rehabilitation of adolescent girls."[447]

Geraldine additionally maintained a close relationship to her home church—St. Augustine Church of the Covenant in Philadephia. Raised in the Episcopal faith tradition, she participated in various church events and conferences.[448] Geraldine discussed Black women in the workplace on church-sponsored panels and also participated in fashion shows and bridge parties, a hobby she acquired from her mother, hosted by the church.[449] Outside of her sorority and church affiliation, Geraldine also volunteered with her local NAACP chapter joining their protest against the Chester school desegregation case.[450] Despite the work of Black educational activists throughout the city in the early twentieth century included Geraldine's Aunt Rachel's, Philadelphia's public school system continued to suffer from issues of segregation and racial discrimination against Black teachers, Black students, and parents. Educational activist, Floyd L. Logan, and the Educational Equality League carried on their battle against the Philadelphia Board of Education in the 1950s and 1960s. "As of 1959 Negro teachers were still not desegregated in 135 schools throughout the city," *Tribune* journalist Dorothy Anderson wrote, "There were still 19 all-Negro schools; 73 or more predominately Negro; 55 all-white schools, and approximately 100 predominately white schools."[451] Despite the

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[447] Fred W. Woodson, "Lay Panels in Juvenile Court Proceedings", *American Bar Association Journal* vol. 51 (1965): 1141.

[448] "Rector's Guild Closes with Garden Party", *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 12, 1958.

[449] "Accent on Travel", *Philadelphia Tribune*, February 3, 1959.

[450] Geraldine Wilson's Resume, 1974, box 1, folder 1, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[451] Dorothy Anderson, "Educational Equality League Sparked Desegregation: Negro Teachers Held Down Prior to 1934," *Philadelphia Tribune*, January 1, 1963.

prolonged fight, Logan contended that the work of the Educational Equality League "will continue to be devoted to the total elimination of any forms of separatism along racial grounds in the school system of the city and throughout the state."[452]

In May 1963, the NAACP began picketing a school in the nearby suburb of Chester County.[453] The NAACP in addition to Black parents and community leaders called for desegregation in the Chester County's public school system. By the next year, these protests drew crowds of a thousand people peacefully demonstrating against segregation in the Chester schools.[454] Other peaceful demonstrations resulted in the arrest of nearly 250 Chester County residents and students. In March 1964, demonstrators involved in a sit-in at a downtown intersection faced police violence with one demonstrator suffering a skull fracture.[455] Geraldine referred to these protests and events as the "Chester Case". Although Geraldine went into no detail concerning her role in these protests, she noted her participation in her application for the 1964 Freedom Summer Project.[456]

In the early 1960s, Geraldine also joined the Philadelphia Area Friends of SNCC, where her mother served as an administrative secretary.[457] The Philadelphia branch of SNCC fulfilled a desire of SNCC's national leaders to branch out north.[458] Philadelphia

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[452] Ibid.

[453] Eric Ledell Smith, *The Civil Rights Movement in Pennsylvania*, (Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 2004), 3.

[454] Benjamin Henry, "Morale of Chester Women High; Pickets Jailed in Media Garage", *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 5, 1964.

[455] Jack Henry, "PMC Student Beaten, Unable to Make Sound: Picket, 21, In Hospital With Skull Fracture," *Philadelphia Tribune*, March 31, 1964.

[456] Mississippi Summer Project Application, 1964, box 2, folder "Mississippi", Geraldine Wilson Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[457] Friends of SNCC Group and Key Fund-Raising Contact, October 1964, http://www.crmvet.org/docs/641000_sncc_foslist.pdf

[458] Matthew J. Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 208.

Friends of SNCC first operated through a local Philadelphia settlement house, the Fellowship House, where Temple University students Marjorie Penney and Joyce Barrett sent volunteers, funds, and supplies to SNCC.[459] Hence, Philadelphia Friends of SNCC emerged as well as other "Friends" in the cities of Chicago, New York, and Boston. In 1963, Hilda Wilson, Geraldine's mother, became the administrative secretary of the Philadelphia Chapter of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). In this role, she managed the daily operations of the office, coordinated volunteers and fundraising events, and spoke on behalf of SNCC and their civil rights efforts to groups at colleges and churches.[460] An article later named Hilda as the chairwomen of the Philadelphia Friends of SNCC stating—"She has been active in the civil rights movement since 1961."[461] Like mother, like daughter, Geraldine acquired her family's passion for civil rights.

Philadelphia Friends of SNCC's supported southern civil rights campaigns especially during the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project of 1964.[462] Geraldine assisted in interviewing applicants for the Freedom Summer Project. In May 1964, Geraldine interviewed Eleanora Patterson of Philadelphia. She wrote under "Impressions of Applicant" that Eleanora "shows initiatives, gives no indication that she cannot work within the frame work of the project as it is set up".[463] Geraldine also joined the Freedom Summer Project. Chaplain of Tougaloo College, Reverend Edwin King, wrote on May

[459] Ibid.
[460] Ibid.
[461] "Sociology Club To Present SNCC Representative", *Villanovan*, May 5, 1965.
[462] Countryman, *Up South*, 208.
[463] Interview of Eleanora Paterson, Mississippi Summer Project Application, 1964, box 2, folder "Mississippi", Geraldine Wilson Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

29, 1964, "The 'long hot summer' is about to begin."[464] That following summer, nearly one thousand volunteers, travelled to Mississippi to work with the local Black community and other civil rights activists. The goals of Freedom Summer involved registering Black Mississippian voters and to enroll Black children into Freedom Schools, institutions designed to educate and encourage the participation of Black youth in the movement.[465] By August 4, 1964, four people died, 80 beaten, 1,000 arrested, and 67 Black churches, homes, and business burned or bombed by white Mississippians.[466]

On June 15, 1964, after five years of employment with the United Neighborhood Association (UNA), a settlement house and community service organization, Geraldine submitted her resignation expressing "many thanks to all of you for your expressions of regret...and for your many good wishes for my safety and my work in Mississippi this summer." She concluded this letter with the following statement:

> Many of you have asked about the project and the kinds of things that are needed and what you can do to help.
> 1. Please, read the attached information so that you will be informed about the project, so that you can tell others about it. The more people who know about it and support it the more successful the project will be.
> 2. Money desperately needed. If you would like to help in this way, I will be glad to see that this money gets to the Jackson, Mississippi Office. As you can see by the flier, all kinds of materials are needed. In addition to the materials that are requested, old but wearable clothing is needed also books. A shipment of books and clothing is expected to be sent to Mississippi in the next two or three weeks. I will be happy to receive any books or clothing that you have.
> 3. The Mississippi Summer Project volunteers will be in relative danger as well as the community residents who will be standing at court houses to register. You can help them be [sic] by writing to Mr. Robert Kennedy of the Justice Department and/or President Johnson. Let them know that you are aware of

[464] Ed King and Trent Watts, *Ed King's Mississippi* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), 3.

[465] Ibid.

[466] Doug McAdam, *Freedom Summer*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), book cover.

> the Summer Project and remind them that the Federal Government has the responsibility of providing protection for them.[467]

She ensured that her termination letter informed her former employees about how to support the Freedom Summer Project. Why go South, the region her grandfather and mother fled in 1913? Geraldine revealed her reasons behind joining the Freedom Summer Project in a speech to graduating seniors at Tougaloo College a decade later. "We came for many reasons, eleven and twelve years ago," she spoke, "confident that at least some of us would change the system that had humiliated and degraded us and that had successfully excluded us; our children and parents from the fruits of our labor."[468] She went to help her people.

In the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer application, SNCC required all applicants to list their membership in community or social organizations, their participation in civil rights activities, and a list of "ten contacts who could be helpful in securing your release from jail if you are arrested or who could help publicity about your activities."[469] Geraldine's list of contacts displayed her deep involvement in Philadelphia's civil rights despite the lack of primary sources detailing her work. Civil rights lawyer and President of Philadelphia's NAACP chapter (1963-1967), Cecil Moore, was among the first names Geraldine listed on her application. Upon his election to this position, Moore stated, "We are serving notice that no longer will the plantation system of white men appointing our leaders exist in Philadelphia. We will expect to be consulted on all community issues which affect our people." The next contact Geraldine listed—

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[467] United Neighbors Association Inter-Office Memorandum, box 2, folder "Mississippi", Geraldine Wilson Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[468] Ibid.

