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This dissertation, LUCY DIGGS SLOWE, HOWARD UNIVERSITY DEAN OF WOMEN, 1922-1937: EDUCATOR, ADMINISTRATOR, ACTIVIST, by LISA R. RASHEED, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chair, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence in scholarship as determined by the faculty. The Dean of the College of Education concurs.

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Anderson-Thompkins, Sibby, Marybeth Gasman, Cynthia Gerstl-Pepin, Karry Hathaway, **Lisa Rasheed**, “Casualties of War’: Suggestions for Helping African-American Graduate Students to Succeed in the Academy,” in Darrell Cleveland (Ed.). A Long Way to Go: Conversations about Race by African American Faculty and Graduate Students in Higher Education (Peter Lang, 2003).

## ABSTRACT

LUCY DIGGS SLOWE, HOWARD UNIVERSITY  
DEAN OF WOMEN, 1922-1937: EDUCATOR  
ADMINISTRATOR, ACTIVIST

by  
Lisa R. Rasheed

Within the last twenty years, some educational researchers initiated an emphasis to study the accomplishments and contributions of African-American women in higher education. Although they were marginally recognized, some African-American women forged into uncharted territories by providing examples of administrative leadership in post-secondary settings. Their triumphs and failures have gone unnoticed, leaving a vacant space in the chronicles of history in higher education. Little is known about one African-American woman, as an administrator at a co-educational institution in terms of her vision about her position as a professional, her view of student-oriented services and activities, and her acknowledgement and realization of the need for a student-centered community as a vital context for learning. Using historical methods, this study examines the life and work of Lucy Diggs Slowe, Howard University Dean of Women from 1922 until her death in 1937. The purpose of this study is to offer a more comprehensive illumination about Slowe's experiences and contributions as an educational leader.

Lucy Diggs Slowe was a woman of strong constitution and substance. A woman of many firsts, she was one of the founding members of the African-American sorority Alpha Kappa Alpha in 1908. Slowe would go on to leave an indelible imprint philosophically, professionally, and personally on the lives she touched as both an

administrator at Howard University and a member of the Washington, D.C. community.

Slowe's contributions are worthy of study to better understand how she embodied

leadership by focusing on her career in higher education as an administrator.



LUCY DIGGS SLOWE, HOWARD UNIVERSITY  
DEAN OF WOMEN, 1922-1937: EDUCATOR  
ADMINISTRATOR, ACTIVIST

by  
Lisa R. Rasheed

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the  
Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
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in  
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in  
the College of Education  
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2010

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To begin with, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Philo Hutcheson, for enduring this long journey with me. I thank you for leading the way even when I was reluctant to follow. Your unique gift for representing history with integrity is invaluable and only matched by your impeccable attention to detail. In light of the unforeseeable changes that have taken place over the years, I especially want to thank committee members who joined this effort while it was in progress. Dr. Hayward Richardson, Dr. Michael Bieze, and Dr. Kim Frazier thank you for your support to see this effort through to its completion. I appreciate all the written and verbal recommendations you made to improve this body of work. I especially want to thank the staff at the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Joellen ElBashir, curator, and Ida E. Jones, Ph.D., assistant curator.

To my friend, colleague, fellow journeywoman, and impetus for the unction to study at this level, Shannon Butler-Mokoro, I thank and love you for pushing me full steam ahead.

Along the way three significant influences died. The inspiration for the study is the legacy of my maternal grandmother, Roxie I. Weaver Miller. She was witty, determined, and astute. Her love and learning helped to shape me.

In memory of a great mind and a beautiful spirit, I want to thank Dr. Asa Hilliard, for inviting me to share his way of knowing, for rekindling energy and restoring zest for learning, for inspiring me when I experienced low places, and for calling me his friend. This journey has been all the more rich and meaningful because of his essence.

Just prior to the dissertation defense, my paternal grandmother, Edna Mae Mifflin Fryer, died after a long period of illness. The last time I saw her was a few weeks before she died. Physically she was incapacitated, but mentally she was sharp as a razor. She made jokes, laughed, and provided matriarchal insights in her own special way. I will miss you my dear.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ACA	<i>Association of Collegiate Alumnae</i>
AAUW	<i>American Association of University Women</i>
AKA	<i>Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.</i>
AME	<i>African Methodist Episcopal (Church)</i>
DoW	<i>Dean of Women</i>
DoM	<i>Dean of Men</i>
HU	<i>Howard University</i>
ICY	<i>Institute for Colored Youth</i>
NACW	<i>National Association of College Women</i>
NADW	<i>National Association of Deans of Women</i>
NAWDACS	<i>National Association of Women's Deans and Advisors of Colored Schools</i>
NEA	<i>National Education Association</i>
NYA	<i>National Youth Administration</i>

## PREFACE

Roxie I. Weaver Miller was a profoundly sharp, witty, and direct woman of great conviction. I lived in awe of her for most of my life because of her strong sense of knowing self. It was not until I went to college that I began to appreciate her fully. Awe turned into sheer wonder when I began to take inventory of her sacrifices and sincerely to acknowledge the impact of those sacrifices on my life. Miss Roxie was my maternal grandmother. She bestowed a firmly rooted love for learning in my heart and mind. I did not ever really understand why she was so emphatic about education until I began working on a college campus. It was then that Miss Roxie shared her collegiate experiences with me. Prior to that, I never knew that she went to college or that she had strong aspirations of becoming so much more professionally. She did not finish college because she opted to return home so that she could work to help her family. As far as I can recall, my grandmother was employed as a cook in a public school for many years until she retired. That is where she ended up but it is not where she dreamed of going and not where she wanted me to be.

As I began my doctoral study, the marginality of African-American women and their stories was evident. Their stories, struggles, successes, failures, and even their existences were muted and discounted. If told at all, the recollections may not fully represent the complexity of their lives as professional women of leadership in higher education. With my roots firmly planted in the matriarchal values my grandmother and mother both instilled in me, the value of their lessons resonated in me as I looked for

African-American women as pioneers in higher education. Undoubtedly, the knowledge and prominence of Mary McLeod Bethune continues to represent a celebrated example. What about the lesser-known African-American women who were also less celebrated or who have since been forgotten?

I continued my studies and very nearly completed the comprehensive examinations before really feeling certain about a topic. It was not until I started to think about certain characteristics that I wanted to study that a topic emerged. I wanted to study a strong, resilient, and effective African-American woman who left a legacy to education. The birthing of my concept was not unique of itself but the subject had to be.<sup>1</sup> Quite by happenstance, I ran across an article written by Linda Perkins, “Lucy Diggs Slowe: Champion of the Self-Determination of African-American Women in Higher

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<sup>1</sup> Marion Thompson Wright was a Howard University Graduate who earned magna cum laude distinction with a major in sociology. A member of Delta Sigma Theta, she also earned her master’s degree in education as well as a diploma from the New York School of Social Work. She completed her doctorate at Columbia University. As an instructor and later, professor of education at HU, she also held other significant post such as the Director of Student Teaching from 1940 to 1946. She became the Acting Director of counseling services in 1946. This evolved into a full-fledged program in counseling services. Wright received the Evening Star Faculty Research Grant to write a biography of Lucy Diggs Slowe. She died before the completion of her efforts. Wright had personal and intimate contact with Slowe as an officer of student council and advocate for sensitive matters involving women on campus. In reference to the latter, Wright participated in activities organized by Slowe, as the Dean of Women. Wright’s career has striking similarities to Slowe’s life in that she was academically astute, evidenced scholarship, sought to advocate for students, originated new university programs and services, produced scholarly works, and, participated in a number of professional and civic organizations. Writings indicate that Wright had started to compile research in order to write a biography about Slowe. When visiting HU, I requested Wright’s documents but the archival request did not yield a significant body of work. Wright died unexpectedly. Two professors found her body. She was sitting behind the steering wheel of her car in the garage of her home. She was 58 years old. See Walter G. Daniel, “A Tribute to Marion Thompson Wright,” The Journal of Negro Education (Summer 1963): 308-310 and “Death of Prof. Marion T. Wright of Howard U. Probed by Coroner,” The Star October 1962. Marion T. Wright Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University Washington, D.C.



Education.”<sup>2</sup> As I searched for references for a paper, Perkins’ article created a sense of intrigue. I wanted to know more about this person, Lucy Diggs Slowe. Who was she? Why would someone consider her a champion? What sacrifices did she make so that others recognized as self-determined? As the questions rattled through my brain, I finally arrived on a topic that merged the values and lessons of my upbringing with the rigor of academia.

My grandmother died prior to me beginning doctoral study. Her death was not in vain. She witnessed the budding of a seed she helped to plant and to nurture in me. As I hope to share in this body of work, Lucy Diggs Slowe was a woman of determination, strength and conviction. Her life was complex and challenging as she lived in and through a period wrought with changes in the field of education and society. Slowe’s professional colleague, long-time friend and supporter, Mary Burrill, sought to immortalize Lucy Diggs Slowe’s eulogy by typing it for reprinting. She wrote, “Because I believe that Time, the unerring appraiser of all human values, will give Lucy D. Slowe a secure place among those great spirits who have wrought mightily for our race; and because the Eulogy by Dwight O. Holmes interprets her character and her work with such truth and beauty, I have given it something of permanency in these printed pages.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Linda Perkins, “Lucy Diggs Slowe: Champion of Self-Determination of African-American Women in Higher Education,” The Journal of Negro History 81, no. ¼ (Winter/Autumn, 1996): 89-104.

<sup>3</sup> Mary P. Burrill, Forward in the “Eulogy by Dwight O.W. Holmes at the Obsequies of Lucy D. Slowe.” October 25, 1937. Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spangarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-1, Folder 1) Mary P. Burrill was a close friend and fellow educator who taught English at Dunbar High School in Washington, D.C. Burrill’s friendship with Slowe included joint endeavors that involved students whether at Howard or in the District of Columbia public school system. For an example, see “Miss Burrill to Read at Vesper Service,” Washington Post December 21, 1924, p. 8. Slowe and Burrill shared a home for fifteen years. In the final chapter I will make further comment on their living arrangement and relationship. The historical method requires documented evidence of

While perhaps not as well celebrated in life as much as in recent times since her death, her life and work were valued and worthwhile. Her experience as a woman in leadership at a co-educational center for higher education leaves a legacy worthy of study.

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claims and assertions. The nature of Slowe's relationship with Burrill appears to be circumstantial but not conclusive.

<sup>4</sup>See Karen Anderson, "Brickbats and Roses: Lucy Diggs Slowe, 1883-1937" in Lone Voyagers: Academic Women in Coeducational Institutions, 1870-1937 ed. Geraldine Joncich Clifford (New York: The Feminist Press, 1989): 285.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

As a lens for examining Lucy Diggs Slowe's contribution to post-secondary leadership, historical analysis is most appropriate. But aside from a mere description of chronological events, the substance in reporting events rests in interpretation of those of happenings and how the past can have an impact on the present and future. The study of African-Americans in higher education has gained more exposure within the last 40 years. Researchers have studied various aspects of minority retention, persistence, and experiences of African-American students on predominantly white campuses.<sup>1</sup> However, research efforts that focus on the historical experiences of African-American women in higher education remain limited except for a few comprehensive historical renderings.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview about student protest and educational reform see Gerald Grant and David Reisman, "Less Pressure, More Options: Meritocratic Discontents and Popular Reform" in The Perpetual Dream: reform and Experiment in the American College (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978). For a discussion about minority retention, see Walter R. Allen, Edgar G. Epps, and Nesha Z. Haniff, College in Black and White: African American Students in Predominantly White and Historically Black Public Universities (New York: SUNY Press, 1991). In reference to race relations see Julian B. Roebuck and Komanduri S. Murty, "Review of Literature on Campus Race Relations" and "Race Relations on Five White and Ten Black Campuses" in Historically Black Colleges and Universities Their Place in American Higher Education (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1993). For a discussion about African American student protest, see Joy A. Williamson, "This has been Quite a Year for Heads Falling: Institutional Autonomy in the Civil Rights Era" History of Education Quarterly 44, no. 4 (2004): 554-576; Black Power on Campus: The University of Illinois, 1965-75 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003); and, Radicalizing the Ebony Tower: Black Colleges and the Black Freedom Struggle in Mississippi (New York: Teachers College Press, 2008). For a discussion about social justice, see Joy A. Williamson, Lori Rhodes, and Michael Dunson, "Chapter 7 A Selected History of Social Justice" Review of Research in Education 31, no. 1 (2007): 195-224

<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this study, I will use the term African-American when speaking in my own voice and in reference to people of African descent who live in the United States of

Particularly neglected in the historical literature are accounts of African-American women who completed collegiate study after the turn of the twentieth century. As one scholar noted just a decade ago, “This history, particularly the record of contributions and accomplishments by notable African American women, has been neglected by mainstream scholars, coming to light largely only after the 1960’s.”<sup>3</sup> There are some scholarly works on African-American men in higher education. Typically, these works focus on educational leaders holding presidential positions.<sup>4</sup> An opportunity of such

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America. The term African American is used to reference a specific racial grouping in geo-political space; however, a cultural designation is not automatically applicable as there are some inherent assumptions that I will discuss in more detail as this work unfolds. I will use Colored and Negro as terms to interchange with African-American whenever those descriptors originate in historical texts. See the following references for contemporary examples of research on African-American women in higher education: Walter G. Daniel, “A Tribute to Marion Thompson Wright,” The Journal of Negro Education 32, no. 3 (Summer, 1963): 308-310; V.P. Franklin and Bettye Collier-Thomas, “Biography, Race Vindication, and African-American Intellectuals: Introductory Essay,” The Journal of Negro History 81, no. ¼ (Winter/Autumn, 1996): 1-16; Mary Frances Berry, “Twentieth-Century Black Women in Education,” The Journal of Negro Education 51, no. 3 (Summer, 1982): 288-300; Shirley Harley, “Beyond the Classroom: The Organizational Lives of Black Female Educators in the District of Columbia, 1880-1930,” The Journal of Negro Education 51, no.3 (Summer, 1982): 254-265; Linda Perkins, “The Role of Education in the Development of Black Feminist Thought, 1860-1920,” History of Education 22, no. 3 (1993): 265-275; Rochelle Garner, Contesting the Terrain of the Ivory Tower: Spiritual Leadership of African-American Women in the Academy (New York: Routledge, 2004); Conchita Y. Battle and Chontrese M. Doswell, eds., Building Bridges for Women of Color in Higher Education: A Practical Guide for Success (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2004); and, Theodora Regina Berry and Natalie D. Mizelle, eds., From Oppression to Grace: Women of Color and Their Dilemmas within the Academy (Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Publishing, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> See Aslaku Berhanu, “An Annotated Bibliography of Reference Sources on African American Women,” Journal of Black Studies 29, no.2 (November 1998): 296. Also see Cassandra P. Evans-Herring, “An Intersectional Analysis of the Life Experiences of Mary Elizabeth Branch, The First Black Female Senior College President,” (Ph.D. diss., Georgia State University, 2003); and, Kijua Sanders-McMurtry, “‘Linked Together in Service’: A History of Education and Philanthropy Among the Black Elite The Links, Incorporated, 1946-1996,” (Ph.D. diss., Georgia State University, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> For examples see Louis R. Harlan, Booker T. Washington: The Making of a Black Leader, 1856-1901 (Oxford University Press, 1972); Wayne J. Urban, Black Scholar: Horace Mann Bond, 1904-1972 (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1992); Richard I. McKinney, Mordecai The Man and His Message: The Story of Mordecai Wyatt Jackson (Washington, D.C: Howard University Press, 1997); Leroy Davis, A Clashing of the Soul: John

magnitude would have been rare and elusive for most African-American women due to the collective and convergent assumptions about race and gender.

In the case of African-American women, many of their educational opportunities stemmed from racial consciousness efforts and societal influences of the time in the interest of social uplift. More than twenty-five years ago, scholars explored the role African-American women assumed. Mary Frances Berry explained, "Black women have focused primarily on the problems of educating black and poor people throughout our history. This has been a natural focus of their interest because of their personal backgrounds and the...educational problems the black community has faced."<sup>5</sup> For the

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Hope and the Dilemma of African American Leadership and Black Higher Education in the Early Twentieth Century Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1998); and Patrick J. Gilpin and Marybeth Gasman, Charles S. Johnson: Leadership Beyond the Veil in the Age of Jim Crow (New York: SUNY Press, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Mary Frances Berry, "Twentieth-Century Black Women in Education," Journal of Negro Education 51, no. 3 (1982): 288. On the same page Berry goes further to write, "In the years since compulsory ignorance for blacks was abandoned with Emancipation, women have worked and struggled to educate themselves for service, and in doing so uplift the race." Jeanne L. Noble discussed this point in her work, The Negro Woman's College Education (1956; repr., New York: Teachers Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987). In chapter two Noble discusses how implications of history impeded notions about education for Negro women. As former slaves who were depreciated as concubines or slave matriarchs, the primary emphasis for education Negro women was moral leadership through education for her family. Noble writes,

During the period between emancipation and the beginning of the twentieth century the education of the Negro woman was influenced by developing educational opportunities for Negro men and white women. The founders of the Negro colleges were convinced that the race needed teachers. Since teachers were mostly women, Negro women were encouraged to be teachers. Negro education, to a large extent, was imitative of college education for whites. Some Negro leaders advocated an education for the development of moral character in Negro women. Much of the concern for moral training seems to have been predicated on the Negro woman's historical role as a concubine during slavery. (33)

Likewise, Shirley Harley (1982) admits that such an historical reputation limited professional mobility for African-American women. "Prevalent sexual attitudes as well as racial attitudes limited the job opportunities for education black women" (254). Harley goes further to discuss the emphasis on moral and character education as role formally

women who did seek and were encouraged by society and family members to pursue education, most entered gendered professions of study such as teaching and nursing.<sup>6</sup> Countless others received some form of training at normal schools or at institutes with domestically oriented courses that were to result in vocational employment.<sup>7</sup>

Yet there were a few stellar exceptions. Such examples are stellar not because of a pure ascent to greatness but because their lives are complex and indicative of internal

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educated black women would occupy in the classrooms as well as in the community (257).

<sup>6</sup> See Beverly Guy-Sheftall, "Black Women and Higher Education: Spelman and Bennett Colleges Revisited," *Journal of Negro Education* 51, no.3 (Summer 1982): 278-286. Guy-Sheftall examines Spelman and Bennett Colleges as single-sex institutions for African-American women. "High on the list of priorities at both institutions has been the training of Black women for leadership roles, though the training of teachers was their earliest mission" (280). In her piece about Black feminism, Linda Perkins (1993) intertwines the notion of racial uplift with Black feminist thought when she writes, "Although most of the earliest formally trained Black women could be described as feminist and were quite vocal on issues related to women, the issue of race was not one they could separate out from their gender" (267).

<sup>7</sup> For a more in depth analysis about the economic intention and emphasis on vocational and industrial for Negroes, particularly in the South, see chapter five, "The Tuskegee Machine" in James Anderson, "Education for Servitude: The Social Purposes of Schooling in the South, 1870 – 1930," (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign, 1973):166-249. Also see Donald Spivey, *Schooling for the New Slavery: Black Industrial Education, 1868-1915* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1978). Spivey provides a discussion about Samuel Chapman Armstrong's philosophy of industrial education in Chapter 2 "Schooling for the New Slavery: The Industrial Education Model, 1868-93." Also see Edith Chapman Talbot, *Samuel Chapman Armstrong: A Biographical Study* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1904). Chapman's daughter wrote his biography and explains the essence of his philosophy about educating Negroes in his own words.

The thing to be done was clear: to train selected Negro youths who should go out and teach and lead their people, first, by example, by getting land and homes; to give them not a dollar that they could earn for themselves; to teach respect for labor, to replace stupid drudgery with skilled hands, and to those ends build up an industrial system for the sake not only of self support and intelligent labor, but also for the sake of character (157).

See Horace Mann Bond, "The Influence of Personalities on the Public Education of Negroes in Alabama, I" *Journal of Negro Education* 6, Issue 1 (January, 1937): 17-29. Bond illuminates Chapman's influence on Washington and comments on other white and Negro proponents for the education of Negroes.

conflict, personal apprehension, denial of fear, and ongoing movement toward purpose and destiny for which the motivation was not necessarily consistently clear. For example, the life and accomplishments of Fanny Jackson Coppin help one to understand better how her personal experiences and a philosophy about education formed the cornerstone for seeking greater social and financial independence in the service of race empowerment that I will discuss in greater detail.<sup>8</sup> Fanny Jackson Coppin was born into slavery in Washington, D.C. The particulars of her birth are scant due to a lack of historical information. The circumstances were such that her maternal grandfather, Henry Orr, a mulatto, purchased his freedom in 1828; owned land and worked as a caterer, and socialized as a notable freedman in the community. Orr would purchase his sons, three of his six children by 1828, leaving his daughters enslaved.<sup>9</sup> Orr would free two of his daughters, Sarah and Rebecca, in relation to life events. Sarah was thirty years old and awaiting marriage. Rebecca's freedom came many years later in 1845 when Orr died and

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<sup>8</sup> See Linda M. Perkins, "Heed Life's Demands: The Educational Philosophy of Fanny Jackson Coppin," The Journal of Negro Education, 51, no. 3 (Summer, 1982): 181-190. This article chronicles Coppin's life from birth to death exploring her experience as one of the nation's few educated black women who became the first female administrator at Philadelphia's Institute for Colored Youth. Also see Linda M. Perkins, Fanny Jackson Coppin and the Institute for Colored Youth, 1865-1902, (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987) and Fanny Jackson Coppin, Reminiscence of School Life and Hints on Teaching, African-American Women Writers, 1910-1940 eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Jennifer Burton (New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1995). For another example of African American female educational professionalism, see Venice Thandi Sule, "Oppositional Knowledge Informing Democratic Education: The Lived Experiences of Dr. Anna Julia Cooper" (paper presented at the 29<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Association of Higher Education, Kansas City, Missouri, November 3-6, 2004. Cooper was a product of Oberlin College who graduated in 1884. She worked in the Washington, D.C. public school system for several years.

<sup>9</sup> Perkins, Fanny Jackson Coppin and the Institute for Colored Youth, 14-15. Perkins discusses that the probable reason for Henry Orr's lack of impetus to free his daughters was due to the financial responsibility he would have to assume due to manumission laws. Additionally, Perkins explores the circumstances of Fanny's birth, as her father may have been a recognized politician. Perkins cautions readers that the paternity cannot be confirmed due to the scarcity of historical records.

willed her freedom. Fanny's mother remained in slavery. Coppin writes of the circumstance, "On account of my birth, my grandfather refused to buy my mother; and so I was left a slave in the District of Columbia, where I was born."<sup>10</sup> A maternal aunt, Sarah, purchased Fanny's freedom for which she remained grateful.<sup>11</sup>

Fanny Jackson Coppin soon went to live with an aunt by marriage in Newport. She worked and went to school when she could. This meant that her educational exposure was sporadic and dependent on self-motivation and disciplined self-instruction. At the age of fourteen, she went to work as a domestic for the Calvert family.<sup>12</sup> Fanny was able to receive some instruction at a public school for Negroes. She passed exams at the Rhode Island Normal School. The experience fueled her passion for teaching and she set her sights on attending Oberlin College.<sup>13</sup> Fanny Jackson Coppin was a woman of many firsts. She was one of the first degree-seeking African-American female graduates of

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<sup>10</sup> Fanny Jackson Coppin, Reminiscence of School Life and Hints on Teaching, 10.

<sup>11</sup> Coppin dedicated her autobiographical account to her aunt Sarah. The written inscription is: "This book is dedicated to my beloved aunt Sarah Orr Clark who, working at six dollars a month saved one hundred twenty-five dollars, and bought my freedom." There is no page number indicated.

<sup>12</sup> In his discussion about status, E. Franklin Frazier wrote, "The majority of Negroes in Northern cities were engaged in domestic and personal services. The smallness of their numbers and the nature of their employment left the matter of their status an unimportant issue." See E. Franklin Frazier, "The Status of the Negro in the American Social Order," Journal of Negro Education 4, no. 3 (July, 1935): 306.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 11-12. Also see Cally L. Waite, Permission to Remain Among Us: Education for Blacks in Oberlin, Ohio, 1880-1914 (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2002). In her book, Waite discusses the evangelical and abolitionist philosophies that created a climate where freed slaves and descendants of slaves could be educated with whites. Waite contextualizes this discussion with an exploration of the tension between the evangelical vision and the changing socio-political climate in the post-Reconstructionist period. Prior to the Civil War, Ohio state law restricted college admission to Negroes and mulattos. See Loretta Funke, "The Negro in Education," Journal of Negro History 5, no. 1 (January, 1920): 4. Also noteworthy to mention, Berea College, established in 1856 and located in Kentucky, also admitted Negroes after the Civil War. Ibid., 7.



Oberlin College.<sup>14</sup> She attended Oberlin from 1860 to 1865. During this time, the faculty selected her to teach both white and Negro students, another first. Of this experience, Coppin wrote,

The faculty did not forbid a woman to take the gentleman's course, but they did not advise it. There was plenty of Latin and Greek in it, and as much mathematics as one could shoulder. Now, I took a long breath and prepared for a delightful contest. All went smoothly until I was in the junior year in College. Then, one day, the Faculty sent for me—ominous request—and I was not slow in obeying it. It was a custom in Oberlin that forty students from the junior and senior classes were employed to teach the preparatory classes. As it was now time for the juniors to begin their work, the Faculty informed me that it was their purpose to give me a class, but I was to understand distinctly that if the pupils rebelled against my teaching, they did not intend to force it. Fortunately, for my training at the normal school, and my own dear love of teaching, tho there was a little surprise on the faces of some when they came into the class, and saw the teacher, there were no signs of rebellion. The class went on increasing in numbers until it had to be divided, and I was given both divisions.<sup>15</sup>

Coppin's reflection on her experience conveys the challenge set before her, the reality of an opportunity, and, the knowledge of limited support. Even so, the tone of her writing indicates humility.

Coppin noted that during her matriculation at Oberlin, Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States in 1860. These were turbulent and uncertain times. Coppin wrote, "In the year 1863 a very bitter feeling was exhibited against the colored people in the country, because they were held responsible for the fratricidal war then

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<sup>14</sup> Waite, Permission to Remain Among Us, identifies Mary J. Patterson as the first African-American woman to obtain a degree from Oberlin College in 1862. Waite distinguishes Patterson and Coppin as notable African-American women who completed the "gentlemen's courses" that was traditionally set aside for men. Both obtained A.B. degrees. Waite explains that other African-American women attended Oberlin and enrolled in the Ladies Course. Waite writes, "Women did not study Latin or Hebrew, nor did they address themselves to primary texts. According to the college catalog, the college course required study of the English Bible, the Hebrew Bible and Cicero, for example, the Ladies Course did not require or offer that curriculum" (17).

<sup>15</sup> Coppin, Reminiscence, 12.

going on. The riots in New York especially gave evidence of this ill feeling. It was in this year that the faculty put me to teaching.”<sup>16</sup> By her account, Coppin thrived at Oberlin in spite of the political climate, national racial tension, overwhelming teaching responsibilities and successful continuation of her own personal studies.<sup>17</sup> In her own memoir, Coppin did not elaborate on any overt or covert matters of discrimination. Her reminiscences reflected an appreciation for an opportunity to pursue education based on meritocracy. With the migration of freedmen from southern to border and northern states, some settled in Oberlin.

By 1865, the Civil War was ending, and Coppin graduated from Oberlin College. Formally, she trained in the classics to be an educator. When Fanny Jackson departed Oberlin in August 1865, she headed for Philadelphia where she had been offered the position of principal of the Female Department of The Institute for Colored Youth (ICY), a high school for blacks, founded by the Society of Friends in 1837.”<sup>18</sup> In Philadelphia,

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<sup>16</sup> Coppin, Reminiscence, 18.

<sup>17</sup> Coppin’s academic consistency and success intrigued me because she did not appear to succumb to pressures, distractions, or other obstacles that could have had a negative influence on her educational goals. In addition to her collegiate responsibilities, Coppin began to teach the freedmen to read and write during night classes. This seems to be indicative of the role of racial uplift, a common thread and sense of obligation that many African-Americans, more often female than male, fulfilled.

<sup>18</sup> Perkins, Fanny Jackson Coppin and the Institute for Colored Youth, 1865-1902, 49. Patterson served as an instructor ICY. Perkins (1987) suggests that Patterson stood in Coppin’s shadow (89). Patterson did graduate a few years before Coppin and started to teach; however, it was Coppin’s career that catapulted her to a national stage. Coppin did not mention Patterson in her autobiography. However, this is not necessarily an indictment as much as an admitted indication of Coppin’s modesty and humility. Patterson’s departure initiated a period of staff turnover during the early years of Coppin’s leadership as principal. In retrospect, one can easily see how staff departure was also indicative of ICY’s development of professional African-American educators who would go on to be school leaders elsewhere (117-118). Also see W.E.B. Du Bois, The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study Political Economy and Public Law Series, no. 14 (Boston: University of Philadelphia Press, 1899). In chapter VIII, “Education and Illiteracy,” Du Bois discussed, analyzed, and interpreted data about illiteracy, attendance, and matriculation in Philadelphia’s seventh ward. In reference to ICY, illiteracy rates and advance study, he wrote,

Coppin found herself in another complicated social context where poverty, crime, unemployment, and racism loomed in the air. Of the latter, Coppin had been sheltered to a large degree because of her experience at Oberlin.

She wrote,

I had been so long in Oberlin that I had forgotten about my color, but I was sharply reminded of it when, in a storm of rain, a Philadelphia street car conductor forbid my entering a car that did not have on it “for colored people,” so I had to wait in the storm until one came in which colored people could ride. This was my first unpleasant experience in Philadelphia. Visiting Oberlin not long after my work began in Philadelphia, President Finney asked me how I was growing in grace: I told him that I was growing as fast as they American people would let me. When told of some of the conditions that were meeting me, he seemed to think it unspeakable.<sup>19</sup>

Coppin remained loyal and grateful for her educational experience at Oberlin.

Even though there were subtle instances of deference to otherness, if not discrimination, Coppin supported the college as a faithful alumna.<sup>20</sup>

The sense of loyalty Coppin voiced and demonstrated to Oberlin does not compare to her concern and compassion for uneducated members of her race. “There is, and always will be, a large number of people who must depend upon this class of employment for a living, and there is every reason, therefore, why they should be especially prepared for it.”<sup>21</sup> Coppin strived to maintain a hybrid curriculum where the

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“Of those graduating from the course at the Institute for Colored Youth, 8 per cent have taken a college or professional course” (93). Coppin inherited a post at an institution where a trend for African-American seeking advanced study had begun. Along with that trend emerged a channel for other African-Americans to follow in pursuit of higher education.

<sup>19</sup> Coppin, Reminiscence, 14.

<sup>20</sup> Perkins, Fanny Jackson Coppin and the Institute for Colored Youth, 1865-1902, 48-49.

<sup>21</sup> Coppin, Reminiscence, 26-27. “The industrial department was independent from the academic department and offered its classes at night to accommodate working adults” (Ibid, 187). Coppin’s early experience teaching freedmen at night, after she studied at Oberlin during the day,

college preparatory and liberal arts studies would co-exist with vocational offerings. She contended with local officials to amend the curriculum so that the masses of unemployed African-Americans would have an opportunity to secure gainful employment. Coppin wrote, “In Philadelphia, the only place at the time where a colored boy could learn a trade, was in the House of Refuge, or Penitentiary!”<sup>22</sup> To this end, Coppin assumed personal labor and sacrifice as she appealed to public support for the needs she perceived: “As a means of preparation for this work, which I may call an Industrial Crusade, I studied Political Economy for two years under Dr. William Elder, who was a disciple of Mr. Henry C. Carey, the eminent writer on the doctrine of the Protective Tarriff.”<sup>23</sup> Coppin would go on to enter the public sphere with regard to addressing audiences at churches and school board meetings, writing for the Christian Recorder, becoming a social activist, and traveling to South Africa as well as England, accompanying her husband as a missionary. Coppin married an African Methodist Episcopal (AME) minister, Levi Jenkins Coppin, in 1881. The couple maintained a long distance relationship while he worked in Baltimore for four years before returning to Philadelphia in 1885. The principalship was a great test. As a pioneering educational leader, she had to buffet male envy in rivaling teachers, staff turnover, limited resources, and public

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provided a precedent in her educational career by giving educational opportunities to working adults who had a thirst for educational options. Perhaps Coppin’s own experiences proved to plant a seed in the interest of African-American people. Coppin used to work performing domestic services and then take classes and private studies when she could.

<sup>22</sup> Coppin, Reminiscence, 23. As it was the case in many urban and industrially developing parts of the United States, Philadelphia attracted both freedmen and emancipated slaves with learning centers flourishing prior to the Civil War. “By 1838 there were thirteen private schools in Philadelphia for the education of the Negro and in 1849 Avery College was established in Allegheny.” Funke, The Negro in Education, 3.

<sup>23</sup> Coppin, Reminiscence, 27.

demands by African-Americans in Philadelphia. Copping remained at ICY until 1902 when she resigned.

Coppin's body of work as an educator predates Slowe by a little more than a generation, yet the two have much in common. Both were raised by family members, excelled in academic endeavors, had career progressions that resulted in ground-breaking firsts, emphasized student empowerment and career options, and, occupied a place in public spheres to address issues that pertained to education for African-Americans. Both were pioneers as principals of unique institutions. Coppin steered the Institute for Colored Youth through curricular changes, difficult economic times, and turbulent racial tension (i.e. the election of 1871).<sup>24</sup> Slowe directed the vision and implementation of Washington, D.C.'s first junior high school for African-Americans before assuming the position of the first African-American Dean of Women at Howard University. Slowe and Coppin chartered courses for women to follow as they embarked on territory that had traditionally been reserved for men. Undoubtedly, there were notable differences. Slowe never married or traveled internationally. Coppin never held a permanent post at a post-secondary institution. Slowe attended public schools in a major city, Baltimore, where she was subsequently employed. Coppin was unique. She was one of the first African-American female graduates from Oberlin College.

Another example of an exceptional African-American woman's educational career is Mary J. Patterson, recognized as the first African-American graduate from

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<sup>24</sup> Perkins, Fanny Jackson Coppin and the Institute for Colored Youth, 1865-1902, 106-111. Perkins describes how increasing immigration, greater competition for jobs between races, and, recent legislation with the passage of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments contributed to racial tension and conflict in Philadelphia. On October 10, 1871, the day of the election, racial rioting surrounded the school and Coppin dismissed classes. Octavius V. Catto, a faculty member at ICY, was killed later the same day en route to vote in the elections.

Oberlin College in 1862. Mary J. Patterson accompanied Coppin to the Institution for Colored Youth as she accepted an appointment as her assistant.<sup>25</sup> After leaving ICY, Patterson became the principal of M Street Colored High School in Washington, D.C.; the name of the school would later change to Dunbar. The high school was a premier secondary institution for African-Americans during Patterson's time. "The regular four-year high-school course is offered with a liberal system of electives. The chief emphasis is placed upon preparation for the professions as indicated by the following report of the graduates of 1915: Teacher training, 37; entering college, 32; entering legal, dental, medical or theological schools, 17 entering engineering school."<sup>26</sup> Paul Laurence Dunbar High School was recognized as an exemplary secondary school for Negroes.<sup>27</sup> The faculty's credentials were no less impressive. Patterson was the first African-American principal of this school. She succeeded Emma J. Hutchins from New Hampshire.<sup>28</sup> Patterson was credited with the school's advancement in three significant ways: (1) the name of the school changed from a preparatory academy i.e. The Preparatory High School; (2) the first high school graduation ceremony was held in 1877; and, (3) "the

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<sup>25</sup> Perkins, Fanny Jackson Coppin and the Institute for Colored Youth, 1865-1902, 80.

<sup>26</sup> Department of the Interior, U.S. Bureau of Education, Negro Education, A Study of the Private and Higher Schools for Colored People in the United States Volume II (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1917): 148. [http://books.google.com/books?id=OGVOAAAAMAAJ&dq=A+Study+of+the+Private+and+Higher+Schools+for+Colored+1916&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s](http://books.google.com/books?id=OGVOAAAAMAAJ&dq=A+Study+of+the+Private+and+Higher+Schools+for+Colored+1916&source=gbs_navlinks_s) (accessed September 26, 2007).