[469] Mississippi Summer Project Application, 1964, box 2, folder "Mississippi", Geraldine Wilson Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

Constance E. Clayton—one of Philadelphia's leading Black educators and in 1983 the city's first Black school superintendent.[470] Clayton was also Geraldine's sorority sister and chapter president of Delta Sigma Theta during her time at Temple. Other contacts included, Episcopalian minister and civil rights activist Layton Zimmer, Mitchell Hinton, Reverend Arthur Barnhart of the Department of Social Christian Relations, and Thomas Jenkins.[471]

In June 1964, Geraldine arrived at Western College for Women in Oxford, Ohio for orientation with other Freedom Summer volunteers.[472] Northern white college stood as the strong majority. In fact, Black men and women comprised no more than ten percent of the volunteer group.[473] Historian John Dittmer wrote, "Although part of the justification for the summer project was to use white volunteers to focus national attention on Mississippi, no one wanted the volunteer contingent to be overwhelmingly white."[474] Black students had worked endlessly in the early 1960s in the North and South, yet still distanced themselves from actively participating in Freedom Summer, so why such a low Black turnout? Dittmer pointed to two reasons behind this question. First, Black students constituted fewer than three percent of the nation's undergraduate population and Black students needed to work over the summer to fund their education.[475] This largely motivated their lack of participation in Freedom Summer; however, in 1964 Geraldine graduated nearly a decade earlier and was 33 years old when

[470] Mississippi Summer Project Application, 1964, box 2, folder "Mississippi", Geraldine Wilson Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.
[471] Ibid.
[472] Summer Project Participants, 1964, box 2, folder "Mississippi", Geraldine Wilson Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.
[473] Dittmer, *Local People*, 224.
[474] Ibid.
[475] Ibid, 245.

she participated in the project. Because of her older age, she simply wrote "over 25" when asked her age.[476] Also CORE activists speculated that Northern Black students avoided going South—the place their families escaped from during the Great Migration.[477] For the Black activists who joined Freedom Summer, they played a vital role in the movement with most activists remaining in the state to continue the fight for civil rights through grassroots organizations.

In Ohio, Black and white participants learned basic movement skills including "ways to absorb an attack, how to respond to an arrest, and the words of dozens of freedom songs."[478] As a Freedom School volunteer, Geraldine also studied the educational curriculum taught to children and learned how to interact with her future students.[479] During their week of training, Bob Moses, SNCC activist and key organizer for voter registration campaigns in Mississippi, announced the disappearance of three civil rights workers—James Chaney, Black Mississippian and member of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Mickey Schwerner, CORE staff member, and Andrew Goodman, a white Freedom Summer volunteer.[480] Moses presumed all three men to be dead. The disappearance of these three men provided a sober introduction into the danger associated with their participation activists especially for Northern white participants.[481] Spokesman for the volunteers, Steve Bingham, stated, "We go afraid, yet dedicated,"

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[476] Mississippi Summer Project Application, 1964, box 2, folder "Mississippi", Geraldine Wilson Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[477] Ibid, 245.

[478] William Sturkey and Jon N. Hale, *To Write in the Light of Freedom: The Newspapers of the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Schools*, (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2015), 25.

[479] Ibid.

[480] Ibid, 25.

[481] John R. Rachal. "We'll Never Turn Back: Adult Education and the Struggle for Citizenship in Mississippi's Freedom Summer." *American Educational Research Journal* 35, no. 2 (1998): 169.

capturing the sentiment of many of the volunteers.[482] Geraldine recalled "the palpable fear of traveling the back roads of Mississippi at a time when Civil Rights workers were being beaten or killed" and the "bravery and quiet heroism of the workers and citizens who supported the Movement at great personal risk."[483] Two weeks later, her group arrived by Greyhound in Jackson, Mississippi. One volunteer wrote that it was a strange combination of children headed for summer camp and soldiers going off to war."[484]

For most white Mississippians, particularly state legislators, these civil right activists invaded their state and disrupted the *status quo*. Congressman Thomas G. Abernathy wrote, "Agitators in the civil rights movement, all mature adults, have for months been carefully mapping strategy and tactics for disorder in our State."[485] Governor Paul B. Johnson Jr. assured white Mississippians that their government had the situation under control. *The Klan Ledger*, a Mississippi Ku Klux Klan newsletter, sent the following message that summer:

> We Knights are working day and night to preserve law and order here in Mississippi…We are deadly serious about this business. We have taken no action as yet against the enemies of our State, our Nation and our Civilization, but we are nog going to sit back and permit our rights and the rights of our posterity to be negotiated away by a group composed of "Jewish" priests, bluegum black savages and mongrelized money-worshippers. Take heed, Atheists and Mongrels, we will not travel your path to a Leninist hell, but we will buy *You* a ticket to the Eternal if you insist.[486]

Freedom Summer volunteers faced violent arrest, daily harassment, the destruction of offices and their hosts' homes, and even death from members of the Ku Klux Klan and

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[482] Ibid.

[483] Obituary of Geraldine Wilson, 1986, box 1, folder Papers, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[484] Dittmer, *Local People*, 246.

[485] Ibid.

[486] John R. Rachel. ""The Long, Hot Summer": The Mississippi Response to Freedom Summer, 1964." *The Journal of Negro History* 84, no. 4 (1999): 317

the Mississippi police. Within the first week of Freedom Summer, a 19-year-old student from John Hopkins University found himself arrested vagrancy. He soon returned home concluding that "my life within the community was in jeopardy".[487] Despite living in constant fear and danger, only five volunteers from the second group of 275 volunteers returned home.[488] Remaining volunteers of the Freedom Summer Project joined arms with local activists such as Fannie Lou Hamer, Lawrence Guyot, Amzie Moore, and Victoria Gray Adams, to pressure the state to recognize Black Mississippians voting rights, access to equal education, and other civil liberties. The Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi began years prior to Freedom Summer through the heroism of these Black Mississippians and other local activists. Black Mississippi leaders provided an entryway for outside organizations and activists to connect with local communities. Through their guidance and leadership, the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi and the 1964 Freedom Summer gathered statewide support from students and elders as well as organizations such as the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), the umbrella organization for major civil rights organizations in the South including SNCC, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the NAACP, and CORE, and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP).

The summer of 1964 was a monumental turning point for the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi. Bob Moses called the summer "a searchlight from the rest of the country on Mississippi."[489] Historian John R. Rachel stated that the project intended

[487] John Rachal. "We'll Never Turn Back: Adult Education and the Struggle for Citizenship in Mississippi's Freedom Summer.", 169.

[488] Ibid, 170.

[489] John R. Rachal. ""The Long, Hot Summer": The Mississippi Response to Freedom Summer, 1964", 315.

"to give the movement a jump start while simultaneously bring national attention to the state's dismal civil rights record."[490] Freedom Summer volunteers attempted to register Black voters while others focused on community centers and Freedom Schools, which focused on adult and Black youth education and movement organizing. Despite Geraldine's focus on Freedom Schools, her work in Mississippi began with voter registration in the Mississippi Delta. For any Black Mississippian, attempting to vote was an action that led directly to harassment, the burning of his or her own home, or even death. Seeing a Black person coming to register to vote, the registrar closed its office or force a potential voter to undergo overly difficult literacy test which they automatically failed due to his or her race. Black Mississippians who attempted to vote also found their names in the newspaper, not as an honor but as a requirement of state law to allow anyone to come forward and challenge the applicant's "good character".[491] This public notice allowed white Mississippians to harass Black Mississippians who tried to vote and fire any of their Black employees who names were on the list.

For instance, on June 30th in Vickburg, Mississippi, a Black woman faced white threats for attempting to register to vote. In Hattiesburg, two white men yelled threateningly at voter registration workers, "Things are fine around here; we don't want them to change." On July 6th, the COFO members reported that a white man shot a Black woman twice at a voter rally as she sung "We Shall Overcome". Incidents such as these alongside of scores of others targeted Black Mississippians and white and Black

[490] Ibid.
[491] Ibid, 326.

volunteers. These incidents filled the pages of the Mississippi Summer Project's "Running Summary of Incidents".[492]

As commencement speaker for Tougaloo College's graduating class of 1975, Geraldine recalled the following story while canvassing for Black voters. She stated:

> Before coming to Jackson this time, I spent sometime in the Hill and Delta country of Mississippi. I shared a copy of a mailing from the NAACP Fund that I had received in New York before coming to Mississippi, with a woman who has been a part of the struggle in this state for a long time. It was a copy of the New Mississippi Voter Registration Form. We had been driving earlier in the day and she had pointed out with pride, the shot-gun cabin where the Freedom Democratic Party Chapter in that county had been born. She had pointed out the hugh [sic] old tree under whose limbs, groups of folk sat when the cabin got too full or too hot. "Folk got it together under that tree", she said. I gave her a copy of the new Mississippi Voter Registration Form; a new form with several unconstitutional questions on it. Her forehead furrowed and she said with a troubled sigh as she picked up the telephone to call a friend, "I guess we have to get down under the tree again."[493]

Indeed, many volunteers had to sit under similar trees throughout that summer. They found great difficulty in locating Black Mississippians to register to vote and fearful of the constant harassment and threats made against their lives. Despite the efforts of summer volunteers, voting rights for Black Mississippians remained non-existent until the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. By August 1964, SNCC shifted from voter registration to gathering support for the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP).[494]

The Freedom Summer Project extended beyond voter registration and garnering political participation in the MFDP. Volunteers also taught within Freedom Schools,

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[492] Mississippi Summer Project Running Summary of Incidents, date accessed April 2, 2017, http://www.crmvet.org/docs/64_fs_incidents.pdf

[493] Tougaloo College, 1975, box 2, folder "Tougaloo College", Geraldine Wilson Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[494] R. Edward Nordhaus, "SNCC and the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi, 1963-64: A Time of Change", *The History Teacher*, vol. 17, no. 1 (1983): 100.

which were designed to "empower black Mississippi youths by supplementing their substandard public school educational opportunities with rigorous and culturally relevant instruction."[495] Historian Jon Hale examined Freedom Summer's second mission in *The Freedom Schools: Student Activists in the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement.*[496] Hale noted, "The Freedom School idea started small and was secondary to the voter registration projects that consumed organizers in Mississippi. This civil rights educational project grew in strength because the Freedom Schools organized entrée for thousands of young people into the civil rights movement…students served as both the leaders and foot soldiers at the local level."[497] Despite the *Brown v. Board* decision, overturning school segregation, Mississippi on average spent four times as much on white students than on Black students and students while maintaining segregation.[498] In November 1963, SNCC activist Charles E. Cobb proposed "Houses of Liberty" to solve educational disparities and to bring up a new generation of activists.[499]

Cobb's proposal began, "It is, I think, just about universally recognized that Mississippi education, for black or white, is grossly inadequate in comparison with education around the country. Negro education in Mississippi is the most inadequate and inferior in the state."[500] He demanded COFO organize students "to articulate their own desires, demands, and…to stand up in classrooms around the state, and ask their teachers

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[495] William Sturkey and Jon N. Hale, *To Write in the Light of Freedom*, 3.

[496] Jon N. Hale, *The Freedom Schools: Student Activists in the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 2.

[497] Ibid, 2.

[498] Sturkey and. Hale, *To Write in the Light of Freedom*, 3.

[499] Ibid, 4.

[500] Charlie Cobb, "Prospectus for a Summer Freedom School Program", SAVF-Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) papers (Social Action vertical file, circa 1930-2002; Archives Main Stacks, Mss 577, Box 16, Folder 6), Freedom Summer Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI.

a real question."[501] Initially, Cobb's House of Liberty involved a two-month educational session for high school students to achieve the following:

1. Supplement what they aren't learning around the state;
2. Give them a broad intellectual and academic experience during the summer to bring back to fellow students in the state, and
3. Form the basis for statewide student action, such as school boycotts, based on their increased awareness.[502]

His "Houses of Liberty" essentially became Freedom Schools for Black elementary, middle, and high school students.

Prior to Freedom Summer, in March 1964 the National Council of Churches hosted a meeting to organize the Freedom Schools' curriculum in New York City. Attendees included veteran civil right organizers, educators, and historians.[503] Organizers developed a humanities-based curriculum which taught students American politics, Black history, a history of the civil rights struggle and current events in Mississippi, as well as organizing tactics.[504] Freedom Schools opened formally on July 7, 1964, and by late July, forty-one Freedom Schools educated over 2,000 students with 175 full-time teachers, including Geraldine Wilson.[505] Florence Howe, a teacher in Jackson's Freedom Schools, stated that for teachers, their mission was "not simply to teach, but rather to learn with the students."[506] For Hale, the history of Freedom Schools showed that the Civil Rights Movement "unfolded at all levels of education".[507]

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[501] Mary Aickin Rothschild. "The Volunteers and the Freedom Schools: Education for Social Change in Mississippi." *History of Education Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (1982): 402.

[502] Ibid.

[503] Ibid, 3.

[504] Hale, *The Freedom Schools*, 5.

[505] Ibid, 177.

[506] John Rachal. "We'll Never Turn Back: Adult Education and the Struggle for Citizenship in Mississippi's Freedom Summer.", 170.

[507] Hale, *The Freedom Schools*, 8.

According to Geraldine's resume, she devoted much of her work during the Freedom Summer of 1964 to Freedom Schools.[508] For historian Jon Hale, Freedom Schools "implemented a new form of pedagogy and curriculum geared directly toward educating young people to be [movement] leaders."[509] Hale continued, "By attending a Freedom School students articulated a new sense of citizenship as they and older activists dismantled Jim Crow on the front lines of the civil rights movements through protests, demonstrations, marches, youth newspapers, and canvassing for the MFDP."[510] A Freedom School teacher commented, "If reading levels are not always the highest, the "philosophical" understanding is almost alarming: some of the things that our 11 and 12 year olds will come out with would never be expected from someone that age in the North."[511]

Teachers faced many challenges including racial and class differences. Geraldine identified more with her students given their shared race as oppose to white volunteers. Still, Geraldine had to adapt from the traditional educational methods she utilized in Philadelphia's public school system to a student-centered curriculum—students guided daily instructions and their experiences stood at the center of classroom discussions. Geraldind also had to adjust to the lack of modern educational tools including desks, typewriters, books, chalk, and even paper. One teacher remarked that teaching in a Freedom School was much like "turning upside down the idea of what teaching is."[512] Yet, the students remained the same—ready to learn.

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[508] Resume of Geraldine Louise Wilson, 1974, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center.
[509] Jon N. Hale, *The Freedom Schools*, 109.
[510] Ibid, 110.
[511] Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 304.
[512] Jon N. Hale, *The Freedom Schools: Student Activists in the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement*, 126.

Students began each morning singing Freedom Songs such as "We Shall Overcome" or "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize".[513] Teachers then taught lessons in Black history and the history of the movement in Mississippi. Students studied the histories of slavery and Reconstruction in addition to the speeches of Booker T. Washington and other Black orators. Some students even recalled discussions on Langston Hughes' poetry, Frederick Douglass' writings, Richard Wright's *Black Boy,* and James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time.*[514] Most importantly, students learned how to protest and become effective leaders in the movement by gaining skills in public speaking, organizing, canvassing, protesting, and the importance of nonviolence. In Hattiesburg, teacher Sandra Adickes led students to desegregate a white public library. Following their removal, she immediately took students to integrate a lunch counter.[515] Teachers and students involved themselves in the movement, but student Hymethia Thompson recalled an important lesson, "We just couldn't get out and demonstrate; we had to first of all be taught."[516]

Freedom Schools members and staff also found themselves on the front lines of the movement. In Vicksburg, Mississippi, white men stoned Freedom School students heading to class. In Canton, the police arrested Freedom School volunteers while in route to deliver books. Parents of students faced threats of termination from employees if their children continued to attend these schools. By August, Freedom Schools were vandalized, burned, and bombed.[517] As the summer concluded, Freedom School teachers and students prepared to continue the civil rights struggles into the state's public school.

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[513] Ibid, 112.
[514] Ibid, 115.
[515] "Mississippi Summer Project Running Summary of Incidents", date accessed April 4, 2017, http://www.crmvet.org/docs/64_fs_incidents.pdf
[516] Hale, *The Freedom Schools,* 121.

Freedom School students continued to organize and protest as Northern white and Black volunteers returned home, but Geraldine remained in the state to continue her civil rights work and later joined the efforts of the Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM), an organization which expanded Freedom Schools on the preschool level through Project Head Start in 1965.

From June to August 1964, Geraldine endured a long, tiring summer of civil rights work and as other volunteers slowly returned home, she and eighty other volunteers decided to remain in Mississippi.[518] Over a decade later, she reflected on this decision in a speech to Tougaloo graduates, "For it is in this state, that I have sharpened and honed, deepened and strengthened, the things that I learned as a child in my family and in my community."[519] Still, despite the regional differences between Pennsylvania and Mississippi, Geraldine noted her experience made clear to her "that the results of racism and exploitation are the same in the North as in the South."[520] She continued, "I did not always measure up in the way I wanted to. I had to learn to behave in situations…however, Black people in Mississippi were patient and generous teachers."[521]

From local teachers, Geraldine learned the strength and resilience of rural Black Mississippians. She wrote, "Only the strong could have stood and understood and then been willing to help those of us who came to help."[522] She continued, "Black Mississippi kept watch over, fed and cared for (sometimes with rifles and shotguns) those of us who were children of parents that they in many cases would never meet."[523] For Geraldine,

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[518] Ibid, 112.

[519] Tougaloo Commencement Speech Transcript, 1975, box 4, folder Tougaloo, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[520] Ibid.

[521] Ibid.

[522] Ibid.

[523] Ibid.

protection and resilience connected the Black race allowing them to create in the face of white opposition. She concluded this portion of her speech stating, "I watched us get up from our knees where we'd been resting, praying and singing from the last struggle to be liberated in this land and I heard us say together, "All right y'all, it's time again, we're gonna take this thing in our own hands."[524] And Geraldine continued to do so in the state of Mississippi beyond the summer of 1964.

From August 1964 to June 1965, Geraldine wrote in her resume that she "worked [Mississippi] with public school principals in the State helping students getting re-admitted to school". She also assisted in developing special work-study courses funded by the Field Foundation at Tougaloo College in addition to community organization in Jackson, Mississippi.[525] Geraldine most likely assisted students arrested during protests to gain readmission into public schools. This work extended also to college students. In 1964, Tougaloo College received a gift of $45,500 from the Field Foundation, a progressive philanthropic group founded in 1940 by Chicago banker and publisher of the *Sun*-Times, Marshall Field III. Field endorsed an array of programs designed to promote civil rights, civil liberties, and child welfare. He was a "passionate integrationist" with a deep interest in "matters of race."[526] As a result, the Field Foundation made several grants to civil rights organizations with integrationist objectives.[527] This grant allowed Tougaloo students who participated in civil rights activities earn college credit because of their

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[524] Ibid.