Also see Vanessa Siddle Walker, "Value of Segregated Schools for African-American Children in the South, 1935-1969: A Review of Common Themes and Characteristics," Review of Educational Research 70, no. 3 (Autumn, 2000): 253-285.

<sup>27</sup> Mary Church Terrell, "History of the High School for Negroes in Washington," The Journal of Negro History 2, no. 3 (July 1917): 252. Terrell identified the school's namesake.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 254-255.

normal department was added with the principal as the high school as the head.”<sup>29</sup>

Seemingly, Patterson would succumb to sexism in that her tenure was split and book-ended by two male principals. The first usurpation occurred one year after she became principal. Richard T. Greener, the first African-American graduate of Harvard University in 1870, replaced her in 1872.<sup>30</sup> Such meant that his reputation preceded him on credential alone.

In her autobiographical memoir, Fanny Jackson Coppin refers to Greener as a member of her staff sometime near 1869. He assumed the direction of the English Department at ICY. Within reason, Greener and Patterson may have known of one another at the least, or had previous professional contact because of the common career path they shared at ICY. Greener served there for one year before accepting another position elsewhere. Patterson resumed the position of principal and held it for twelve years before F.L. Cadozo, Sr. became Greener’s successor in 1884.<sup>31</sup>

As was the case, many of the African-American graduates from Oberlin pursued careers in education.<sup>32</sup> Other African-American alumnae from Oberlin such as Mary

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 256. The text does not clarify what the name of the school changed to, but rather it suggests progression with the addition of increasing levels of instruction and the evidence of academic rigor produced in its graduates.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. Greener held other distinctive positions a “Professor at the University of South Carolina in the Reconstruction period, Dean of the Law School of Howard University, Chief Civil Service Examiner for New York City, and United States Consul at Vladivostock, Russia” (256).

<sup>31</sup> Cardozo held many distinctions in that he was educated abroad at the Glasgow University in Scotland and the London School of Theology. He also served as a pastor and missionary. The latter was under the auspices of the American Board of Missions. He founded the Avery Institute in Charleston, South Carolina and served for two terms as the Secretary of State for South Carolina, Ibid., 257.

<sup>32</sup> Cally L. Waite, Permission to Remain Among Us, 27.

Church Terrell, and Anna Julia Cooper would join Patterson in Washington, D.C.<sup>33</sup>

Patterson would leave public school administration “because she refused to scale back the academic program and increase the vocational curriculum.”<sup>34</sup> Perhaps a professional setback or a window of opportunity, Patterson went on to help form the Colored Women’s League of Washington, D.C.

Coppin, Patterson, and Slowe, as with other African-American women in the history of higher education, deserve attention because of their important role as educators to the masses. For a great majority of these female educators racial uplift formed the philosophical cornerstone of pedagogy for the liberation of a people. African-American women, teachers during a Progressive period of educational reform, often had little room for singular ambitions that could prove to be contrary to the mission of service and uplift.<sup>35</sup> Despite being dedicated to the race, many African-American female educators

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<sup>33</sup> Terrell and Cooper graduated from Oberlin in 1884. Cooper completed advanced study and acquired her master’s degree in 1888. Cooper would go on to be the principal at the M Street School. (Its name at some point after the preparatory description was eliminated and the facilities moved to another physical location and building.) Perhaps for the similar reasons as Coppin, Terrell did not mention her accomplishments in the article she authored. Mary Church Terrell, “History of the High School for Negroes in Washington,” (259).

<sup>34</sup> Cally L. Waite, Permission to Remain Among Us, 28.

<sup>35</sup> In chapter three, I will mention the emergence of African-American social and community organizations where educated African-American women assumed leadership roles in the interest of racial uplift. While there may have been some personal interests, the overwhelming probability was that needs of the race quickly overshadowed the needs of any individual. A conspicuous pattern emerged where educated African-American educators, particularly in large cities, found and perpetuated special interests groups with the sole purpose of improving the quality of life for poor and uneducated members of the race. For example, Lucy Diggs Slowe was an accomplished and competitive tennis player yet had she wanted to pursue it as a professional that would have caused conflict with her pursuits as an educator, budding collegiate administrator, and community servant. For another reference about African-American women and social uplift see Kijua Sanders-McMurtry, “Chapter Five, Women of Distinction: Racial Uplift and the Social Elite,” in “‘Linked Together in Service’: A History of Education and Philanthropy Among the Black Elite The Links, Incorporated, 1946-1996,” (Ph.D. diss., Georgia State University, 2007).



failed to reap tangible benefits from the profession of teaching. Salaries commensurate with male and white counterparts, and opportunities for scholarly enterprises were often elusive. Annual earnings for teaching and social standing remained inversely related.<sup>36</sup> Simply stated, many African-American women accomplished extraordinary things with ordinary or less than adequate resources and conditions.

“Focusing on the career of one activist black woman, Lucy Diggs Slowe, is a mean of understanding some of the dynamics of change experiences and shaped by women of color in this period. An explanation of her background and career as dean of women at Howard University informs our understanding of the importance of black culture, Progressive education, feminism, and women’s culture for the values and activities of black women educators. Because her career as an educator spanned the period from 1908 to 1937, Slowe’s life provides a fuller perspective on the generational relationships between those women who had come of age at the zenith of women’s activism in the Progressive era and the younger women who embraced the new freedoms and constraints symbolized by the flapper.”<sup>37</sup>

The intersection of race, gender, and class inextricably intertwine with social forces.<sup>38</sup> As an extension of previous scholarly endeavors by other educational historians such as James Anderson, this work moves beyond race as the primary focus. Instead, this study examines how race, gender, class, and region culminated in the life of one educator during and between periods of educational reform. Instead of studying how African-Americans were educated for servitude during the aftermath of the Civil War, this study

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<sup>36</sup> Shirley Harley, “Beyond the Classroom,” 255-256. Harley explains, “While the annual salaries of teachers was never commensurate with their high social standing in the black community, teaching was a much sought after profession. For black women, a teaching position was highly desirable for the following reasons: (1) it represented an acceptable, even admirable, public extension of their domestic roles in the home; (2) it represented one of few opportunities in which educated black women could perform duties commensurate with their professional training; (3) it provided one of the best salaries available to blacks in general; and, finally, (4) it carried considerable social prestige and status in the black community.”

<sup>37</sup> Anderson, “Brickbats and Roses: Lucy Diggs Slowe 1883-1937,” 284.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

peers into the life of an African-American woman who benefited from and contributed to both public and post-secondary education through the Progressive era. An exception to the literature about women in academic leadership positions, Lucy Diggs Slowe represented African-American women who held both administrative and academic posts. This study examines chance, change, and conflict in the life's work of Lucy Diggs Slowe.

### Theoretical Framework

Particularly in Western thought, historical analysis has been rooted in the context of time, consensus, and the metanarrative. The notion that history represents truth without shades of distinction or variance was a standard created through the merger of science with history. The historian represents truth from a standpoint of an overarching social structure that places the individual in the shadows.<sup>39</sup> "The disciplining of history, its metamorphosis into scientific discipline, became possible only once a new notion of time had emerged."<sup>40</sup> Time became and it remains a common denominator for classifying, describing, and recording events as they accumulated historically in Western cultures. The influence of science also marked the need for factual, agreed upon rigor.

In the United States, history was a valuable tool used to shape a sense of national identity through a master narrative depicting Americans' successes in "establishing free institutions, their cultivation of the wilderness, their liberation of the ordinary ambitions of ordinary men."<sup>41</sup> Thus, the history of America is universalized by time, marked by

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<sup>39</sup> Michael Rustin, "Reflections on the Biographical Turn in History," in The Turn to Biographical Methods in Social Science Edited by Prue Chamberlayne, Joanna Bornat and Tom Wengraf (Routledge: London, 2000), 33-70.

<sup>40</sup> Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob, Telling the Truth About History, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), 56.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 112.

specific events that bind an imagined community into a nation, and is indelibly represented by the lives of men who were ambitious enough to pursue nation building. Such a history became popular and acknowledged as truth because of its wide acceptance.

When considering the impact of science on history (i.e. methodology, objectivity, and rigor), time is not the sole ingredient by which a mixture develops to produce academically accepted scholarship. Consensus provides the agreement by which members of an imagined community can produce the concept of a nation. To address further the notion of objectivity, Carl F. Kaestle discusses the matter of consensus as a means of establishing a standard of truth in history.<sup>42</sup> For Kaestle, history rests on the agreement of scholars as a means for testing or confirming the truth. Yet this poses a major problem for histories that deal with minority groups. Consensus minimizes or eliminates the experiences of excluded groups, thus making cultural biases evident. Instead, the mythic and heroic quality of history assumes a superimposed presence on the collective consciousness. What then can be questioned or studied about one person or group that fails to fit neatly into the metanarrative? Can such a story be told objectively as the rigor of history requires?

The notion of objectivity is problematic. Historians can experience researcher's bias in that their own experiences and preferences influence their work. For example, in the case of an autobiography, participants share intimate details yet a filtering process takes place as to what to include or exclude given the time and purpose of the work. This same type of dilemma occurs for historians especially since historical methods require

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<sup>42</sup> Carl F. Kaestle, "Standards of Evidence in Historical Research: How Do We Know What We Know?" History of Education Quarterly 32 (Fall 1992): 361-366.

interpretation rather than simple reporting. Barzun and Graff write, “An objective judgment is one made by testing in all ways possible one’s subjective impressions, so as to arrive at a knowledge of objects.”<sup>43</sup> The authors go on to state that historians must intend to be objective in that they exhaust possibilities via comparison techniques and scholarly competence. Such is the rigorous influence of science.

Jacques Barzun writes about the ambiguity and problematic nature of history as a discipline. He distinguishes what he terms “popular” versus “unpopular” history where the masses easily recollect subject matter as if it were trivia while the latter requires deliberate effort to gather, analyze and interpret. Barzun writes that the notion of popular history is “potent and possibly dangerous” because it fails to account for perspectives based on the collective memory of specific social groups.<sup>44</sup> Random and superficial historical facts can be accepted as social truths as the past relates to the present. Barzun dismisses popular history because of the tendency to oversimplify complicated happenings and complex people. Popular history then reduces the significance of past events. It reduces the richness of the past to facts void of context, lacking a sense of urgency, and absent of any intimacy.<sup>45</sup>

In contrast to popular history, Barzun also describes unpopular history as the “results of sober reconnoitering... historical virtues [that] become, in ascending order of

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<sup>43</sup> Jacques Barzun and H.E. Graff, The Modern Researcher, (1957; repr., New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1977), 140.

<sup>44</sup> Jacques Barzun. “History, Popular and Unpopular,” in The Interpretation of History, ed. Joseph R. Strayer (1943; repr., New York: Princeton University Press, 1950), 33-34.

<sup>45</sup> For example, many Americans call recall the date Christopher Columbus sailed the ocean blue; however, his personal motives for the expedition versus the colonial sanction are not as well known or recognized.

value: accuracy, intellectual honesty, and artistic imagination.”<sup>46</sup> When adeptly employed by the historian, these three virtues create an opportunity for history to have an impact on the present. An event or person comes to life through the depth, scope, and breath of the historian’s efforts to convey the complexity of the happening or life. On the one hand, there are the notions of time, consensus, and objectivity. On the other hand, Barzun contends that accuracy, intellectual honesty, and artistic imagination are critical factors. This dichotomy and the gray continuum between pose an interesting dilemma for the historian to reconcile. One methodological approach to this dilemma is narrative discourse.

### *Narrative History*

As a form of discourse, Hayden White provides a thorough and thought provoking discussion about the use of narrative in contemporary history.<sup>47</sup> White addresses the doubts cast on narrative as an adequate form of historical research. He writes, “But it is precisely because the narrative mode of representation is so natural to human consciousness, so much an aspect of everyday speech and ordinary discourse, that its use in any field of study aspiring to the status of science is suspect.”<sup>48</sup> White grapples with the concept of the narrative as an interpretative versus a representative dissertative mode; an ideology versus a philosophy; a form of discourse or mere telling of a story; and, a form that is distinguished either by its content or by void of significant meaning. White presents various schools of theory that critique, deconstruct, linguistically analyze,

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<sup>46</sup> Barzun, “History, Popular and Unpopular,” 53-54.

<sup>47</sup> Hayden White, “The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory,” *History and Theory* 23, no. 1 (February 1984): 1-33.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

and evaluate the allegorical characteristics of the narrative as a medium for historiography. He exposes concerns about the interpretational quality of the narrative as commentary versus explanatory. Based on White's analysis of the controversial and ambiguous aspects of the narrative, any historian must seriously contemplate its use against the researcher's intentions and the expected outcome. However, the narrative, with all of his critiques and limitations, is "a function of the imagination in the production of a specifically human truth."<sup>49</sup>

When writing about the subjective nature of the individual experience as a narrative, Paul Cohen contends, the individual experience "affords us a basis for addressing critically and self-reflectively what it is about the experienced past that is distinctive."<sup>50</sup> Cohen explains that the individual experience "consists of a continuum of different kinds of experiences, at one end of which are experiences that, in terms of a given set of variables, are central, key, memorable, defining, and at the other end, experiences, often highly repetitive, that are of a more auxiliary or supportive sort."<sup>51</sup> A person's life is then a range of events that encompass very complex happenings and routine practices. All of the happenings have a distinct meaning to the individual as the experiences occur. However, the individual remains oblivious to how, over the course of time, history may interpret or represent the individual and her experiences. Both the remarkable and the subliminal experiences occur within a context. As Cohen states, "people's understanding of their experience, in other words, is circumscribed by not the

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>50</sup> Paul A. Cohen, History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 60.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 61.

cultural, but also the social, space within which they operate.”<sup>52</sup> The narrative is then a means to negotiate the private space of one life between other lives and it provides an entrance into public spaces.

*Biographical Study as Narrative*

Biography is one way to represent the individual experience. On the theory of biography, Apitzch and Inowlocki write,

It is not surprising, therefore, that much qualitative-interpretive research, and especially biographical analysis, does not presuppose social normality but rather asks about experiences during times of social transformation and in moments and times of crisis, and the emergence of needs for new social practices to prevent further exclusion or the complete breakdown of individual or social life.<sup>53</sup>

The evolution of the narrative as a means of conveying a story where a particular agent or central figure moves through particular events provides the foundation for narrative history. With this method, some historical techniques are necessary so that its practice is mechanized and reproducible. Specifically, in the case of a historical biography, Dumas Malone provides some fundamental guidelines for undertaking the task of reconstructing and representing someone’s life. The first point is that a “biography should orientate its subject in history, though it should certainly not contain a full story of the times.”<sup>54</sup> The purpose is to provide the context and situations in which the person lived. Malone also reminds the historian to focus on the deed or task. Extraneous details can distract the

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>53</sup> Ursula Apitzsch and Lena Inowlocki, “Biographical Analysis: A German ‘School,’ in *The Turn to Biographical Methods in Social Science* ed. Prue Chamberlayen, Joanna Bornat, and Tom Wengraf (Routledge: London, 2000), 53 -70.

<sup>54</sup> Dumas Malone, “Biography and History,” in *The Interpretation of History*, ed. Joseph R. Strayer (1943; repr., New York: Princeton University Press, 1950), 141.

reader from the significance of the person's life. However, supporting information related to deeds serves to complement the narrative the historian offers as a body of work. The second requirement that Malone discusses is the historian's awareness and acknowledgment of value judgments. "Biography that abounds in hasty judgment on insufficient evidence is false, but biography that is devoid of judgment is vain."<sup>55</sup> That is to say, a biography as a final product undergoes processes and moments when the historian must decide what information to use and how. Omissions, minimal references, and overindulgence in scandalous information result from the historian's lack of judgment. Malone's third requirement concerns the collection and interpretation of personal attributes (i.e. lineage, personal appearance, marital and nuclear family constellation, etc.) in order to render an interpretation of the subject's life. Sensitive historical interpretation provides meaning and significance in a biography by illuminating a context rather than positing singular causes.<sup>56</sup>

More specifically, the educational historian and biographer have the means "to explore intersections between human agency and social structure."<sup>57</sup> In the case of African-American women, both gender and race conform to notions of social structures

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 142-143

<sup>57</sup> Barbara Finkelstein, "Revealing Human Agency: The Uses of Biography in the Study of Educational History," in Writing Educational Biography, Explorations in Qualitative Research. Ed. Craig Kridel, (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998), 46. Some earlier historians would concur with Finkelstein's statement. One such historian is Michael Kraus, "Biography since 1900," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review 40, no. 4 (March 1954): 608-613. Kraus writes, "The best modern biographers have learned how to invest the 'facts' of an individual's life with the intangibility of his personality" (612).



through which human agency are demonstrated.<sup>58</sup> Barbara Finkelstein delineates the utility and justification of this narrative method. She writes,

Biographical studies situate historical storytelling at the margins of social possibility where social change originates, constraint and choice merge, large and small social structures intersect, cultural norms converge, and the relative force of political, economic, social and cultural circumstance becomes clear. Historical biography reveals the relative power of individuals to stabilize or transform the determinacies of cultural tradition, political arrangements, economic forms, social circumstances and educational processes into new social possibilities.<sup>59</sup>

Finkelstein postulates that biographical studies provide a four-fold point of entry into history: the etymology of novel concepts or ideas; the revelation of alternative possibilities as represented by unheard individuals or groups; the opportunity to acknowledge the tension between educational processes and social change; and the realization that variation exists in the overshadowed lives of individuals.<sup>60</sup> The life and work experiences of Lucy Diggs Slowe represent all aspects of Finkelstein's typography.

In the first instance where biography provides a lens to study the etymology of new ideas, Finkelstein contends that it has the "capacity to reveal the ideological, economic, political, social and cultural crucibles within which a person develops new ways of knowing, thinking, acting and being."<sup>61</sup> In Slowe's

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<sup>58</sup> Paul. W.L. Jones, "Negro Biography," *The Journal of Negro History* 8, no. 2 (April 1923): 128-133. Jones emphasizes the need to promote biographical study as a primary means of highlighting "the fact that the Negro's advancement is part of the forward movement of the world, and his progress in all fields where-in he has labored is apart of the general progress of mankind" (129).

<sup>59</sup> Finkelstein, "Revealing Human Agency," 46

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 47.

case, her life clearly embodied the result of new ideas represented as flesh and bone. She was born during the socio-political era of Post-Reconstruction. Orphaned as a young child, her maternal aunt raised her and her sister. She relocated to Baltimore, Maryland to be educated in arguably one the best public school milieus for Negroes. She secured an unprecedented scholarship as a young woman and completed undergraduate studies at Howard University. She entered the field of education at a time when the demand for highly qualified Negro teachers was at its peak. Timing, chance, and her own preparedness aligned so that she would be the first principal of a junior high school for Negro students in Washington, D.C. Slowe went on to become the first African-American Dean of Women at Howard University at a time when women's rights were emerging. All of these seemingly inconsequential facts are examples of the convergence of ideological, political, social, and cultural crucibles that Finkelstein references.

When discussing biography and the discovery of social possibilities, Finkelstein uses the biographies of nineteenth century slaves. She explores the opposition and strain that educational pursuit meant for the individual slave who desired it yet feared the consequences of such a pursuit. No less is the tension or apprehension of Lucy Diggs Slowe. Although she was not ever a slave, the weight of being a pioneer was a daunting task. The first implies navigating an uncharted course. The complexities, nuances, impediments, triumphs, victories, and concessions that are the processes imbedded in the navigation would remain invisible were it not for the biography.<sup>62</sup> When discussing biography in terms of

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 52-55.

social change, Finkelstein focuses on gender. In her example about girls and women, Finkelstein writes, “biography can reveal the processes by which people transform lived experiences into new human relationships, power hierarchies, status definitions, educational arrangements and civic influences as well as into efforts to reconstruct social political and economic forms.”<sup>63</sup> In Finkelstein’s examples, she refers to well-to-do white women such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton. It is ironic that in the shadow of the male slave narratives and white women from affluent families that Finkelstein uses to illustrate her points rests the uncovered stories of a number of African-American women who represent race, gender, and varying assortments of class. Lucy Diggs Slowe is an example of such a story.

When writing a biography, there can be a tendency to elevate the subject to the extent that life events give way to mythic overhaul. When this happens there is the possibility of creating “a persistent fallacy in historical reasoning: the tendency to promulgate interpretive schemes or sense-making myths that reveal historical developments and processes of social change with uncommon elegance while muting, distorting, over-simplifying and obscuring both human agency and historical processes.”<sup>64</sup> That is to say, the metanarrative has limitations because it cannot include every facet of history. The historical substance of the biography supplements the grand myth by adding color, texture, and diversity. These stories of the forgotten and marginalized would not have been told otherwise; their otherness does not fit into the

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 55

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 58. See Michael Kraus, “Biography since 1900,” The Mississippi Valley Historical Review 40, No. 4 (March 1954): 612-613.

grand scheme of mythic history. However, if left untold, mythic history would persist as the only representation of what was.

Thus, educational biography is a viable means of representing and retelling the life and work of Lucy Diggs Slowe. As an African-American, as a woman, as educator, as an administrator, as a civic leader, and one called upon to speak on social issues in public spaces. Her life is the convergence of race, gender, class, educational opportunity, ambition, happenstance, social transformation, politics, individual flaws, personality conflicts, self-will, pride, and humility. The co-existence of seemingly contradictory elements substantiates the complexity of a singular story for which the biography provides the best means of illumination.

#### Method

Historical analysis requires time and intentional pursuit of information in the form of documents. Primary documents are required and can be represented as personal letters or diaries, business correspondence, manuscripts and other public documents. On April 5-6, 2004 and November 10, 2009, I visited the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center Manuscript Division and reviewed the Lucy Diggs Slowe collection. The Slowe Collection is six linear feet and contains documents written from 1919 to 1943. The collection contains “correspondence, speeches, writings, class notes, curriculum, administrative, and organizational material, scrapbooks, clippings, printed matter, memorabilia, photos, and family and other papers. It also contains organizational materials about the Deans and Advisors of Women in Colored Schools, the National Association of College Women, obituaries and letters of condolence regarding Slowe's

death.”<sup>65</sup> After collecting copies of the documents, I categorized the information based on chronological and thematic groupings.

In an attempt to obtain primary source from District of Columbia Public School System, I contacted the department of archives only to find very scant information about her appointment to the Shaw Junior High School, the first Negro public institution of its type in Washington, D.C. Digital text provided a tremendous resource. I was able to locate at least one primary document during Slowe’s employment in the District of Columbia’s public schools system. In other instances, it was necessary to rely on secondary resources such as scholarly articles about the junior high movement as a phenomenon in public education and Negro education at the turn of the twentieth century and newspaper articles. For this information, as well as all other literature, I created categories organized by thematic groupings. In reference to genealogical facts, I used electronic resources to obtain scanned copies of primary documents such as U.S. Census records.

### Organization of the Dissertation

Divided into both chronological and thematic chapters, this study focuses on specific events and developments in Slowe’s life. The first chapter examines Slowe’s academic development as a student who transitioned from high school to collegiate study at Howard University. The second chapter discusses Slowe’s early life experiences and family or origin. The third chapter discusses major system changes in higher education and secondary schools because of Charles W. Eliot’s influences. The importance of this

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<sup>65</sup> Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers. <http://www.howard.edu/library/moorland-spigarn>. Accessed January 19, 2005.

explores how Eliot's influences on educational reform at the secondary level had a watershed effect on the circumstances that favored Slowe's chances to assume leadership roles in education, particularly at the junior high school level. The fourth chapter presents Slowe's experiences public education and at the helm of educational reform as the principal of a junior high school. The fifth chapter discusses Slowe's fifteen years of experience in the position of dean of women at Howard University. I will reference historical and contemporary biographical studies about dean of women in academia and explore Slowe's leadership in the professional organizations, i.e. Deans and Advisers of Women in Colored Schools and the National Association of Colored Women, as well as her community service endeavors. The sixth chapter examines Slowe's decline in status during a period of institutional reorganization at Howard University. The final chapter provides concluding remarks about her the professional contributions and personal convictions.

## CHAPTER 2

### OUT OF THE VALLEY

“If the person is to get the benefit of what we call education, he must educate himself, under the direction of his teacher.”<sup>1</sup>

Fanny Jackson Coppin

Originally known as Battletown, Berryville, Virginia was renamed on January 15, 1798, as the namesake of Benjamin Berry, a white landowner.<sup>2</sup> Nestled in the Shenandoah Valley, which borders West Virginia, Berryville is located approximately sixty miles west of Washington, D.C. The Shenandoah Valley is steeped in history and Battletown had been an appropriate epitaph. Major General Phillip Sheridan, an officer for the Union Army, waged a military campaign from August through October of 1864 in that same valley. Berryville was the site of an inconclusive battle between Major General Sheridan and Lieutenant General Jubal Early of the Confederate Army.<sup>3</sup> The quaint

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<sup>1</sup> Fanny Jackson Coppin, *Reminiscence of School Life and Hints on Teaching*, 44. Coppin originally published her autobiography and pedagogical hints in 1913. Coppin’s statement underscores the importance of self-engagement in education under the direction of the teacher. The educational process is fruitful when the student is inspired to embark on an individual pursuit and quest. Of her own experience, Coppin stated that she was inspired to teach as a result of a particular educational experience she had with a teacher who inspired her.

<sup>2</sup> National Park Service, Berryville, available from <http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/abpp/battles/va118.htm> and <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/VAmainstreet/ber.htm> (accessed July 30, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

agrarian county seat that remains characterized by German and English settlers, an infamous mill, and the beauty of fall foliage is the birthplace of Lucy Diggs Slowe.<sup>4</sup>

Certainly, by modern standards, sixty miles is a meager distance to travel from the countryside to the country's capitol. Yet the story of Lucy Diggs Slowe's trek from small-town Berryville to the urban setting of Washington, D.C. incorporated a more arduous path full of both setbacks and surprises. On July 4, 1883, Henry and Fannie Potter Slowe received a new addition to their family; Lucy Diggs Slowe was born as the third daughter and youngest of seven children.<sup>5</sup> Slowe's father was the owner of the only hotel in Berryville and her mother worked as the primary housekeeper.<sup>6</sup> Her paternal grandparents were David Slowe and Penelope Diggs Slowe. Her maternal grandparents were David Potter and Ann Massey Potter. All of the grandparents were from Berryville.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Genealogical reference, Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C (Box 90-1, Folder 1). The contents refer to Chilham Castle B.C. 56 - A.D. 1916, the family genealogy of British family, Sir Dudley Digges. A white woman in Virginia believed there was a relation between this family and Lucy Diggs Slowe.

<sup>5</sup> Ancestry.com <http://www.ancestry.com> *Clarke County, Virginia Births, 1878-96* [database on-line] (accessed July 30, 2008). Her obituary and various other sources cite Slowe's birthday as July 4, 1885. For an example see Marion Thompson Wright, "Lucy Diggs Slowe," *Notable American Women 1607 - 1950: A Biographical Dictionary* Vol. III ed. Edward T. James (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1971), 299-300. As another curious point of discrepancy, U.S. Census records identify the spelling of her last name without an e, Slow. I could not determine at what point the addition or omission of the letter e occurred. Lucy's name appears only with her first name and middle initial indicated. The recorders intermittently indicated or omitted the middle initial on various records. The recorder misspells the mother of Lucy's name as "Grannie" on the census report. A number of inconsistencies across time existed when examining the manual census reports.

<sup>6</sup> Memorandum to Miss Beatrice Clark "in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C May 22, 1936 (Box 90-2, Folder 39). This is a two-page document enumerating Slowe's professional career path with biographical information.

<sup>7</sup> A note from Nellie Slow Hawkes, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C (Box 90-1, Folder 1). Notice that Slowe's sister does not spell her last name with the letter e. Also, note that Diggs is



The record for the Battletown Township identified Henry, age 58 as a laborer, and her mother, as a homemaker, as the parents of five children: John the eldest at age 12, Coltrop age 9, Preston age 8, Owen age 4, and Charlotte age 16 months. Additionally, a paternal grandparent, Penelope, age 80, resided with the family. This descriptive report identified that John attempted to attend school during that year; however, he could not read or write. In fact, none of the adults in the household could read or write.<sup>8</sup>

By the age of six, Lucy D. Slowe's mother died. Years later in her memoirs, Lucy D. Slowe wrote what could be interpreted arguably as a loosely autobiographical account of her early childhood years. In this piece, she referred to herself as Dora Cole and some of her siblings as John, James, Bill, and Charlotte. Coincidentally, John and Charlotte were the names of her siblings according to the June 15, 1880 United States Census. In this reflective piece she wrote,

My mother was a gentle, easy woman, especially with me, for I was her youngest, and had been only nine months old when my father died. I did about as I pleased in spite of the protests of my brothers, John and Bill, and my sister, Charlotte who was four years my senior, but seemed very much older to me. She it was who regarded it as her especial duty to boss

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the maiden name of Slowe's paternal grandmother.) This information was written on a personal handwritten note that delineates ancestry. The note reads: "Lucy Diggs Slowe, the youngest child of Henry and Fannie Potter Slowe was born July 4<sup>th</sup> 1883 at Berryville Clark County, Virginia. Her paternal grandparents were David Slowe and Penelope Diggs Slowe. Maternal grandparents were David Potter and Ann Massey Potter all of Berryville to the best of my knowledge. Lucy's parents having died (father when she was nine months mother when she was less than six years) she was taken to Lexington, Va. By our Aunt – Martha Price, later her aunt moved to Baltimore, Md. Where Lucy attended and finished the public schools leading her class all ways and winning honors, including a scholarship to Howard University Washington, D.C."

<sup>8</sup> Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau, June 15, 1880. <http://www.ancestry.com>; Internet: Accessed 30 July 2008. The census report was recorded manually by hand. Often names would be misspelled from one decade to the next. The indication for literacy was a tick mark if the resident could not read or could not write. When a resident was literate then the category remained absent of the tick mark. This makes the absence of any tick marks for Lucy's sister, Charlotte, rather curious since she was only 16 months old.

me, and I it was, who thought I had a perfect right to scratch her, pull her hair and then hide behind my mother's skirt.<sup>9</sup>

By Slowe's own account, she revealed some of her personality characteristics in terms of how she interacted with her siblings.

A paternal aunt and mother of nine children, Martha Slowe Price assumed care for Lucy. In a semi-autobiographical piece, Slowe described her aunt and life in Lexington where they moved for a brief period after leaving Berryville.<sup>10</sup>

Aunt Martha had lived in Lexington since her girlhood. She had been employed as a lady's maid by the aristocratic Mrs. Pendleton, whose service she left to become the wife of Robert Price, an industrious man of all work at the military school in town. My aunt had imbibed a good deal of culture and refinement from her employer, and was as much of an aristocrat, in her own way, as Mr. Pendleton. She had very pronounced ideals on dignity, morality and religion, which she did not fail to impress upon the members of her family.

When my sister and I joined my Aunt's household, her husband had died and her two sons and a daughter were supporting her. William her older boy took his father's place at the military school, while Tom looked after the orchard and Louise the house. Aunt Martha was forty-five, tall, straight and proud. Her children respected and obeyed her, and Charlotte and I feared her.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Lucy D. Slowe, "The Evolution of Dora Cole," Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C (Box 90-1, Folder 1).

A note from Slowe's long time personal friend and companion, Mary P. Burrill, identified the drafts as course work assignments in composition assigned during her enrollment at Columbia University. Burrill wrote, "These sketches are personal experiences in the life of Dean Slowe. They were written as exercises in a course in Composition Columbia University. The Evolution of Dora Cole is an accurate account of the death of Dean Slowe's mother. John is Dean Slowe's brother – Dora is Dean Slowe herself; Charlotte, Dean Slowe's sister. The account is true, as I have often heard Dean Slowe relate the incident. The story of Jan House is also an incident from Dean Slowe's childhood." in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C (Box 90-1, Folder 1).

<sup>10</sup> K. Anderson, "Brickbats and Roses," 284; Washington, D.C., U.S. Census Bureau, June 5, 1900.

<sup>11</sup> "The Evolution of Dora Cole," Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers.

Eventually Slowe's aunt relocated from Lexington, Virginia to Baltimore, Maryland, a larger metropolitan area. Slowe wrote, "Anyhow, I was not consulted, but it was decided that Charlotte and I would start in two days with Aunt Martha to her home in Lexington, Virginia."<sup>12</sup> Located approximately forty miles from Washington, D.C., Baltimore is where Slowe would receive her formal education in public schools.<sup>13</sup> Slowe wrote, "When I was about nine years old, I moved to Baltimore in order that I might have better school facilities."<sup>14</sup> Characterized by a dichotomous existence, Baltimore embodied both northern and southern qualities reflected in the day-to-day experiences of Negroes at the turn of the twentieth century.

A leading commercial center in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries because of its port's proximity to the Midwest and the South, Baltimore was one of the nation's most populous cities and, in the antebellum United States, had one of the largest immigrant and free black populations in the country. Economically and demographically, Baltimore resembled a Northern city more than it did a Southern one, especially in the post-Civil War period when, like contemporaries in the North and Midwest, it rapidly industrialized and grew in population. Yet Baltimore was Southern oriented. Sympathizing with the Confederates during the Civil War and occupied by the Union army to keep it from seceding, Baltimore in the postwar era statutorily racially segregated its public school, as did other Southern cities, and encouraged informal racial segregation and exclusion in other spheres of public life.<sup>15</sup>

Further, the dichotomy could be described quantitatively by examining various figures in terms of cost per student and total number of students educated. When

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. Slowe wrote about her enthusiasm when learning that she would leave Lexington for the city. "I gasped but was afraid to jump up and scream for joy, because Aunt Martha had a way of changing her mind about permitting me to do things, if I appeared too eager. I sat as still as a mouse; but how my heart was beating!"

<sup>14</sup> "Memorandum to Miss Beatrice Clark," Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers.

<sup>15</sup> Farrar, *Baltimore Afro-American: 1892-1950*, xiii.

comparing the per pupil cost educational cost between Virginia and Maryland in 1910, the former spent \$2.74 for each Negro student while the latter spent \$6.88. While that appears to be a great improvement, in comparison to white counterparts, Virginia spent \$9.64 per pupil while Maryland spent \$18.79 per student.<sup>16</sup> The comparison between white and Negro students revealed a stark contrast when considering the data available at the time “In other words, the number of white children is less than twice the number of colored children, but the amount of money spent for the education is over six times that spent for colored children.”<sup>17</sup> By 1916, not much had changed; the national figures continued to indicate a stark disparity where the average cost per white student was \$10.32 as opposed to \$2.89 spent on each Negro student. Costs remained a practical indicator about the inequities evidenced in segregated educational systems.<sup>18</sup>

Lucy Diggs Slowe attended Baltimore High School, categorized as a “large city high school with good teaching force and limited equipment.”<sup>19</sup> In other words, the staff members did the best they could with what they had even though resources, materials, and equipment were not equal to a comparable white school. As previously mentioned, Baltimore legally practiced segregated public education but there was some resistance to

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<sup>16</sup> Kelly Miller and Joeseph R. Gay, Progress and Achievements of the Colored People (Washington, D.C.: Austen Jenkins Co., 1917): 232. [http://books.google.com/books?id=wiYjnOIVwDMC&dq=progress+and+achievements+of+colored+people&printsec=frontcover&source=bl&ots=jdg3ctgQGU&sig=P6X3Fd2Bt08k8U2k-RgzDwx7J0&hl=en&ei=HvAES6yrHsjSnAfZs6nGCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CAwQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=wiYjnOIVwDMC&dq=progress+and+achievements+of+colored+people&printsec=frontcover&source=bl&ots=jdg3ctgQGU&sig=P6X3Fd2Bt08k8U2k-RgzDwx7J0&hl=en&ei=HvAES6yrHsjSnAfZs6nGCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CAwQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=&f=false) (accessed September 23, 2008).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 231.

<sup>18</sup> Department of the Interior, Negro Education, 10. See L.A. Pechstein “The Problem of Negro Education in the Northern and Border Cities,” The Elementary School Journal 30, no. 3 (November 1929): 192-199.