[525] Resume of Geraldine Louise Wilson, 1974, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center.

[526] "History of the Field Foundation of Illinois," date accessed April 23, 2017, http://fieldfoundation.org/about/history/

[527] Daniel Faber and Deborah McCarthy, *Foundations for Social Change: Critical Perspectives on Philanthropy and Popular Movements*, (New York, NY: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005), 42.

dedication.[528] SNCC workers also received a $1,000 Field Foundation scholarship to spend a year at Tougaloo College after a year work of voter registration.[529] This allowed Tougaloo student-activists to engage in civil rights work without affecting their classes or finances. Tougaloo students fueled the movement distinguishing the institution from Mississippi's other Black colleges. The segregationist state legislature controlled the state's public Black colleges—Jackson State, Alcorn, and Mississippi Valley State College. At these institutions, Black administrators had to crack down on protesters or lose their jobs.[530] Founded by the American Missionary Association in 1869, Tougaloo College was under their own authority and students had greater liberties here than at other Black Mississippi colleges.[531]

In the summer of 1965, Geraldine transitioned from working with student-activists to implementing President Lyndon B. Johnson's Project Head Start, a preschool education program developed during his War on Poverty (1964), with civil rights activists in Mississippi.[532] Project Head Start operated under the "maximum feasible participation", which improved low income rural communities by providing parents with jobs and utilizing local businesses to provide Head Start programs resources and food.[533] In February 1965, the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) announced the availability of Head Start funds to public school superintendents encouraging applications for a Head Start grant.[534] Due to segregation and racial discrimination in Mississippi, only white

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[528] Dittmer, *Local People*, 225.

[529] Laura Visser-Maessen, *Robert Parris Moses: A Life in Civil Rights and Leadership at the Grassroots*, (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 2016), 148.

[530] Ditmer, *Local People*, 225.

[531] Ibid.

[532] Jeanne Ellsworth and Lynda J. Ames, *Critical Perspectives on Project Head Start: Envisioning the Hope and Challenge*, (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1998), xii.

[533] Ibid.

[534] Ibid, 591.

superintendents applied; hence, only white superintendents submitted applications requesting grants for racially segregated programs. OEO employee and Head Start program analyst Polly Greenberg travelled to Mississippi to find someone to submit a Head Start application that promoted integration. During her travels, she met Tom Levin, a Jewish psychoanalyst from New York City and 1964 Freedom Summer volunteer.

Before the development of Project Head Start, in 1964 Levin called for a Freedom School for preschoolers, especially for the children of civil rights activists.[535] Levin initially placed this idea on the backburner as other pressing matters arose including the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party's arrival at the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey and growing racial violence across Mississippi. When approached by Greenberg in the spring of 1965, Levin explored the thought of using Head Start as the vehicle for his initial preschool Freedom School alongside several white civil rights activists in New York. Greenburg detailed this meeting in *The Devil Wears Slippery Shoes* stating, "The meeting was intended to explore the possibility of establishing from five to ten day care centers in Mississippi…the centers would be staffed by volunteers from the freedom fighting elements of poor communities, and professional consultants from the Committee of Conscience [a group of nationally recognized social scientists]. They would serve the children of Movement workers and sympathizers."[536] Greenberg needed applicants from across the South to submit applications where staff members had experience working with the poor and engaging the community with the program. Levin and his team needed a grant to fund their preschool education program for low-income rural and urban Black communities in Mississippi.

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[535] Ibid.
[536] Polly Greenberg, *The Devil Has Slippery Shoes*, 3.

On April 3rd, Greenberg and Levin travelled to Mississippi to meet with representatives from twenty lower-income Black communities.[537]

The idea of a Head Start in Mississippi quickly brought the Black community's support. "The people asked careful questions," Greenburg recalled, "They considered. They ended up even more enthusiastic than when they had started, and left the meeting with hastily duplicated sheets for signing up children by name."[538] After attending multiple meetings about the project to write up a grant, these representatives and supporters called themselves the Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM), an organization in what Levin called MACE—Mississippi Action for Community Education. Although CDGM accommodated Head Start to fit the needs of Black children, they opened the program to all poor children, yet white parents rarely enrolled their children.[539] CDGM staff members wrote of one white child who came to a Head Start center in Rose Hill, but his relatives punished him for attending for his grandmother believed Head Start was "for the colored children".[540] She shared the sentiment of most poor white Mississippians. Geraldine Wilson when speaking of CDGM stated, "Head Start came to Mississippi on the lips of people like Tom Levin, Mississippi's first Head Start Director in the summer of 1965; as well as people like Polly Greenberg though the planning for it came on the heels of that tough summer of 1964."[541] The Child

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[537] Ibid, 18.
[538] Ibid, 19.
[539] Harry Morgan, *The Imagination of Early Childhood Education*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1999), 81.
[540] Greta de Jong, *You Can't Eat Freedom: Southerners and Social Justice After the Civil Rights Movement*, (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 2016), 77-78.
[541] Tougaloo Commencement Speech Transcript, 1975, box 4, folder Tougaloo, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM) received a $1.4 million grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity becoming the nation's pioneering program.

Despite Head Start providing poor children a preschool education, medical care, and nutritional meals, this program also became the nation's most controversial due to its location in the state of Mississippi.[542] White state officials abhorred not only the Head Start program, but the entire War on Poverty. In 1964, all of Mississippi's congressional representative voted against the funding of the poverty program. The *Jackson Daily News* compared Head Start with communism in the Soviet Union and China.[543] In fact, to avoid having the state's governor veto the program, the CDGM had to apply for its grant through the guise of Mary Holmes Junior College, a historically Black school operated by the Presbyterian National Board of Missions.[544]

By August 1965, Head Start enrolled 6,000 Black Mississippian children in nearly 200 centers across the state.[545] Although these centers served Black children from the ages three to five, they had no immunity against racial violence. One staff member lamented, "They burned three crosses at three of our centers last night because today is voter registration day in this county."[546] Racists destroyed and even fired shots into Head Start centers. The Klan also burned down centers causing teachers to begin classes outdoors.[547] In Bolivar County, Mississippi, whites shot at the home of CDGM committee chairman, Frank Davis, and beat two of the center's Black employees.[548]

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[542] Dittmer, *Local People*, 369.
[543] Ibid, 370.
[544] Kay Mills, *Something Better for My Children*, 63.
[545] Donald W. Robinson. "Head Starts in Mississippi." *The Phi Delta Kappan* 47, no. 2 (1965): 95.
[546] Ibid, 91.
[547] Ibid.
[548] Crystal R. Sanders. "More Than Cookies and Crayons: Head Start and African American Empowerment in Mississippi, 1965–1968," 602.

White employees threatened Black parents with termination if their children attended these schools.[549] Even Mississippi's Democratic Governor Paul Johnson sought to shut down CDGM's Head Start Centers. That June, he accused Head Start of mismanaging their funding and threatened to withhold the program's remaining funds. Despite these threats, CDGM's first program offered thousands of Black preschool children an education and offered employment for over a thousand local Black women and men.[550]

Geraldine never documented her early work with the CDGM; however, her resume showed that in July 1965 the organization sent her to Albany, Georgia to assist with implementing Head Start in the city.[551] Geraldine elaborated that she "set up and participated in a training session designed to teach skills to community people interested in working with pre-school children; held seminars for teachers in Albany, Georgia 's Head Start Program." She placed all her civil rights work under "Volunteer Service History" which implied Geraldine was unemployed during Head Start's early years.[552] However, as her work with the CDGM progressed, Geraldine's work made her a pivotal figure leading the development of early childhood education curriculum rooted in Black American and African history with training sessions for parents, teachers, and volunteers in 1968.[553]

By March 1965 for unknown reasons, Geraldine left Mississippi and moved to New York City where she began work as Assistant Director for the Neighborhood Children's Center, a Harlem-based Head Start program. [554] Her responsibilities included

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[549] Dittmer, *Local People,* 371.
[550] Ibid, 373.
[551] Resume of Geraldine Louise Wilson, 1974, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center.
[552] Ibid.
[553] Ibid.
[554] Ibid.

teaching five, six, and seven year old groups, developing a health program for students, and serving on the Teacher Education Committee.[555] Geraldine also led racial sensitivity training for Head Start employees at New York University (NYU) each June from 1965 to 1968. From 1966 to 1968, Geraldine moved into a more permanent position with New York City's main Head Start Office as a field advisor. In this position, she managed five Head Start centers, managed the centers' budgets, and trained parents, administrative staff, and teachers.[556] She accomplished this all while pursuing her Masters in Group Dynamics and Human Relations at NYU which she completed in 1968.[557] Geraldine remained busy with New York City's Head Start work, but maintained her ties with CDGM's Head Start Program in Mississippi and later the Friends of the Children of Mississippi (FCM), a dissent organization formed by former members of the CDGM to serve five counties excluded from the organization's jurisdiction.