<sup>19</sup> Dwight O.W. Holmes, “Eulogy at the Obsequies of Lucy D. Slowe,” Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Morland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 09-1, Folder 1). See also Department of the Interior, Negro Education, 321.

this practice. Some Negroes voiced the need for Negro leadership in the form of political representation on the school board and daily oversight in the form of a Director of Colored Schools.<sup>20</sup> However, it is difficult to categorize Baltimore in such definitive terms as urban but segregated. During an earlier period, some considered Baltimore as a bastion for a few liberal thinking whites. As Carter G. Woodson explained, in West Virginia, Negro volunteerism from other states made educational opportunities possible. Woodson wrote,

There went out to the other States the call for help, which was answered largely by workers from Virginia, Maryland, and Ohio. Virginia did not have many workers to spare, but from Baltimore, where because of the liberal attitude of the whites toward the education of Negroes prior to the Civil War, a considerable group of Negroes had been trained, came a much larger number of volunteers.<sup>21</sup>

The public school system in Baltimore, and in some other northern cities, was comparatively improved because of the number of qualified African-American teachers.

Baltimore High School was predominantly female. The enrollment was comprised of 448 female students and 221 male students. Not as glaring in contrast to the student body, the faculty also reflected this trend where 19 of the 34 members were female in comparison to 15 male teachers. The curriculum was exceptional in that there were very few schools in the southern states that provided secondary schools for Negro students.

There are only 65 public high schools for negroes in the Southern States. Of these, 47 maintain four-year courses and 18 have three-year courses. In

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<sup>20</sup> For a more detailed discussion about the politics of Negro public education in Baltimore see chapter two, "But Slowly: The Afro-American and Black Education," in Hayward Farrar, Baltimore Afro-American: 1892-1950, 29-56. Farrar discusses the contention and circumstances that contributed to African-American teacher employment at the same type of public schools, African-American educational leadership, controversies about equal pay and equal facilities. Slowe would return to Baltimore to teach English in her first professional position.

<sup>21</sup> Carter G. Woodson, "Early Negro Education in West Virginia," The Journal of Negro History 7, no. 1 (January 1922): 26.

addition, there are about 200 public schools which enroll few pupils above the elementary grades. Practically all of the four-year high schools are in large cities of the border States.<sup>22</sup>

At the turn of the twentieth century, Baltimore High School was an atypical high school for Negroes. In addition to having 669 students, 34 faculty members and property estimated at \$65,000, the curriculum was a hybrid of college preparatory, commercial, and industrial courses. The curriculum at Baltimore High School was more consistent with common practices of the period in contrast to the circulating and contemporary W.E.B. Dubois versus B. T. Washington debate. The dichotomous debate concerned the appropriateness of a college preparatory as opposed to a vocational emphasis in the interest of uplifting the race.<sup>23</sup> In actual practice, this hybrid model appeared to combine the practical need for skilled artisans with the promise of building an academic elite and upper middle class through acculturated educational experiences.

The curriculum was structured so that students could take Latin, science, and commercial courses for up to four years. Every track required language. For example, German was a requirement for the science track, and one year of foreign language was required for commercial courses.<sup>24</sup> Baltimore High School was a larger, better equipped, and a more highly valued institution with a more rigorous curriculum when compared to other schools for Negroes. Despite the fact that Negro students did not receive resources equivalent to white counterparts, amongst secondary schools for Negroes in the southern and border states, Baltimore High School could be envied. The grounds consisted of a

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<sup>22</sup> Miller and Gay, Progress and Achievements, 232.

<sup>23</sup> For an artistic and unique perspective on industrial education as argued by B.T. Washington, see Michael Bieze, Booker T. Washington and the Art of Self-Representation (New York: Peter Lang, 2008): 127-132.

<sup>24</sup> Miller and Gay, Progress and Achievements, 232-234.

city lot: on the lot were a two-story brick building with a basement, a two-story brick shop, and two rented buildings used for instruction of domestic courses and the another building was used as a chapel.<sup>25</sup> Slowe would thrive in this setting, consistently pursuing excellence in every endeavor. She had a competitive nature, and she vied against a fellow classmate, Alethea Washington, for the highest honors in every class. “These two shared between them first and second rank in class all the time.”<sup>26</sup> In 1904, she graduated from high school as the salutatorian with her sights set for higher education.<sup>27</sup> Slowe would go on to matriculate at Howard University (HU), enrolled from 1904 to 1908.<sup>28</sup> During the course of her enrollment at HU she remained keenly intellectual, competitive in sports, active in student organizations, and she was the first to accomplish many things as a woman on a coeducational campus. As an example of both her ambition and intellect, Slowe was one of the first female students to whom HU offered a scholarship.

Scholarships were scarce but even more so for female students.

She was the first girl from Baltimore High School to enter Howard University and the first one to receive a scholarship. She entered the University in the fall of 1904 and was graduated with the degree of A.B. in 1908. She took active part in the literary, musical, athletic and social activities of the University by serving as Vice-President and Secretary respectively of the Alpha Phi Literary Society, as first President of the

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Holmes, “Eulogy at the Obsequies of Lucy D. Slowe,” Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers. At this point in the eulogy Holmes only alluded to Slowe overcoming challenges.

<sup>27</sup> Wright, “Lucy Diggs Slowe,” Notable American Women, 299.

<sup>28</sup> Slowe’s accomplishment as a graduate needs to be emphasized for several reasons. She was a scholarship recipient who persisted through steady matriculation. Statistically, she would have been 1 of 5,000 African-Americans to graduate from college since 1823 and one of 900 female graduates during the same time period. See Edward T. Ware, “Higher Education of Negroes in the United States,” Annals of the American Academy of Political Science 49 (September, 1913): 209-218.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, and as President of the Women's Tennis Club.<sup>29</sup>

As a student, Slowe was one of the founding members of Alpha Kappa Alpha, the first sorority for African-American women. Nine undergraduate students founded Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. (AKA) during the 1907-1908 academic-year at Howard University: Beulah Burke, Lillie Burke, Margaret Flagg Holmes, Marjorie Hill, Lucy Slowe, Marie Woolfolk Taylor, Anna Easter Brown, and Lavinia Norman.<sup>30</sup> In January 1908, the Howard University administration approved the sorority's constitution, initially drafted by Slowe. Because the constitution stipulated that the president must be a senior, Ethel Hedgemen, a junior and the sorority's creator, nominated Lucy Slowe as the first president. During her senior year, Slowe worked with a professor, Chas. C. Cooke, in the English Department.<sup>31</sup>

Slowe graduated as valedictorian prior to the incorporation of AKA on January 29, 1913.<sup>32</sup> Another of her notable accomplishments included winning the first American

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<sup>29</sup> "Dean Lucy Slowe" Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C (Box 90-1, Folder 1).

<sup>30</sup> Marjorie H. Parker Alpha Kappa Alpha Through the Years 1908-1988 (Chicago: The Mobium Press, 1990) and Lawrence C. Ross, Jr. The Divine Nine: The History of African American Fraternities and Sororities (New York: Kensington Publishing Corp., 2000). Notable members of AKA include Althea Gibson, professional tennis player; Dr. Maya Angelou, novelist and poet; Toni Morrison, Noble Prize winning author; Congresswoman Yvonne Braithwaite-Burke; Dr. Mae Jemison, physician and first African American female astronaut; and, Dr. Dorothy Cowser Yancey, the first African-American female president of Johnson C. Smith College, a historically black college.

<sup>31</sup> "Miss Slowe to be Dean of Women at Howard Univ. Made Record as Principal of Robert Gould Shaw Junior High School, Has Columbia Univ. Degree, To Also be Assistant in the Department of English," The Washington Tribune, 17 June 1922, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-10, Folder 201).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.



Tennis Association Championship in 1917.<sup>33</sup> To be certain that her prowess on the tennis court was not commemorated by a single event, “she won seventeen tennis cups.”<sup>34</sup>

She would later go on to begin her career as an English teacher when she returned to Baltimore, Maryland from 1908-1915. In most parts of the country, it was unusual for black teachers to attend, let alone, complete collegiate study before entering the field of teaching. “The large proportion of colored teachers with less than eighth-grade education is ample justification for recommending the introduction of teacher-training courses in every educational institution able to offer any or all of the subjects or activities usually given in such courses.”<sup>35</sup> There were some regional exceptions.

However, in northeastern cities, teaching was fast becoming a professional endeavor for women, and women of color. Farrar chronicles trained and eligible African-American educators who were systematically excluded through local school board policies from pursuing teaching positions in schools for African-Americans. Farrar goes further to state that by 1903 community pressure resulted in a turnover from white teachers to African-American teachers in Negro schools. He writes, “Southern blacks, including those in Baltimore, correctly agitated for control and staffing of institutions set aside for them, especially schools.”<sup>36</sup> Slowe and others benefited from this transition. The

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<sup>33</sup> African-American sports Hall of Fame & Museum available from <http://aasportshall.com> (accessed 30 July 2008). Also see <http://www.afn.org/~ata/about.htm> (accessed 30 July 2008). Founded in 1898, the American Tennis Association provided a means for competitive athletic opportunities for African-Americans. Slowe competed in the championship held in August 1917 in Baltimore, Maryland.

<sup>34</sup>Wright, “Lucy Diggs Slowe,” Notable American Women, 299.

<sup>35</sup> Department of the Interior, Negro Education, 37.

<sup>36</sup> See Hayward Farrar’s discussion, “The Crusade for Equity in Teaching,” in The Baltimore Afro-American, 32.

effect of her influence on the sorority, the student body at HU, and visibility to the administration cannot be fully assessed in the absence of more readily available documents. It is, at the least, coincidentally interesting that Slowe returned to her alma mater as an administrator overseeing student life, particularly the experiences of collegiate women. The hallmarks of AKA include achievement and service.<sup>37</sup> Beyond her collegiate experiences, Slowe continued to demonstrate pioneering inclinations in her professional career that resonated with the service and empowerment philosophy of AKA. In forthcoming chapters, her professional endeavors will be discussed in more detail.

Slowe remained with her aunt and cousins until her mid-twenties. The U.S. Census records for two years document this period of prolonged residency with her extended family. In June 1900, Slowe lived with her cousin, James Steward, age 32. For ten years, James had been married to Louise, age 34, and the couple had two daughters, Martha and Mable. James was employed as a butler, an occupation representative of the small but developing Negro middle class. At this time, Slowe's aunt continued to live with her and extended family members. Everyone in the household read and wrote except for Martha Slowe Price.<sup>38</sup> John Steward rented a home for his family in the 16<sup>th</sup> district of Baltimore.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Parker Alpha Kappa Alpha Through the Years 1908-1988, 3.

<sup>38</sup> Washington, D.C., U.S. Census Bureau, June 5, 1900.

<sup>39</sup> It was difficult to determine whether or not renting a home was the norm or an exception. Based on the previously referenced semi-autobiographical account, Slowe's aunt Martha had some sense of refinement and high expectations for her children and relatives. In reference to housing in Baltimore, Hayward Farrar (1998) writes,

Until the 1890s Baltimore's blacks were dispersed throughout the city with three-quarters city's twenty ward 10% black or less and no more than one-third black.

It was in this familial, educational, and social context that Slowe evolved to become an academically astute and ambitious student guided by the support of her aunt, Martha Slowe Price, who emphasized education and discipline.<sup>40</sup> Slowe's aunt also had a strong abiding faith that she tried to instill firmly in family. Even as a child, Slowe had her own views.<sup>41</sup> Until her unexpected death due to illness, Slowe continued to act on her own convictions and to demonstrate her commitment to education.

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However, by the turn of the century, increased black migration from rural Maryland and points farther south, industrial redevelopment, and hardening racial attitudes began concentrating Baltimore's blacks into three areas: a large ghetto abutting the central business district on its northwest side, a smaller one just east of downtown, and a tiny upper-class black neighborhood near Morgan College in far northeast Baltimore. The northwest ghetto was the largest and most diverse, containing over half of Baltimore's black population. Working and underclass blacks lived in that part of this ghetto closest to the downtown area; while the more elite blacks lived farther away, some ten blocks to the northwest, mostly on the upper Druid Hill Avenue (101).

It would have been difficult for Slowe's family to own a home. Renting would have been the norm. For a comparative discussion about housing for Negroes, see W.D. Weatherford, Negro Life in the South: Present Conditions and Needs (New York: Association Press, 1911). In chapter three, "The Health and Housing of Negroes," Weatherford discussed the range of great disparity between overcrowded rural one-room settings, overcrowded urban tenement dwellings, and, fewer but existent houses for family dwellings in both Southern and Northern locations.

<sup>40</sup> Anderson, "Brickbats and Roses," 284. "

<sup>41</sup> In the "Evolution of Dora Cole," Slowe wrote about an exchange she had with her aunt.

Sunday was indeed a day of rest in Lexington. Everybody went to church. My aunt was a regular attendant, so, of course we had to go. "Dora! Dora!" came the short crisp call up the stairs one bright July Sunday morning. 'It is half-past nine and time you were in Sunday School. Come down here immediately. Charlotte is ready and waiting for you.' "Aunt Martha," I pleaded, "I have a headache this morning. Couldn't I stay out in the yard in the cool?" "No!" came in an explosive tone. "Do you think I am going to have a little heathen in my house? I never stay home from church and neither will you. Come done right now." Down I came and started up the street with my sister to Sunday School and preaching service. The morning was hot, and outdoors alluring, hence religious service in a small church was torture for me. I made up in my mind that I would never know what the inside of a church looked like when I became a woman.

By April 21, 1910, Aunt Martha no longer lived with the family. Instead, Lucy's sister, Charlotte, moved into the home.<sup>42</sup> Both Lucy and Charlotte worked in schools. The procurement of employment at a teacher in Baltimore was significant since such an occupation represented an emerging socio-economic distinction. Teachers, preachers, doctors, and lawyers represented the emerging Negro elite class.<sup>43</sup> Seemingly, both Lucy and Charlotte made a social and economic leap from one class to another in less than a single generation's time. Historically, the Freedmen's Bureau, various church-supported initiatives, and Northern philanthropic efforts provided white teachers to educate Negroes in the southern states and heavily populated cities in border states, with an emphasis on industrial education.<sup>44</sup> Statesmen, clergymen, and industrialists all had a position on educating the masses of former slaves. Often debated and complicated by the sheer volume of freedmen, the salient questions remained as to how the country would provide education, in what form, and for what purpose. Whether qualified as or having an

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<sup>42</sup> Washington, D.C. U.S. Census Bureau, April 21, 1910. Aunt Martha's name does not appear on the census report. I did not make the assumption that she died because she could have gone to live with other relatives.

<sup>43</sup> Farrar, Baltimore Afro-American, xiv.

<sup>44</sup> See James Anderson, "Education for Servitude: The Social Purposes of Schooling in the Black South, 1870-1930" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1973) and The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988). In his dissertation, Anderson discusses how philanthropic efforts were used to promote education for freedmen in order to perpetuate a laboring Negro class. For further reading on philanthropic endeavors for Negro education, see Marybeth Gasman, Envisioning Black Colleges: A History of the United Negro College Fund (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007) and Marybeth Gasman and Katherine V. Segwick (eds.), Uplifting a People: African American Philanthropy and Education (New York: Peter Lang, 2005). Also see Bieze, Booker T. Washington and the Art of Self-Representation. For a perspective about how timely industrial education was for African-Americans, see Booker T. Washington, "Relation of Industrial Education to National Progress," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 33, no.1 (January, 1909): 1-12 and Roscoe C. Bruce, "Training in Agriculture at Tuskegee," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 21 (May, 1903): 171-173.

aptitude for teaching, the national task with immediate regional implications, was attributed, in part, to supply and demand.

The most urgent need of the colored schools in Maryland is trained teachers. The supply now depends largely on the secondary and normal schools outside of the state. Within the State only the Baltimore Normal School, the Bowie Normal School and Princess Anne Academy offer even a fair preparation for teaching. The output of these schools is obviously inadequate to meet the needs of a State with almost 235,000 colored people and 1,000 colored public-school teachers.<sup>45</sup>

There simply were not sufficient numbers of white or male teachers available to educate the large numbers of Negroes. The tone of this referenced passage indicates scarcity and insinuates mediocrity. The latter did not reflect the reputation Slowe developed as an industrious student, reliable employee, innovative principal and entrepreneurial administrator in higher education. Along with a number of other women, Lucy Diggs Slowe joined the ranks of highly qualified African-American educators. She became a premier educator as a teacher in her own community, the first principal of the junior high school experiment for Negroes in Washington, D.C., and the dean of women at Howard University from 1922-1937.

In summary, Slowe grew up in a large family having lost both parents at a young age, and dependent on the mutual aid of family members through informal adoption. Arguably, the move from Berryville, Virginia to Baltimore, Maryland provided an opportunity for Slowe to experience a qualitative difference in her educational experience. She was an educated Negro woman living in an urban environment where a middle

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<sup>45</sup> Department of the Interior, Negro Education, 319. Other sources also comment on the lack of trained Negro teachers for the growing masses of slave descendants in need of public education. See Edith Armstrong Talbot, Samuel Chapman Armstrong: A Biographical Study (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1904) 156. Talbot made reference to her father's rationale for the state of Virginia's need of and justification for Hampton University to have trained Negro teachers in the public schools for Negro children.

and upper class would emerge out of industrial, governmental, and entrepreneurial opportunities. By examining the early years of her life, it is evident that she thrived in the Baltimore public school system. Her experiences as an academically successful student laid the foundation for a unique career as a public school educator and principal as well as a university administrator.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE INFLUENCE OF CHARLES W. ELIOT ON PUBLIC EDUCATION AND SCHOOL REFORM: A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY FOR LUCY DIGGS SLOWE

The condition of secondary education is an important factor in our problem. It is desirable that the young men who are to enjoy university freedom should have already received at school a substantial training, in which the four great subdivisions of elementary knowledge—languages, history, mathematics, and natural science—were all adequately represented; but it must be admitted that this desirable training is now given in very few schools, and that in many parts of the country there are not secondary schools enough of even tolerable quality. For this condition of secondary education, the colleges are in part responsible; for they have produced few good teachers, except for the ancient languages; and they have required for admission to college hardly any but the elements of Greek, Latin and mathematics.<sup>1</sup>

Historical methods have traditionally hinged on the events and circumstances that correlate with a mythic figure. By Western standards, the mythic figure has typically been a white male of affluent status. One only needs to consider the founding fathers of United States of America as appropriate examples. The history of education in American is no exception. Consider Horace Mann as the champion of the common school movement. Mann's impetus to press for public education created a watershed effect on schooling, families, students, teachers, financing schools, and the emerging careers of

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Eliot, "Liberty in Education," in The History of Higher Education 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Eds. Lester F. Goodchild and Harold S. Wechsler ASHE Reader Series, (Needham Heights, Massachusetts: Simon & Schuster): 365-372. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1077210> (accessed March 15, 2009).

women as teachers.<sup>2</sup> At the turn of the twentieth century, a handful of men guided education in the United States. One man of particular influence and vision was Charles W. Eliot, the president of Harvard University. For the purpose of this study, I will examine Eliot's contribution to educational reform as it is related to the Committee of Ten and its impact on public education, particularly secondary schools. The reforms Eliot promoted had a rippling effect on opportunities for students, families, educators, and school districts. Although it is indirect impact on Slowe's career, a case can be made that the weight of the reforms Eliot supported and his influence on the pressing educational and social issues in the nation had an impact on subsequent opportunities that materialized for Slowe.

Slowe's progressively more advanced career moves occurred in the aftermath of the Committee of Ten's report. Slowe's two major career accomplishments, principal of Shaw Junior High School and dean of women at Howard University, happened in the midst of school reform. When superimposing Slowe's life over the major educational and social developments since the Civil War and up to the junior high school movement, it is clear that she benefited from the timing of such events coupled with her own ambitions and preparations.

By the time Slowe was born in 1883, Eliot was entering the fourteenth year of his presidency at Harvard. Eliot had initiated work toward professionalizing entrance requirements for specialized study in areas such as medicine, law, and dentistry with African-American representation in each field by the early 1870s. In 1895, the debate

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<sup>2</sup>Steven E. Tozer, Guy Senese, and Paul C. Violas, School and Society: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009). See chapter three, "Schools as a Public Institution: The Common School Era."



between W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington took the national stage, ushering in a great discussion about the utility of education for all African-Americans, former slaves, freed men and women of color, and the mixed race descendants of who might cross the color line.

In 1896, the landmark case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* pressed the legality of race relations in the nation. Separate but equal became a standard for social and educational consideration. In the same year, Booker T. Washington received an honorary master's degree from Harvard University. Washington continued his relationship with Harvard by receiving an honorary induction into Phi Beta Kappa in 1904 and appearing as a guest speaker to the student body in 1907. Charles Eliot embraced separate education and the bi-racial social system while balancing this view with meritocracy. Admittedly not a landslide, but a handful of promising African-American students had matriculated from Harvard University by the time Slowe completed high school in Baltimore in 1904. When Eliot resigned from the presidency in 1909 after forty years of service, Slowe would end her first year as a teacher in Baltimore. In Baltimore, the transition from white educational administration to African-American leadership solidified separate social and professional spheres. By 1901, the entire faculty at the Colored High School in Baltimore was African-American.<sup>3</sup> Brought about by political, social, and economic changes, the opportunity for a college prepared teacher to enter the profession took on a different meaning. In the past, white teachers and administrators held steadfast positions in education of all students (white, African-American, Native American, and immigrant) in public schools under the authority of state legislation. When African-American teachers

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<sup>3</sup> Farrar, Baltimore Afro-American, 31.

could deliver instruction in public segregated schools, the opportunity afforded the furthering of professionalization and administrative mobility.

There is not direct correlation between Eliot's formal ending point in his career and Slowe's beginning point in her career. However, the impact of Eliot's educational philosophy and pivotal work toward educational reform in both collegiate and secondary institutions opened a window of opportunity for some teachers to develop careers and distinct career paths. Slowe's career emerged and developed during this period that was ripe and open for change because of educational reforms. Of particular interest to this study are the reforms Eliot promoted in public education. This portion of this study examines the impact of educational reform on the career path of Lucy Slowe who was a public school educator in Baltimore and Washington, D.C.

Slowe's professional career path would intersect with a number of people either who had benefited directly from the Harvard experience or who were influenced indirectly by Eliot's achievement in educational reform. Notwithstanding her own personal constitution, Slowe developed her own style, ideas, and positions that pertained to leadership and professionalization as the dean of women at Howard University. That style was incubated in the urban centers of Baltimore and Washington, nurtured in the academies of Howard and Columbia Universities, perfected in practice as a public school educator, challenged through various contentions about her professional role and duties, and manifested in the legacy she left for others. Knowing that she did not accomplish anything in a vacuum is vitally important in order to integrate the importance of historical antecedents and social contexts that relate to Slowe's recognition as a pioneer.

## The Influence of Harvard University Policies on Public Education

When initially considering the impact of changes in higher education in America on public compulsory schooling in hindsight, there is a direct connection. The advent of Charles Eliot's undertaking as president of Harvard University initiated a period of scholastic renovation in concept and practices.<sup>4</sup> In his own words, Eliot discussed the practice of an elective system at Harvard as a deliberate change from the prescribed one-size-fits-all method. Eliot received many letters on the matter. In a response he wrote,

You want the Faculty or me to lay out an advisable course of study for the great majority of boys. I must confess that I cannot lay out such a course of study, and I believe the Faculty would confess a like inability. My reason is that a given course of study will fit very few boys. As a rule, I have to arrange a course of study for each individual boy who consults me. I do not succeed in using even a dozen types of college course. I find that the best college course for each youth has to be expressly contrived for him with careful consideration of his school studies, his purposes in life, his inheritances, and his tastes. In my opinion to direct a hundred boys upon the same course of study for four years in college is a careless, lazy, unintelligent, unconscientious method of dealing with them, and I will never again be responsible for the selection of a course of study intended for any such use in college. I am willing and the Faculty is willing to take any amount of trouble to advise and direct the individual boy; but I will

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<sup>4</sup> Charles W. Eliot was a descendant of Andrew Eliot from East Coker in Somersetshire, a shoemaker. Andrew Eliot migrated to the American colonies to settle in New England during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Both his maternal and paternal great-grandfathers, Theodore Lyman and Samuel Eliot, secured wealth respectively through trade and the mercantile business. Eliot's family became well known, respected and wealthy. Various members of his family had relations with Harvard University as alumni, benefactors, and even an elected President. Charles W. Eliot was a Harvard graduate, employed as a mathematics tutor, and worked as an assistant professor of mathematics and chemistry at Harvard. For a brief period he left Harvard to travel in Europe. After a few years, he returned to Boston as a professor of chemistry at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He was elected as president of Harvard University in 1869 and served in that post for forty years until 1909. See Henry James, Charles W. Eliot President of Harvard University, 1869-1909, Volume I: 1-35.

not lay out any uniform course for boys by the hundred or even by the score.<sup>5</sup>

Prescribed advisement lost ground during the period from 1865-1903 only to return, as most educational reforms do.<sup>6</sup> For Eliot, the elective system in its freest form had definitive benefits. The advantages of an elective system promoted student self-initiative and interest, furthered scholarship as the basis of relations between faculty and students, enlivened discussions and interactions between students, and promoted the good of the university. As Cotton related to readers about Eliot, “The President knew from his own college and school days that the best mental equipment comes, not from studying what is required and frequently cordially disliked, but from studying what one wants to study.”<sup>7</sup> The disadvantages of the elective system (i.e. lack of student preparedness, faculty resistance to change, and the perception that electives gave students too much freedom) were moot points, far out-weighed by the advantages.<sup>8</sup> Having said that, Eliot did have to overcome resistance before members of the faculty, parents, and critics at large more readily accepted the elective system. Eliot put safeguards in place by dividing classes into small sections, requiring prerequisite courses dependent on faculty approval, and tracking students into three groups: “the enterprising, the indifferent, and those who awoke slowly to a realization of their powers.”<sup>9</sup> Eliot and the faculty gradually introduced the curricular

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<sup>5</sup> As quoted in Henry James, Charles W. Eliot President of Harvard University, 1869-1909, Volume II (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1930), 46-47. See also Edward H. Cotton, The Life of Charles W. Eliot. (Boston: Small, Maynard & Company) 1926: Part I.

<sup>6</sup> See Laurence R. Veysey, The Emergence of the American University (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965): 118-120.

<sup>7</sup> Cotton, The Life of Charles W. Eliot, 176-177.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 178-181.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 181.

and advisement changes over time by allowing upperclassmen to take advantage of the elective system first. “Opportunity of choice was given to seniors in 1872; juniors, 1879; sophomores, 1884; and freshmen, 1885.”<sup>10</sup> The elective system promoted student choice and student-centered learning.

The reforms Eliot initiated preoccupied his focus. “As an educational reformer, Eliot was as involved with the internal restructuring of Harvard during the first two decades of his tenure as president that he gave only passing knowledge to larger social currents.”<sup>11</sup> Eliot’s focus for the first half of his presidency, centered on systematizing curricular changes to include the elective system and relaxing entrance requirements into professional schools where a degree-in-hand had been required. Additionally, Eliot sought to make improvements in the quality of faculty resulting in more impressive credentials and better scholarship production. As a complement to faculty upgrades, Eliot also advocated for improvements in the quality of the student body while simultaneously relaxing some customary and traditional practices such as required religious services. Eliot’s sense of reform involved both quality and quantity as he sought to increase the faculty members’ credentials while expanding the number of students. In reference to student caliber and his inherited station in life, Eliot wrote,

I want to have the College open equally to men with much money, little money or no money, provided they all have brains. I care no more than you for young men who have no capacity for an intellectual life. They are not fit subjects for a college, whether their parents have money or not. I include to thing that you would be more tolerant than I of the presence of stupid sons of the rich. I care for the young men whose families have so little money that it would make a real difference to them whether the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 463.

tuition fee were \$150 or \$225. You do not seem to care for that large class. To my thinking, they constitute the very best part of Harvard College.<sup>12</sup>

Other advancements included the formation of professional schools and expanded philanthropic efforts (e.g. increased endowment and corporate gifts) that benefited the institution.<sup>13</sup>

### *Eliot's Philosophy of Education*

Eliot idealized the democratic properties of education in the United States that should subscribe to the needs of the various classes or “layers” as he wrote in 1909. Eliot argued:

Those layers are four in number and of very different thickness. The upper one is very thin; it consists of the managing, leading, guiding class –the intellectual discoverers, the inventors, the organizers, and the managers and their chive assistants. Next comes an indispensable and much more numerous class, namely, the highly trained hand-workers, that is, the men who are always going to get their living by skilled manual labor. We may hope that their manual labor is going to be of the artistic sort more and more; we may hope that it is going to be a sort of manual labor into which the enjoyable activities of the nervous system enter more and more. We see clearly that this layer is growing thicker, as mechanical power and machinery invade old industries which formerly depended on human or animal muscle. The next layer, indispensable and thick, is the commercial class, the layer which is employed in buying, selling, and distributing. Lastly, there is the thick fundamental layer engaged in household work, agriculture, mining, quarrying, and forest work. This layer is constantly thinned by drafting some of its members into the second or third layer; but it remains numerous and, as a rule, it is comparatively neglected by school authorities. These four layers are indispensable to the progress of the modern democratic society, as of every older form of industrial and political organization; and our school systems must be so reorganized that they shall serve all four of the social layers or sets of workers, and serve

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<sup>12</sup> Henry James, Charles W. Eliot President of Harvard University, 1869-1909, Volume II, 151.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. See a letter to Edward Everett Hale dated February 4, 1909 in Henry James, Charles W. Eliot President of Harvard University, 1869-1909, Volume II. Eliot delineated what he considered to be his best accomplishments during this presidency.

them with intelligence, and with keen appreciation of the several ends of view.<sup>14</sup>

In other writings, Eliot would go further to contend that culture could and would be successfully transmitted from one generation to the next. For example, he referenced public parks, libraries, museums, and other amenities as free institutions from which all could benefit.<sup>15</sup> Essentially, education had a utilitarian purpose. His support of the elective system was rooted in his utilitarian and democratic view of education. "Hence men could be educated. And it followed that the best kind of education was one which gave abundant practice in making wise free choices of the kind that any man would have to go on making during the remainder of his days on earth."<sup>16</sup> Therefore, democracy in a university setting had two meanings. As Laurence Veysey argued,

First, 'democracy' often referred to the equality of all fields of learning, no matter how novel or how technical. Second, 'democracy' might mean equality of treatment or condition among all the students who were attending a university at any one time. This type of 'democracy' sought to combat social or intellectual snobbery at the level of the undergraduate.<sup>17</sup>

At Harvard, Eliot supported both forms. In his own words, Eliot competed for liberty in education founded on student choice of course work that would allow an opportunity to specialize in a particular subject area of interest that would result in a self-directed form

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<sup>14</sup> Charles W. Eliot, "Educational Reform and the Social Order," The School Review 17, no. 4 (April, 1909): 217. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1077210> (accessed March 15, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> Eugen Kuehnemann, Charles W. Eliot: President of Harvard University May 19, 1869-May 19, 1909. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1909): 63.

<sup>16</sup> Veysey, The Emergence of the American University, 88. "Eliot's version of 'democracy' was not that of most of his countrymen since the time of Andrew Jackson. His views often reached back toward the generation of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson." (93)

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

of mental discipline.<sup>18</sup> However, when considering race, his position on liberty was not as definitive and was in fact conditional at times.

*Eliot's Perspective on Race and Education*

Eliot's focus on democratic ideals and the social order of higher education gave way to racial implications. Eliot favored equal opportunity in educational and occupational endeavors. He took a firm position to support equal access and opportunity. Eliot wrote,

The Whites and the Negroes had better live beside each other in entire amity, but separate, under equal laws, equally applied as regards education, property, admittance to trades and professions, civil and religious liberty and security of life. The segregation of the colored people implies to my mind that they should have access to all trades and professions: that they should be in due proportion not only laborers, farmers and mechanics, but builders, bankers, lawyers, physicians, preachers and teachers.

As to the ballot, it seems to me reasonable that an educational qualification should be required, and that the payment of poll tax is an expedient condition for exercising the suffrage: but whatever qualifications apply to Negroes should also apply to white men. Political equality seems to me to have nothing to do with what is called social equality; but I recognize that the Southern Whites are not of this opinion. They believe that political equality may lead to social admixture, or at any rate, to an assertion on the part of Negroes of a right to social intercourse with white people. As far as I know, this belief among the Southern Whites finds no support in the practice of any nation, or part of a nation, in which broad suffrage now obtains, and I regret this prevalence among Southern Whites.<sup>19</sup>

Essentially, Eliot supported a dual social system. However, Harvard's position on race would ebb and flow over time. Prior to the Civil War, Harvard did not admit any students

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<sup>18</sup> Charles Eliot, "Liberty in Education," in The History of Higher Education 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 365-372.

<sup>19</sup> See a letter dated April 30, 1909 in Henry James, Charles W. Eliot President of Harvard University, 1869-1909, Vol. II, 166-167. Also see Jennings L. Waggoner, Jr., "The American Compromise: Charles W. Eliot, Black Education and the New South," in The History of Higher Education 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Eds. Lester F. Goodchild and Harold S. Wechsler ASHE Reader Series, (Needham Heights, Massachusetts: Simon & Schuster), 463-472.



of color nor women. In 1850, Martin Delaney and two other male African-American students were admitted into the Medical School. Due to mounting resistance from the student body, the three men did not matriculate. Toward the end and soon after the Civil War, Harvard admitted a few more African-American men such as Edwin C.J.T. Howard to the Medical School in 1865, George L. Ruffin to the Law School in approximately 1870, and Robert T. Freeman into the Dental School around 1871 that completed and graduated with the first dental class.<sup>20</sup> Some students proved to be exemplary. Robert H. Terrell was the first African-American to deliver a commencement speech. Other historically significant African-American scholars completed graduate degrees such as W. E.B. Du Bois, Carter G. Woodson, and John Hope Franklin. Alain Locke was a graduate of the college in 1908, doctoral recipient in 1918, and the first African-American recipient of the Rhodes Scholarship. On May 28, 1896, Harvard University bestowed an honorary master's degree upon Booker T. Washington. The relationship between Eliot and Washington would remain mutually respectful, based on some common beliefs and values, and the recognition of race as a social dilemma in America.<sup>21</sup>

The notion of separate but equal was not foreign but discussed in sociological circles particularly in the wake of the landmark case, *Plessy v. Ferguson*.<sup>22</sup> In the course

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<sup>20</sup> See Werner Sollors, Caldwell Titcomb and Thomas Underwood. Blacks at Harvard: A Documentary History of African-American Experience at Harvard and Radcliffe with an introduction by Randall Kennedy (New York: New York University Press, 1993). The authors' research reveals the changes in the university's policies on admissions as well as faulty and staff employment.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 101-112. In the introduction of this chapter I already made mention of Washington's subsequent visits to Harvard.

<sup>22</sup> *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896). Veysey argued Eliot had a disdain for paternalism when coupled with his democratic ideals, that "students should be treated as free individuals; university training should be the opposite of military or industrial." Veysey, The Emergence of the American University, 93.

of both educational and social changes, socio-economic mobility became a reality for some African-Americans in the form of middle class emergence. For example, Mary Taylor Blauvelt described exceptional affluent African-American women in Michigan at a women's' club meeting.

They had the voices of ladies. Further, they were able to make themselves heard without their voices becoming harsh or strained. They had the manners of ladies, sweet and dignified. Dignified, not pompous. There was the absence of pretense about them which marks well-bred men and women of the world. They had the mellow courtesy—the tactfulness which, it seems to me, is a distinguishing mark of the race. They were dressed like ladies—scrupulously neat and clean, in good taste. There was very little tendency toward gaudy or inharmonious colors which has been supposed to characterize the race. From personal knowledge I can testify that many of these women came from homes as clean, as attractive—nay, even as artistic—as one can be found among the whites in a similar financial position. Some of them even came from elegant homes. Some are the wives and daughters of clergymen, physicians, lawyers, inventors. Some are themselves teachers, trained nurses, musicians, writers. It seems almost an insult to these ladies to write such things about them. Yet I write them, because, while most of us have had the opportunity to see negro life at its worst, I fear that very few have seen it at its best.<sup>23</sup>

At the turn of the twentieth century, Blauvelt described an emerging middle class that was prosperous and sustained apart from white America. As Robert E. Park explained, there was a justification for racial prejudice and the segregation of races.