In September 1966, Geraldine travelled back to Mississippi to assist the CDGM in developing and facilitating workshops in child development. Geraldine's work also focused on developing goals for new centers across the state.[558] As the organization's consultant, in 1967 Geraldine compiled bibliographies of Black children literature for community education and for Head Start teachers and also conducted Head Start board meetings. By 1968, Geraldine transitioned from consultant work with CDGM to the Friends of Children of Mississippi. Both CDGM and FCM operated and supervised Head Start programs; however, the FCM's creation emerged out of a disagreement within the CDGM regarding federal funding. Although in February 1966 CDGM received a second

[555] Ibid.
[556] Ibid.
[557] Ibid.
[558] Resume of Geraldine Louise Wilson, 1974, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center.

grant for $5.6 million, the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) cut off CDGM's additional funding in October until the organization ensured employees limited their participation in political or civil rights activities outside of work hours.[559] Polly Greenberg indicated that OEO shot down "its best Head Start, in order to wrest power from the poor and rapid reformers, and try to get it into the hands of moderate Mississippi whites."[560]

Eventually CDGM complied, while cutting ties with five counties still involved with civil rights activities causing a split between the organization's leaders. A FCM teacher stated, "We're tired of being told what we can do and what we can't do. Poor people have been under other people's program ever since they've been born. We decided we'd run this program on nothing before we'd let somebody else run it for us. We've been brought and sold too many times."[561] Despite their disagreement, they remained "friends" and shared a common goal of helping poor people run their Head Starts; hence, the new organization called themselves Friends of Children of Mississippi.[562] From October 1966 to 1967, FCM managed twenty-nine centers for 1,500 receiving only $0.30 per child a week in Clarke, Greene, Humphreys, Neshoba, Leflore, and Wayne County.[563]

In fall 1967, FCM received a Field Foundation grant to fund its centers and in 1968 FCM also attained its first official OEO grant. Geraldine worked extensively with the FCM's Head Start centers and as her mother, Hilda, migrated permanently to

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[559] Mills, *Something Better for My Children*, 73.
[560] Ibid, 72.
[561] Sanders, *A Chance for Change*, 176.
[562] Mills, *Something Better for My Children*, 73.
[563] Ibid, 74.

Mississippi in 1966 she worked with the organization as a field consultant. By the time Hilda resigned in 1973, she had served as the organization's Associate Director for Preschool Education and Parent Involvement Coordinator. Both women worked with FCM's unique early childhood educational curriculum. By 1968, Geraldine made a name for herself in the Head Start federal office with her work extending beyond New York City and Mississippi to educational consultation services for centers in Michigan, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Wisconsin. Her consultation services involved antiracism training, incorporating Black history and African culture in classrooms, and working with Black students.[564] Because of her diverse experience and involvement in civil rights, FCM tasked Geraldine with creating their Black power and awareness curriculum for not only Head Start teachers, but parents in Mississippi's Black communities.

The CDGM also gave Geraldine a similar task. In 1968, she assisted in the development of a black history and culture booklet for Head Start teachers entitled "What Shall I Tell My Children Who Are Black?"[565] Named after a poem by former director of the Museum of Black History in Chicago, Margaret Burroughs, this booklet featured selected works from Black writers such as Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, Countee Cullen, and James Weldon Johnson. "What Shall I Tell My Children Who Are Black?" also highlighted the biographies of famous Black historical leaders including Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass and told of Black military involvement since the American Revolution beginning with the death of Crispus Attucks, lists of items invented by Black people, and African proverbs.[566] CDGM Director Tom Levin also had the

[564] Resume of Geraldine Louise Wilson, 1974, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center.
[565] "What Shall I Teach My Children Who Are Black?", 1968, box 2, folder Mississippi, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center.
[566] Ibid.

Johnson Publishing Company send monthly issues of *Ebony* magazine to all CDGM center directors.[567] Head Start centers in Mississippi sought to instill self-confidence and the knowledge of Black history into its students at an early age to move them beyond the image of poor Black Mississippians.[568] For historian Crystal Saunders, the development of children's confidence "rather than teaching them the alphabet was the cornerstone of CDGM's program."[569] This was FCM's same cornerstone.

In "The Negro American: His Self-Image and Integration", Dr. Alvin F. Poussaint, Southern Field Director for the Medical Committee for Human Rights in Jackson, Mississippi, stated, "One has only to visit Head Start schools with three to five years olds to see that these children already suffer damaged self-esteem."[570] Poussaint continued, "You hear the children shouting at each other in anger, "Black pig," "Dirty nigger," etc."[571] Educator Jean Lloyd made similar conclusions in her article, "The Self-Image of a Small Black Child". Lloyd found that "a Negro child already has negative feelings of self by the time he is three or four years old, one reason may be that long before he enters school he has been bombarded by all manner of communications media where Black is bad and white is good."[572] Wilson, CDGM, and FCM each combated these images by reinforcing positive Black images and teaching a history absent in Mississippi's public education curricula—Black history. FCM took this a step further by

[567] Crystal R. Sanders. "More Than Cookies and Crayons: Head Start and African American Empowerment in Mississippi, 1965–1968.", 598.

[568] Ibid.

[569] Ibid, 597.

[570] Alvin F. Poussaint, M.D., "The Negro American: His Self-Image and Integration", *Journal of the national Medical Association* 58, no. 6 (1966):420.

[571] Ibid.

[572] Lloyd, Jean. "The Self-Image of A Small Black Child." *The Elementary School Journal* 67, no. 8 (1967): 11.

understanding and building the Black awareness of their own teachers through Black Awareness and Consciousness workshops.

Geraldine designed and conducted each of these workshops from 1968 to 1970. Following these two-day workshops, FCM required participants to write a reflective response. Geraldine wrote that the purpose behind these workshops was to "find ways and means to teach or explain why we are trying to develop "Black awareness" in our children, parents, teachers, and community."[573] Bessie Thurman, FCM Field Consultant and workshop participant in December, wrote, "This workshop was conducted by Miss. Gerry Wilson, who I feel did a successful job in opening our eyes as to what we should be doing in our community."[574] Thurman continued, "I now understand how important it is to start to develop "black" in our young boys and girls." Geraldine opened each session discussing the four basic needs of children, intellectual, social, emotional, and physical, and her fifth addition—cultural.[575] For Geraldine, this fifth basic need of children spoke to the formation of identity in non-white groups residing in America. For Geraldine, "they usually relate to life as it is lived in the majority culture" with necessities often denied to them.[576]

Reports from participants allowed for Geraldine's workshops to be reconstructed for this paper. Geraldine continued the workshop asking participants to complete sentences such as, the basic needs of children are, to me the word Negro means, being

[573] Simmons' Report from Black Awareness Workshops, 1968, box 8, folder Mississippi Head Start, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.
[574] Ibid.
[575] Ibid.
[576] Goals of the Workshop, 1968, box 8, folder Mississippi Head Start, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

Black means, and the word militant means.[577] When asked what does having Black awareness mean, participants responded with the following:

> a. Struggling to get free, being aware that you're Black and knowing that you're on the road to freedom.
> b. Knowing who I am.
> c. Knowing that Black is good as any other color.
> d. Self-respect, self-pride, self-determination.
> e. Getting to know ones' self.
> f. Being aware if [sic] your race and proud of it.
> g. You having nothing to hide.[578]

Geraldine spent time diving into each participants' response asking for clarification and input from others.

The next discussion involved education and emotions and how the community reacted to their treatment and their current reality as Black Mississippians and as Black Americans. Karlee Johnson, a workshop participant, reflected, "We continued out [sic] discussion from the cultural standpoint: Family relationship, who work and where? who get paid? who get education? where you live? who you marry? Attitudes about color, how and what we should be called. What a man or woman can do."[579] These detail reports displayed that Geraldine touched on not only racial issues, but cultural and gender issues as well. Next, participants divided into groups to discuss each center's performance and goals, and the participation of parents.[580] For many working-class Black parents, the FCM had a difficult time connecting them to their centers. The workshop also involved developing their Black awareness on three levels as an individual, as an

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[577] Ibid.