As it seems impossible to conceive of a world without friendships, so it seems improbable, in such a world, that life should go on without enmities, for these two things are, in some sense and in some degree, correlative, so that the bias with which we view the qualities of our enemies and theirs. There is always and everywhere the inevitable dichotomy between those who call each other “we,” and the outsiders whom one refers to as “they.”<sup>24</sup> Prejudice—that is caste, class and race

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<sup>23</sup> Mary Taylor Blauvelt, “The Race Problem. As Discussed by Negro Women.” The American Journal of Sociology 6, no. 5 (March, 1901):662-663. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2762006> (accessed March 22, 2009).

<sup>24</sup> Robert E. Park, “The Bases of Race Prejudice,” Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 140 (November, 1928): 11. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2127938> (accessed March 25, 2009). Robert E. Park worked collaboratively and in a mentoring capacity

prejudice—in its more naïve and innocent manifestations, is merely resistance of the social order to change. Every effort of the Negro—to take the most striking example—to move, to rise and improve his status, rather than his condition, has invariably met with opposition, aroused prejudice and stimulated racial animosities. Race prejudice, so conceived is merely an elementary expression of conservatism.<sup>25</sup>

Park would go further to articulate a theory of change in race relations based on his observations called bi-racial development. Rather than the African-Americans representing a caste beneath the whites in a hierarchical relation, Park distinguished the groups by parallel classes (i.e. professional, business, and labor occupations), or horizontal relation, in separate spheres. Based on Eliot's writings, he agreed with this concept in part. Eliot would also articulate economic and regional exceptions to this concept.

Economically, Eliot viewed the inclusion of African-Americans as necessary and partakers of any benefits. He wrote, "The Negroes are indispensable to the industrial development of the Southern States, so that they are sure to share the great increase of wealth which is taking place in that part of the country."<sup>26</sup> Simultaneously, Eliot reasoned

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with a number of prominent African-American scholars and educators including Booker T. Washington and Charles S. Johnson. See Garner J. Edwards, R.C. Bedford, Joseph P. McCullen, T.J. Minton & P.A. Bacas, "Letters Collected by R.E. Park and Booker T. Washington," Journal of Negro History 7, no. 2 (April, 1922): 206-222 and in Gilpin and Gasman, Charles S. Johnson: Leadership Beyond the Veil in the Age of Jim Crow. Park worked with Washington for several years as a publicist and administrator at Tuskegee from 1905-1914. At Fisk University, he was a visiting professor until his death in 1944. Park completed his undergraduate study at the University of Michigan, earned a master's degree from Harvard University, and undertook post-graduate work at various institutions in Germany before earning his doctorate in Heidelberg. Other teaching experiences included lecturing for one year at Harvard in philosophy from 1904-1905. Eventually he became a member of the faculty at the University of Chicago from 1914-1923 first, as a lecturer until securing a position as full professor in 1923. Park served as president of the American Sociological Society in 1925.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>26</sup> See a letter dated April 30, 1909 in James. Charles W. Eliot President of Harvard University, 166-167.

that time was necessary before African-Americans could acquire all the trappings of civility in order to participate fully in society. “It would seem to me very unreasonable to expect that people who had so recently been savages and slaves should all acquire in forty years the primary virtues of civilization. Savages are never either frugal or steadily industrious; and for the slave labor is a curse and frugality is absurd.”<sup>27</sup> To add another caveat to the complex and perhaps inconclusive stance Eliot took on the matter of race, he distinctly recognized regional differences. In northern states, African-Americans were a clear minority with comparatively better opportunities for employment in industrial centers and post-secondary attendance. The condition was then whether or not the perception of Northern liberalism would persist if the number of African-Americans increased. Eliot wrote,

The complete segregation of the colored people does not seem to me necessary in the Northern states, or wherever the proportion of negroes is small. It is unnecessary, for example, in the public schools of Boston and Cambridge. If, however, in any Northern state the proportion of negroes should become large, I should approve of separate schools for negro children. As to the most expedient treatment of colored people who are removed by four or five generations from Africa or slavery, I am in favor of leaving that problem to the people of a hundred years hence.<sup>28</sup>

Unwilling to wait a hundred years, a number of African-American scholars scrutinized the practice of segregation and bi-racial development.

In his critique of Park’s observations, E. Franklin Frazier challenged the effect of African-American social mobility in general by paying specific attention to barriers in both southern and northern states. Essentially, the reported estimation of social mobility

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> See a letter dated May 5, 1909 in Henry James, Charles W. Eliot President of Harvard University, 1869-1909, Vol. II, 166-167. It is ironic that Eliot would specify a hundred years as a reasonable time frame when it took very nearly that time period before America elected a person of color, the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, Barack Obama.

was not widespread. Regions had different barriers but never the less there were difficulties for the majority of people of color. Frazier imparted his observations when he wrote,

When we view the present situation in the South, there is evidence that a growing number of whites are inclined to favor bi-racial organization in which differences in the status of the Negro will be given recognition. In fact, many of the liberal whites who comprise the interracial committees make much of the social differentiation in the Negro group and are disposed to treat Negroes according to their relative status in the Negro group. The relations between the two races under the bi-racial conception of race relations range from ceremonialized “good will” meetings and handshaking to genuinely human associations based on mutual regard and mutual interests. However, the significance of such relationships may be and, in fact, are overrated, as far as they are supposed to affect the actual status of the Negro. On the whole, the people who comprise the interracial committees are sentimental in their attitudes toward the Negro, and, what is more important, either do not possess power, or do not care to use it, in changing the status of the Negro in any fundamental sense.<sup>29</sup>

As it would be the case in Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, D.C., both Eliot’s recommendation and Frazier’s observation remained valid. Separate public schools, colleges, churches, and professional as well as social clubs formed in a bi-racial format. For some African-Americans occupational and academic opportunities did emerge. For others barriers remained in varied forms. “The Negro white-collar worker and the intellectual are as dependent economically as the wage earner. Negro teachers in the public schools, both local and state, hold their jobs only so long as they do not oppose the present pattern of race relations.”<sup>30</sup> Frazier’s point was reinforced each time whites and African-Americans did not cross understood color lines. For example, Edward T. Ware, a

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<sup>29</sup> E. Franklin Frazier, “The Status of the Negro in the American Social Order,” Journal of Negro Education 4, Issue 3 (July, 1935): 303. <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0022-2984%28193507%294%3A3%3C293%3ATSOTNI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-8> (accessed April 25, 2002). Quotations appear in the original document.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 304.

former Morehouse College President, wrote about his observations in the state of Georgia, representative of the movement for a dual and separatist social and educational system across the South. Ware remarked that the system is productive but reliant on external funding controlled by whites in legislative offices. Hence, there was no independence.<sup>31</sup>

Fannie Coppin agreed with Frazier when she wrote about the difficulty African-Americans, particularly male youth, encountered when seeking employment. She chided,

It is just as hard to get a boy into a printing office now as it was ten years ago. It is simply astonishing when we consider how many of the common vocations of the life colored people are shut out of. Colored men are not admitted to the Printers' Trade Union, nor, with very rare exceptions, are they employed in any city of the United States in a paid capacity as printers or writers, one of the rare exceptions being the employment of H. Price Williams of the Sunday *Press* of this city. We are not employed as salesmen, or pharmacists, or saleswomen, or bank clerks, or merchants' clerks, or tradesmen, or mechanics, or telegraph operators, or to any degree as State or Government officials, and I could keep on with the string of "ors" until tomorrow morning, but the patience of the reader has its limit.<sup>32</sup>

Eliot's point of view seemed to be utopian in that it represented an ideal where under certain conditions, African-Americans and whites could exist harmoniously, functioning in separate but equal parts of society while sharing economic and political parity.

Eliot had something of a strong man's limitations. He was repelled by moral laxity and by unhealthy or neurotic mentality, and this blinded him to the great qualities with which these defects are sometimes associated. His aggressive optimism, his essentially active, outward and forward looking nature, prevented an understanding of those depths of human experience, or those nuances of feeling and insight, that are inseparable from suffering and brooding. There was a touch of the banal, of

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<sup>31</sup> Edward T. Ware, "Higher Education of Negroes in the United States," 215.

<sup>32</sup> Coppin, *Reminiscences*, 35. Italics appear in the original document.

shallowness, of externality, in his ways of thinking, as there was of hardiness in his way of acting.<sup>33</sup>

“However much he might personally feel that race should be the determining consideration in regard either to dinner guests or schoolmates, he judged popular sentiment to be of a different mind. And in so judging, he gave Northern liberal endorsement to the Southern system of dual schooling.”<sup>34</sup> The differences between the southern and northern states appear to be stark, yet there was a common undercurrent of “otherness” and shades of gray within and between each region to include western states.

Years later, other writers continued to echo Frazier’s observation about informal social sanctions and coercive tactics used to support the bi-racial system. Beale reported on the obstacles African-American teachers in the North found when seeking opportunities to teach in racially mixed schools. Beale described the situation:

Since appointment to a mixed school means instructing whites, Negroes are generally barred entirely from teaching positions in the North. Only in a few large cities are they permitted to teach at all. Usually there is no “rule” against them; they are just never allowed to pass examinations or else they are kept perpetually on waiting lists and vacancies are never found. In some cities with large Negro populations they have gradually won the right of an appointment to elementary schools and, in the last decade to high schools in “black belts.” Some cities accept them and just manage always to place them in schools where they will not teach whites.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ralph Barton Perry, “Charles William Eliot: His Personal Traits and Essential Creed,” *The New England Quarterly* 4 no. 1 (January 1931): 13. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/359215> (originally accessed March 15, 2008).

<sup>34</sup> Waggoner, “The American Compromise: Charles W. Eliot, Black Education and the New South,” 463.

<sup>35</sup> Howard K. Beale, “The Needs of Negro Education in the United States,” *Journal of Negro Education* 3, no.1 (January, 1934): 12. <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0022-2984%28193401%293%3A1%3C8%3AATNONEI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-HA> (accessed April 25, 2002).

In 1934, Beale further substantiated the regional difficulty that African-Americans encountered were it not for a pioneer, an exception. Beale shared his findings.

In New York City, a few Negroes have taught in white schools ever since Susan Frazier won the right to do so in 1896. But it was years before one could get appointed to a high school. Now there are some thirty Negro high-school teachers who all teach, not in Harlem, but in schools almost entirely white. White parents and children in schools which have no Negro teachers object to them. But in a school where there is one, white children, parents, and teachers like the Negro teacher and accord him social equality.<sup>36</sup>

Eliot's position was not to comment on race as a national issue but rather to make note of regional differences and attend to individual merit as he had promoted at Harvard University. In reference to personal character and demeanor, Eliot wrote,

As a rule I select my companions and guests, not by the color of their skins, but by their social and personal quality. It would never occur to me not to invite to my house an educated Chinaman or Japanese because their skin is yellow or brownish, or to avoid asking a negro to my table if he were intelligent, refined and interesting person. It is the intelligence, refinement and good judgment of Mr. Booker T. Washington which makes him an agreeable guest at any table; and too many of us Northern people, the fact that nearly half his blood is African is a matter of indifference.<sup>37</sup>

The whole matter about social segregation with political parity, bi-racial organizations, and separate but equal opportunities continued to rest on democratic ideals. There was curious equation where opportunity and merit did not equal social integration. "The Republic desires and believes that all competent men within its limits should enjoy

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Elliot to Rev. S.A. Steel, October 25, 1901. (Eliot Papers, Letterbook 92) quoted in Jennings L. Wagoner, Jr., "The American Compromise: Charles W. Eliot, Black Education and the New South," in The History of Higher Education, 460-461. Also see pages 466-467 as Jennings portrays the paradox intertwined with Eliot's and Washington's accommodationist approach to segregated education. Eliot endorsed Washington's plan but still advocated for more academic rigor in Tuskegee's curriculum.



political equality, the tests of competence being the same for all races.”<sup>38</sup> Yet Eliot went on to justify separation of the races due to the instinctual inclinations of mankind. Such instincts were further stratified by region.

As Eliot thus evaluated the differences in practices between the North and the South, he concluded that the underlying racial attitudes of the two regions appeared much the same. No greater feeling of brotherhood, no deeper commitment to liberalism, no fervent devotion to ideals of liberty, equality or justice were needed or warranted in explaining differences in practices.<sup>39</sup>

After Eliot resigned his presidency, Harvard University would assume segregational housing practices. A noted example is the case of Roscoe C. Bruce, Jr., the son of a Harvard University alumnus and grandson of a well-regarded Washington politician and former member of Congress, Blanche K. Bruce.<sup>40</sup> In what amounted to a scandal, Harvard’s practices required freshmen to live on campus but would not permit African-American students in the dormitories. Roscoe C. Bruce, Sr., a graduate from the elite Phillips Exeter Academy and Harvard in 1902, would later become the Assistant Superintendent for Colored Schools in the District of Columbia. Although Bruce Sr. was a member of the alumni, then President A. Lawrence Lowell forbade his son, Roscoe C. Bruce, Jr., to reside in the dormitory because of his race in 1923. This change in policy initiated another shift during Harvard’s position on race. Eliot’s position conceded to the prevailing social climate of the day, however, his liberal sense of separate but equal did

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 467.

<sup>39</sup> Wagoner, “The American Compromise: Charles W. Eliot, Black Education and the New South,” in The History of Higher Education, 463.

<sup>40</sup> See the chapter, “Harvard Dormitory Crisis, 1921-23,” in Werner Sollors, Caldwell Titcomb and Thomas Underwood, Blacks at Harvard: A Documentary History of African-American Experience at Harvard and Radcliffe, 195-228. Also see Lawrence Otis Graham, The Senator and the Socialite: The True Story of American’s First Black Dynasty, (New York: Harper Collins, 2006).

promote and reward African-Americans who were talented, gifted, and diligent. During his presidency at Harvard, a number of African-American men matriculated and maintained professional stature.

#### Eliot, Secondary School Reform, and the Committee of Ten

Eliot went on to promulgate not only the elective system but also prerequisite courses and preferred academic subjects students should have as precursors to attending a college or university. Giving more depth to the tensions and progressions of Eliot's changes, Hugh Hawkins explores how the move from a religious affiliation to a non-sectarian institution influenced many of the outcomes Eliot achieved during his presidency.<sup>41</sup> Religion, a delicate subject embedded with values and marked by traditions, proved to be a challenge yet concern about public school education was also an equally engaging quest. Appointed by the National Education Association (NEA) as the Chairman of the Executive Committee of Ten in 1892, Eliot commandeered a huge task.<sup>42</sup>

Essentially the questions about purpose, uniformity, and democratic values as applied to public school formed the basis of inquiry. Of the three, uniformity was the most pressing issue. A report from the NEA stated,

There is no educational subject before the American people requiring more serious attention, demanding a calmer discussion, greater wisdom, a keener appreciation of the trend of present civilization, and a loftier spirit

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<sup>41</sup> Hugh Hawkins, "Charles W. Eliot, University Reform, and Religious Faith in American, 1869-1909," *The Journal of American History* 51, No. 2 (September, 1964): 191-213. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1888010> (accessed September 23, 2008).

<sup>42</sup> See National Educational Association, History of the National Educational Association in the United States: Its Organization and Functions, Historical Sketch, (Washington: J.J. Little & Co., 1892) <http://books.google.com/books?id=HI8BAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=History+of+the+National+Educational+Association+in+the+United#v=onepage&q=&f=false> (accessed September 23, 2008).

of altruism that which relates to an American system of education which shall be consistent with psychic law from the kindergarten to the graduate school of the university.<sup>43</sup>

In search of this uniformity, the Committee articulated eight specialized points for consideration during the 1896-97 program review. The four most salient points that had an impact on curricular offerings were:

(2) To this end it is recommended that the requirements be considered in the following groups: English, classical languages, modern languages, history, mathematics and science.

(3) Within the several groups special attentions should be given to what should constitute a year's work in each subject (e.g. first-year French, second-year French, physics, chemistry, etc.), or, as may be preferable in some groups, what should constitute the "elementary" and what the "advanced" requirements, and, in general, the constitution of entire courses of study in the separate subjects.

(4) It is recommended that a schedule of options or equivalents within the various groups, or between separate groups, be prepared.

(5) The committee should make special effort to secure a more satisfactory method of admission to college. The view of the associations, subcommittees and institutions (above referred to) should be sought as to the best pedagogical means of testing the work done in preparation for college.<sup>44</sup>

In order to make a seamless curriculum possible, high schools had to play an important role. Viewed by Committee of Ten members as having a tri-fold purpose, high schools needed to change in order to fulfill their missions more efficiently and to close the gap between themselves and post-secondary institutions. In reference to college entrance requirements, the high school's purpose was for certain preparation in business, teaching, or college attendance. A uniform curriculum allowed time for indecisive

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<sup>43</sup> National Education Association, Report of Committee on College Entrance Requirements, July 1899. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1899): 7. <http://books.google.com/books?id=AjwBAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=report+of+the+committee+of+college+entrance+requirements&lr=#v=onepage&q=&f=false> (accessed September 23, 2008).

<sup>44</sup> See A.F. Nightingale, "The Committee on College Entrance Requirements," 322-323.

students to make the best personal choice for further study and to expect collegiate admission to any institution in the country. “To this end, secondary programs of study would be thoroly [sic] elastic and with varied electives, suited to the talents of the individual child: a college program should be still more elastic with a larger number of electives.”<sup>45</sup> However, there was some resistance from high school principals who complained about the adaptation process.

Eliot’s influence as committee chairman brought attention in terms of vigorous debate, the production of scholarly articles, and the evolution of reforms that would persists throughout the twenty-first century.<sup>46</sup> More importantly, the curricular changes proposed and furthered by the Committee of Ten as well as other related organizations and committees rejected the disjointed opposition of educational offerings in both public and private schools. Instead, Eliot’s influence and the Committee’s work solidified the promise of a uniform secondary curriculum inclusive of a form of the elective system Eliot engendered.

Eliot also had other ideas about public education in the interest of economy.

Edward Krug summarized these viewpoints when writing about Eliot’s reforms:

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<sup>45</sup> National Education Association, Report of Committee on College Entrance Requirements, July 1899, 8.

Edward T. Krug, “Charles W. Elliot and the Secondary School,” *History of Education Society* 1, no. 3 (September, 1961): 6. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/366923> (accessed January 1, 2009). “Principals complained about the time and energy it took to adapt courses to these varying requirements. Nor did admission by certificate make things any easier. Usually certification meant a separate arrangement with each college involved, and the principal had to fill out complicated forms for each student specifying what books had been read in the various subjects. The principals complained that they were forced to neglect the interests of those students who, in the parlance of the time, were preparing not for college, but for life” (6).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-17. Krug described the nature of the backlash to the report of the Committee of Ten which stimulated heated debates for the next ten years and beyond.

Eliot's own views on public schooling had by this time come to include a broader range of issues than the immediate one of college entrance requirements. He had proposed shortening the grammar school period from nine grades to eight. What he evidently had in mind were the prevailing nine-grade grammar schools in Massachusetts and other parts of New England; he was not attacking the so-called eight-four plan. This was the extent of his proposed "economy of time" in lower schools, and he felt then and later that eighteen was a desirable age for entrance to college. His major concern, furthermore, was not shortening the program, but with improving it, particularly through the introduction of algebra, geometry, and foreign languages in the upper grades of grammar school. He argued for these changes in the interest of all students, especially those who did not go beyond the grammar grades.<sup>47</sup>

Eliot would go on to push for electives in the lower school such that he emphasized uniformity in terms of process and method as opposed to a mere replication of course work for every student respective to each grade. His notion of reforms remained rooted in his democratic view of education where choice was important when coupled with a student's own inclinations and preferences.

For Eliot, the central issue rested on two fundamental points. "There are two evils in our schools—and may I add in our colleges—namely, a lack of strong interest on the part of the pupil, and a lack of continuous strenuous exertion."<sup>48</sup> The Committee of Ten convened many times at various conferences to discuss the need for school reform. Not intended to be an extreme makeover, the reform process examined what schools were doing versus what "should" be done to alleviate the two evils Eliot identified. Eliot corresponded with a number of members via letters. In one, he admitted the necessity to include all committee members on the topic of discussion. This realization emphasized

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>48</sup> Charles W. Eliot and Oscar D. Robinson, "The Work of the Committee of Ten," The School Review 2, no. 6 (June, 1894): 369-370 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1074032> (accessed September 26, 2007). The Committee of Ten would vary in terms of membership over the years. The demand of the work, inconsistent funding, and members' own professional demands were probably mitigating factors.

the need for a participatory process of discussion and feedback. Eliot expressed his concerns:

I am more and more led to believe that Committee of Ten will have to continue themselves to interpreting the results of the Conferences. I do not believe that any two members of the Committee would agree on the details of a program for a specific school.<sup>49</sup>

By deferring some issues for more discussion, Eliot underscored the magnitude of the work the Committee had undertaken.<sup>50</sup> Although not every point concluded with consensus, the process even yielded minority and dissenting opinions.<sup>51</sup> Among the topics of concern, the Committee of Ten deliberated over course offerings, equivalent weight for courses, subject groupings, and the length of the school day.

Referring to the platforms for discussion in laundry list format minimized the weight of the work. In reference to Eliot's initial effort, Oscar D. Robinson wrote, "The chairman again had the proportion of nine to one of the labor."<sup>52</sup> Every member had a great deal of information to investigate and to compile so the collaborative effort was no

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 370.

<sup>50</sup> Krug, "Charles W. Eliot and the Secondary School," 8.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 9. One of the most heated issues honed in on language. The issue was whether or not Greek should be required, and, if so, during which grade students should begin course work. The inclusion of language and which ones determined, in part, the nature of the program of study. Krug explained,

The classical program recommended by the Committee included Greek, Latin, and a modern language, with Greek delayed until the third year in the interests of postponing what Eliot called "bifurcation." It was this reduction of Greek from three years to two that was later to arouse the most massive attack against the entire report. The Latin-scientific program included Latin and a modern language, German or French. The modern language program included these two modern languages. The English program called for one foreign language, classical or modern. The entire program included various amounts of the "moderns," but with more history and science in the English program than in the others.

<sup>52</sup> Eliot and Robinson, "The Work of the Committee of Ten," 367.

small feat. To aid in this process, the use of various subcommittee on each academic subject and each level (elementary versus secondary) made the work more manageable.<sup>53</sup>

In his 1897 response to a report about recommendations made by the Committee of Ten, Chicago Superintendent of High Schools, A. F. Nightingale specified eight areas of curricular reform.<sup>54</sup> In reference to secondary schools, Eliot would extend his support of the elective system to curriculum reform in the public high schools. Eliot supported a resolution for such changes. The resolution read:

*Resolved*, That in both secondary schools and colleges, such courses of study should be provided, as will offer to every student the best advantages, within reasonable limits, for the highest development of those talents with which he has been endowed, and that to this end studies should be arranged under the following heads, viz., (1) language; (2) mathematics; (3) natural and physical science; (4) history and literature; (5) civics and economics; *further*, that while students should, in general, be encouraged to maintain a reasonable balance between these, the courses should be so plastic, as to permit alternative options, with a view to their adaptation to the individual capacities and purposes of students.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> See Veysey, The Emergence of the American University. 312. He discusses the development and use of committees in the university setting as an effective and practical way of managing the business of the academy. The NEA made use of committees very early on in its development based on school levels: kindergarten, primary school, high school and college, normal schools, and manual/industrial schools. Other committees focused on specific courses of study.

<sup>54</sup> The Committee of Ten on College Entrance Requirements consisted of both collegiate and public school leaders. Excluding Nightingale who has already been identified, the remaining members consisted of the following: Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler of Columbia University; Dr. B.A. Hinsdale of the University of Michigan; Dr. James E. Russell of the University of Colorado; Dr. Paul H. Harris of Harvard University; Dr. W.C. Jones of the University of California; Charles H. Thurber of Morgan Park Academy; John T. Buchanan of Boys Classical High School of New York City; J.R. Bishop of Walnut Hills High School in Cincinnati; and, William H. Smiley of Denver High School. See A.F. Nightingale, "The Committee on College Entrance Requirements: Report of the Chairman," The School Review 5, no. 6 (June, 1897): 321-331. National Educational Association. Report of Committee on College Entrance Requirements, July 1899. Nightingale was a member of the Executive Committee of Ten.

<sup>55</sup> J. G. Shurman, Charles W. Eliot, David S. Jordan, & A. F. Nightingale, "Rigid vs. Elastic Courses of Study for Secondary Schools," The School Review 6, no. 5 (May 1898): 307. Italics appear in the original document.

Bearing a striking resemblance to the types of changes Eliot pursued at Harvard, the executive Committee of Ten considered reforming the public school curriculum in secondary schools. Eliot participated in national and regional discussions about educational curricular reform.<sup>56</sup>

The significance of Eliot's work as president of Harvard University for forty years, Chairman of the Committee of Ten in 1892, prolific writer and public speaker on educational matters, and nationally recognized scholar with opinions on matters at-large had both direct and indirect implications for the career of Lucy Diggs Slowe. The overarching effect of Eliot's reforms at Harvard and on public education instituted a period of standardization. "During the last part of the nineteenth century, the characteristics of higher education in American began to change. Higher education, like many other facets of public life, was beginning to become a system."<sup>57</sup> The uniformity that created a seamless educational system limited the variety that was available to white women.<sup>58</sup> African-American women had been in co-educational collegiate institutions and African-American single gender learning opportunities were more often the

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<sup>56</sup> Edward King, "Charles W. Eliot and the Secondary School," History of Education Quarterly 1, no. 3 (September, 1961):4. Eliot had worked with other committee members through regional efforts via the New England Association i.e. John Tetlow, the principal of the Girls High School in Boston. (5)

<sup>57</sup> Patricia Albjerg Graham, "Expansion and Exclusion: A History of Women in American Higher Education," Signs 3, no. 3 (summer, 1978): 761. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173112> (accessed September 23, 2008).

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* Graham discusses what she identified as two monolithic periods in higher education in America: classical education typically reserved for the wealthy and the subsequent development of the research institution. On the one hand, Graham identified educational reform as a direct result of the change between monolithic forms. On the other hand, Graham writes, "An indirect result that was those categories of people, particularly women, who had no earlier won secure places for themselves in society and were now trying to do so, faced a dwindling number of accepted educational pathways. This loss of variety was more serious for women as a group for men."



exception. African-American women also had limited access to pursue teaching through routes such as teacher training schools.<sup>59</sup> The methodological and systematized educational reform meant African-American women needed to meet standards to teach, to gain acceptance in the university as scholars, and to establish themselves as viable administrators.<sup>60</sup>

Slowe was born at an opportune moment because it was the eve of a number of changes, transitions, reforms, and chances. When combined with her family values, personal ambitions, and natural inclinations, the circumstances that provided the context for her career in education must be considered. Slowe was educated in Baltimore and Washington, D.C., two areas that remained buffered to some degree from the comparative more harsh racial elements in southern states. Slowe chose a career during a period when choice for such was very limited for African-American women. Conditions were such that teaching in urban settings favored career-minded African-American women as white teachers and administrators began to yield to pressures from African-Americans to educate their own. Of that time, Beale wrote, “In Baltimore, Kansas City, St. Louis, Washington, there are segregated schools in which Negroes have secured all of the teaching positions, and most of the administrative posts and full equality with whites in school appropriations and salaries.”<sup>61</sup> Slowe began teaching at a time when public

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<sup>59</sup> Miller and Gay, *Progress and Achievements*, 314-321. The authors reference the evolution of state departments of education and the position of State Supervisor of Negro Schools. Such processes created standardized certification regulations and an administrative infrastructure to manage and to oversee African-American schools.

<sup>60</sup> Graham, “Expansion and Exclusion,” 762. “The overwhelming concern with scholarship, with the primacy of the institutional responsibility for generating rather than transmitting knowledge, was a direct outgrowth of the efforts of Charles William Eliot at Harvard and others to broaden the college curriculum.”

<sup>61</sup> Beale, “The Needs of Negro Education in the United States,” 11.

school officials in Baltimore were hiring African-American teachers to teach students of their own race. The educational reforms, namely uniformity and efficiency, which Charles Eliot pursued, had an impact on the emergence of the junior high school. The creation of this intermediary institutional format between grade school and high school presented yet another opportunity for Slowe to advance her career.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRINCIPAL LUCY DIGGS SLOWE AND THE ROBERT G. SHAW JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL: AN EXPERIMENT IN THE WASHINGTON, DC, PUBLIC SCHOOL REFORM

The School stands for the development of the highest ideals of character, wisdom and worth are handmaidens here. Trustworthiness, dependability, regard for one's word, deference to elders, consideration of one's comrades, respect for one's self are the watchwords. Truth is our cornerstone: Character is our complete structure.<sup>1</sup>

#### Slowe's Career Path

##### *Slowe Accepts an Appointment at Armstrong Manual High School*

Slowe returned to her alma mater and taught English for seven years, 1908-1915, at the Baltimore Colored High School.<sup>2</sup> Teaching was not a profession into which she entered haphazardly. Slowe wrote, "I chose the teaching profession, and have continued to follow it, because I was happier in that profession than in any other, and because it

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<sup>1</sup> Lucy Diggs Slowe, "Summary of Speech Delivered at Shaw Junior High School Commencement," dated June 21, 1933 in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University Washington, D.C. (Box 90-6, Folder 135). See Elvin H. Fishback, "Character Education in the United States," The Elementary School Journal, 29, No. 4 (December 1928): 277-279. <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0013-5984%28192812%2929%3A4%3C277%3ACEITUS%3E2.0.CO%3B2-S> (accessed September 26, 2007).

Fishback reported his findings from a two-question survey mailed to forty-nine states, three territories and the District of Columbia. The two questions investigated if states required character education and if there were no state requirements, did the districts provide the instruction. Of the respondents who were school superintendents, seventeen states, three territories and the District of Columbia, confirmed state requirements for character education. Twelve other states reported instruction in the area of character development. Slowe's reference to the Gould Shaw Junior High School illustrated her awareness about persistent issues and pedagogical emphasis in education.

<sup>2</sup> The name of the school changed in 1925 to Frederick Douglass High School, one of many so named in the country including Atlanta, Georgia.

gave me opportunity, from my point of view, to work with a large number of human beings in show welfare I have always been interested.”<sup>3</sup> Rooted in her motivation to teach were both intrinsic and altruistic motives. Slowe sought a need to fulfill professional ambitions and to contribute to society through the development of others. In some respects, many of her counterparts would have been pleased to remain in this post without advancement. However, Slowe had other intentions. She wrote, “I changed my position each time because I saw opportunity for financial advancement and for larger service.”<sup>4</sup> In comparison to other schools within district and across regions, the Baltimore Colored High School was a competitive academic environment for learning.<sup>5</sup> Slowe left Baltimore Colored High School after seven years to accept a comparable teaching position at Armstrong Manual Training School in Washington, D.C. in 1915, the same year she completed her master’s degree in English from Columbia University. Columbia University was well-recognized for its rapid and consistent growth as well as pioneering advancements in the field of teaching. Educational researchers and members of the public at large compared Columbia to Harvard and the University of Berlin. In terms of record student enrollment and matriculation, a large number of students attended summer sessions. Lucy Diggs Slowe was one who often completed summer course work in the summers based on short-term sponsored scholarships<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> “Memorandum to Miss Beatrice Clark,” Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. See also “District Pay Goes Up,” Washington Post, February 2, 1917.

<sup>5</sup> Teacher examinations were fast becoming a standard practice for employment consideration as teaching in public education was professionalized. For example, see “Waive of Teacher Tests,” Washington Post, 8 November 1917, 10.

<sup>6</sup> See Rudolf Tombo, “Registration Statistics,” Science, New Series 29, no. 731 (January 1, 1909): 10-21; “Registration Statistics <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1635286> (accessed March 22, 2009); Science, New Series 30, no. 782 (December 24, 1909): 897-907; and, “Columbia and

The move to Armstrong was not a passive consideration. Slowe had to qualify for the position. She wrote, "Through competitive examination, I was appointed in November, 1915 to a teachership in English in the Armstrong School at Washington, D.C., and remained at this school until September, 1919."<sup>7</sup> While at Armstrong, Slowe taught English for four years before completing her last year as the vice-principal, a position that later became the Dean of Girls.<sup>8</sup> The "Lady Principal" or Dean of Girls in a school required a high sense of responsibility, well-developed sense of morals, and a deep connection to the young persons served. Elsie M. Smithies wrote about the necessary qualities indicating that the dean of girls had to be remarkable in many ways. Smithies summarized the necessary qualities as follows:

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Berlin," *Science*, New Series 34, no. 883 (December 1, 1911): 762-764 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1636546> (accessed March 22, 2009). Also see, "2,516 at Columbia Get Degrees Today," *New York Times*, 7 June 1922, p. 10. Competitors also monitored Columbia's growth. See Appendix D Table II B in See Henry James, *Charles W. Eliot President of Harvard University 1869-1909* Volume II (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1930): 347. In the decade from 1870 to 1880, Columbia's enrollment increased by 97.4 per cent. Similarly, during the period from 1890 to 1900, Columbia's enrollment grew by 90 per cent. Much of the growth at Columbia University resulted from high summer term enrollment. Slowe completed her graduate course work during the summer. See "Miss Slowe to Be Dean of Women at Howard University," *The Washington Tribune*, June 17, 1922 in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-11, Folder 207).

<sup>7</sup> "Memorandum to Miss Beatrice Clark," Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers and "Waive Teacher Tests" *Washington Post*, 18 November 1917. The newspaper article discussed the need to waive testing certification because the demand for teachers was high. Slowe would have been a highly attractive candidate as a college-educated woman with a master's degree, prior teaching experience, and, certified to teach. Local newspapers provided coverage of events at both Armstrong and Dunbar High Schools in topics that covered both academics and extracurricular activities. For examples see "5,000 at Graduation," *Washington Post*, 20 June 1916, 4 and "Armstrong Defeated by Dunbar Machine," *Washington Post*, 2 December 1921, 16.

<sup>8</sup> "Dean Lucy D. Slowe," Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers. See Elsie M. Smithies, "The Qualities Essential to a Dean of Girls," *The School Review* 33, no. 3 (March, 1924): 203-208. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1079199> (accessed September 26, 2007). Smithies described the qualities a Dean of Girls should have in order to be successful. "Possessed of the understanding of heart, one must also have the magnetic personality and happy disposition which will attract young people because of a warm friendliness and genial charm" (205).

In summarizing, let it be said that no person has qualities to be a dean if she has not first proved she is a true educator, one who has founded her theories on sound educational principles, who has for the keynote of her work the individual student, one who has for her goal and steadfast purpose the building of honest, sincere, and wholesome character among young women, one who feels that it is her responsibility to send our from out institutions of learning young people equipped with such a code of ethics and such strong principles that they will be able to go into the world and improve human relations.<sup>9</sup>

The requirements for Slowe's position as dean of girls prepared her for other leadership roles to come. In reference to her career moves, Slowe felt compelled to continue post-graduate study at Columbia University. She wrote that she took course work in student personnel services in order to hone her skills and to remain abreast of the most current theoretical premises and contemporary practices.<sup>10</sup>

Armstrong Manual Training School demonstrated more of a hybrid curriculum as opposed to a purely classical, liberal, or vocational institution. The active employment of electives indicated that the curriculum was far more progressive than the label of a vocational school would suggest.<sup>11</sup> Arguably, Slowe's decision to accept a comparable position in Washington, D.C. was a matter of simple economics. In Baltimore, there were historical antecedents of inequity in terms of teacher compensation and opportunities. As it was the case with Coppin at ICY, and Patterson at Dunbar High School, in Baltimore there was a move afoot to minimize the liberal arts curriculum in favor of an industrial one. Hayward Farrar discusses the position of a local African-American newspaper's

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>10</sup> Anderson, "Brickbats and Roses," 285; Wright, "Lucy Diggs Slowe," 299; and, "Dean Lucy D. Slowe" in Slowe Papers. The latter source specifies Slowe pursued additional graduate study at Columbia in 1917, 1921, and 1930.