[578] Goals of the Workshop, 1968, box 8, folder Mississippi Head Start, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[579] Karlee Johnson's Report from Black Awareness Workshops, 1968, box 8, folder Mississippi Head Start, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[580] John A. Wallace' Report from Black Awareness Workshops, 1968, box 8, folder Mississippi Head Start, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

organization, and as a community, challenging myths about the Black community, and to place "meeting the needs of children" in the context of African and Black American history. Geraldine helped the central staff and teachers of Head Start centers under FCM to develop a positive self-image for not only parents and children, but for themselves as well. In addition to these goals, she also provided the centers' employees with tools to strengthen their problem-solving, community organizing, and critical thinking skills.[581]

These two-day workshops also involved watching Black history films, learning Black history through song, biographies, and poetry, and hearing each other's personal experiences.[582] They learned not only of famous Black historical figures, but also their local Black history in each of their respective counties. During their discussion, one participant asked Geraldine to define Black history. Before providing her answer, she reiterated that this was her personal opinion at the time which "should be challenged" and she hoped that each of the participants developed their own answer to the question, what is Black history? She answered,

> History is fact and opinion. The history of opinion can bind and enslave people. The history of fact can liberate people. History is not just what happened to them. History is also the effect on people of what happened. Knowing the history of Black people will help us answer those important questions: Who are we? Where did we come from? Where are we going? How do we get there? It is not enough to know who the famous Black people are, whom we honor and respect. The existence of poor Black people is also a part of history. They have built this country, they have made money for others in this country. They remain poor for historical reasons we need to understand.[583]

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[581] Goals of the Workshop, 1968, box 8, folder Mississippi Head Start, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[582] Wilma R. Levertte's Report from Black Awareness Workshops, 1968, box 8, folder Mississippi Head Start, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[583] Memo to the County Staff Who Participated in the December Workshop from Gerry Wilson, 1968, box 8, folder Mississippi Head Start, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

Geraldine wanted her participants to understand the motivations behind the "white man" who distorted and ignored Black history and how white people profited from this distortion.[584] Participant Johnson concluded, "Before, if anyone had asked me some abot [sic] black American I could not have said anything. Now I think I can talk about it."[585] Geraldine left the group with methods to help develop and reinforce Black awareness in young children. She encouraged utilizing Black books, pictures of Black people hanging in the classroom, black and brown paint, crayons, and other art materials, saying the word Black, and the singing songs about and by Black people.[586]

So how did this early childhood educator and specialist learn so much about Black history? On the one hand, Geraldine always had a deep interest in Black history and constantly sought ways to educate herself about the history of her people, but her introduction came not in the classroom or in Philadelphia. Geraldine credited her introduction to Black history to a young Black Mississippian who volunteer with SNCC who in 1964 provided Geraldine with a bibliography on the Black experience. She mad it a goal since that moment to continually read and understand the history of Black people not only from books or documentaries, but from Black people themselves, especially Black elders.[587]

Geraldine continued to reside in Mississippi most likely to spend time with her mother, Hilda who joined the FCM staff as a Black history consultant and parent

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[584] Ibid.

[585] Karlee Johnson's Report from Black Awareness Workshops, 1968, box 8, folder Mississippi Head Start, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[586] Goals of the Workshop, 1968, box 8, folder Mississippi Head Start, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[587] Basic Research for Professor Millard Clements, 1972, box 4, folder unnamed, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and History.

coordinator.[588] In 1969, both Geraldine and civil rights activist and educator Mary Emmons proposed a two-year early childhood education program at historically Black Colleges in the state. Initially, FCM and CDGM required teachers to go through extensive training as oppose to hiring teachers with college degrees. Yet, as Mississippi state officials continued to attack the program in 1969, its criteria for teachers changed. Federal and state official began to question if it was proper for "a poor maid with seventh grade education" to teach children.[589] As the importance of credentials grew, Black Mississippians needed a two-year early childhood education program in order for Head Start centers to maintain their success. At Tougaloo College in 1975, graduates from the institution's early childhood education program welcomed Geraldine as their commencement speaker, introduced her as the one who designed the 1969 Early Childhood Education program alongside Mary Emmons in 1969. The program director stated, "Ms. Wilson is one of the two co-planners who committed one whole year, 1969, researching and planning for this Institute."[590] Geraldine credited the creation of the Mississippi Institute of Early Childhood Education (MIECE), known by 1975 as TIECE, Tougaloo Institute of Early Childhood Education, to several Black Mississippians including activists Medgar Evers, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Aaron Henry.[591] She also credited MIECE's creation to the state's Head Start pioneers, Tom Levin and Polly Greenberg, and Marian Wright Edelmen. No other account of MIECE's creation exists beyond Geraldine's commencement speech. There, she stated to the program graduate's,

[588] Hilda C. Wilson Paper's Description, date accessed March 30, 2017, http://opac2.mdah.state.ms.us/tougaloomanuscripts/t033.html

[589] Tougaloo Commencement Speech Transcript, 19745, box 4, folder Tougaloo, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[590] Ibid.

[591] Ibid.

> In January 1969, not because of anything that Mary Emmons and I did that was so special; but because <u>you</u> said, "We deserve the right to have the training", "we would like to protect ourselves", "we know what we need", "we know what we would like to do for our children". The Field Foundation provided funds, through Mary Holmes College. Mary Emmons and I began work on planning grant to develop a proposal for the Mississippi Institute for Early Childhood Education. Mary and I worked with many of you. We travelled up and down this state. We sat in meetings in Memphis and Nashville and we watched college faculty from some of the most "prestigious" Southern colleges and personnel from State Departments of Education propose mechanisms for the credentiallizing [sic] of people at the college level to work with young children.[592]

This program also took root at Mary Holmes College in 1970, a two year historically black college in West Point, Mississippi, to provide childhood education for Head Start teachers and teacher aides.[593] Funded by both the Field Foundation and the Carnegie Mellon Foundation, this two year program combined "basic education courses, with on-the-job experience, leading to an Associate in Arts degree."[594] Geraldine mother's Hilda served on MIECE's board until her death in 1975.

By 1970, Geraldine returned to New York City where she accepted admission into New York University's doctoral program in early childhood education.[595] Her resume that accompanied her application spoke greatly to her expertise and experience in this field. Prior to her first fall semester at NYU, Geraldine travelled to western Africa to study at the University of Ghana.[596] She enrolled in a summer course entitled "Introduction to African Studies" at the institution's Institute of African Studies. She returned with a richer understanding of African history and culture which she shared in the classrooms of Head Start centers and in workshops across the nation. As Geraldine

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[592] Ibid.

[593] Carnegie Corporation of New York, *Annual Report-Carnegie Corporation of New York*, (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1971), 30.

[594] Ibid.

[595] Resume, 1975, Geraldine Wilson Papers.

[596] Certificate from the University of Ghana, box 1, folder Accomplishments, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

focused on her doctorate degree, she continued to work for FCM as an educational consultant and in 1973, she returned to New York City's Head Start Center as Director of the Regional Training Office.[597] In this position, she oversaw the training of teachers and staff at Head Start centers in New York City's five boroughs. During this time, Geraldine also worked with early childhood programs in upstate New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Indiana, Illinois, South Carolina, and California.[598] Her lifelong goal was to "offer learning experiences to parents, staff, and faculty that would excite and inspire them as they worked with the beautiful children of Head Start".[599]Due to cuts in Head Start's budget, her position at the Regional Training Office ended in 1979 and Geraldine transitioned into a role of full-time educational consultant. The majority of her work involved seminars on the effects of racism on Black and Latino children, creating positive self-images in children of color, and trainings on incorporating African and Afro-American history and culture in to the classrooms.[600]

Beyond Head Start, Geraldine advocated for diverse children's literature in the classrooms. Curriculum guides routinely excluded Black authors and illustrators. Public libraries also failed to carry a wide selection of Black authors and educational journals rarely reviewed these author's works.[601] In 1968 during a previous Black History and Consciousness Workshop, Geraldine had constantly reminded Head Start workers to reinforce positive Black images utilizing books. Geraldine also sought ways to eliminate

[597] Letter to Lou Kleinman from Geraldine Wilson, 1973, box 2, Education, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[598] Obituary of Geraldine Wilson, 1986, box 1, folder "Obituary", Geraldine Wilson Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[599] Ibid.

[600] Resume, 1975, Geraldine Wilson Papers.

[601] Advocacy Issues, undated, box 2, folder 16, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

obstructions to Black authors. In her article "Advocacy Issues", Geraldine called for greater accessibility to diverse children's literature that "young children initial experiences with books ought to include many that give them positive racial and cultural feedback." For Geraldine books required what she called "cultural mirrors", which reflected to Black children their experiences and culture.[602] Black children suffered from a double-barreled handicap when searching for Black books as they had limited availability and failed to be reviewed.[603] They failed to find themselves in books.

To remedy this issue, Geraldine provided annotated bibliography of children's literature books authored by writers of color to Head Start and educational centers she worked with. In 1978, the Head Start Bureau published one of Geraldine's annotated bibliographies and distributed it specifically to Head Start centers.[604] Geraldine offered ways to support Black authors and illustrators which included arranging reading parties with these authors, showcasing their artwork on classroom's walls, and personally contacting publishers to demand Black books.[605] Geraldine also served as a monthly contributor to *Interracial Books for Children Bulletin* to ensure Black books received the same attention white children's books had constantly received. She utilized her platform at early childhood education conferences and conventions including the Mississippi Teacher Association Convention, the Early Childhood Conference, the National Head

[602] Ibid.

[603] Black Children's Books by Carl T. Rowan, 1981, box 2, folder 16, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[604] Geraldine L. Wilson, *An Annotated Bibliography of Children's Picture Books: An Introduction to the Literature of Head Start's Children*. (Washington: U.S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Human Development Services, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Head Start Bureau, 1978).

[605] Supporting the Tradition of Black Books for Children What Organizations Can Do, undated, box 2, folder 16, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

Start Association Conference, and the National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI) to continue the fight for inclusive children's literature.

Beyond her role as an educational consultant, Geraldine also gained popularity in the Harlem community as a writer and poet. *Elan, Ebony,* and *Essence* magazines featured her work detailing the biographies of Black cultural figures such as actress Lena Horne and photographer Gordon Parks.[606] She befriended several prominent Black authors during the late 1970s including Black feminist, activist, and writer Toni Cade Bambara. When the International Black Women's Congress' Founder La Frances Rodgers-Rose, published Geraldine's article, "The Self-Actualization of Black Women" in her anthology *The Black Woman*, Bambara wrote her exclaiming, "Your name's been in my mouth all week for one reason or another and then I got LaFrances' book outline and fell out. That is you there, ain't it, doing self-actualization? Well alright!"[607] In each letter addressed to Geraldine, Bambara addressed her as "Sistuh" Gerry Wilson. Geraldine also gained a friendship in the 1980s with actress, writer, playwright, and activist Rudy Dee as a result of writing gatherings in New York City. Multiple photos also showed Geraldine and Dee together at these workshops supporting one another at their respective engagements.

Geraldine gained a sisterhood of friends within Harlem's esteemed Black community. In June 1983, Geraldine held a poetry reading alongside poets Alexis De Veaux and Wayne Providence at the Harlem Library. She held other readings and special poetry events in Harlem. In the 1980s, Geraldine also continue to work within Black

[606] A List of Articles and Publications by Geraldine Wilson, 1981, box 1, folder 2, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[607] Letter to Geraldine Wilson from Toni Bambara, undated, box 2, folder Letters, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

early childhood education serving on the boards of the National Black Child Development Institute and the Council on Interracial Books for Children. Her membership extended to the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the Day Care Council of New York, and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. She served as not only the co-founder of MIECE, but also the founder of Black Early Childhood Group of New York and Friends of "Like It Is", a Black news organization based in Harlem.[608] Throughout her life, Geraldine possessed a commitment to Black early childhood education building a young Black child's education on a foundation of his or her own culture—African and Black history. She sought to reconstruct a positive self-image in Black children through a revision of Head Start curricula in the late 1960s beginning in Mississippi and spreading across the nation through her speeches, workshops, and writings.[609]

When Coordinator of the Tougaloo Institute for Early Childhood Education Dorothy Gibbs asked Geraldine to speak at the college's graduation in 1975, she requested Geraldine speak to graduates about the "truth of our existence" as Black people in America working with young children. In response, Geraldine detailed her personal upbringing, activism in Mississippi from 1964 to 1969, the process behind creating early childhood educational programs, and great Black history lessons. Toward the conclusion of her speech, Geraldine stated, "Dr. Woodson felt that it was important to educate Black folks to the truth of their existence in this society, and to teach them the skills needed to build—not to leave our Black communities." According to Wilson, "The truth of our

[608] Obituary of Geraldine Wilson, 1986, box 1, folder "Obituary", Geraldine Wilson Papers, Manuscripts and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.
[609] Ibid.

existence has meant that we have had giants in our communities." She called for teachers to learn of these giants' names, teach them to Black children to honor, and to remember their work.[610] Geraldine challenged her audience to start Black schools, support Black schools, and not allow Black colleges to die.[611] She left them with a mission, a mission she attempted to fulfill until her death in 1986.

As she worked toward this mission, Geraldine placed her own personal educational journey aside. Although she began her doctorate degree in 1970, Geraldine worked on her dissertation until her death in 1986. Her dissertation examined not only Black early childhood education, but the child-rearing practices of enslaved men and women and the experience of enslaved Black children from 1619 to 1880.[612] Although a teacher at heart, Geraldine was also a historian. As Geraldine devoted her life in ensuring young children learned the names of Black men and women, she also endeavored to present Black history and people's accomplishments by preserving her story as a personal archival collection in the storehouse of Black history—the Schomburg Center in New York City. This center holds the papers and accomplishments of Black giants from the poems of Phillis Wheatley to the advocacy of Malcolm X. In her writing, "Our Children's Children Live Forever", referenced in the opening of the chapter, Geraldine concluded, "Finally, now—as in the past—young Black children will learn from their adults a variety of different ways of responding to life in an oppressive society with a rhythmic, impovizational [sic], creative elegance that is expressive of their unique cultural heritage." She accomplished this through the development of inclusive early childhood

[610] Tougaloo Commencement Speech Transcript, 1975, box 4, folder Tougaloo, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.
[611] Ibid.
[612] Ibid.

curricula, the retraining of teachers, and her educational activism which supported the unique needs of Black preschoolers.

CHAPTER FIVE: EPILOGUE

From Freedmen Bureau schools in Virginia to Freedom Schools in Mississippi, the biographies of grandfather Joseph Sawyer, his granddaughter Rachel Flowers, and great granddaughter Geraldine Wilson, gave their lives advocating for Black people to receive stimulating and equal educational opportunities just as their white counterparts received. But these three generations of Black educators tell more than this family's history. They tell a complex history of Black education in America, education as a "weapon", or tool combating systematic oppression, and the key to self-realization for a race.

Sawyer founded his family's activism, anchored resiliency, and innovation. These traditions were passed on to future generations. Educational activism branched out to Rachel as she challenged segregation in Philadelphia's public school system. Geraldine walked Mississippi's dirt roads to provide workshops for Head Start teachers who presented the history of the race to new generations of Black Americans. Regardless of time period, Joseph Sawyer, Rachel Flowers, and Geraldine Wilson each confronted white supremacy's efforts to block Black access to quality education. Today, Black children in Florida, Pennsylvania, and Mississippi reap the fruits of their labor.

Sawyer proved to be hands-on in Black education; he constructed Black learning institutions throughout Virginia in 1866. Sawyer was also an educator teaching Black

children in schools sponsored by the New York Society of Friends, a Quaker-based northern missionary organization. His activism continued as he migrated to Florida and assisted in the development of the first AME Church school in the state—Edward Waters College. In 1884, the college celebrated a class of 125 students with Sawyer continuing his campaign to raise additional funds for the institution.[613] Although little exists on Sawyer's past schools in Virginia, Edward Water College continues to operate. By 2016, the college served nearly ten thousand students, the majority being African American.[614] Edward Waters College was Saywer's dream which he evolved into reality by encouraging the AME Church's East Conference to develop a school and leading financial campaigns for the institution.[615] He also taught within the institution providing lessons in shoe-making, phonography, and stenography. Sawyer represented the ultimate educator, he learned an array of subjects and enlightened students of all ages and levels.

By the time of Sawyer's death in 1919, eight of his grandchildren had migrated north with their father Harry Flowers to Brandtsville, Pennsylvania. Sawyer's educational activism pressed forward through his granddaughter Rachel Flowers. Rachel in 1916, enrolled at Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home, the first Black student to attend. Afterwards she briefly worked as a teacher in Suldersville, Maryland before relocating to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. There, her educational activism involved the utilization of the Black press to speak out against the city's school board's racial

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[613] Rhema Thompson, "After Struggles in Past, Edward Waters College Looks to Expand Student Numbers, Footprint", *The Florida Times-Union*, January 19, 2016. http://jacksonville.com/news/schools/2016-01-19/story/edward-waters-college-some-struggles-past-school-looks-expand-both

[614] Larry Eugene Rivers and Canter Brown Jr., *Laborers in the Vineyard of the Lord: The Beginnings of the AME Church in Florida, 1865-1895,* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2001), 149.

[615] Ibid, 126.

segregation policies. Her work also supported Black teachers as they sought greater employment opportunities beyond Black primary schools. Rachel worked with other activists and civil rights organizations to pressure the city to eliminate segregation and to put Black teachers in their "proper places"—in any school irrespective of race and grade level.

On March 3, 1976, Rachel penned a letter to her niece Geraldine, whom she referred to as Gerry. After weeks of attempting to get in touch with Geraldine, Rachel wrote, "I had called you almost every evening for a week prior to the letter and also called your friend's home and she said that she would give you the message. Rachel gently taunted, "How does one "catch-up" with you, anyway? (smile)"[616] Geraldine led a busy life and rightfully so wore many hats throughout her life. She participated in Mississippi's Civil Rights Movement from 1964 to 1969, yet continued to travel to the state until the 1980s to assist in training Head Start teachers for two competing Head Start organizations, the Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM) and the Friends of Children of Mississippi (FCM). CDGM's operations concluded in 1968 following charges of incompetence and financial mismanagement.[617] Today, Mississippi's Head Start programs operate under FCM's leadership.

In 1969, the year of her final extended stay in Mississippi, Geraldine had left a co-founding the Mississippi Institute of Early Childhood (MIECE) which provided Head Start teachers with required credentials as their job standards evolved higher overtime. MIECE introduced a two-year early childhood education programs through two of the

[616] Letter on March 3, 1976 from Rachel Flowers to Geraldine Wilson, 1976, box 2, folder Family, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[617] Crystal Sanders, *A Chance for Change: Head Start and Mississippi's Black Freedom Struggle*, (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 2016), 183.

state's Black colleges—Tougaloo College in Jackson and Mary Holmes College in West Point, Mississippi, however, Mary Holmes closed in 2005. Tougaloo's early childhood education program continues today and maintaining its mission to "prepare and support caring, reflective pre-service teachers as life-long learners and to succeed as professional educators in the teaching community."[618] A mission shared by its co-founder, Geraldine Wilson.