<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that the progressive and vocational curriculums were not mutually exclusive or necessarily competitive.

position on such issues. In reference to the Washington Du Bois debates about curriculum, Farrar wrote,

The Afro-American generally supported these trends but warned against going too far. In July 1905, the newspaper criticized the emphasis on manual training at the colored High School. This training, it feared, would completely supplant the academic subjects, thereby depriving students of the change to stimulate their minds as well as their hands.<sup>12</sup>

Coincidentally, Slowe graduated from the Baltimore Colored School in 1904, the year before the newspaper controversies were printed.

*Public Perception of Armstrong and its Counterpart*

Prior to and during her time at Armstrong Manual Training School, the institution had regular press coverage, as did the white schools. Before Slowe arrived at Armstrong, local newspapers such as The Washington Post often reported the routine and sensational happenings. For example, the newspaper reported the generous appropriation of \$60,000 for school facility additions.<sup>13</sup> The building expansions included two classroom buildings, enlarged machine shops, electrical laboratories, a reading room for teachers, and a gymnasium. The newspaper reported that renovations would make Armstrong “one of the most complete school structures in the country.”<sup>14</sup> For as much progress and supportive funding Armstrong received, it also remained under scrutiny. Within the next year, Mr. Oyster, president of the Board of Education, was accused of misappropriating \$23,500 of congressional funding earmarked for industrial course.<sup>15</sup> An auditor alleged that the funds

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<sup>12</sup> Hayward Farrar, The Baltimore Afro-American, 32

<sup>13</sup> “Improve Armstrong School,” Washington Post, 21 January 1912, 4.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> “School Fund Inquiry: Auditor is Investigating Misappropriation Charge,” Washington Post, 13 December 1911, 4.

were used to purchase materials used in a commercial course. Mr. Oyster denied the charges. The article shed light on the advantageous position Armstrong was in as well as how any perceived errors could complicate the desired mission of the school.

The newspapers also covered the duality of bi-racial and separate educational systems. For example, the Washington Post covered status of white schools and African-American schools in terms of meetings, funding, curricular offerings, and scheduling.<sup>16</sup> To explore the duality, one should take notice of how both the white and African-American schools evolved along similar lines having college preparatory as well as industrial schools. One of Armstrong's white counterparts and predecessor was the McKinley Manual Training School. It was named after President McKinley who was assassinated in 1901. Since Armstrong was cut from the same pattern in terms of funding and mission, it bore the strongest resemblance to McKinley in terms of progress. McKinley Manual Training School emerged from another institution, Central High School, in the same fashion that Dunbar High School gave birth to Armstrong Manual High School.<sup>17</sup> At both schools the District of Columbia initiated industrial courses.

Public records report:

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<sup>16</sup> Several articles referencing education for both white and African-American students appeared in that edition. "Admission to the Colored High Schools" specifies the method by which eighth graders could approach the principal of the school they desired to attend concerning admission. This edition also announced upcoming meetings for teachers and administrators in an article titled, "Meeting of Teachers." As both white and African-American schools had various types of schools in the District of Columbia, this edition also identified "White Night Schools" and "Colored Night Schools."

<sup>17</sup> "School Barrier Down, McKinley First-Year Pupils to be Accommodated," Washington Post, 27 September 1907, 16. McKinley moved to a different location after receiving \$26 million in 1926. The school remained segregated until 1956 when President Dwight D. Eisenhower issued an executive order for desegregation. By the end of the decade white flight occurred and the school was predominantly African-American by 1960. Currently, the school maintains its industrial roots. It is known as McKinley Technology High School. See the District



Manual training was first introduced into the District's public school system in 1885 when a teacher at Central High School began giving lessons in carpentry after school hours to some of his students in his physics class. Soon, a defined curriculum for manual training was developed using wood-turning, forging and machine shop. The shops were initially located with the walls of Central High, but later moved to a separate building across the street from the high school. In 1893, an official technical course of study was developed as part of the high school curriculum. Due to its popularity, demands for a new and a larger building were made that ultimately resulted in Congressional appropriations for Manual Training School #1 (named McKinley Manual Training School at its dedication). The following year, Congress followed up by making similar appropriations for Manual Training School #2 (for blacks). In its initial appropriations for manual training schools the District, Congress likely felt compelled by the District's argument that many of the graduates of the technical course had become assistant machinist in the gun shops of the Navy Yard, greatly aiding in the manufacturing of guns during the Spanish American War.<sup>18</sup>

Undoubtedly, the impetus for starting McKinley was driven by student interest and happenstance. However, industrial education had been promoted for African-Americans since the close of the Civil War. Yet there were some instances of African-American schools that combined industrial arts and classical curricular offerings along a

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of Columbia Public School website: [http://mths.k12.dc.us/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=111&Itemid=111](http://mths.k12.dc.us/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=111&Itemid=111) (accessed September 26, 2007).

<sup>18</sup> District of Columbia Office of Planning, "Staff Report for Robert Gould Shaw Junior High School (McKinley Manual Training School)," Washington, D.C.: Historic Preservation Review Board, September 25, 2008). [http://planning.dc.gov/planning/frames.asp?doc=/planning/lib/planning/preservation/2008-09\\_hprb/shaw\\_junior\\_high\\_school.pdf](http://planning.dc.gov/planning/frames.asp?doc=/planning/lib/planning/preservation/2008-09_hprb/shaw_junior_high_school.pdf) (accessed December 3, 2008).

The McKinley Manual Training School was designed by architects John L. Smithmeyer of Washington and Henry Ives Cobb of Chicago who created a four-story Romanesque style structure. The Armstrong Manual Training School was dedicated in 1902 a few months before McKinley was dedicated. Keep in mind the African-American students used an existing building, the M Street School, so erecting a building was not an issue. This point made the issue about \$60,000 for building renovations at Armstrong appear to a point unworthy of concern. The M Street School was constructed in 1889-90 for \$109,909.82 inclusive of the land, construction, and fixtures. Terrell, "History of the High School for Negroes in Washington," 258.

continuum.<sup>19</sup> The provocative question was whether or not African-Americans had equal probability or opportunity for employment if they received the same training. A newspaper reported that at least in theory, the schools had equal footing, particularly during wartime.<sup>20</sup> In reference to the Great War, Superintendent Ernest L. Thurston stated, “The value of the possible output of the shops here might be taken as an indication of what might be done in school shops throughout the country.”<sup>21</sup>

The local newspapers also provided equal coverage of community concerns about education, if not scandals. Within three years of its opening, McKinley Manual Training School was in the newspaper. The allegations included students who cheated and stole, teachers who smoked in the building, and a principal, A.I. Gardiner, who did little to correct the issues.<sup>22</sup> Shaw Junior High School moved into the McKinley Manual Training School in 1928. The McKinley Manual Training School relocated to another site and another new building because of overcrowding and a dilapidated infrastructure at its former location.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Linda R. Buchanan and Philo A. Hutcheson, “Reconsidering the Washington-DuBois Debate: Two Black Colleges in 1910-1911,” in Essays in Twentieth-Century Southern Education, Exceptionalism and Its Limits ed. Wayne J. Urban (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.): 77-99. The authors use the case study method to examine State University and Eckstein Norton Institute in Kentucky. See pages 91-94 for a discussion about curricular offerings spanning from textiles and industrial arts to college preparatory courses at Eckstein Norton. As one of seven medical schools for African Americans, State University’s curriculum ranged from other professional studies in theology and law to dressmaking, millinery, commercial, and domestic science.

<sup>20</sup> “School Shops for War,” Washington Post, 13 February 1917, 12.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> “Accuse Principal,” Washington Post, 12 April 1906.

<sup>23</sup> District of Columbia Office of Planning  
[http://www.planning.dc.gov/planning/lib/planning/preservation/200809\\_hprb/shaw\\_junior\\_high\\_school.pdf](http://www.planning.dc.gov/planning/lib/planning/preservation/200809_hprb/shaw_junior_high_school.pdf).

*Friendship and Opportunity*

After three short years of teaching at Armstrong, Slowe was promoted assistant principal in 1918. By the following year, public school administrators courted her for the coveted position as the principal of the Robert Gould Shaw Junior High School.<sup>24</sup> No significant recorded data about the position Slowe assumed within the district was available upon request from the District of Columbia Public School System. On the one hand, the scarcity of information could exemplify history by omission. On the other hand, the thriving academic culture for African-American during Slowe's career could have made her professional trajectory appear to be more common than unique. She did well in the midst of other African-American educators who also did well in the Washington,

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<sup>24</sup> See G. Smith Wormly, "Educators in the First Half Century of Public Schools in the District of Columbia," *Journal of Negro History* 17, No. 2 (April, 1932): 131. (Wormley was named a prospective replacement for Slowe as principal when she accepted the post as D of W at HU. He was principal in the district.) The school was referred to as the M Street school before being renamed around 1902 after Robert Gould Shaw, a colonel in the Union Army who commanded the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts regiment of Negro soldiers during the Civil War. Ironically, his command required spending a brief overnight stay in Berryville, Virginia, Slowe's birthplace. Shaw wrote to his mother, "We left Charleston at about 11 P.M. last Monday, and marched to Berryville, where we bivouacked. Our wagons and tents were left behind as we started off in a great hurry to reinforce Colonel Gorman, who had advanced toward Winchester." Robert Gould Shaw. *Blue-Eyed Child of Fortune: The Civil War Letters of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw*. (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1992) 181. The inscription on the Robert Gould Shaw Monument located in the Boston Common reads:

The white officers taking life and honor in their hands – cast in their lot with men of a despised race unproved in war and risked death as inciters of servile insurrection if taken prisoners—besides encountering all the common perils of camp march and battle. The black rank and file volunteered when disaster clouded the union cause – served without pay for eighteen months till given that of white troops—faced threatened enslavement if captured—were brave in action—patient under heavy and dangerous labors—and cheerful amid hardships and privations. Together they gave to the nation and the world undying proof that Americans of African descent possess the pride courage and devotion of the patriot soldier—one hundred and eighty thousand such Americans enlisted under the union flag in M.D.CCCXLIII – M.D.CCCLXV

Henry James, *Charles W. Eliot President of Harvard University, 1869-1909*, Volume II, Appendix D, 354. This inscription is recorded in this study as it appears in the reference source.

D.C. area. One could argue that given Washington's history of educational development African-Americans had a combination of circumstances that cultivated opportunities for those who were both talented and industrious.

Apart from other women who had successful careers in the public school system in Washington D.C., Slowe had the direct influence of Roscoe C. Bruce, a Harvard University graduate and former employee of Tuskegee Institute. Bruce's educational background was rooted in the Washington, D.C. public school system. His father was the well-connected and widely respected, mulatto, Blanche K. Bruce of Mississippi who served as a full term in the United States Senate until his term expired in 1881.<sup>25</sup> Roscoe Bruce also secured honors as a member of the debate team.<sup>26</sup>

In 1903, he married Clara Burrill and news of the nuptials appeared in the local newspaper.<sup>27</sup> He was not employed with the public school system for the District of Columbia until he requested a release from Booker T. Washington as supervisor of the

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<sup>25</sup> "Death of Blanche K. Bruce," New York Times, 18 March 1898. Bruce was credited with starting the first school for African-Americans in Missouri. He represented Mississippi in the United States Senate. President Garfield appointed him to the position of Registry of the Treasury and later he was employed as the Recorder of Deeds for the District of Columbia. Phenotypically Bruce appeared Caucasian yet he was recognized as a "Negro Leader." Blanche Bruce died when his son, an only child, was 18 years old, a freshman at Harvard University. Josephine Bruce would work as the Lady Principal at Tuskegee prior to her son's, Roscoe C. Bruce, appointment. Blanche Bruce was also a trustee for Howard University. Moorland-Spingarn Research Center has a collection of his papers.

<sup>26</sup> Terrell, "History of High School for Negroes in Washington," 263. In 1903, Roscoe Bruce married Clara Burrill, the sister of Mary Burrill who was a long-time friend of Lucy Slowe. See "Roscoe Bruce Weds," Washington Post, 5 June 1903, 7. Terrell wrote, "Miss Mary P. Burrill and Mr. Nathaniel Guy, dramatic readers and trainers, deserve special mention for the service they have rendered the Washington schools and the community in their particular field" (265). Mary Burrill and Slowe shared a home together for more than ten years during Slowe's years at Howard University.

<sup>27</sup> "Roscoe C. Bruce Weds," Washington Post, 5 June 1903, 7

Academic Department at Tuskegee.<sup>28</sup> Bruce specified a number of reasons why employment in the nation's capital was more attractive for both personal and professional reasons. Bruce indicated that while he did not solicit the position, he would be willing to entertain the opportunity if Washington would permit him consider it. Bruce delineated the following reasons for considering the appointment as the following:

1. The happiness of my family—Tuskegee is isolated and travel costly.
2. My health cannot long sustain the amount of indoor work and the hours entailed by my present position. The other position incurs nine months' work, and night work is optional.
3. With better facilities for study, I should have every day and night much more leisure for recreation, for my own intellectual development, and for serious literary production.
4. I could make and save more money.
5. The city Negro population offers practically a new field for applying that philosophy I have learned at Tuskegee; and, therefore, a highly significant and useful career.<sup>29</sup>

Bruce had an elite and rare education, from his preparatory schooling to collegiate experience. However, he remained an advocate for industrial education and sought to implant that philosophy in the District of Columbia. In his 1905 Harvard Memorial Day

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<sup>28</sup> Roscoe C. Bruce to B.T. Washington, 26 August 1905, The Booker T. Washington Papers, Volume 6, page 396. The University of Illinois Press <http://www.press.uillinois.edu> (accessed March 5, 2009). In his book, The Senator and the Socialite, Lawrence Otis Graham makes the case that Booker T. Washington hired Roscoe C. Bruce to spy on his behalf. There is evidence of correspondence between the two prior to Bruce's employment at Tuskegee from 1903 to 1906. Roscoe C. Bruce to B.T. Washington, February 8, 1902, The Booker T. Washington Papers, Volume 6, page 396. The University of Illinois Press <http://www.press.uillinois.edu>. (accessed March 5, 2009). In the letter Bruce referred to a newspaper clipping. He wrote, "I fear the paper is doing harm—it serves to organize the malcontents & to intimidate the weak. Moreover, there seems to be no immediate or even remote prospect that the papers resources will dry up. It is supported by the malcontents whose doctrines it expressed, by the curious whose curiosity it feeds, & by the rather large lower middle class of Negroes who yearn for a lively race paper in Boston." The ampersand appears in the original text. See Louis R. Harlan, "The Secret Life of Booker T. Washington," The Journal of Southern History 37, Issue 3 (August, 1971): 393-416. Harlan gave an account of Washington leading a double or secret life in the shadows to exact social change in the interest of race. For a balanced discussion, see Bieze, "Later Accounts of the 'Secret Life'" in Booker T. Washington and the Art of Self-Representation, 15-32.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

Address, Bruce opened with a recollection of the sacrifices the Civil War yielded in the interest of “the fact that Americanism demands the free play of each individual’s best powers in service of the community.”<sup>30</sup> In his speech, Bruce examined the vast masses of African-Americans who remained impoverished and without meaningful skills because of the lack of adequate pathways for improvement. He commented,

Now, the moral and industrial regeneration of the Negro life in the Black Belt must come from within; the job must be done by teachers, preachers, mechanics, farmers, housewives educated and trained in Negro schools and inspired to help their people. Institutions seeking to contribute to this far-reaching service should educate their students to ideals and train them in habits and arts that they may spread among the masses intelligent methods in farm and garden and household work; patient thrift and sustained industry; clear foresight and prompt initiative; rugged honesty and steady self-control; moral courage, chastity; public spirit and racial confidence and pride. In a school community like Tuskegee all the elements of real life are adequately represented. The students participate to the fullest extent in the whole circle of activities; they gain experience and a reasonable confidence in their own powers and a sense of responsibility. Such school communities, resting upon agriculture as the basic industry, should be established at the center of each of the black belts; they should, as President Eliot has recently suggested, receive the nation’s aid.<sup>31</sup>

Bruce neatly embraced Eliot’s notion of democracy and education, married it with the need for industrious work for a people who had been ill learned and previously enslaved, and appealed to African-Americans’ call to racial mobilization and uplift via education.

As intended by Congressional appointment and Roscoe C. Bruce’s educational philosophy, Armstrong Manual Training School had a vocational focus opposite of its

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<sup>30</sup> “Roscoe Conkling Bruce, ‘Freedom Through Education,’” <http://www.blackpst.org/?=1905-roscoe-conklin-bruce-freedom-through-education> (accessed March 3, 2009). Bruce presented this same speech at a later point in his career in Cleveland, Ohio at the Lincoln Douglas banquet of the Attucks Republican Club. See “Freedom Through Education,” *Washington Post*, 13 February 1909.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

archrival, the highly revered Dunbar High School, its progenitor.<sup>32</sup> The program at Armstrong Manual Training School consisted of a mixed curriculum such that there was an appeal to the needs of students and their families. As Kelly Miller stated, “The higher education of the Negro must be essentially vocational, leading to a practical livelihood. The Negro must make a living before he can make a career.”<sup>33</sup> That is to say, African-Americans as a collective group had not reached the point where learning could be for the sake of itself. Therefore, education needed a practical emphasis mixed with the academic offerings to stimulate the mind. The Armstrong Manual School blended required courses with electives as indicated:

The academic and industrial subject of the four-year course are arranged on a liberal elective system. English is required in the first three years and is an elective with civics and economics the fourth year. Mathematics and free-hand drawing are required in the first two years. All other subjects are elective the industrial work includes domestic service, dressmaking, tailoring, millinery, woodworking, wood turning, pattern making, forge work, machine shop, automobile repairing, art metal work, and mechanical drawing. About a fourth of the pupils’ time is given to industrial courses.<sup>34</sup>

The curriculum had evidence of Eliot’s option for electives as well as the indispensable quality of industrial education that many argued as the most expedient means of African-

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<sup>32</sup> Armstrong Manual Training School was born out of the vocational arts program at Dunbar High School. When the latter elected to retain a liberal arts emphasis, the former separated into a different institution. “From 1877 to 1897 the high school course consisted of three years’ work. But in 1894 the course was enriched and enlarged by the addition of several electives and since then it has been lengthened to four years. The commercial department was established in 1884-85 and in 1887 a business course requiring two years of study laid the foundation of Armstrong Manual Training School.” Terrell, “History of the High School for Negroes in Washington,” 257.

<sup>33</sup> Kelly Miller, “The Past, Present and Future of the Negro College,” The Journal of Negro Education 2 Issue 3 (July, 1933): 421.

<sup>34</sup> Department of the Interior, U.S. Bureau of Education, Negro Education: A Study of the Private and Higher Schools for Colored People in the United States, “Vol. II, 147-148.

American participation in a non-slave society. To some degree, Slowe would replicate this mixture of philosophies and realities as the administrator of a new movement.

### The Junior High School Experiment

The aftermath of World War I proved to be the eve of a great experiment in American public schools. The notion of the junior high school gave way to actual implementation in piloted fashion across the nation. Before discussing the significance of Slowe's principalship at Shaw Junior High School, it is necessary to examine some of the antecedents and reforms in the field of education that cultivated the opportunity for Slowe to assume leadership of such a novel enterprise, the junior high school.

In reference to school reform, Larry Cuban distinguishes between two types, the incremental and fundamental. The former amounts to a "tinkering" with established structures while the latter indicates the need for a complete renovation if not overall of the existing structures.<sup>35</sup> "The junior high school, invented in the early 1900s, had become within decades a core structure bolted into the system of American schooling."<sup>36</sup> The circumstances that led to the evolution of the junior high schools resulted from addressing student attrition at the point of transition in the 8-4 school plan, recognizing differences in adolescent development, reforming the curriculum to make ready college-bound students or industry-prepared workers with efficiency as a the cornerstone, and

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<sup>35</sup> Larry Cuban, "What Happens to Reforms that Last? The Case of the Junior High School," American Educational Research Journal 29, no. 2 (Summer, 1992): 227-251. Also, see David Tyack and Larry Cuban, Tinkering Toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995).

<sup>36</sup> Cuban, "What Happens to Reforms that Last?" 230.



preparing faculty who could provide instruction to this newly identified classification of students.<sup>37</sup>

Given the transition from a rural to an urban and industrial society, the option to work was an attraction for many students in the cities. In bucolic settings, work remained a necessity due to reliance on the land. At the turn of the twentieth century, it was common for children to leave school so that they could work to help support their families. The case was even more so for the masses of African-Americans who remained what was known regionally as the Black Belt, deep southern states. While attrition was a concern on one end of the attendance continuum, the wholesale capture of an audience of students who remained enrolled but who were thoroughly disengaged was yet another issue. In response to this, the concept of efficiency was applied to answer how the time spent for children age 12-14 could best be utilized. Tyack and Cuban explained,

The rigidity and narrow academic emphasis of the educational structure was a major cause of this problem, reformers asserted. All children were expected to ascend the ladder of graded classrooms, studying the same subjects in the same ways and taking exams for promotion from one rung to rung. Many were left behind each year. “Retarded” pupils age ten to fifteen years, many of them poor and from immigrant families crowded the upper grades of elementary schools, shamed and bored as individuals and collectively producing what educators called “waste” –a social sin in an age that glorified the “social inefficiency.” When young people dropped out or were pushed out, those who did find work usually ended up in repetitive, mind-numbing, dead-end jobs. Academically talented students experienced another kind of “waste” as they marked time academically in the standard pace of grades until they qualified for entrance to high school.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Leonard V. Koos, The Junior High School (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920): 20-26. See Koo’s discussion on matriculation mortality. Also see R.L. Lyman, “The Junior High Schools of Atlanta, Georgia,” The School Review 33, no. 8 (October, 1925): 578-593. Lyman estimated attrition to be as high as 34 percent (578).

<sup>38</sup> Tyack and Cuban, Tinkering Toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform, 69-70. Also see Frank P. Whitney, “The Junior High School,” Music Supervisors’ Journal 15, no. 1

Writings from the period of the early 1900s resonated with the message that the students could perform more rigorous study with less repetition and in less time. Younger students, particularly between the ages of 12 and 14, were capable of introductory level college preparatory academic courses on manual training for work.

Author and educator, Herbert Weet, profiled the community and schools in Rochester, New York.<sup>39</sup> As a justification for implementing junior high schools, Weet identified four distinct needs in the interest of efficiency and the need to meet age-specific interest.

We had, first of all, in each grade certain boys and girls who were going to high school, there to take the general of college-preparatory courses. For these we felt the urgent need of an opportunity to begin the students the study of foreign language, for example, while they were still in the upper grades. In the second place, we had in each grade group certain pupils whose sole ambition was to get the best possible preparation for the business office. Some of these planned to go on into the commercial courses of high school, while still others through choice or necessity were to withdraw from school upon the completion of the eighth grade. Here again was a type need that was not being met. Then again in each grade group were girls who would be called to work in the home or in the trades as soon as the grammar-grade work was completed. For these much more attention to the house-hold arts seemed desirable. Lastly, there were certain boys, and the number of them in this particular community was large, who would go to machine-shop, the print-shop, and other trade lines as soon as elementary-school days were over. For these more work in the industrial arts was important. It was thought therefore, that if sufficient number of these pupils could be gathered in one central building, each

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(October, 1928):18-19. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3383729> (accessed March 27, 2009). In concurrence, Whitney wrote, "The junior high school in common with all other agencies of education recognizes as fundamental the objectives of character and ethical growth, of health, of citizenship, of worth home membership, of vocational fitness, of command of fundamental processes, and of wise use of leisure. The junior high school did not yield to other school in its allegiance to these ideals. As a separate school, however, it must justify its existence not so much by those great aims which it holds in common with other types of schools as by those aims which it alone is best fitted to realize" (19).

<sup>39</sup>Herbert Weet, "A Junior High School," *The School Review* 24, no. 2 (February, 1916):143-144. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3383729> (accessed March 27, 2009).

type of need could be met in a way consistent with economy and adequate instruction.<sup>40</sup>

Based in Weet's observations of his community, there were four separately identifiable needs as determined by age, gender, class, and individual interest. The school needed to accommodate all of these types in an educational setting that would encourage success for all and limit the concern about waste. One focal point of the junior high school experiment focused on educational and vocational guidance as one of its "peculiar functions."<sup>41</sup>

Additionally, J.C. Powers would have agreed with the contemporary authors' synopsis of reasons for varying attendance patterns. Because of attrition, junior high schools developed different admission requirements. Powers reported the common practices of the states that responded to his survey.<sup>42</sup> Essentially, there was great variation among the states that had junior high schools. Florida did not initiate junior high school until the ninth grade. Georgia permitted promotion if the sixth grade were overcrowded. Massachusetts combined age and the result of intelligence testing while in Oregon retarded pupils were promoted only if they could benefit from vocational studies. The variation in admission requirements was indicative of the absence of standardization.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Koos, The Junior High School, 15-19. Koos ranked responses from seventy schools about the intended purposes of junior high schools. In descending order, respondents identified "retention of pupils, economy of time, recognition of individual differences, exploration for guidance, and, vocational education" as the primary functions of the junior high school.

<sup>42</sup> J. Orin Powers, "Legal Provisions and Regulations of State Departments of Education Affecting Junior High Schools," *The School Review* 33, no. 4 (April, 1925.): 287. <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0036-6773%28192504%2933%3A4%3C280%3ALPAROS%3E2.0.CO%3B2-9> (accessed September 26, 2007).

Both Weet and Powers hinted at the emerging data in support of student developmental changes. To that end, Charles Judd articulated the psychological concern for maturing students transforming from more easily directed students to questioning adolescents. “The twelve-year-old child begins to look into the larger world. He begins to think of his duties to society and himself. When he is fourteen or fifteen he will be half through the critical period of adolescence. If you want to influence an adolescent in a large way, you must begin at twelve, not fourteen.”<sup>43</sup> Judd’s articulation supported Charles Eliot’s generalization that students should enter college around age 18 for optimal reward in collegiate studies.<sup>44</sup>

The plans for instructional delivery and the curricular offerings met scrutiny from educational reformers. Many educators viewed the 8-4 plan as an antiquated remnant of European influences.<sup>45</sup> In summing up the evils of the 8-4 plan, Arthur T. Jones articulated the argument identifying the plan as prescribed, restrictive, and essentially undemocratic. Jones wrote,

It does not give to each person an equal opportunity to secure that education and training that will enable him to develop his powers so that

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<sup>43</sup> Charles H. Judd, “The Junior High School,” The School Review 24, no. 4 (April, 1916): 253. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1077729> (accessed September 3, 2009).

<sup>44</sup> Letter from Charles W. Eliot to Dr. Henry S. Pritchett, 13 July 1907 in Henry James, Charles W. Eliot, President of Howard University 1869-1909 Volume II: 149-150. Eliot wrote, “I think that a young man’s character is, as a matter of fact, usually formed by the time he is eighteen years old, and that he will probably never be fit for freedom unless he is then fit.” Eliot wrote this in relation to his bid to reform the standard four-year college experience by shortening the experience to three years in an accelerated format. This is one reform he did not accomplish as president of Harvard University.

<sup>45</sup> Charles Hubbard Judd, “The Junior High School,” The School Review 23, no. 1 (January, 1915): 25-33. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1077231> (accessed September 3, 2009). Judd wrote a rebuttle to another scholar’s objection to digressing from the 8-4 plan on the premises that doing so jeopardized democratic ideals. Judd explored various plans, American and European, by philosophically comparative means.

he can use them efficiently; undemocratic to society because it does not train the individual to do the thing he can do best, because it does not provide for a selection of leaders from all ranks of people, and because it provides for the training of only a few leaders in a comparatively narrow field.<sup>46</sup>

Alternatives to the 8-4 plan included the 6-6, 6-3-3 and 6-2-4 plans. Naming the junior high school in Kansas City, Charles H. Judd made the case that the city's "famous experiment" was its ability to promote students' progress through elementary education in less than three years.<sup>47</sup> Judd addressed both efficiency and curricular change in his observation. Depending on the location, student needs, educational system, and resources for qualified teachers, any of the plans could work. School districts experimented with different plans in some variation or the other.<sup>48</sup>

Educators and administrators alike harped on the nature of curricular offerings. As The Committee of College Entrance Requirements stressed, the units, sequence, and degree of difficulty needed to be justified by students' abilities in an effort to be prepared for society. Writers of the day acknowledged the transference of practices from the high school to the junior high school. In his earlier work written in January of 1915 analyzing the junior high school, Charles H. Judd examined the common curricular aim that junior high and high schools shared. He wrote:

From the point of view of the high school demand for readjustment is no less urgent. One of the cardinal principles which has always governed the high-school course of study is the principle that the student must be introduced to all the broad fundamental types of human knowledge. The student must be introduced to natural science, to the study of social life as

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<sup>46</sup> Arthur J. Jones, "The Junior High School: It's Place in the Reorganization of Education," The School Review 26, no. 2 (February, 1918): 111-112. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1077786> (accessed September 23, 2008).

<sup>47</sup> Charles H. Judd, "The Junior High School," (April, 1916): 251.

<sup>48</sup> Koos, The Junior High School, 7-9.

this is set forth in history and civics, to other civilizations and their languages and literature, to mathematics in the form of algebra and geometry, to the vernacular both in its literature and in the rhetorical principles that govern its effective use, and, last but not least, to applied knowledge in commercial subjects, and in the practical arts of industry and domestic organization. With this elaborate plan before it the high school has been seeking every possible device to find time to do its work. It has gradually pushed up the quantity of its requirements until now a bewildering mass of materials is being offered to young people every year and yet the range of high-school offerings is constantly increasing. How shall this congestion be cured? There is but one answer: Give the high school more time in which to do its work. Some of this additional time must ultimately come from a more intimate correlation of high-school work with college work, but some of it must certainly come from a reorganization of the relation of the elementary school to the high school.<sup>49</sup>

Voila, the junior high school was an obvious antidote to the problems arising from inefficiency and mounting requirements for college entrance. Moreover, the junior high school had a remedy for the lack of student engagement by offering a wide variety of industrial and college preparatory courses. Such courses would be sufficient to interest the otherwise bored achiever, disinterested adolescent and practical-minded future employee.

English and science were both courses of interest that, besides Judd, others monitored as curricular changes at regional and national levels. Based on the results of a national study involving seventy-eight schools, science became a barometer for grade-level specific changes in the curriculum. Authors Tryon, Smith and Rood commented on the results of their study.

Here is evidence of the transfer of important units of instruction from senior high school to the junior high school, which is regarded by most authorities on the junior high school movement as one of its chief characteristics. These subjects have not as yet been pushed down as far as the seventh grade to any great extent. It should be added, however, that there is a distinct tendency in this direction. Science already appears as a

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<sup>49</sup> Judd, "The Junior High School," (January, 1915), 31.

constant in this grade in a considerable number of junior high school systems. Of the seventy-eight centers, twenty-two, or 28 per cent, offer science as a constant in seventh grade.<sup>50</sup>

The fact that trends were anticipated is an indication that the junior high school reform movement had taken root as an accepted component of the common school experience, particularly in many cities.<sup>51</sup>

Suggested English courses were consistent with the psychological rationale and school plan for the junior high school. In his bid to sway readers to seize the moment, Walter Barnes advocated for swift changes in English courses before the movement grew cold. He wrote,

Now while the new school organization is still plastic and malleable, we should reconstruct our course in English. If we wait until the new idea becomes rigid—as it undoubtedly will—we shall find it a more difficult task to expand, compress, and remold our course in English. The six-three-three plan is undeniably more in accordance with the change and growth of children; it recognizes more clearly and meets more adequately their disposition, their temperament. The proper course in English in the junior high school is one that is based on the qualities, the characteristics, the peculiarities, the interests, of the children of junior high-school age. Manifestly, our first problem is to comprehend the child in this stage of development, to discover what are his tastes, inclinations, notions, ideals,

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<sup>50</sup> R. M. Tryon, H. L. Smith, and Allan F. Rood, “The Program of Studies in Seventy-Eight Junior High School Centers,” *The School Review* 35, no.2 (February, 1927):102. <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0036-6773%28192702%2935%3A2%3C96%3ATPOSIS%3E2.0.CO%3B2-F> (accessed September 26, 2007).

<sup>51</sup> Admittedly the educational development of public schools in southern states lacked the same novelty that northern and western states experienced. However, at least in Atlanta, the movement was afoot. For the sake of a regional comparison, see R.L. Lyman’s, “The Junior High Schools of Atlanta, Georgia,” *The School Review* 33, no. 8 (October, 1925): 578-593. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1078919> (accessed September 3, 2009). Legislation for the junior high school was introduced in 1918. Lyman cited attrition and “deplorable” fiscal and building conditions. Lyman included data on both white and African-American schools given the segregated society. Lyman identified the superintendent’s support of intermediate schools as a key aspect for the “awakening” that the junior high school movement brought. In terms of course work, the seventh grade did not include science as part of the curriculum for the entire year. Instead, courses included English, geography or history, mathematics, spelling and penmanship, health education, art, music, household arts for girls, and manual arts for boys.

instincts, and powers; having done this, we are ready to plan for him a course in English.<sup>52</sup>

Barnes identified several problem areas specific to the adolescent development of the student and the diverse functions of the junior high school. He recommended changes in terms of instructional delivery so that students would engage more readily. Specifically, he suggested individual reading versus class reading, student selection of themes and topics, an option for students to test out of courses, the use of projects, a reliance on charismatic characters, and other creative methods that subscribe to the type of literature read while providing an opportunity for the student to display what was learned.<sup>53</sup>

Educators, researchers, and scholars of the period made contributions to the body of knowledge that became a reservoir of suggested practices for how to delineate and to deliver the curriculum in the junior high school.

#### An Invitation to Do Something New: Shaw Junior High School

As previously referenced, a number of African-American women became principals of various types of institutions during the period preceding and during Slowe's experience in public school administration. For yet another example, consider the career of Marion P. Shadd, a District of Columbia public school educator who moved from teacher to principal, from principal to supervising principal, and, finally, to Assistant Superintendent as an African-American woman.<sup>54</sup> While Shadd's accomplishments are

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<sup>52</sup> Walter Barnes, "Suggestions for the English Course in the Junior High School," The School Review 27, no. 7 (September, 1919): 524-525. <http://links.kstor.org/sici?sici=0036-6773%28191909%2927%3A7%3C523%3ASFTECI%E2.0.CO%3B2-2> (accessed September 26, 2007).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 525-532. In total, Barnes made 15 observations with corresponding suggestions for instructional reform particularly structured for junior high students.

<sup>54</sup> G. Smith Wormley, "Educators of the First Half Century of Public Schools of the District of Columbia," The Journal of Negro History 17, no. 2 (April, 1932): 131.



commendable, Slowe happened upon a unique opportunity. In fact, an offer was extended to her. The position as principal was well publicized and highly desired because it represented social status, professional credibility, and legitimacy in the political arena for public education.<sup>55</sup> She had to be well-prepared, well-regarded, well-connected, and even fortunate in that circumstances favored her chances of securing the appointment. The new experiment, a social awakening manifested as the junior high school would require exemplary and creative leadership in order to leave its mark as a vital educational element.

*Carpe Diem!*

On September 15, 1919, Slowe received a letter from Roscoe C. Bruce, Assistant Superintendent of Schools.<sup>56</sup> In his correspondence, Bruce extended a novel invitation to do something new.<sup>57</sup> Bruce recorded a lengthy history of professional contact and networking with Slowe: “It was while I was Assistant Superintendent ‘in sole charge of

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<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2714463> (accessed September 23, 2008). Wormley did not provide specific dates about Shadd’s career and its progression. “She has the distinction of being the first woman of her race to occupy the position of assistant superintendent with credit not only to herself but to all educators of her sex.”

<sup>55</sup> “Miss Slowe to be Dean of Women at Howard Univ. Made Record as Principal of Robert Gould Shaw Junior High School, Has Columbia Univ. Degree, To Also be Assistant in the Department of English” *The Washington Tribune* 17 June 1922, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-11, Folder 207).

<sup>56</sup> When African-Americans participated in WWI educators were called upon to render direct or supportive service in the war efforts. See “How Negroes Are Helping to Win the War,” *New York Times*, 7 July 1918, 58. This article profiled Emmett J. Scott, Secretary of Tuskegee Institute, who was appointed as Special Assistant to the Secretary of War. In that capacity, he addressed complaints about discriminatory practices in the military while disseminating a message of patriotic duty. The African-American schools in Washington D.C. were involved by having military training corps on campus.