Geraldine Wilson also left a lasting imprint in organizations devoted to Black early childhood education, predominately the National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI). For over forty years, the NBCDI has been committed to a mission of improving and advancing "the quality of life for Black children and their families through education and advocacy."[619] Geraldine's role in this organization remains unclear outside of annual presentations, however, at the 1986 NBCDI's annual conference the organization celebrated Geraldine Wilson just shortly after her death that year.[620] At its 2014 conference, the NBCDI held a "Legacy Voices" seminar inducting new members into their Council of Elders remembering past Legacy Voices that included Asa G. Hillard, educational psychologist and educator, and Geraldine Wilson.[621]

The Sawyer-Flowers-Wilson advocated for greater educational opportunities for Black children and adults through various institutions including the Freedmen's Bureau, the AME Church, the Black press, and Head Start programs. Today, their legacies

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[618] Tougaloo College's Division of Education, date accessed April 15, 2017, https://www.tougaloo.edu/academics/divisions/education

[619] National Black Child Development Institute Who We Are, date accessed April 15, 2017, https://www.nbcdi.org/who-we-are

[620] National Black Child Development Institute, *Black Families: Confronting the Challenge.* National Black Child Development Institute's 1986 Annual Convention, 1986, cassette tape.

[621] National Black Child Development Institute, *44th Annual Conference Program*, (Silver Spring, MD: National Black Child Development Institute, 2014), 23.

continue within agencies and programs they founded or supported in the states of Florida, Pennsylvania, and Mississippi. In Geraldine Wilson stated in her 1975 commencement address to graduates of the early childhood education program she co-founded, "Lastly, all of us have been children. All of us have children who are close to us; either because we conceived them and bore them, or because we are part of our family, and/or because we teach them. Or because we teach those who teach children." She challenged these current and future teachers at this gathering, a challenge embraced by her great-grandfather Sawyer and aunt Rachel, to teach children skills needed to strengthen their communities eliminating the need for successful young adults to leave in search of healthy, thriving communities. She asked, "Are we interested in the creation, growth and development of supportive centers and environments for young children in our communities? Or, will we continue to reproduce the oppressive and destructive elements of the Public School and the larger society?"[622] In the family's own respective way, Joseph Sawyer, Rachel Flowers, and Geraldine Wilson dedicated and risked their lives for the advancement of Black education using this as a tool of resistance within an oppressive society.

[622] Tougaloo Commencement Speech Transcript, 1975, box 4, folder Tougaloo, Geraldine Wilson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

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John Brown Memorial Association, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts-Amherst Libraries, Amherst, MA.

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1900 Federal Census Records

1910 Federal Census Records

1920 Federal Census Records

1930 Federal Census Records

1940 Federal Census Records

Civil War and Later Pension Index, 1861-1917

Compiled Military Service Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served With the United States Troops: Infantry Organizations, 20th through 25th

Florida Civil War Records of Union Soldiers, 1861-1865

Florida Marriage Index, 1830-1957

Freedmen's Bureau Field Office Records, 1865-1872

Records of Freedmen's Complaints, 1865-1872

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APPENDIX A: Resume of Geraldine Louise Wilson, 1974

Geraldine L. Wilson
541 East 11th Street Apt. 1A
New York, New York 10009
212 982-0419

Education

Philadelphia High School for Girls
Temple University-B.S. in Early Childhood and Elementary Education (minor in Sociology)
New York University-M.A. in Human Relations-1968
University of Ghana – Certificate for study in African History, Art and Culture-1970
New York University- doctoral candidate in early childhood/teacher training (course work completed and dissertation in progress)

Present Work Experience

Project Director
New York City Head Start Regional Training Office
New York University, School of Education

Employment History

Summer 1953 and 1954 – Associated Day Care Services, Franklin Day Care Center, Miss Elizabeth Bjorling, Director, 719 Jackson Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Assistant teacher in three and four year old groups.

Summer 1955 and 1956 – Miquon Country Day School, Day Camp Program; Mr. Robert Conway, Director, Kikino Park, Pennsylvania. Counselor in the five year old group.

Summer 1958 and 1959 – Day Care Division of the Board of Education, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Substitute teacher in four and five year old groups

September 1955 to June 1959 – Philadelphia Board of Education. Kindergarten Teacher

September 1959 to September 1962 – Director of Children's Program, United Neighbor Association, House of Industry, 619 Catherine Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Mr. T. Snedley Bartram. Responsibilities: Budget, records, supervision of students and part-time staff, program planning.

September 1962 to July 1964 – House Director, United Neighborhood Association, House on Industry. Responsibilities: Budget, records, supervision of students and part- and full-time staff; program planning, recruitment and training of volunteers, delegation of duties to staff.

March 1965 – March 1966 – Neighborhood Children's Center, 1833 Lexington Avenue, New York, New York. Assistant Director. Responsibilities: Ordering supplies, health program, classroom program in five, six, and seven year groups, teacher education committee

March 1966 to September 1966 – Citizen's Care Day Care Center, 131 Saint Nicholas Avenue, New York, New York. Director of Center

Instructor- in early childhood education; Teachers College, Columbia University, and The New School for Social Research, Social change theory and laboratory field work; New York University, the Professional and the Community Person in Partnership; The New School for Social Research and Teachers College, Columbia University.

Co-planner-Mississippi Institute for Early Childhood Education (funded by Field Foundation) Jackson, Mississippi

Consultant Work

New York University Head Start Training Program (June 1966): Trained Head Start teachers and aides in art for the young child.

Child Development Group of Mississippi (September 1966): Led workshops in child development; Prepared film strip to be used in training programs and in work with board committees; Compiled book of children's paintings to be used for teacher training and community education, publication pending. (June 1967): Seminars and workshops with Central Staff in the development of goals for Demonstration Centers.

Milwaukee Head Start Program (September 1967): Goals and philosophy of the Head Start Programs

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Get Set Program (June 1967): Art in the pre-school as related to self-image

SUTEC Project –Queens College– Parent, staff, student workshops on education of the poor child (May 1967)

New York City Head Start Summer Programs (June 1967)

New York Early Childhood Education Association (March 1967) : Art Workshop for Assistant Teachers

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Head Start

Friends of Children of Mississippi

Ossining School Board: Ossining, New York

Woodward School; Brooklyn, New York

Teaneck School Board; Teaneck, NJ : Work with administrators and staff around racism and other social issues affecting the education of students and staff behavior and performance

Parent Child Center; Newark, New Jersey

Harlem Parents Committee; New York, New York; Staff training for work with parents and staff

North Carolina Central University; Durham, North Carolina; Training with Office of Dean of Women, staff and students

Hunter College Elementary School; New York City Staff, student and parents needs assessment and training geared to alleviate home relations problems. Analysis of School provided.

Volunteer Service History

Philadelphia Tuberculosis and Health Association (1960-193): Securing of volunteers for special projects; volunteered time in film department

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. (Since 1953): Held various offices and committee chairmanships including 1. Adviser to undergraduate chapter (1957-1960); 2. Chairman of Job Opportunities Committee (1962-1964)- Planning and coordinating workshop held in junior high schools; involved work with school faculty, parents, representatives of business, vocational, industrial and occupational areas; included preparation of kits for students and the production of a slide program; each year involved approximately two thousand students 3. Member of National Social Action Committee (1965-1966) –

Resource person for Regional Social Action Workshop.

Christian Social Relation Department of the Diocese of Pennsylvania of the Episcopal Church; Member of the Board of the Department 1963 – 1964; Member of Social Welfare Committee and the Racial Understanding Committee.

Fellowship Commission of Philadelphia (1963-1964): Member of Committee on Equal Job Opportunity; Resource person for the planning of workshops on job training, drop-outs, college preparation held in various of the city.

Philadelphia Association of Settlements (1963-1964): Secretary to Executive Committee of Philadelphia Association of Settlements; Member of Human Relations Committee.

Civil Rights Work in Mississippi (1964): Worked with Public School Principals in the state helping students get readmitted to school; Teaching special work-study student courses at Tougaloo College; locating students to take advantage of educational offers sent into the state; Community organization in Jackson.

Albany, Georgia (July 1965): Set up and participated in a training session designed to teach skills to community people interested in working with pre-school children; Held seminars for teachers in Albany Georgia Head Start Program.

Areas of Specializations

Early Childhood Education (Child development: socialization, Development of Self-concept, Program Models)

Curriculum Development (Particular interests-creative arts, language, social studies, blocks)

Black History and Cultures; especially the Family and Children

Staff training in administration and Human Relations

Program Evaluation

Organizations

NAEYC- local, state, and national
Day Care Council of New York City
Day Care and Child Development Council of America

ASCD- state and national
Black Early Childhood Group of New York City (Co-Chairwoman)
Langston Hughes Child Development Center (Chairwoman