<sup>57</sup> Letter to Lucy D. Slowe from Roscoe C. Bruce dated September 15, 1919, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University Washington, D.C. (Box 90-2, Folder 33)

classes and schools in which colored children are taught' in the District of Columbia (1904-1921) that I came to know of Miss Slowe's notably effective teaching of English in the high school of the city of Baltimore."<sup>58</sup> In fact, Bruce acknowledged that he was the impetus for persuading Slowe to take the examination for certification so that she might qualify for a teaching position in the District of Columbia.<sup>59</sup> Bruce's letter of invitation to assume another level of leadership reads as follows:

FRANKLIN SCHOOL BUILDING

Washington, D.C.

15 September 1919.

Miss Lucy D. Slowe  
1758 T Street, N.W.  
City.

My dear Miss Slowe:

I write to enquire whether you are especially interested in the proposed junior high school. In case you are, I should be very glad to have you communicate with me.

I may say that this experiment appears to me one of great moment. I am anxious that nothing should be left undone that will contribute to the successful issue of the experiment. To this end, one of the vital factors, of course, the wise selection of the teaching staff. It seems to me that no one should be appointed to this staff who is not sincerely and intelligently interested in the junior high school project.

For any advice or suggestion which you may see your way clear to let me have, I shall be very grateful.

Very sincerely yours,  
Roscoe C. Bruce  
Assistant Superintendent of Schools<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Letter of recommendation for Lucy Slowe from Roscoe C. Bruce dated May 15, 1933, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University Washington, D.C., (Box 90-2, Folder 33).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Just a few years prior, the Chancellor of the Washington D.C. public school system appointed Bruce to replace Dr. Montgomery as the Assistant Superintendent of Colored Schools.

The tone of the letter is formal and respectful yet clearly familiar in a way that indicates assurance about Slowe's capabilities. Bruce's letter was an invitation on three levels. First, he invited her to consider the position as principal. In doing so, he exuded enthusiasm about the experimental nature of the great opportunity. Second, there was an inducement to take advantage of "great moment" that was unique. Bruce requested her feedback in a collegial rather than supervisory manner indicative of participating in a shared adventure.<sup>61</sup> Third, Bruce's last sentence reflected his respect for Slowe's creative energy and administrative skill. Slowe was hired to teach English. She remained in the classroom for only three years before becoming an assistant principal at Armstrong. Even

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Bruce was the principal at Armstrong for one year before being promoted at the age of twenty-eight. "As a supervising principal, Mr. Bruce has made a good record." See "Chancellor Names Bruce," Washington Post, 29 March 1907, 13. The Assistant Superintendent of Colored Schools was one of the highest ranking positions for African-Americans. Roscoe was very likely at the glass ceiling in his career. See Clinton Rogers Woodruff, "Notes on Municipal Government. Educational Organization and Progress in American Cities. A Symposium on Present Educational Conditions and Needs," Annals of the Academy of Political and Social Science 25 (January, 1905): 157-199. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/100989> (originally assessed March 15, 2008).

The School Board consisted of seven members who served seven-year terms. Each year one appointment would expire. The School Board had complete authority over appointments and dismissals. "The law does not mention the question of color with reference to the members of the School Board, but there have always been at least two members of the colored race on the School Board; but the law does provide reference to the two assistant superintendents, that one of the superintendents, "under direction of the superintendent, shall have charge of schools for colored children." (180) Also see, Thomas J. Elward, "Pioneer Music Educators in the Nation's Capitol: They Made Black History," Music Educators Journal 67, no. 6 (February, 1981): 35-38 <http://jstor.org/stable/1074032> (accessed March 15, 2009). Until 1905, public education was managed by a Board of Trustees. During that time, George F.T. Cook served as the Superintendent of Colored School from 1868 to 1900. With the renaming of the Board of Trustees to the Board of Education, one superintendent was designated at the chief officer with support of assistant superintendents, one for white schools and another for African-American schools, "an action that took away much of the black schools' autonomy" (36). All of the public schools were supported via congressional funding effective in 1862 thereby ending all private funding sources (35).

<sup>61</sup> Letter of recommendation for Lucy Slowe from Roscoe C. Bruce dated May 15, 1933, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. In the recommendation letter, Bruce credited himself as the brain behind the establishment of the junior high school for African-Americans.

though the School Board had complete control of appointments, Bruce advocated on her behalf thereby providing an opportunity for her inclinations toward leadership to flourish. He wrote, “The success of this institution I had very much at heart and I entrusted it to Miss Slowe with complete confidence. The truth is that she exceeded my every expectation.”<sup>62</sup>

Bruce’s letter to Slowe was dated sixteen days after an article in the newspaper appeared about the creation of a junior high school for white students in the district.<sup>63</sup> Time may have been of the essence, however, other issues were also pressing. Undoubtedly, Bruce’s position was both political and highly visible. The degree of his popularity could have hurt or helped him dispense his duties and obligations as the Assistant Superintendent. Newspaper accounts recorded evidence that Bruce’s acceptance among African-Americans waned throughout his occupancy of his position as Assistant Superintendent. He was under heavy scrutiny from members of the community and under review by the school board.

In 1915, he was involved in an automobile crash and this event was published in the newspaper. Later, in the same year, a newspaper reported that he had taken a leave of absence because of a nervous breakdown.<sup>64</sup> During the same year, Bruce attempted to oust a principal, Lucy E. Moten. The move divided whites and African-Americans.<sup>65</sup> Moten directed the Myrtillia Miner Normal School that specialized in the two-year

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> “Plans for Junior High School,” Washington Post, September 3, 1919.

<sup>64</sup> “Police News Notes,” Washington Post, 14 January 1915; “Roscoe Bruce Injured,” Washington Post 23 April 1915, p. 3, and, “City in Brief,” Washington Post 3 August 1915, 4. Bruce had two automobile accidents in the same year. He was not injured in the first one.

<sup>65</sup> “Fail to Oust Teacher,” Washington Post 30 June 1915, 3.

preparation for African-American teachers.<sup>66</sup> Moten retained her position despite Bruce's recommendations. In the District of Columbia, the school board demonstrated preference to normal school graduates for teacher appointments, and this may have been a deciding factor in the outcome.<sup>67</sup>

Bruce had issues raised against him and he was party to controversy throughout his occupancy of the position as Assistant Superintendent. The Parents League consisted of African-American families that revived an effort to seek his resignation in 1919.<sup>68</sup> Parents vowed to withdraw 15,000 to 20,000 African-American students out of the public school system and enroll them into private institutions. While this did not happen, the threat of mobilization with such a widespread impact on the school system had to preoccupy, at the least, if not pressure Bruce.

Perhaps the tone of Bruce's letter to Slowe was both formal and appealing because of the brewed and coming storms of which he had been the center. Nevertheless, Bruce needed to identify a capable, creative, independent thinker who could organize and influence others. With little time to gather resources, Bruce extended an invitation to Slowe. It seemed that she was the only candidate approached for the position as no others

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<sup>66</sup> Department of the Interior, Negro Education, 148-149. As reported in May 1916, Miner Normal School had 115 students, 113 female and 2 male. The faculty and staff consisted of 15, inclusive of every position from principal to janitor. Applicants had to complete high school in the district. The curriculum consisted of 1.5 years of educational theory and observations with the remaining half of the year spend in practice.

<sup>67</sup> Woodruff et.al., "Notes on Municipal Government," 180.

<sup>68</sup> "Wage Scale Not Forecast," Washington Post 3 September 1919. In 1912, there was a previous attempt to reject Bruce as Assistant Superintendent. Several hundred African-Americans gathered to in a local church. They appointed committee members to charter a petition for Congressional involvement in an effort to over rule he School Board's decision to retain Bruce. See "School Inquiry Urged," Washington Post, April 4, 1912, 2.

had been associated with the opportunity to move on the charge of “Ready, set, go!” To make another point, it was possible that Bruce and Slowe interacted in other circles beyond professional. Bruce’s sister-in-law, Mary Burrill, was a friend of Slowe’s and defended her character even after her death. In a social context, Bruce and Slowe may have developed certain loyalties based on friendship and shared circles. In that case, Slowe may have been a silent supporter and Bruce a rewarder to those who remained trustworthy and steadfast to him. Bruce wrote, “Personal loyalty I rate high. But, Miss Slowe has ever displayed a finer and higher loyalty—I mean devotion to the institution she serves.”<sup>69</sup>

*Character is Our Complete Structure*<sup>70</sup>

It has been said that no news is good news. This adage, though over used, seems appropriate when exploring why Slowe was a viable candidate for the position at Shaw. Attempts to identify records of Slowe as the principal of Shaw Junior High School were limited and thwarted by the absence of the mention of her by name. Slowe obtained educational accomplishments, a teaching certification, and experience in the classroom to the point of mastery. Some of her counterparts furnished the newspapers with headlines because of various allegations.<sup>71</sup> For example, one teacher was accused of paying a well-

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<sup>69</sup> Letter of recommendation for Lucy Slowe from Roscoe C. Bruce dated May 15, 1933, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers. See “Miss Slowe to be Dean of Women at Howard Univ.,” Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers. Five competitors consisting of both men and women competed to be her replacement at Shaw. “The candidates were Miss M. Kirkland, assistant principal of Dunbar High School; G. Smith Wormley, Minor Normal; M. Grant Lucase, and dark horse Miss Zita Dyson.”

<sup>70</sup> Slowe, “Summary of Speech Delivered at Shaw Junior High School Commencement,” Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers.

<sup>71</sup> While conducting research, I could not find any articles with specific references to Slowe’s leadership as principal. In articles retrieved from the Washington Post, Slowe’s name did not appear in stories about Shaw Junior High School during the period of her administration.

established African-American attorney to use his influence so that she could secure a teaching position.<sup>72</sup> Bruce was involved in that controversy. In another situation, a former principal of Armstrong Manual High School, Bruce Evans, found discrepancies with records concerning teacher transfers.<sup>73</sup> While Evans criticized the Board of Education and sought reinstatement, he also identified difficulties he had with Roscoe Bruce. The principal stated that Roscoe Bruce tried to place “young and untrained teachers” in the night school with adults against his objections. To counteract Evans’ claim, Bruce testified that Evans forced girls to take mechanical classes and withheld payroll for teachers. Additionally, the board inquired about charges of nepotism on his son’s behalf. Bruce refuted all charges and the board requested records before adjourning.

### *Making Bricks Without Straw*

The first year of her principalship was a whirlwind. Roscoe Bruce offered Slowe the position on September 15, 1919 and typically, the school year would begin the third full week of that month.<sup>74</sup> Slowe had one week to coordinate staff, equipment and materials while formulating a vision for the school. Physically, the school was jointly housed with the M Street School. Slowe began her principalship with only six teachers

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<sup>72</sup> “Shifts Bribery Charge,” Washington Post, 25 October 1907, 11.

<sup>73</sup> “Evans Critic of Board,” Washington Post, 23 December 1915.

<sup>74</sup> District of Columbia. Annual Report of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, Year Ended June 30, 1920: Report of the Board of Education 1919-1920 Volume IV (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1920): 8. 1920.[http://books.google.com/books?id=yLOgAAAAMAAJ&dq=board+of+education+of+the+district+of+columbia+1920&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s](http://books.google.com/books?id=yLOgAAAAMAAJ&dq=board+of+education+of+the+district+of+columbia+1920&source=gbs_navlinks_s) (accessed September 23, 2008).

and forty students.<sup>75</sup> There were a number of issues surrounding the opening of the school. Slowe articulated her concerns in the annual principal's report.<sup>76</sup>

Slowe's first point of trepidation involved the lack of understanding that educators, administrators, parents, and students had about junior high schools. Why the District of Columbia and other school systems create them? How would they function differently from elementary and secondary schools? In what ways would students benefit? Slowe would carefully put forth her concerns in a forthright but respectful manner. With her approach, Slowe seemed to counteract lack of knowledge and resistance to the "experiment."

Although the foundation for the junior high school has scarcely been laid this year, I see great possibilities for its future if the administration will provide the means for its development.

The school has been seriously handicapped in a number of ways:

First there was no time to acquaint parents, teachers, and the general public with what a junior high school really is, and what its advantages are. Consequently, erroneous ideas concerning it were prevalent, hence parents were and are reluctant to send their children to it.

Second the school is without equipment of any kind suitable for the proper prosecution of its work. Absolutely no equipment for the teaching of science, printing, typewriting, free-hand and mechanical drawing is provided, although the above-mentioned subjects, by vote of the board of education, form a part of the curriculum. It is exceedingly embarrassing to the school to advertise a course of study which it can not give except in promises for the future.

Third, the school is and will be handicapped as long as it has to share its building with the manual training department as a grade manual training center. The proper order and atmosphere can not be established and maintained if pupils from various schools must come in and out of the

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<sup>75</sup> Slowe, "Summary of Speech Delivered at Shaw Junior High School Commencement," Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers. To my dismay as a researcher, Slowe only included notes in narrative form. She may have digressed from these notes so only a remnant of the passion and inspiration, caution, and admonition she may have expressed was captured. She wrote, "There is not time, nor is this the occasion on which to review the history of this experiment." Also see, "'Miss Slowe to be Dean of Women at Howard Univ.," Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers.

<sup>76</sup> Annual Report of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, Year Ended June 30, 1920, 359-361.



building several times a day and thus disturb recitations of the junior high school. We are now sharing the building with a manual training center which was established in it before the junior high school was organized, therefore it hardly seems fair to displace the center; yet I believe the best results can not be obtained in developing the school until we have unrestricted use of a whole building.<sup>77</sup>

For each issued she raised, Slowe provided suggested recommendations and solutions indicative of her emergent expertise. In preparation for her task, Slowe traveled to Rochester, York, Boston, Massachusetts, and New York City to observe developing junior high school systems. While in Boston, she worked with Dr. Stevens of Columbia University. The opportunity for an African-American beginner principal to visit other major cities was a testament to the professional reputation she developed. Furthermore, her ongoing contact with Columbia University faculty members kept her abreast of recent educational tendencies.

Slowe's proposed interventions depended on whether or not the Board of Education made resources available. To address this lack of information and to curtail any misunderstandings, Slowe recommended that she as principal and board members hold a forum to discuss the purpose of the school. Her other suggestions demonstrate her executive prowess as she addressed student enrollment, teacher training, equipment, and social needs with the progressive measure of recommending a visiting teacher. She wrote,

I would suggest, further, that the children living in the immediate vicinity of the junior high school be required to do their seventh and eight grade in it. Such an arrangement would work no hardship on the pupils because of the distance of the school from their homes, would give them all the obvious advantages of the junior high school organization, and it would bring to the school a sufficiently large group of pupils to insure its success.

Second, immediate action should be taken by the board of education to obtain an appropriation from Congress for the purchasing of equipment for the school. In October 1919, I submitted estimates for the

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 360.

equipment totaling \$20,000, but this request was not honored. Prices of materials of all sorts are now so high that at least \$40,000 should be made available for the purchase equipment for the teaching of science, printing, machine-shop practice, typewriting, free-hand and mechanical drawing, and household arts. These subjects are absolutely essential to the life of the school and should be offered to the pupils without further delay.

Third, in a special letter to Asst. Supt. Bruce I have set forth the need of erecting a one-level type building in the most congested school section for housing the junior high school. In view of the difficulties now facing us by having to share the building with the manual training center, I can not stress too emphatically the need of securing an appropriation for erecting a modern junior high school building.

Fourth, some definite provision should be made for the special training of those who will teach junior high school. I believe that the personnel of the faculty should consist to a very great degree of persons whose educational careers are ahead of them, who are willing and physically able to study, and who have pursued several courses beyond their high and normal school training. To this end extension courses should be established at the Myrtilla Miner Normal School in the evenings and on Saturdays for those who wish to be promoted to the junior high school.

Those teachers appointed to the junior high school have the qualifications prescribed by the board of education for high-school teachers should be promoted to 6A; I would suggest that all other teachers be promoted to class 5 until they qualify for 6A. In other words, some definite status should be given to the teachers in the junior high school. If it is to be a secondary school, the teacher should have the same qualifications as those in other secondary schools; if it is to be an intermediate school, those who teach in it being specialists in their particular subjects, should have given some financial consideration above that which they would ordinarily receive in the grades.

In connection with the teaching staff, I would suggest that an experienced teacher be appointed to visit the home of those students whose attendance is irregular and conduct unsatisfactory. Such a teacher would extend the arm of the school into the homes for the purpose of drawing the two together for the benefit of children. This system of the visiting teacher has been carefully worked out in New York and Rochester where it has been in operation for several years. The visiting teacher is suggested not in place of, but in addition to, the attendance officer. Often a teacher of wide experience and a sympathetic attitude toward children is more influential with parents than the attendance officer, backed by the power of the law. The visiting teacher can be also of great service to the vocational guidance of pupils, for any attempt at such guidance must be based upon a knowledge of the home conditions as well as the aptitudes of

the pupils. I firmly believe that the employment of a visiting teacher would be highly beneficial to the children in this school.<sup>78</sup>

Slowe's recommendations unmistakably represented her sound base of knowledge about the purpose of the junior high school, ability to cultivate school climate and galvanize parental involvement, awareness of fiscal responsibilities and school budgetary expenses, a firm understanding of teacher training, qualifications and certifying processes, and advocacy for both the staff and the students as a progressive leader.

*Slowe Engineers an Experiment of Excellence*

Slowe recorded her own view of leadership and executive obligations on her curriculum vitae. She wrote,

So far as I can remember, I did not learn in school how to be an executive; indeed, I had very little opportunity to exercise executive ability. I sometimes think that executives are born and that you either can organize and induce people to work with you or you cannot. I have my doubts about learning techniques which will make one an executive.<sup>79</sup>

Despite the fact that Slowe acknowledged a lack of training or chances to perfect skills to perform executive functions, she managed to develop a reputable career as an educational leader who was worthy of a special kind of promotion for an innovative occasion.

Slowe attributed her interest, success, and inspiration for education to her high school teachers and principal at her alma mater, Baltimore Colored High School.<sup>80</sup>

Spending her formative teaching years in Baltimore, Slowe developed her foundation in

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 360-361.

<sup>79</sup> "Memorandum to Beatrice Clark," Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. "I owe a great deal of what success I have had to the inspiration of the colored teachers in the high school at Baltimore who are under the leadership of Dr. H.H. N. Waring, who was the principal of the school when I was a student there."

both instructional method and curriculum development there. Those skills were necessary in order to establish a standard for excellence and pursue its achievement. In her memoirs, Slowe described how she began by working with the teachers to develop a vision of the school. Slowe illustrated the process and outcome as follows:

The teachers and I at the very opening of this new school thought very earnestly about the sort of boys and girls we desired to graduate from it. We were anxious that the students whose talents we helped to develop should realize the end and aim of all education is the making of men and women who have information and know how to use it; who will continue to get information and to use it wisely; but above all things, who will be trustworthy individuals.”<sup>81</sup>

Slowe’s focus on graduates with a purpose demonstrated a student-centered approach and philosophy. The school produced a newsletter and Slowe wrote the “Principal’s Page,” in which she encouraged student thought about constructive academic and non-academic activities.<sup>82</sup> Slowe urged students to partake in hobbies as a form of constructive leisure time. “If you make the sky, the water, the earth, your hobbies, you will become big in mind, strong in body, and altogether better man or woman.”<sup>83</sup> While Slowe reinforced the values regarded in the school’s founding mission, students also contributed to this published periodical by writing about various aspects of their educational experiences. In this way, the students were actively engaged in English composition as a method of instruction and practice for one of the fundamental courses. After all, Slowe was an English teacher before she was ever an administrator so she was adept at instructional

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> “Principal’s Page,” The Junior High School Review, Robert Gould Shaw Junior High School, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

delivery methods.<sup>84</sup> Shaw Junior High School students participated in Christmas programs from the outset.<sup>85</sup> In addition to the newsletter, students participated in a wide range of activities that balanced the curriculum. By the time Slowe left Shaw Junior High School, the local newspaper featured the commencement activities and named every graduated. The ceremony consisted of student-led activities included recitations, dance, choral performance, a presentation of school statistics, and a focus on the science curriculum.<sup>86</sup>

In her three-year administration (September 1919 until June 1922) at Shaw, with the support of her faculty, Shaw planted, cultivated, and harvested steady graduates steeped in a liberal culture for learning. By October 1921, the school was bustling with activity. Instead of getting a new building, the manual training center was relocated to Dunbar High School so that Shaw Junior High School had its own building. The school made use of 16 classrooms. Even so, the burgeoning enrollment made additional construction a necessity. Construction was underway for a lunchroom. In the short span of two academic terms, Shaw Junior High School increased enrollment from forty students to 395 pupils.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> This type of activity was encouraged and considered an innovative approach to the English curriculum. See Walter Barnes, "Suggestions for the English Course in the Junior High School." I did not find any record of the courses Slowe taught. Slowe's ongoing post-graduate studies could have kept her informed about the timeliest theoretical approaches to instruction.

<sup>85</sup> Elward, "Pioneer Music Educators in the Nation's Capitol: They Made Black History," 37.

<sup>86</sup> "Shaw Junior High Class Night Held," *Washington Post*, 17 June 1923.

<sup>87</sup> "Shaw Junior High filled with Pupils," *Washington Post*, 9 October 1921. Throughout this article Slowe's name is not mentioned once. She was not credited with any of the suggestions she made to the School Board the previous year.

Students continued to be fruitful in various endeavors such as writing, printing a paper, mastering the King's English, and, receiving guest motivational speakers.<sup>88</sup> By the next academic year, 1921-1922, Slowe resigned to accept another appointment as an innovator. In the Board of Education's Report, the format changed completely. Principals and directors no longer provided individual reports. Instead, the Superintendent presented the information in a general manner. The 1921-1922 report dedicated an entire section to explaining what the junior high school was as an independent school and intermediary institution.<sup>89</sup> The District of Columbia now operated as a 6-3-3 system.<sup>90</sup> The report clarified new recommendations to qualify for the sixth level of certification via examination with testing in the following format: oral, written, "personal characteristics, and teaching ability."<sup>91</sup> There was considerable effort put forth to explain how a teacher could qualify to teach based on minimal training or prior teaching experience so that one qualified for junior high school instruction.<sup>92</sup> In lieu of the examination, the Board of Education accepted completed professional courses for certification. To this end, Slowe arranged for Shaw Junior High School to be the site of extension courses sponsored by

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<sup>88</sup> Respectively, "Students in Shaw to Publish Paper," Washington Post 24 September 1922, 15; "Shaw Junior High Plan Slang Drive," Washington Post, 1 October 1922, sec. General, 23; and, "Talks for Youths at Shaw School," Washington Post, 8 October 1922, sec. Editorial Society, 15.

<sup>89</sup> Annual Report of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, 1921-22, 83.

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

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 15. The report did not describe these categories in detail. Requirements may have included observations or interviews to determine teachers' abilities. Centre is spelled as it appears in the original article.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-94.

Columbia University.<sup>93</sup> “On June 5, 1922 the teachers of the Columbia Extension Centre presented Miss Slowe with a gold locket and chain as a testimonial of their appreciation of the service she had rendered them by securing the Columbia Extension Centre.”<sup>94</sup>

Miss Kirkland, of Dunbar High School, succeeded Miss Slowe as principal. In the years that followed, the seeds Slowe planted and cultivated would bloom under Kirkland’s administration. The Board of Education moved to make junior high schools a model throughout Washington D.C. and opened two more schools.<sup>95</sup> Kirkland assumed command of a well-running educational operation with a prepared staff, recently renovated building, increasing enrollment, and reputation for excellence that materialized from Slowe’s vision.

The NEA, its executive Committee of Ten of 1892, and subsequent committees created prerequisite circumstances that contributed to the advent of the junior high school in the United States. In doing so, the subsequent watershed effect from the straightforward influences of academia on public education would unwittingly influence the career path of a public educator to become a pioneering administrator in the mysterious specialization of adolescent education. At first vaguely conceived in some ways, the junior high school experience was actually an awakening in some respects. Educators and lovers of education recognized the need to reconcile student needs with social ones. The dawn of this new enterprise, a pervasive educational reform, created an

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<sup>93</sup> Initially Slowe recommended the normal school for the site of the extension courses. That was probably the result of Shaw lacking space during its first year. Annual Report of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, 1921-22, 361.

<sup>94</sup> “Miss Slowe to Be Dean of Women at Howard Univ.,” Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers. Centre is spelled as it appeared in the original document.

<sup>95</sup> “Move to make Junior High Model,” Washington Post 16 March 1923, 12.

opening through which others recognized Lucy Diggs Slowe as a capable and eventual university administrator. Slowe could not have anticipated the long lasting impression the junior high school movement would have on the face of education. In her own words she said, “It was my good fortune to be the leader of this small group who were starting out on an experiment the results of which had to left to the future for determination.”<sup>96</sup> She invested into an endeavor for which she did not know the dividends. The magnitude of the risks Slowe took when she accepted the invitation to lead this new project was essentially a gamble with questionable odds. Very few people knew what a junior high school was. Time was of the essence when Roscoe C. Bruce solicited her assistance. The nebulous and imperfect junior high school movement needed artisans to fit its form into particular communities. As Frank Whitney explained:

But one cannot define the junior high school in terms of organization alone, or in terms of curriculum alone, or in terms of purpose of alone. It is all three. It is new subject matter and new organization illumined and directed by new purpose. But it is even more. The junior high school is the outstanding institutional expression of a great social and educational movement. However valuable the enumeration of characteristics, however indispensable the restatement of objectives, however useful the analysis of methods, no one nor all of these together will be quite sufficient to enable us to understand the new school with an interpretation of its spirit in the light of the fundamental characteristics and the emerging ideals of our society.<sup>97</sup>

Moreover, Slowe proved to be an illuminator by interpreting the spirit of the movement and the new institution that would become a permanent fixture in education in the United

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<sup>96</sup>“Memorandum to Beatrice Clark,” Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers.

<sup>97</sup> Whitney, “The Junior High School,” 22-23.



States. In hindsight, Roscoe Bruce wrote, “She is not only a born teacher with a modern training and experience but a highly gifted administrator.”<sup>98</sup>

Slowe’s ability to develop an infrastructure for Shaw Junior High School challenged her to heighten her skills in administration. Areas of skill development included budgetary management, personnel, building maintenance, new construction, and political astuteness. Slowe needed all of these experiences as she moved to the next phase of her career. Instead of remaining in public school administration at the building or central office level, Slowe received yet another invitation for college administration at Howard University.

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<sup>98</sup> Letter of recommendation for Lucy Slowe from Roscoe C. Bruce, dated May 15, 1933, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers.

## CHAPTER 5

### LUCY DIGGS SLOWE: HOWARD UNIVERSITY DEAN OF WOMEN, 1922-1937: DEFINING THE POSTION

#### The Girl

Eyes full of laughter, heart full of dreams,  
Heaven's best gift to us, sweet as a flower;  
Joyous as sunlight, wistful as twilight;  
Mind, heart and body teeming with power.  
This is the girl as we see her and love her;  
Moving on paths that are ever dividing,  
Dazzled by bubbles of marvelous light—  
What is the fate of her swift choice is deciding  
Choosing so blindly but often so right?  
This is an era of seeking potentials,  
Weighing electrons and bridging the streams;  
Show me a power that ranks with our girlhood,  
Boundless potentials lie hid in her dreams.  
Eyes full of question lying may it linger!  
Heart full of dreams may the fairest come true  
Girls of the past—today—and tomorrow—  
ALL THAT WE HOPE FOR IS GOVERNED BY YOU.  
Let us remember that as God beholds her  
Nations unborn depend on her choice;  
Heaven itself in its glory enfolds her,  
Empires are swayed by the sound of her voice.  
Then let us cherish her, teach and protect you,  
Let us be patient and tender and wise  
Helping the best of your dreams to fruition,  
Keeping the sunshine aglow in our eyes.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “The Girl,” Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.. (Box 90-1. Folder 17). The author was Miriam Moore Whitehead and her relationship to Slowe is unknown. The original document had a number of typographical errors and one grammatical error that I took the liberty of editing for inclusion in this study.

### A Brief History of Howard University Prior to Slowe's Appointment

Established on March 2, 1867, Howard University bears the name of its founder, Oliver O. Howard, a Civil War hero, member of the First Congregationalist Church, and, one-time Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau.<sup>2</sup> The impetus and credit for the idea to have an institution in the nation's capital belongs to Benjamin F. Morris, the son of a senator from Ohio. The initial premise was actually very specific in that the school would provide religious training for African missionaries.<sup>3</sup> Interested parties gathered to nominate a board of trustees, all white men, some with abolitionist beliefs. The proposed name of the school would succumb to variations until Morris and Danforth Nichols suggested the Howard Normal and Theological Institute for the Education of Teachers.<sup>4</sup> Some members of the Board of Trustees were congressional representatives who pursued a bill to enact the institute through appropriated funds from the Freedmen's Bureau. The institution received its charter as Howard University (HU). Richard McKinney summarizes the beginnings of HU by providing details about the land, institution's purpose, and source of funding.

The school was situated on a hilltop, the site of a former slave plantation. Its initial grant was \$150,000. The Freedmen's Bureau funded it until the federal government abolished the bureau in 1872. That development, along with the panic of 1873, created a financial crisis for the institution. The federal government came to Howard's rescue in 1879, and, except for the period 1872 to 1878, continued to support it on an annual basis. Each year, the institution had to lobby for that support, and for a long time the continued appropriations were not guaranteed.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Logan, Howard University: The First Hundred Years, 1867-1967, 12-13.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>5</sup> Richard I. McKinney, Mordecai, The Man and His Message: The Story of Mordecai Wyatt Johnson (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1997), 54.

Another transition included the dissolution of the Freedmen's Bureau and General Howard's return to the military. Howard was on an indefinite leave of absence so designating new leadership was necessary.<sup>6</sup> In 1879, the federal government appropriated funds for HU. On annual basis, the institution would have to lobby for financial support without any guarantees of renewable funding.<sup>7</sup> HU would struggle at various points with both its need for financial support and credibility as an elite institution of higher learning.<sup>8</sup> For example, General Howard was accused of financial misconduct. Within the

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<sup>6</sup> D.O.W. Holmes, "Fifty Years of Howard University: Part II," The Journal of Negro History 3, no. 4 (October, 1918): 368. Also see Logan, Howard University: The First Hundred Years, 1867-196, 59-64.

<sup>7</sup> McKinney, Mordecai: The Man and His Message, 54. Also see Holmes, "Fifty Years of Howard University: Part I," 137-138. Holmes provided a more detailed account of the financial distress when HU had a \$100,000 shortfall. The Board of Trustees had to revise the salary schedule for the faculty.

<sup>8</sup> "Gen. Howard and the Howard University," New York Times August 23, 1867, p. 5. The article described land transactions and alluded to the firing of General Howard as President of HU. "Some time since a fund was started by subscription from parties at the North to establish a University for the benefit of freedmen; a Board of Trustees was duly organized, of which Gen. Howard was made the President; the estate question was purchased, a large share of which not being required for the purpose intended, was offered for sale, and in order to increase its value, Gen. Howard was induced to purchase a few lots, which he acquired on precisely the same terms as the purchaser. In response to the allegations, HU published a full report of financial disclosure." See "Howard University. The Recent Charges Thoroughly Refuted—Gen. Howard's Account with the University," New York Times July 8, 1873, p.3. Holmes gave further explanation, citing the purpose of buying the land was to sell selected tracts not intended for the actual institution as a means of generating a profit and subsequent deposit into the university's treasury. See D.O.W. Holmes, "Fifty Years of Howard University: Part I," 136.

"The Howard University Brick Business," New York Times February 7, 1869, p. 5. Another article took a more sarcastic and course tone. "The Howard University," Daily National Intelligencer (Washington, D.C.) 8 February 1869. "The Tower of Babel was a lucky edifice in comparison with the structure of Howard University. The whole building seems to be as rotten as the affairs of the Freedman's' Bureau generally. The bricks are not specimens, certainly, like the interesting Africans General Howard proposes to turn out of his mill, ready to administer the affairs of this great nation. Whether anything can be beat into their heads or not, we cannot say. Perhaps a shower of bricks would enlighten them as to the mysteries of the 'trolley loll' contract. There would be not occasion for repeating the celebrated Mr. Patterson's touching inquiry, whence the missile had come, for it would be a comfort to know that the source was eminently pious."

first four years, national newspapers reported an inquiry about a questionable brick business. The American Missionary Association supported HU, particularly, the theological seminary, which relied on philanthropic efforts.<sup>9</sup> As a result of the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890, the government recognized it as a land grant institution. HU benefited from both pieces of legislation. At its inception, HU did not bear a particular designation as race-specific institution.<sup>10</sup> The Morrill Act of 1890 did specify race.

The Morrill Act forced the land-grant institutions to provide instruction in agriculture and mechanic arts. At times, some urged that universities should convert their emphasis to the teaching of the skills, industrial trades, and even such occupations as blacksmithing and carpentry. The idea of manual labor for college students, broached before the Civil War, survived intermittently as a kind of fad.”<sup>11</sup>

For a few years under President Patton, university president from 1877 to 1889, HU offered industrial courses in the Normal and Preparatory Departments.<sup>12</sup> HU digressed from its intended purpose of educating preachers and teachers to developing professional schools of student in law, medicine, and pharmacy.

Concerning this study, Slowe interacted with two university presidents. The first was J. Stanley Durkee, a minister who served as president from 1918 to 1926. Early in Durkee’s appointment, he approved the position, dean of women, in 1920 following the

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<sup>9</sup> D.O.W. Holmes, “Fifty Years of Howard University: Part II,” 372-373; and Logan, Howard University: The First Hundred Years, 1867-1967, 82-87.

<sup>10</sup> “List of the 107 Land-Grant Institutions in the Unites States and Its Territories,” in The History of Higher Education 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Eds. Lester F. Goodchild and Harold S. Wechsler ASHE Reader Series, (Needham Heights, Massachusetts: Simon & Schuster): 363-364.

<sup>11</sup> Veysey, The Emergence of the American University, 70-71.

<sup>12</sup> Logan, Howard University: The First Hundred Years, 1867-1967, 100-101.

initial appointment another position, dean of men, in 1919.<sup>13</sup> Miss Helen Tuck served as the acting Dean of Women until her resignation in June 1922.<sup>14</sup> Mordecai W. Johnson was the second president with whom Slowe had long-term interaction. Johnson was a member of the clergy, and distinguished as the first African-American to serve as president.<sup>15</sup> Both men, Durkee and Johnson, were well educated, with ministerial experience. Johnson also had some college teaching experience at an African-American institution. Over the course of the fifteen years Slowe occupied the position as dean of women, she initiated, offered support for, and objected to a number of things. Some of those things were indicative of the changing social context while other things were because of differences in opinion and style. For Slowe, her experiences as both a faculty

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<sup>13</sup> See Logan, "Durkee the Compromiser, July 1, 1918 – June 30, 1926," in Howard University: The First Hundred Years, 1867-1967, 187-244. Logan referred to Durkee as a compromiser because "a compromiser achieves what is possible to obtain, or he yields to expediency and thereby makes more difficult the attainment of desirable goals. President J. Stanley Durkee was a compromiser in both meanings of the word" (187). Durkee was born in Nova Scotia in 1866 and educated in Maine at Bates College where he received his A.B. in 1897 and his M.A. in 1905. He also received his Ph.D. from Boston University in 1906. (The dates do not seem to reflect the contemporary duration of study for the terminal degree.) Initially, Durkee served as a Baptist minister until he accepted the call of the Congregational Church in Boston. See pages 194 and 198 concerning appointments for dean of men and dean of women.

<sup>14</sup> Apart from information about her dates of service, there is no information about how she functioned in the role. See Logan, Howard University The First Hundred Years, 1867-1967, 198-199. Given the history of dean of women, Tuck may have performed monitoring duties to ensure that the women students upheld moral standards and expectations.

<sup>15</sup> Mordecai W. Johnson was born in Paris, Tennessee in 1890. His father was a dark-complexioned man who had been born into to slavery and served during the Civil War. His mother was 30 years younger than his father. Richard I. McKinney, Mordecai, The Man and His message: The Story of Mordecai Wyatt Johnson (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1977): 4. Johnson was educated at Atlanta Baptist College in 1905. After graduation, he taught English, history, and economics. (In 1913, Atlanta Baptist College was renamed as Morehouse College.) Johnson pursued additional education, obtaining another A.B. from the University of Chicago in 1913. He also received two theological degrees: B.D. from Rochester Theological Seminary in 1921 and S.T.M. from Harvard University in 1922. He was a Baptist minister in Charleston, West Virginia from 1917 until 1926. Logan, Howard University: The First Hundred Years, 1867-1967, 248.

member and dean of women would vary because of differences in race, gender role expectations, and the changing conditions of society.<sup>16</sup>

### The Evolution of the Dean of Women Position

Before discussing Slowe's appointment as dean of women, it is necessary to discuss the emergence and evolution of the position, dean of women, in post-secondary schools. Several scholars have commented on the early and pioneering days of a select group of women who ushered in the novel position. Some of the early and well-recognized white pioneers include Alice Freeman Palmer of the University of Michigan (1892-1895), Marion Talbot of the University of Chicago (1892-1925), Mary Bidwell Breed of Indiana University (1901-1906), Ada Comstock of the University of Minnesota (1906-1912) and Smith College, Lois Mathews of the University of Wisconsin (1911-1918), and Lucy Sprague Mitchell of the University of California at Berkeley (1906-1911). The dean of women would later develop into a professional career position at various colleges and universities throughout the country before becoming extinct by the 1970s as universities and colleges replaced the one position with a number of student personnel offices.<sup>17</sup> Jana Nidiffer provides a conceptual framework for analyzing the

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<sup>16</sup> The first students to attend HU were four white girls, children of the faculty. Logan, Howard University: The First Hundred Years, 1867-1967, 34, 56-57. Logan made a point to briefly explain that HU was different from the other institutions for African-Americans for three reasons. It was a university as opposed to a college. HU was coeducational at its inception. Both African-American and white students had an option to enroll. Logan wrote, "While Howard's Charter provided for the 'education of youth,' it can hardly be denied that the Founders expected a sizable number of the students to be Negroes. Howard was thus unique because it also planned the education of a sizable number of Negro men and women, and white men and women." (25)

<sup>17</sup> Jana Nidiffer, "Advocates on Campus," in Women Administrators in Higher Education: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2001): 135.

profession in various stages of progression.<sup>18</sup> As the first of five developmental phases, dean of women had two distinct purposes: paving the road as the initial cadre of administrators in higher education, and improving the quality of the student life for women on campus.<sup>19</sup> This set a historical point of reference for administrative intervention for women on campus. Initially, this role was limited by dormitory and moral monitoring. In order to achieve these two aspects of the initial phase, over time deans of women had to gain acceptance and respect through intellectual endeavors that arguably laid the foundation for contemporary applications in the form of student personnel services. As Robert Schwartz states,

Over sixty years, from the late 1800s through World War II, the deans of women established a new profession in higher education. They laid the foundations of professional practice for higher education administration and student services, include graduate study, the development of professional associations, research on students, college environments, and student guidance and counseling. The deans of women developed a body of professional literature that included journals, research reports, and books. They worked hard to “professionalize” the position of dean and to legitimize their role on predominantly male college campuses.

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<sup>18</sup> Jana Nidiffer, Pioneering Deans of Women: More than Wise and Pious Matrons (New York: Teachers College Press, 2000): 12-16. Nidiffer discusses the professional evolution of dean of women in distinct phases. Phase one, 1833-1892, provides a historical backdrop where coeducation during the antebellum era increased and the dean of women was an experiment on a few university campuses. During phase two, 1892-1901, Nidiffer characterizes this period as pre-professionalization when university presidents started to acknowledge that females students had unmet needs. The third phase, 1901-1906, was distinguished by the deans’ ability to acquire the confidence of women students and developing a collective body to represent the field. The fourth phase, 1906-1911, resulted in research and intellectual productivity. The fifth and final phase, 1911-1918, culminated with a defined course of study, professional organizations, and the first published book, The Dean of Women, written in 1915 by Lois Mathews of the University of Wisconsin. See chapter six in Nidiffer, Pioneering Deans of Women, 107-131. Nidiffer explores Mathews’ life, scholarship, and work as a dean of women.

<sup>19</sup> Jana Nidiffer, “The First Deans of Women, What We Can Learn From Them,” About Campus (January/February, 2002): 11.



The entire field of student services, from admission and orientation to student activities, to residential housing to career services, can be traced to the work of deans of women.<sup>20</sup>

Nidiffer discusses how taking on an intellectual identity challenged the notions of socially acceptable gender roles. Being authoritarian, competitive, or objective were designated male attributes based on social constructions. Women who worked, functioned, and practiced with such characteristics challenged the status quo, risking professional isolation and a quick elevation to a glass ceiling.

The second phase consisted of the recognition that women, whether campus resident or community dweller, had specific needs. The source of recognition was the key. When a university president or board members made an appointment to create an office for the dean of women, it signified the realization of a need for an academically prepared and professionally trained position as opposed to a matron, house monitor, or dorm mother. More than monitoring morality and chaperoning social events, the dean of women represented a body of applied knowledge on the college campus in the lives of women. "Deans, however, recognized that while the immediate concerns of housing, adequate meals, rest, and good health were necessary, the higher needs of women such as intellectual parity, career aspirations, leadership opportunities, and a sense of community must also be addressed."<sup>21</sup> Deans of women were able to address students' needs collectively by forming professional organizations and hosting regular meetings or

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<sup>20</sup> Robert A. Schwartz, "Reconceptualizing the Leadership Roles of Women in Higher Education: A Brief History on the Importance of Deans of Women," The Journal of Higher Education 68, no. 5 (September/October, 1997): 504-505.

<sup>21</sup> Jana Nidiffer, "Advocates on Campus," in Women Administrators in Higher Education: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001): 143.

conventions.<sup>22</sup> Essentially the aim was to standardize what was a loose set of tasks related to women into a profession of and for women. Carolyn Bashaw chronicles how the vision of a few led to a national effort. Bashaw writes,

In the summer of 1915, Kathryn Sisson McLean, dean of women at State Teachers College, Chadron, Nebraska, initiated a formal discussion group of graduate women at Teachers College. As a result of their lobbying efforts, coupled with faculty support, Teachers College offered its first graduate courses designed exclusively for deans of women in the summer session of 1916. From that inauspicious beginning, the Teachers College Program, which eventually employed influential scholars such as Sarah Sturtevant and Ruth Strang, become the most prestigious training center in the country.<sup>23</sup>

Formalized study complemented a national professional organization to create a pipeline of highly educated, theoretically sound, and professionally prepared women administrators in higher education.

In the third phase, Nidiffer explores the advent of collective activity. The catalyst event occurred on November 3-4, 1903 when eighteen women met at a joint conference in Chicago sponsored by the University of Chicago and Northwestern University.<sup>24</sup> Topics at the conference focused on housing, social integration, and student regulations. Of particular note was the indication of deans hosting women students in their homes in order to promote dialogue in an atmosphere of confidentiality. The body also referred to use and reliance on YWCA organizations as a community resource. In December 1905,

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<sup>22</sup> See Carolyn Terry Bashaw, "'Reassessment and Redefinition:' The NAWDC and Higher Education for Women," in Women Administrators in Higher Education: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2001): 157-182. Bashaw examines the National Association of Women Deans and Counselors as a professional organization for women, inclusive of administrators, faculty members, and counselors, who were activists in contemporary times and pioneers in past times.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>24</sup> Nidiffer, Pioneering Deans of Women, 72-76.

the group convened for a second time, thereafter recognized as “The Conference of Deans and Advisors to Women in State Universities.”<sup>25</sup> Nidiffer delineates that three primary functions of the meetings were, first, to create forum for discussion as many deans operated in near isolation. This forum offered support and guidance. The second purpose resulted from the first. “The deans were able to establish standards of practice that defined the nature and scope of the job.”<sup>26</sup> Hence, the position began to take form in terms of parameters for practice. The third and final purpose Nidiffer identifies was the creation of an identifiable professional organizations characteristic of a meritocratic bureaucracy needed to address a heterogeneous student body. Nidiffer writes,

One interpretation of the bureaucratic impulse was that of pragmatic necessity—it was a rational response to growth and complexity aimed at rendering the institution more manageable. Also, a Weberian-constructed bureaucracy held the promise of meritocracy—an appealing concept to Americans. Yet the zeal with which bureaucratization was embraced suggested another, deeper explanation.

By 1900, the American university had become something that contemporaries of the era could not easily define. Compared with its predecessor, it seemed to diverse and heterogeneous to manage—rootless and without focus. Even in the popular imagination, it seemed unwieldy.

Without a core of shared values among all the participants in higher education, bureaucratic administration was the structural device chosen to facilitate institution-building. Heterogeneity forced individuals to adopt a coping mechanism appropriate to the circumstances. When presidents and deans wanted the community to operate in a specific fashion, they created rules, guidelines, and procedures—more predictable than morale persuasion and more palatable than coercion. In these times, collegial ethos of the university came to fruition.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 74. For additional information about professional academic associations for women, see Carolyn T. Bashaw, “To Serve the Needs of Women: The AAUW, NAWDC, and Persistence of Academic Women’s Support Networks,” in Women Administrators in Higher Education: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2001): 249-269.

<sup>26</sup> Nidiffer, Pioneering Deans of Women, 75.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 76.

Through the collaboration of some Midwestern deans of women and Teachers College the National Association for Deans of Women (NADW) formed. This organization would go on to establish a national headquarters in Washington, D.C. and produce journals such as the Yearbook and the Journal of the NADW. With an emerging standard of practice resulting from collective activities and decision-making as well as periodic publications, the next phase extended into the arena of specialized knowledge and expertise.

Nidiffer distinguishes the fourth phase from the previous foundational phases with the elevation and separation of dean of women from matronly duties and responsibilities. Characterized by two distinct products, this phase included research-supported initiatives and professional literature with specific supporting activities. During her appointment as dean of women at the University of Minnesota in 1906, Ada Comstock, who later held the position as president of Radcliffe College from 1922-1943, initiated and implemented measures based on research findings.<sup>28</sup> Nidiffer explains,

She collected data on students and illustrated a systemic, more ‘scientific’ approach to the job. In journal articles and speeches, she helped articulate the specific expertise deans needed, building upon the ideas of women’s nature Talbot previously expressed. She then used her expertise as the basis for campus programs she initiated.<sup>29</sup>

Comstock used her research finding to address women’s issues with housing. The Alice Shelvin Hall was not only a residential space for women, but a means by which Comstock developed, a designated space where women could live, grow, explore, question, and govern themselves. Self-government became an important part that

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<sup>28</sup> Nidiffer, “Advocates on Campus,” in Women Administrators in Higher Education, 146.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

Comstock used to support the purpose and functioning of Shelvin Hall.<sup>30</sup> It appears that dean of women attempted to create an atmosphere where their female students could be nurtured into social and intellectual independence.

The next aspect of this fourth phase focused on publications. Journal articles, conference bulletins, research findings, and books documented the efforts of practicing dean of women and guided the way for developing protégés. Nidiffer writes,

During this stage the first statistical research project on the work of deans was collected and distributed. A clearer intellectual rationale for the work of the deans was developed, based on their beliefs about women's nature and their assertion that the most appropriate focus for a dean's expertise was the nature of women's education in a coeducational setting. This intellectual activity saved the profession from remaining at the level of matron.<sup>31</sup>

Expertise was a key to transforming a body of collective tasks into an empirical and theoretically based profession thereby challenging limitations imposed by the notions of gender.

The compliment to publications was the initiation of formal education for assuming a position as dean of women. The University of Wisconsin and Teachers College, Columbia University led the way.<sup>32</sup> With publications and a defined graduate education curriculum, dean of women solidified a position worthy of acknowledgement as a distinct profession, one representative of cultural demands, professional organizations and publications, specialized knowledge and technical skill. As Robert Schwartz writes about the graduate education courses at Teachers College,

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 147.

<sup>31</sup> Nidiffer, "The First Deans of Women," 15. "In 1911, Dean Gertrude Martin of Cornell conducted and distributed the first statistical research project on the work of deans." Nidiffer, Women Administrators in Higher Education, 146.

<sup>32</sup> Nidiffer, Pioneering Deans of Women, 14.

The deans of women encouraged graduate study and graduate degrees not only for the training of new young deans but also because it expanding opportunities for research. As a new profession, the deans did not stand still. The faculty teaching in the graduate programs, as evidenced by Ruth Strang, represented some of the strongest researchers and practitioners in the new fields of guidance and counseling and the emerging “personnel” movement. When Esther Lloyd-Jones joined Strang and Sarah Sturtevant on the faculty at Teachers College, she brought with her firsthand knowledge and experience in the new “personnel psychology” first developed at Northwestern University in Evanston by Walter Dill Scott.<sup>33</sup>

Teachers College played a critical role in the theoretical development and production of specialized knowledge associated with the dean of women’s position, adding credibility to the both the office and person occupying the chair for dean of women. Moreover, many deans of women held joint faculty positions or had faculty responsibilities at a time when enrollments were increasing and colleges became more bureaucratically organized and administered.

The evolution of the dean of women from matron to profession took place over a span of less than a hundred years, 1833–1918 based on Nidiffer’s conceptual framework encompassing five distinct phases. By the time Slowe entered the profession, her white predecessors had defined the field in terms of clear boundaries and specific functions.

The early deans made an enormous difference in the lives of the women students. They fought for entrance to facilities, campus jobs, decent housing, women’s centers, acknowledgement from faculty, opportunities for leadership and extracurricular activities, scholarships, and an end to making women the butt of most campus humor.<sup>34</sup>

With a template for implementation, Slowe began her appointment with some clear advantages because of the work of mid-western pioneers, some definite challenges given

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<sup>33</sup> Schwartz, “Reconceptualizing the Leadership Roles of Women in Higher Education,” 509-510.

<sup>34</sup> Nidiffer, “The First Deans of Women,” 16.

the social climate of her time, and a novel opportunity to further her professional career as the first and dean of women at Howard University.<sup>35</sup>

### A Permanent Appointment: Dean of Women

President Durkee established a precedent at Howard University with the appointment for the position, Dean of Women. Durkee's predecessor, President Stephen M. Newman (1912-1918) opposed the office and pleas from the student body about the needs of the women.<sup>36</sup> Of course, Durkee began his second search prior to Ms. Tuck's resignation:

When in the twenties, President Durkee of Howard University decided to place the office of the Dean of Women on a high plane, he went about seeking the best persons that he could be had for the position. After canvassing the field thoroughly and getting advice from many sources he invited Miss Slowe to take that office, which did after carefully considering its requirements and possibilities.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> See Carolyn Terry Bashaw, "Stalwart Women," A Historical analysis of Deans of Women in the South (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999). Bashaw discusses the professional careers of four deans of women, Sarah Gibson Blanding, Katherine S. Bowersox, Agnes Ellen Harris, and Adele H. Stamp. Bashaw contends that these four administrators had markedly different experiences when compared to their Midwestern counterparts. Bashaw explores state and regional deans associations as she discusses the impact of regional and class differences on professional development.

<sup>36</sup> Logan, Howard University: The First Hundred Years, 1867-1967, 199. The first Dean of Men was Dr. E.L. Parks (198). Parks had been the treasurer for the Board of Trustees and Dean of the Teachers College. See Kathryn Nemeth Tuttle, "What Became of the Dean of Women? Changing Roles for Women Administrators in American Higher Education" 1940-1980" (Ph.D., diss. University of Kansas, 1996): 71. Tuttle describes the circumstances and nature of female students' requests. Although predominantly white schools and historically black colleges and universities shared some common trends, the scale for such was different. For example, Logan reported, "During the period from 1890 to 1903, the pattern of graduates continued constant. Men continued to constitute the larger number and percentage of recipients of all certificates, diplomas, and degrees except those designed to prepared students for teaching." (130). Even though there were a higher number of male students in the total enrollment, in the discipline of teaching, an initial trend toward the feminization of the field was emerging. Slowe completed an A.B. degree in English in 1908. That year 11 male students graduated. Slowe was one of eight women (153).

<sup>37</sup> Holmes, "Eulogy at the Obsequies of Lucy D. Slowe," in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers.

In a letter to President Durkee dated on May 31, 1922, Slowe summarized some major points they discussed during face-to-face interview with him two weeks prior on May 12<sup>th</sup>. Similar in tone to her principal's report to the Board of Education for the District of Columbia, Slowe delineated the parameters she thought were necessary in order to achieve the best possible execution of the duties she assumed. Perhaps she implemented the step of written clarification after her initial and transitional experience the principal of Shaw Junior High School. On May 31, 1922, Slowe sent a letter to President Durkee that reads as follows:

My Dear Dr. Durkee:

I have been going over in my own mind the various points brought out in the conference which I had with you on May 12<sup>th</sup>. In order that I may be sure that my understanding is correct, I am setting down the several agreements covered for your verification and endorsement:

1. It is agreed that I be appointed the position of Professor of English in the School of Education with the administrative duties of Dean of Women.
2. It is agreed that the salary for the two positions shall be not less than \$3200.
3. It is agreed that I be permitted to name a confidential clerk whose entire time shall be spent in my office.
4. It is agreed that the suite of rooms now used by the acting Dean of Women be placed at my disposal, but that I shall not be required to live on campus.
5. It is agreed that all women in charge of girls in the university shall be directly responsible to me in all matters affecting the girls of their care.
6. It is agreed that all policies pertaining to the women of the University shall emanate from my office with the approval the President.

Under such conditions as these, I shall be happy to work with you in building up a fine morale among the women in the University.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Letter from Lucy D. Slowe to Dr. J. Stanley Durkee dated May 31, 1922 in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spangarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-2, Folder 51). Also see Kathryn Nemeth Tuttle, "What Became of the Dean of Women? Changing Roles for Women Administrators in American Higher Education" 1940-1980" (Ph.D., diss. University of Kansas, 1996). See chapter two, "The Depression Years: Lucy Diggs Slowe, Howard University, and the Influence of Outside Agencies," 68-99. Tuttle



The tone of Slowe's letter was forthright, reflecting accounts and descriptions of both her personality and character. Slowe seemed to negotiate in terms of a "final offer" about some critical aspects of the meeting with President Durkee. First, she clarified that the nature of the position was a joint appointment as a faculty member with administrative responsibilities as the Dean of Women. Additionally, Slowe could have considered another previous experience. While at Armstrong High School, her administrative duties and title of assistant principal was used interchangeably with "Lady Principal," until the title and responsibilities changed to Dean of Girls.<sup>39</sup> The initial title was not necessarily a paid or professional position. "The overseers of young women had such titles as preceptress, matron, or lady principal. Occasionally, they were employed by the college, but using the volunteer labor of the president's wife or a local club woman was not uncommon."<sup>40</sup> The change in title seemed to indicate the evolution of the role and its capacity for different tasks as positions in education became professionalized over time.<sup>41</sup> Increasing student enrollment was a significant factor. "The larger the college grew, especially the larger the faculty grew, the more it became necessary to specialize and delegate duties."<sup>42</sup> HU's enrollment increased and President Durkee's administration

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uses the case study format to examine seven women who worked as deans of women during specific epochs. While Tuttle discusses some of the pertinent findings regarding Slowe's experience, her focus shifts to professional organizations for deans of women, with some references to men, and the effect of the depression on career extinction for women.

<sup>39</sup> "Dean Lucy D. Slowe," Slowe Papers.

<sup>40</sup> Nidiffer, Pioneering Deans of Women, 16.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 12-16.

<sup>42</sup> John S. Brubacher and Willis Rudy, "Changes and Increases in Administrative Personnel," in The History of Higher Education 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. ASHE Reader Series, Eds. Lester F. Goodchild and Harold S. Wechsler (Needham Heights, Massachusetts: Simon & Schuster): 363-364. The authors make an argument for a supply and demand situation. Increasing enrollments at

symbolized a period of expansion in professional course offerings.<sup>43</sup> The change in the name of the title “Lady Principal” to Dean of Girls also represents the ideological movement from a model based on in loco parentis to one that administered student services beyond matronly oversight. It is interesting to note that Slowe’s attendance at HU from 1904 to 1908 represented, by way of participation, the trend that would have a direct trajectory to her occupation of the role as Dean of Women.

Second, Slowe secured the amount of her salary and confirmed the appointment of at least one dedicated staff person. An adroit move on her part, Slowe confirmed her status as an administrator with support staff in place and ensured that she would have at least one person in whom she could confide. After all, the move from public school to a university setting was a huge undertaking. However, it would not be foreign as Slowe had remained an active member of the alumni and alumnae.<sup>44</sup>

Slowe’s participation in an important ceremonial event for Howard University’s semi-centennial celebration in 1917, demonstrated her commitment to higher education

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Harvard, as I have referenced at Columbia University and in the Washington, D.C. public schools, facilitated the need for faculty and administrative skills sets that were ever becoming more specialized in order to meet the diversified needs of the students. Slowe’s appeal to the Board of Education after her first year at Shaw Junior High School is an example.

<sup>43</sup> Logan, *Howard University: The First Hundred Years, 1867-1967*, 199. Refer to Tables IV, VII, VII, and IX which appear on various pages. The tables represent the numbers of graduating students and respective degrees in all departments and colleges from 1904 to 1918. For example, in the College of Arts and Sciences, one student completed the B.S. degree and six completed the A.B. degree in 1904. About sixty years later, both enrollments and graduation numbers would increase at HU. See “Howard Univ. Presents Degrees to 305 at 62<sup>nd</sup> Annual Graduation,” *Washington Post*, April 4, 1930, p. R4. Although the numbers are small, the mere fact that students of color attended and matriculated during the period from 1880 to 1910 when little financial support was available. This was comparatively consistent with low enrollment numbers for the period. See Linda R. Buchanan and Philo A. Hutcheson, “Reconsidering the Washington-DuBois Debate,” where the authors contend, “Like many black colleges of this era, State produced relatively few college graduates” (79). Buchanan and Hutcheson write about State University in Kentucky circa 1879.

<sup>44</sup> “Plans for the Celebration on the Semi-Centennial,” *Washington Post* 18 January 1917.

and the practical understanding to collaborate with various college presidents, judicial officials, community and business leaders, scholars, and local noted clergymen.<sup>45</sup> The three-day celebration included the first two days as a special conference about the sociological aspects of educating African-Americans since the Civil War, “Fifty Years of Progress by the American Negro.”<sup>46</sup> Among the noted guest speakers, only one woman presented, Mary White Ovington, “a prominent liberal New York social worker and strong supporter of the NAACP, discussed health and sanitation, two of the more significant topics at the Conference.”<sup>47</sup> Slowe participated as a member of the organizing committee for the “rally” on the first night held in Rankin Chapel on the HU campus.<sup>48</sup> On the committee, Slowe worked with Dean Kelly Miller, a prominent figure in the academic history of HU and noted scholar. On the second day, Slowe’s former supervisor, Roscoe Bruce, spoke on the stated theme.

Third, Slowe confirmed that she could continue to reside in her own home. This was a critical issue to both parties. For Slowe, living off-campus ensured her autonomy and privacy. As a public school teacher turned administrator, she dedicated countless hours to her profession. The need to rest and to find solace would have been important. For Durkee, accessibility and cost-efficiency could have been motivating factors. The increasing number of women on the co-educational campus approached manageability

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<sup>45</sup> Logan, Howard University: The First Hundred Years, 1867-1967, 174-178. The guests included former HU president from 1906-1912, Wilbur P. Thirkield. Slowe graduated from HU during Thirkield’s administration. More examples of noted guests included Secretary of the Interior, Franklin K. Lane, editor of the Christian Recorder, Dr. R.R. Wright, Jr., and W.E.B. DuBois.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> “Plans for the Celebration on the Semi-Centennial,” Washington Post

best if the designated administrator remained in close proximity. As Durkee learned, his request was not without precedent; however, dean of women living on campus was fast becoming obsolete.<sup>49</sup>

Fourth, Slowe's clarification about her line of authority as administrator specified her scope of practice. Items 5 and 6 in the letter placed people and policies under the auspices of the Dean of Women. Slowe assured that she had subordinates and the means by which she directed their tasks. The absence of any letter of response to Slowe's does not clarify how Durkee responded to each line item she presented. History confirms that she did leave her post at the principal of Shaw Junior High School to take on another pioneering effort as the first permanent and African-American Dean of Women at Howard University.<sup>50</sup> Slowe served as a member of president Durkee's cabinet.

#### The Professional Dispensation of the Duties as Dean of Women

In recent times, a number of researchers and scholars have written about higher education by highlighting the status of women in the field.<sup>51</sup> In doing so, these works inevitably comment through their subjects' lives diligent effort to execute their duties in the offices they held. Related topics for these women in higher education as

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<sup>49</sup> Letter to Dr. J. Stanley Durkee from Mina Kerr, Executive Secretary of the American Association of University Women," June 26, 1925 in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-2, Folder 52).

<sup>50</sup> Tuttle, "What Became of the Dean of Women? Changing Roles for Women Administrators in American Higher Education 1940-1980," 71.

<sup>51</sup> Throughout this work, I have cited a number of works. For additional sources see, Pamela J. Bretschneider, "Marion Talbot and the Professionalization of Women in Higher Education," (Ph.D., diss., Boston College, 1998); Rita I. Herron, "True Spirit of Pioneer Traditions: An Historical Analysis of the University of Florida's First Dean of Women, Marna Brady," (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 2004); and Janice Joyce Gerda, "A History of the Conferences of Deans of Women, 1903-1922," (Ph.D. diss., Bowling Green State University, 2004).

administrators concern the professionalization of their practice, the nature of related scholarship, the breadth and nature of their relations with colleagues and students; and their own perceptions of their crafts versus impositions made by others and distortions as result of societal demands. Using Slowe's own words and other primary sources as the driving force behind an examination of such related topics, the goal here is to examine how she executed her duties as the Dean of Women at Howard University.

As it was customary for Slowe's personal sense of work ethics and values, she began her appointment as dean of women in scholarly fashion, by researching the most current methods and practices as she had done when she became the principal of Shaw Junior High School.

When Slowe became Dean of Women, with characteristic energy and foresight, she visited the offices of Deans of Women at the University of Pittsburgh, Cornell University, Oberlin College, Western Reserve University, the University of Chicago, Swarthmore College, Columbia University and the University of Delaware, where she studied their procedures and adapted the best of them to the needs of Howard University. She was guided in the establishment of the Office of Dean of Women at Howard University by Dr. Romiett Stevens of Columbia University who gave the first course for Deans of Women in the United States.<sup>52</sup>

In short, Slowe's approach to her position was a blend of a scientific approach with specialized knowledge. Slowe's tendency to observe, to classify, and to record data was indicative of scientific methods and influences. Specialization resulted from professional standards and practices established by preceding white, Midwestern deans of women. Slowe participated in predominantly white professional organization but spearheaded a number of professional associations and actively participated in various community organizations.

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<sup>52</sup> "Dean Lucy D. Slowe," Slowe Papers.

*Professional Affiliations*

In 1936, near the end of her life and career, Slowe received a letter from the regional president of an association for dean of women. Despite her lengthy career, membership in other well known organizations, publications and history of public speaking engagements, the writer did not know who she was, what she had done, or for that matter, that she was a woman of color. A white woman forwarded a letter rescinding an invitation to a regional professional meeting for the American Association of University Women's Club on the sole basis of race. Slowe made headway in many areas of her profession. No matter how many times she spoke of inter-racial cooperation and collaborative efforts for the good of all, race continued to be an issue to some degree.

Annie Bailey Cook wrote,

Until I received this letter I was not aware of the fact that Howard University was for colored people—you may lay this to ignorance on my part and to the fact that I am a new comer in Regional Association work. However, I feel sure that since you deans have never attended the meetings in past which I have attended that you will not plan to do so this year, even though you received my form letter and program which I sent to all university, college, and high school deans and advisers. This is a courtesy that I extended to you knowing that you represented a colored university. Please inform your co-workers of this as I would spare you and them any embarrassment as well as our hostess and the American University group.<sup>53</sup>

It seemed that if Dean Slowe had accepted the invitation, there could have possibly been another precedent set in her life and at the regional conference. The irony of this situation is that Slowe had been a sole member of the NADW, a national organization, for many

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<sup>53</sup> Letter from Annie Bailey Cook to Miss Lucy Diggs Slowe dated November 14, 1936 Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-2, Folder 40). Also see, Letter to Miss Cook from Beulah Clark Van Wagenen, Dean of Women The State Teachers College in Harrisonburg, Virginia dated November 12, 1936 in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-2, Folder 40).

years, active on various committees including the Yearbook. In memory of Slowe's efforts, a representative from the NADW wrote, "Her membership in the Association dated back to the time before the headquarters' office was established. November, 1922, is the earliest date upon which her name appears on our records."<sup>54</sup> Similarly, the members of the Yearbook Committee of NADW wrote, "The Committee of Resolutions will present her name in their report but we also wish to record our appreciation of her loyal service to both our committee and to the Association."<sup>55</sup> Slowe had a national reputation but that did not exonerate her from the ignorance of others, be it racial or otherwise, who lacked knowledge about the profession and her contributions to it. In contrast, another white woman, Dean Beulah Clark Van Wagenen, wrote Slowe inquiring about whether her assistant, an African-American woman, could attend the regional association conference, specifically, she asked if Dean Slowe endorsed attendance.<sup>56</sup>

Race was an issue across the board whether in segregated regional associations or segregated facilities in locales where conferences were held. Despite this, Slowe forged profitable and mutually respectful relationships with her white counterparts. A primary example was her ongoing relationship with Thyrsa W. Amos, Dean of Women and one-time President of NADW. In reference to race and her membership in this organization, Slowe wrote, "I feel personally indebted to you for making it possible for me to feel

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<sup>54</sup> "Memorial Tributes to Slowe," Journal of the National Association of College Women, 14 (1937):49 in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-7, Folder 158).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> My research efforts did not identify any response from Slowe to either Ms. Cook or Ms. Van Wagenen.

comfortable as an individual in this group of women, and I shall never feel that I have adequately expressed my appreciation to you.”<sup>57</sup>

Slowe would go on to be the founder of other professional organizations for African-American educators so that they too might gather to discuss relevant issues, share best practices, work toward the professionalization of their craft, publish scholarly studies, and participate in a forum that ratified their work. In 1923, Slowe started the National Association of College Women, “an organization for African American alumnae of accredited colleges and universities.”<sup>58</sup> This organization would remain fruitful for many years after Slowe’s expiration. This philosophy was based on mutual aid and mentoring where graduate students render assistance to younger students in an effort to promote matriculation. The National Association of College Women also had a racial platform to work toward inter-racial communication and collaboration to pursue harmony.

To the specific tasks mentioned is added another. If there are to be peace and harmony among the races in the United States the trained men and women of both races must take the lead in bringing this about. Misunderstanding and racial hatreds are due to ignorance for the absence of opportunities for different races to know each other. The colleges of the land ought to open and keep open eternally their doors to men and women of good character and mental capacity regardless of race, in order that there may be a common meeting ground where each race can learn and appreciate that which is fine and worthy of the other.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Letter from Lucy D. Slowe to Thyrsa W. Amos dated March 4, 1931 in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-2, Folder 24).

<sup>58</sup> Carolyn Terry Bashaw, “Slowe, Lucy Diggs. Dean of Women at Howard University (1922-1937),” in Historical Dictionary of Women’s Education in the United States ed. Linda Eisenman (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998):375-377.

<sup>59</sup> Lester A. Walton, “Negro Women Seek to Better College Living,” The World, 25 April 1926 in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University Washington, D.C. (Box 90-11, Folder 207).



The NACW gave birth to another organization, the Deans of and Advisors to Women in Colored Schools that remained under the parent organization for several years until becoming an independent entity in 1935. While the NACW fixed on inter-racial collaboration and improved collegiate curriculum for women, Slowe remained heavily involved in other associations that were attending busily to the practical needs of students. The membership for NACW included colleges and universities from across the country.

Slowe spearheaded Deans of and Advisors of Women in Colored Schools while simultaneously becoming President of the National Council of Negro Women. In both instances, she was the first president. The Deans and Advisors of Women in Colored Schools held annual conferences and events. Documented in archival since the 1930-1931 academic-year, the conferences discussed varied aspects of responsibilities where the care of women and girls was required. The meetings changed venues annually as there was consistent participation among African-American schools. Fisk University, Tuskegee Institute, Wilberforce University, Hampton Institute, and of course, Howard University hosted the conferences. The topics typically addressed the role of the dean or adviser, housing, components of the students' social environment, health, vocational guidance, and records.<sup>60</sup>

Slowe spoke and wrote of her views about being dean of women in both public and private spaces. Publicly, Slowe accepted speaking engagements on various topics

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<sup>60</sup> "Meeting of Deans and Advisors of Women in Colored Schools," Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-8, Folder 169).

after which newspaper coverage documented her comments.<sup>61</sup> Additionally, Slowe produced several publications and monographs through professional organizations. All the while, she maintained a dual appointment as a dean and faculty member throughout her career at Howard University. Privately, she maintained written correspondence with white and African-American women in the same or similar posts, having discussions that focused on innovations in the field and best practices. Central areas of responsibility for the dean of women included student-centered services in the form of advocacy for real-world preparation through vocational counseling, financial aid, campus housing, academic endeavors, and student activities. Slowe addressed each of these areas in her work.

*Slowe's Conception of the Dean of Women and Execution of Duties*

Lucy Diggs Slowe had a firm grasp and a set of self-imposed expectations for executing her duties as both an administrator and faculty member. In addition to teaching, “A Dean of Women should be first of all a well-trained, experienced educator with a broad outlook on the world and its problems.”<sup>62</sup> Slowe internalized these values as she modeled and exemplified them for her students. Her message combined a sense of civic service and personal preparedness in order to respond readily to the demands of society. In an article that appeared in the university’s alumni journal, Slowe petitioned for

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<sup>61</sup> For examples see “Coeds at Howard Elect New Officers,” Washington Post 4 November 1923, sec. General, p. 4; Dean at Howard Gives Report on Convention,” Washington Post, March 11, 1923, sec. Editorial Society, p. 42; “Women’s Dinner Held at Howard University,” Washington Post, 16 November 1927, sec. Editorials Features, EF9; Women Hear Speech by Dean of Women at Howard U.” Washington Post, February 6, 1927, p. M2; “Dean Discusses Negro Education,” Washington Post, December 8, 1929, p. R6.

<sup>62</sup> Lucy Diggs Slowe, “The Dean of Women in a Modern University,” in Howard University Alumni Journal (December, 1933): 9, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-6, Folder 125).

support. She wrote, “The social changes brought about by the industrial and political revolution of our day have wrought tremendous changes in the mode of life for women who look to the college to prepare them to meet adequately and bravely the new order of things.”<sup>63</sup> Slowe’s reference to social contexts underscored her understanding that her influence on students had practical applications for active citizenship and leadership. As Linda Perkins writes,

As one of the earliest black women formally trained in student personnel, during her fifteen year tenure at Howard, Slowe became an outspoken advocate for self-determination, respect and advancement of college-trained African-American women. Slowe took seriously the charge that African-American women had a vital role to play in race leadership and, as a result, she sought to develop the leadership skills of black college women. Slowe’s leadership in black women’s higher education resulted in the establishment of two important organizations for the advocacy of African-American college women – the National Association of College Women (NACW) and the National Association of Women’s Deans and Advisors of Colored Schools (NAWDACS).<sup>64</sup>

Slowe understood that her role as dean of women needed to fortify the total development of the collegiate women in tangible ways for immediate productivity in society.

Slowe used her membership in and stewardship of professional organizations to highlight the need for professional standards for dean of women. “Negro colleges employing matrons are to be urged to abolish the position and appoint a Dean of Women who shall have her A.B. degree.”<sup>65</sup> As President of the NACW, Slowe advocated for appropriate living conditions for female students. “Adequate provisions should be made

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Linda M. Perkins, “Lucy Diggs Slowe: Champion of the Self-Determination of African-American Women in Higher Education,” *Journal of Negro History* 81, no. ¼ (Winter-Autumn, 1996): 89.

<sup>65</sup> Walton, “Negro Women Seek to Better College Living,” Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

for housing women students for their physical and social development, as well as for the training of their minds.”<sup>66</sup> At the groundbreaking and cornerstone laying ceremony for a women’s dormitory, Slowe continued to reinforce the message of total development of character. Slowe recorded her remarks as follows:

As we lay this corner stone we are undergirding with solid marble a building inside whose walls constant building more difficult and more significant must go on.

We realize that the character of personality which will be build within these walls must be supported by corner stones as solid, as durable as everlasting as this place of cold marble that we put in place today.

We know that the materials which we select for our human construction must be as carefully chosen as these inanimate bricks and stones around here.

The great purpose of this educational institution—the awakening of a new spirit of mind, a new mode of thought, a new standard of life, a new vision of light—can be achieved only by putting in place in the life of each student the corner stone of unselfishness, generosity, of truthfulness, courage, righteousness, and high endeavor. It is for us, the faculty, to lay our spiritual and intellectual corner stone in the lives of the students of Howard University as artistically, as durably, as this stone is laid today. To that great task we take joy in addressing ourselves.<sup>67</sup>

In all of her endeavors as dean of women, she worked toward a holistic interpretation of student development.<sup>68</sup> In a draft of an article, Slowe reinforced the indispensable value

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<sup>67</sup> Speech by Lucy D. Slowe, Dean of Women, Howard University on the Occasion of the Cornerstone of The Women’s Dormitories at Howard University, June 5, 1931” in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University Washington, D.C. (Box 90-6, Folder 123).

<sup>68</sup> Slowe had ongoing communication and contact with Thyrza Amos throughout her years at HU. Amos held positions as dean of women at the University of Pittsburgh as well as member and president of the National Association of Deans of Women. Amos visited HU and presented a seminar. See “One-Day Institute Conducted by Dean Thyrza W. Amos, Dean of Women, University of Pittsburgh,” dated April 25, 1936 in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-6, Folder 137). Amos expressed her own philosophy, one that Slowe also endorsed and repeated during her own speaking occasions. At the ceremony Amos stated,

Take the idea of education as a development of the whole. The purpose of education as I see it is the development of excellency. Excellency cannot be

of coordinating offices in the interest of the student. "The administrative function of the work of the Dean of Women makes necessary her presence on all committees which have to do with the administering of policies affecting the life of women students."<sup>69</sup> For example, Slowe wrote,

It is highly desirable that a trained dietitian be a part of the staff of the Dean of Women. If the dietitian is an independent officer of the institution, she should be associated with the Dean of women in such a way that the Dean may be in constant touch with the conditions affecting the social and physical life as does the dining room.<sup>70</sup>

Slowe advocated for services across interdepartmental or divisional lines in the interest of meeting the social, academic, and personal, needs of women on and off campus.<sup>71</sup> To be successful, Slowe recognized that her participation on various committees provided an opportunity to interface with other departments within the university in the interests of the students. Slowe then practiced a system of processes that existed through the coordination of information and services with other offices to include the Registrar, Dean

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confined solely to the accumulation of facts; solely to instilling mental things, but there has to be developed also the side of you that turns its face toward people, toward working with people, the side which sets its face toward that which is greater than any human; the side that turns its face toward what is right and what is wrong. I think that education, from the nursery school to the graduate school, that is not interested in making you excellently well a person is missing largely the goal for which education stands. That is a personal thought. Others think that to give purely intellectual light is enough. The college ought to develop a student into a person excellently well a person. Amos saw her position as warranted to assume oversight of the development of the whole student.

<sup>69</sup> Lucy Diggs Slowe, "The Business of Being a Dean of Women," Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-6, Folder 119).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

of Men, and, the university physician. The result of her desire to collaborate with others not only served the best interest of the students but also forged alliances.<sup>72</sup>

In other instances, Slowe received requests to refer students to potential employers and other collegiate programs in emerging career fields. For example, Algernon B. Jackson, M.D sought Slowe's recommendation for students to study and train in Cleveland, Ohio. Jackson wrote,

My dear Dean Slowe:

I am referring the enclosed letter to you with the hope that you will be able to recommend some worth while persons to take this work. I know Mr. Lynde very well and believe this is the finest sort of opportunity for young colored boys and girls to enter the field of social work. This course is carried on in connection with Western Reserve University, leads to the master's degree and affords a wonderful opportunity for employment while studying.

May I ask that you and Dean West confer on this matter and let me know what conclusion you reach? However, I want to urge that if possible you recommended one or two persons to Mr. Lynde. Each year in the past, when I was on the Hill, I was able to send one or two persons to Cleveland for this course and with one exception they all made good. May I further ask that you be very careful in the selection of students as the future attitude of this organization will be more or less influenced by the caliber and character of the students we send to them?<sup>73</sup>

Slowe responded within two days thanking Dr. Jackson for contacting her. She also indicated that she would comply with his request to share the information with the

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<sup>72</sup> Tuttle, "What Became of the Dean of Women? Changing Roles for Women Administrators in American Higher Education" 1940-1980" 77. Tuttle briefly discusses Slowe's supportive efforts to create a professional organization for the Dean of Men at HU.

<sup>73</sup> Letter from Algernon B. Jackson, M.D. to Miss Lucy D. Slowe dated March 16, 1931 in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-5 Folder 111). The School of Public Health was founded in 1921-1922 under president Durkee's administration. Logan, Howard University, The First Hundred Years, 196. It is possible that Slowe and Jackson became acquainted during her first year as dean of women. Howard did not offer coursework in social service until 1935. The original text has periods at the end of the sentences that begin, "May I..." I took the liberty of inserting question marks for the sake of clarity.

William B. West, dean of men.<sup>74</sup> Slowe focused on student opportunities for leadership and practical experiences in the interest of preparing them to contribute to society. She worked in an ongoing capacity to develop vocational avenues for the students.

*Vocational Counseling and Personnel Services*

Slowe's view of her role as dean of women emphasized preparing collegiate women for the world as effective participating citizens. In her writings, Slowe criticized the course offerings for lacking an adequate focus to prepare women to enter the world as productive citizens. Slowe addressed the inefficiency of doing so when she talked about race and gender. Slowe wrote,

The curriculum which is pursued by students in college must take account of the fact that they will, upon leaving college, enter a world torn by the most profound upheaval in history. The women students, particularly, must be prepared to shoulder the responsibility first of all for making a living because they are definitely committed in the modern world to developing their own individual talents and of being responsible for their own lives.<sup>75</sup>

At the crux of her argument rested the recognition that her students would have to reconcile the uneasy but real inconsistency of the American society's perception of race and gender. She wrote about the deficiencies African-American colleges perpetuated and the quandary of the lack of appropriate preparation in which her students were placed. Slowe discussed the gender limitations within the African-American race and argued for an androgynous approach in academia. Slowe wrote,

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<sup>74</sup> Letter from Lucy D. Slowe to Dr. Algernon B. Jackson dated March 18, 1931 in 1931 in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-5 Folder 111). The punctuation in the quotation is as it appears in the original document.

<sup>75</sup> Lucy D. Slowe, "The College Woman and Her Community," Opening Speech Presented at the National Association of College Women, Atlanta, Georgia, April 1934 in Howard University Alumni Journal, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-6, Folder 120).

When Negro women go to college, they go usually from segregated communities where neither they nor their parents have had much experience in the civic life of the community. In many places they have not had the right to vote, nor have they been permitted to participate in the responsibilities of government in their city or state. They have paid taxes, but have had not voices in deciding how taxes shall be spent. They are accustomed to stand by and see policies of government worked out or not worked out, without help from them. Frequently, Negro college women come from homes where conservatism in reference to women's place in the world of the most extreme sort exists. Regardless of the fact that modern conditions have forced many women to be economically, politically, and socially independent, many parents still believe that the definition of women found in an eighteenth century dictionary is true today: "Woman, the female of man. See man." Regardless of the wish of many parents that their daughters become adjuncts of "man," modern life forces them to be individuals in much the same senses as men are individuals.<sup>76</sup>

Slowe would continue writing in the same piece about racial differences for African-American collegiate women. Slowe noted,

Living as we do in an industrial democracy, the college woman has a right to expect also some guidance toward the choice of her life's work. It appears to the writer that one of the most serious defects in the Negro college is the slowness with which it has recognized this need. Here and there Negro colleges are offering their students expert advice in the field of vocational guidance, but it is the exception rather than the rule. This guidance is even more important for Negro women than it is for white women because the former have to be guided not only with reference to their aptitude, but because of racial identity, also, with reference to possible opportunities for work. Negro women cannot assume that because they are prepared efficiently as individual they will receive the same consideration as others when they apply for work. Negro women cannot assume that because they are prepared efficiently as individuals they will receive the same consideration as others when they apply for work. In every Negro college a woman has a right to expect a well-established guidance office where she can secure dependable information on the work

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<sup>76</sup> Slowe, "The Colored Girl Enters College. What Shall She Expect?" Opportunity Journal of Negro Life (September, 1937): 278 in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spangarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-6, Folder 121).



of the world, and where her own capabilities for doing that work can be properly directed by the guidance office.<sup>77</sup>

Slowe advocated for a realistic view of vocational guidance that confronted the racial and gender paradox in mainstream society as opposed to the microcosmic experience students had on a homogenous racial campus. For example, Slowe interacted with white deans of women in an effort to promote African-American students in the developing field of student personnel services. Slowe visited other campuses as a guest speaker, and she invited notable dean of women to visit HU. In a letter to Thyresa W. Amos, Slowe wrote about her speaking engagement at Columbia University.

I am leaving in a very few minutes for Columbia University to address the students at Teachers College tonight on "The Education of Negro Women for Social Responsibilities." I shall see Miss Sturtevant and other of our mutual friends at dinner at 6 o'clock, and I do wish that you could be with us too.<sup>78</sup>

Slowe maintained regular contact and correspondence with Thyresa W. Amos, who visited the campus to talk with students and staff about developing personnel programs. Slowe wrote to express her gratitude:

I have not written you since your memorable visit, but all of us have continued to talk about the help that you gave us. The members of my staff and the students received both inspiration and information which have been helpful to them. I hope that we can plan to have Miss Ruch come down next year for I feel that she could be of very great service to the members of my staff who carry the responsibility for general student activities.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 276.

<sup>78</sup> Letter from Lucy D. Slowe to Thyresa W. Amos March 11, 1931 Slowe Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-2, Folder 23).

<sup>79</sup> Letter from Lucy D. Slowe to Thyresa W. Amos dated June 26, 1936 Lucy Diggs Slowe Manuscript Division, Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-2, Folder 24).

Slowe and Amos corresponded with one another over several years. Slowe sought Amos's advice and professional support with many of the unfolding adjunct responsibilities for the dean's position.

Slowe would write letters of recommendations, monitor students' progress, and support vocational searches for employment in higher educations. For example, Slowe corresponded with Bernice V. Brown, the dean of women at Radcliffe College, concerning a former student Hilda Davis. Brown initiated the inquiry by writing,

I do not remember, when I had the pleasure of meeting you in Atlanta City, whether I told you about one of our promising graduate students, Hilda Davis by name. She will probably receive her Master's degree in English at midyears this year, and I am eager to have her find just the right place afterward.

She is not only well endowed mentally but I think she has an unusually attractive and out-going nature. She would succeed well, I think, in administrative work in a Dean's office, and would be able to do well in teaching at the same time. If you hear of any opening for her, won't you drop me a note?<sup>80</sup>

In response, Slowe wrote,

I thank you very much for your kind letter in reference to Miss Hilda Davis who finished her work for the masters degree in English at Radcliffe this year.

I happen to know Hilda very well as she spent four years with us at Howard University and was one of our finest students. I have had her in mind for some time for an administrative position in connection with one of the dormitories, and hope that I shall be able to use her next year. I am not sure that I shall be able to induce the trustees to give me sufficient budget to attract her but I do have her in mind.

It is very satisfying to know that you feel about her as I feel. She has also impressed very favorably Mrs. Charlotte Hawkins Brown with whom she has worked ever since leaving Howard University.

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<sup>80</sup> Letter from Bernice V. Brown to Lucy D. Slowe dated December 15, 1931 Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscripts Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-2, Folder 32).

I do hope that when you come to Washington for the Deans Conference in February that you will come out to Howard University. We have three new dormitories and I believe you will like them very much.<sup>81</sup>

Slowe remained abreast of her students' progress and supported their post-graduate efforts after leaving Howard University for employment or further study. Davis had a clear path to becoming dean of women at Shaw University located in Raleigh, North Carolina. Her route to this position including on-going discussions between her, Slowe, graduate faculty at Radcliffe, and others Slowe knew in the field. This is an example of how Slowe used her position to develop what she considered well-educated and well-qualified candidates mentored through their development until they were ready to assume a leadership position in higher education. At the Fifth Conference of Deans and Advisors of Women in Negro Schools, Hilda Davis delivered a customary address, "The Business of Being a Dean of Women." The conference report indicated the following:

Dean Davis brought out in her discussion the fact that being a Dean of Women is now a well-established profession and no longer a vague function. Underlying the business of being a dean is a philosophy of education, specific preparation, well-defined activities, and orderly procedures. She pointed out clearly that scientific preparation is now needed for each successful Dean of Women.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>Letter from Lucy D. Slowe to Bernice V. Brown dated December 18, 1931, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-2, Folder 32).

<sup>82</sup>The Fifth Conference of Deans and Advisors of Women in Negro Schools," dated March 22-24, 1934, Hampton Institute, Hampton, Virginia in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-8, Folder 173). Also see Perkins, "Champion of Self-Determination," where she referenced Hilda Davis:

Hilda Davis, a Howard graduate in 1925, recalled that she was one of the first women chosen as a mentor after Slowe arrived on campus in 1922 and the experience had a profound impact on her. She recalled that Dean Slowe had high expectations of the women students and had leading women personnel deans visit Howard and work with the mentors. As a result, this sparked Davis' interest in student personnel work. After obtaining a masters from Radcliffe and taking a course for Deans of Women at Boston University, Davis obtained a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago and became a prominent Dean of Women and ultimately the president of the NACW (94).

The correspondence Slowe received and sent over the years suggests that there was an arrangement for educating talented African-American women through formal graduate study and practical work experiences in the expanding field of student personnel services.<sup>83</sup>

In an address to the Deans of Advisors in Colored Schools held at the 1936 annual meeting, Slowe stated her approach to personnel services.

Finally, I should like to call attention to the fact that there is nothing in my judgment intricate about this thing called personnel work. Sometimes we favor personnel workers so much that we think they have some virtue in themselves, more than college education, in order that the individual student might have the advantage of personnel. There were personnel workers in the college long before we thought of Deans of Women. Dr. Strain of Columbia University, has a book called "The Role of the Teacher in Personnel Work." The teacher should be interested in the personnel problems of the people they teach. This used to be so when schools were small and it is still so now where teachers are interested in students as people. So many people seem to think that subject matter is all that is needed in college, they seem to forget that they are teaching subjects but they are teaching children.

Now this thing that we call personnel work is simply working with individuals in order that they might have a chance to develop intellectually, physically and spiritually. That is all it is and whatever officers come into the college should never lose sight of that. Now it is true, we have to pay attention to the housing, to the food, to the health and to those things that you call extra curricular activities. We want you through these things to become better students, better men and women. A school should have on its faculty, the people who see the students as the important part of the college and the subject matter only means by which we develop men and women. It is my feeling of sending out into the world men and women who are properly developed.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> See other examples. Letter from Lucy D. Slowe to Dean Thyrsa W. Amos dated June 26, 1936 and Letter from Thyrsa W. Amos to Lucy D. Slowe dated June 30, 1936 Slowe Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-2, Folder 24).

<sup>84</sup> "The Place of the Dean of Women on the College Campus," The Seventh Conference, Deans of Advisers to Women in Colored Schools, Wilberforce University, Wilberforce, Ohio dated March 19-21, 1936 in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-8, Folder 175).

Slowe pressed for the expansion of African-American women into other rapidly growing fields. She conducted research using a comparative analysis of academic majors at other institutions from 1933, and she admonished other schools for failing to promote degree-seeking efforts in the social sciences, namely political science, economics and sociology.<sup>85</sup> Four years later at HU, of the 623 women who completed studies across the curriculum, 406 took English, 326 studied education, 263 completed a course in languages, 209 reviewed history, 181 took home economics, and 177 completed a course in psychology. Slowe's argument was critical of alma mater as well as other institutions. "The woman who enters college should expect to receive from the college much more guidance in matters of curricula choice than she seems to be receiving if she is to go out into life to meet its problems and to have some techniques for solving them."<sup>86</sup> Slowe pushed for greater academic advisement that directed students, women especially, to professional and specialized fields such as accounting, dentistry, law, nursing, pharmacy, research, and social work. Of the last, Slowe was a strong advocate. She supported the establishment of HU's School of Social Work. Course work in "Social Service" began during the 1935-1936 academic term.<sup>87</sup>

Slowe acknowledged that what she recognized as personnel activities needed greater development because of the lack of qualified candidates, fiscal appropriations for salaries, and other resources.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Slowe, "The Colored Girl Enters College," Slowe Papers, 277.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 278.

<sup>87</sup> Logan, Howard University: The First Hundred Years, 1867-1967, 368.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

*Student Financial Needs*

For the majority of students attending schools at the beginning of the twentieth century, financing education was a challenge unless familial means comfortably afforded post-secondary enrollment. The historically black colleges and universities may have had limited scholarship resources. In her correspondence from Thyrsa Amos, Slowe inquired about the means to establish a type of financial aid program with the dean of women's office. In the letter, Slowe indicated that an unnamed foundation might provide the source of funding in an amount to be determined. Slowe asked for Amos' input because she was gathering information because the HU scholarship committee solicited her input. Slowe reported a collected sum of \$150 through women student's efforts. She wrote, "They wish to build up by \$1,000 each year until they get a substantial fund and then lend the interest on it."<sup>89</sup> Amos responded by giving Slowe some specific recommendations on starting a fund similar to the one at the University of Pittsburgh.

The persons deciding upon the loans are the dean of women, and the chairman of the Student Loan committee. Each applicant has to prove his need and furnish references with and without the University, all of which are investigated to safeguard infringements upon the courtesy of the loan. Without question the administration of the loans should be placed in the hands of confident persons and I think an administration person, a faculty person and the chairman of the Student Loan Committee would make an adequate committee. Any bank holding the funds should never let pass a check which would not have an administrative officer's signature to it.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Letter from Lucy D. Slowe to Thyrsa W. Amos dated December 12, 1930 Slowe Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.(Box 90-2, Folder 23)

<sup>90</sup> Letter from Thyrsa W. Amos to Lucy Diggs Slowe dated December 17, 1930 Slowe Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.(Box 90-2, Folder 23)

Amos explained that the source of the funds resulted from student-sponsored activities where they raised money via various cultural and organizational enterprises. If Slowe had been able to promote this idea at HU under her direction, then she would have been responsible for providing financial aid either as a member of committee for women's funds or as a direct dispenser of the monies. Although there is no evidence that the program materialized as Slowe envisioned, her inquiries and the responses she solicited illustrate her understanding of pervasive student needs that were universal in application.

Slowe attempted to promote scholarships through various organizations of which she was either a member or officer. For example, Slowe channeled financial concerns to and through academic organizations such as the National Association of College Women. "It is the ambition of its members that the National Association of College Women be made the clearinghouse for awarding of scholarships and fellowships to deserving students."<sup>91</sup> Slowe called upon national and community organizations for information on the question. As a member of the committee for National Youth Administration (NYA), Slowe requested information about its scholarship process. Slowe received the requested correspondence discussing the NYA program in terms of administration and eligibility conditions for financial assistance.<sup>92</sup> Based on the correspondence mentioned, Slowe pursued financial assistance for at least six years as an additional duty under the services the dean of women might provide. Had Slowe been able to combine her intended efforts, then the students would have most assuredly benefited thereby relieving some of the financial pressures.

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<sup>91</sup> Walton, "Negro Women Seek to Better College Living," The World, Slowe Papers.

<sup>92</sup> "NYA Bulletin #5," in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-10, Folder 199).

Slowe did not limit her attention to students with an aptitude for graduate study.

Slowe also monitored and supported working students. Slowe stated her position:

All Negro schools and a large number of white ones, at this time, are trying to solve the problem of part-time employment for students. With our financial system shaken to its foundation, we are having more and more students with inadequate funds coming to college in need of part-time jobs. The Dean of Men and the Dean of Women at Howard University operate an employment bureau and place students in jobs on the campus and off the campus. In normal times these students earned very much larger sums of money than they do now, but many of them are able to stay in school by the work secured through these offices.

So far as the women are concerned, we attempt to keep records of all who are working with the number of hours and their compensation. We attempt to get in contact with their employers, especially those of the campus, and we attempt to know something about the conditions under which the students work. It can be readily seen that there are some types of jobs into which it would not be safe to have women go in a large city, consequently, we find it necessary to make some sort of investigation before we place a young woman. A much more searching investigation could be made if there were more adequate help in the office of the Dean of Women for this type of service, but as it is she does the best she can in securing work for students.

Care has to be taken that students do not suffer physically by carrying a heavy program of subjects and also long work of hours. Sometimes the Dean of Women has to advise students to carry a part-time academic program and take a longer time to finish college rather than undermine their health by attempting to do regular academic work and regular employment at the same time.<sup>93</sup>

Slowe seemed to understand students' situations and provided a balanced view of options that minimized risks to students and supported the likelihood of graduating from Howard University. In summary, Slowe was a key figure in promoting graduate academic experiences for African-American women so that they would have more vocational options with the proper professional training. She sustained the legacy of the Midwestern and pioneering dean of women by reinforcing the standards of practice for

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<sup>93</sup> Lucy D. Slowe, "The Administration of Personnel Work at Howard University," in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-6, Folder 118).



professionalization. Slowe did not sacrifice students' safety for part-time employment opportunities as she sought to try to find employment options that would foster greater independence.

### *Campus Housing for Women*

As President of the NACW, Slowe advocated for appropriate living conditions for female students. "Adequate provisions should be made for housing women students for their physical and social development, as well as for the training of their minds."<sup>94</sup> Slowe contended that the provision of facilities to nurture mind and body would be helpful to combat the inactivity of spirit. She addressed what she considered the subduing influence of religion on women's thoughts and conceptions about self.

It is to be remembered too, that much of the religious philosophy upon which Negro women have been nurtured has tended toward suppressing in them their own powers. Many of them have been brought up in the antiquated philosophy of Saint Paul in reference to women's place in the scheme of things, and all too frequently have been influenced by the philosophy of patient waiting, rather than the philosophy of developing their talents to the fullest extent. Under these conditions, it is inevitable, therefore, that the psychology of most of the women who come to college is the psychology of accepting what is taught without much question: the psychology of inaction rather than that of active curiosity.<sup>95</sup>

Slowe delineated her responsibilities in terms of housing where she not only identified suitable options for off-campus accommodations, but she supervised work experiences for women who were independently responsible for paying tuition. Most likely, she understood the importance of supporting the latter because she was a former scholarship recipient who also worked and lived off-campus. Slowe acknowledged housing as a

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<sup>94</sup>Walton, "Negro Women Seek to Better College Living," The World, in Slowe Papers.

<sup>95</sup>Slowe, "The Colored Girl Enters College," 276-279, Slowe Papers. This publication was the result of Slowe's research efforts and ongoing commitment to scholarship. She mailed surveys to colleges and received forty responses. She shared her findings in this article.

critical issue as it related to students' academic success and preparation for social demands.

Upon her assumption of the post, she advocated for designated campus-based housing that would cater to women's needs for socialization and intellectual stimulation. "The setting aside of a special area to be designated as the 'Women's Campus,' separated from the physical center of all the other phases of university life. This idea first occurred to her at the beginning of her administration as Dean of Women and was finally realized when the women's dormitories opened in 1931."<sup>96</sup> Howard University had three dormitories for women.

It took nearly ten years before Slowe's vision for housing was realized. For students who lived in campus housing, faculty with light teaching loads provided supervision. Slowe argued, "Proper housing is one of the most potent influences in the education of college students. Dormitories designed and furnished in accordance with decent standards of living, and presided over by members of the faculty trained in their supervision can be and should be valuable adjuncts to the academic life of a student."<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Joanna Houston Ransom, "Innovations Introduced into the Women's Program at Howard University by the Late Dean Lucy D. Slowe," Journal of the National Association of College Women, 14 (1937):51-52 in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-7, Folder 158). This is an excerpt from a collection of printed statements appearing in the October 1937. Also see letter from Thyrsa W. Amos to Lucy D. Slowe December 17, 1930 Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-2, Folder 23). In the first paragraph of Amos' response, she referred to the building of the dormitories in terms of specifications i.e. size of the rooms, building capacity, and dining accommodations. The tone of the letter is warm and cordial. It appeared that Slowe sought Amos' counsel and guidance about the erection of campus dormitories for women.

<sup>97</sup> Lucy Diggs Slowe, "The Dean of Women in a Modern University," in Howard University Alumni Journal (December, 1933): 10 in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University Washington, D.C. (Box 90-6, Folder 125).

When Slowe started working during president Durkee's administration, she made it clear that she had no intentions of living on campus. However, three dormitories warranted some type of administrative support and presence. Instead of living on campus, Slowe sought the Board of Trustees' approval for paid positions. The positions served various capacities as educational and social directors in the dormitories. Slowe advocated for her young assistants to also teach so that they could cultivate additional skills. This was consistent with her views on vocational guidance. Slowe was able to be resourceful in this way. On the one hand, Slowe met students' needs in a manner consistent with her views of personnel services and the total development of the student. On the other hand, Slowe supervised protégés for dean of women positions who gained hands on practical experience. The dormitories proved to be both a major accomplishment and a dream deferred. Arguably, Slowe did not receive consistent administrative support. The complications Slowe experienced will be discussed in the next chapter.

#### *Students' Academic Status and Performance*

In a causal relationship, Slowe correlated housing with academic proficiency and the quality of student life. Slowe confirmed that housing was a matter of incredible importance and students' academic success was no less vital. As dean of women, Slowe encouraged success while addressing barriers or issues that hindered accomplishments. Rather than merely establishing standards and rules for compliance, Slowe started to delve into the causes of student academic decline and to identify ways of addressing issues in order to promote achievement. Slowe explained how she evaluated a negative situation, and, contrary to what was presented, she used it as an opportunity to negotiate

options for the student. The ingenuity to turn a crisis into a triumph bears the mark of her compassion for students and conviction to correct ill processes and wrongs.

In my institution the dropping of students who fail was at one time automatic. The Academic Dean called in a girl and told her that her average was below "C" for two successive quarters and she was dropped with no study of causes whatsoever. I called attention to the lack of wisdom in such procedure, but it went on until the following incident occurred. A young woman of fine character and disposition came in one day to say to me that she was leaving for home. In the course of the conference, she revealed that she failed and was being dropped by the Dean for poor scholarship. I questioned her closely about the cause of her failure and after much hesitancy, she revealed that her eye-sight was so bad that she could not read all her assignments. She revealed further that she was too poor to purchase glasses. She revealed further that she was too poor to purchase glasses.

After learning from her some embarrassing things about family conditions, I took up her case with the Dean. He soon saw not only that it was cruel to drop this girl but that her case should have been investigated before he acted. No women students are now dropped for poor scholarship until their cases have been referred to me.<sup>98</sup>

Slowe gained the confidence of some of her colleagues in terms of her judgment and recommendations.

Slowe's recollection showed how much advocacy was involved in her role as dean of women. She demonstrated skills of a counselor in her ability to gain the student's confidence so that they discussed sensitive matters. Slowe documented the rationale for the strategy as follows:

The work of counseling the students on individual problems tests the real fibre of the Dean of Women. Techniques cannot be definitely set up as 'the way' to proceed, for every individual will probably require a treatment different, even though so slightly, from that used with someone else. There are, however, certain general techniques which may be cited. The most desirable counseling relationship is that in which the student

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<sup>98</sup> Lucy D. Slowe, "A Problem with Coordinating the Work of the Dean of Women with that of Other Divisions of the University," dated August 10, 1930 in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spangarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-5, Folder 111).

seeks the Dean of Women for help. The mere fact that the student has come of her own volition indicates a degree of confidence in the Dean of Women and a willingness to be helped. Often, though, the students who are most in need of counsel do not ask for it and many times do not want it. The personal interview is the Dean of Women's chief instrument for counseling. It should be held in a comfortable room in which the Dean and the student will be free from interruption and from being overheard. The presence of a third person may inhibit the student and negate the benefit to be derived from the interview. The interview should not be an inquisition nor a confessional. Rather, it should be an opportunity for the student with the Dean to look objectively on the immediate matter, to study and to understand the underlying causes, and to work out some solution to the problem. The Dean of Women should never force confidence.<sup>99</sup>

She demonstrated conflict resolutions skills that rendered relief to the crisis. In term of solving the individual student's needs, Slowe also happened upon another opportunity to foster collaborative work with other deans. Slowe's willingness to supplant ineffective policies with new methods and practices indicated how progressive her thoughts were on administrative processes that centralized student-centered services.

### *Student Organizations and Social Activities*

As a cornerstone of her personal and professional development, Slowe emphasized the development of social life as much as academic preparation and employment. For example, Slowe was involved with the National Student Department of the National Board of the Young Women's Christian Association since the early 1920s. She had regular correspondence with the agency as she inquired about ways to include students in important activities.<sup>100</sup> She coupled the message of community service with personal enrichment and social duty. In short, she believed in a well-rounded student.

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<sup>99</sup>Slowe, "The Business of Being a Dean of Women," Slowe Papers.

<sup>100</sup> Linda Perkins, "Champion of Self-Determination," 94-95. Perkins discusses Thelma Preyer Bando, a student who was the campus president for the YMCA. Slowe also mentored her advocating for a scholarship at Columbia University for further study. Bando worked at Virginia Seminary and eventually became the dean of women at Morgan State College.

“The student has a right to expect the college to assist her in coming in contact with those activities outside of the classroom which will refine her taste, deepen her moral strength, and send her out into the world a wholesome, helpful, dependable person.”<sup>101</sup> No different from when she was a principal at Shaw Junior High School, Slowe discussed avocational and vocational pursuits. Slowe relished her own activities such as tennis, social clubs, and singing as much as teaching, scholarship, public speaking, and, administrative duties.<sup>102</sup>

Slowe hosted garden parties and other social events at her home for students and in some instances, remained indirectly supportive of AKA, the sorority she helped to create.<sup>103</sup> In other instances, she accepted very limited engagements with her sorority if they did not compromise her immediate goal of creating a uniform basis to perpetuate the educational, social, and economic progress of African-American women.<sup>104</sup> Despite her personal history of involvement with the development of the AKA organization, she was

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<sup>101</sup> Slowe, “The Colored Girl Enters College,” Slowe Papers, 278-279.

<sup>102</sup> “Dean Lucy Slowe,” Slowe Papers. “Very few people know that Dean Slowe has a contralto voice and loves to sing. She was member of the University choir during her student days being in the first choir organized by Miss Lulu V. Childers, now Director of the Conservatory. Dean Slowe believes that every student should be taught to appreciate great music and art as part of his education.”

<sup>103</sup> Letter from Wanser Bagnall, President Iota Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha to Dean Slowe dated November 6, 1923, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-2, Folder 26). Bagnall invited Slowe to be president of the national chapter as “a guiding hand in the affairs of the organization just as you have done before.” Slowe’s response is dated November 2, 1923, Slowe declined the invitation, writing, “It would be most unwise for me to take any active part in the affairs of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority either locally or nationally, therefore, I have found it wise to maintain the same relationship toward the women of Alpha Sorority that I maintain toward women of all the other sororities. In other words, I take no active interest active interest in sorority affairs at all.”

<sup>104</sup> Letter from Lucy D. Slowe to Thyrsa W. Amos dated January 25, 1932 Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Folder 90-2, Folder 23). Ibid., Slowe’s reply to Ms. Bagnall.

also interested in activities for women who were not sorority participants.<sup>105</sup> In that way, she was unilaterally supportive of productive outlets for women. This type of unilateral support cut across all types of dichotomies, i.e. freshman versus senior, dormitory resident versus off-campus resident, employed versus unemployed, stellar scholar versus struggling student.<sup>106</sup> For areas where she had concerns, reservations, questions, and a lack of knowledge, she wrote to others in her same capacity for input and feedback. Through correspondence, Slowe established and built a supportive and responsive network across institutional types and racial lines.

In terms of social activities, Slowe favored those that reflected culture and refinement. Slowe contended,

We attempt to have literary programs or lectures, recitals and discussion in the dormitories and other places in order that the students may find some outlet for their energy in ways other than dancing. It seems to me a committee of students and faculty members could very well work together on a social program for the year to profit both.<sup>107</sup>

Student social options included class organizations, a student council that sponsored a dance each quarter, fraternities, sororities, state and academic clubs, and the Women's League in which all female students belonged. Slowe described the related activities.

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<sup>105</sup> Letter from Lucy Slowe to Betty Brown, Member of Faculty Stephens College, Columbia, Missouri dated May 15, 1937, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (90-2, Folder 32). Slowe inquired about options for women who were not in sororities.

<sup>106</sup> "One-Day Institute Conducted by Dean Thyrsa W. Amos, Dean of Women, University of Pittsburgh," Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers. "Division between girls who live at home and girls who live in the dormitories. You have two kinds of college life. You need activities that bring the two groups together; that is, to find the kind of activities that will do that. The idea is to be bigger than the environment."

<sup>107</sup> Letter from Lucy D. Slowe to Eva Carper Conic, Dean of Women, Southern University dated February 7, 1933 in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Folder 90-2, Folder 39).

Working through student committees, the League promotes and supervises a number of morale-building activities designed to increase fellowship and intelligent leadership on the campus and in the community. The League, for the last fifteen years, has promoted on the first Friday in November a Women's Dinner attended by hundreds of college women, students and graduates, who look upon this as their time of inspiration for the extra-curricular work of the year. Following this event the students, through various committees, arrange a Christmas Vesper Service; a Student's Gift Service on Palm Sunday of each year; and an annual May Festival, when they select the woman who has done most of the finer life of the women on the campus as their queen.<sup>108</sup>

The student government was of utmost importance to Slowe as she viewed participation in it as a critical tool for developing character particularly in light of the fact that segregation and racial discrimination limited civic participation for many of her students.

Slowe wrote,

Self-government is the goal of all education for character building; therefore, much time and attention should be given to student government bodies in their various forms. The extra-curriculum programs of most colleges contain some form of self-government for students, but in many progressive schools the tendency is toward community or co-operative government, with administration, faculty and students participating. Whatever form the student government may take, the objective is the same – the development of individuals who are free to act in keeping with the best interests of the group of which they are a part. While self-government is an individual matter, a thing of the spirit, it is founded on the principle of doing in individual cases only those things which are ultimately good for the group.

If this principle is a sound one, the college authorities are obligated first of all to examine with the students those group goals which are desirable. This practice immediately precludes the drawing up and handing down of rules and regulations by administration and faculty. It brings the students into participation in making the rules by which they are to be governed. Not only is this good training for conduct on the college campus, but it is excellent training for conduct throughout life, especially in a democratic state.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> "The Colored Girl Enters College," Slowe Papers.

<sup>109</sup> Lucy D. Slowe, "What Contribution can a Program of Social Activities Fostered by the Institution make to the Moral and social Development of Students in Negro Colleges?" in



Slowe's position required her to monitor, to support, and to encourage compliance with university expectations and rules for all of these organizations.<sup>110</sup> Slowe cautioned against large gatherings because of the difficulty of controlling crowds with very limited staff. Instead, she recommended that small "beautifully arranged affairs are much better from an educational point of view than large affairs."<sup>111</sup> Slowe voiced a strong preference for a liberal culture on campus through student activities and community organizations. As Veysey writes,

The colleges could serve society best by retaining their emphasis on liberal arts, taught from a moral point of view. Thus colleges should be democratic but should train the "best men"; individualism should be fostered, but never eccentricity; economic freedom should be joined with "moral socialism"; religion was to be promoted, but not "in a doctrinal sense"; patriotism was good, and so was humanity; spirituality could not be fostered, but should material success.<sup>112</sup>

Slowe was educated during the formative years of progressive educational thought. While she believed in student-centered learning, she advocated for the democratic ideals associated with education. In terms of student activities, Slowe wrote,

Here the college has opportunity through the right sort of leadership to cultivate such standards through the right sort of leadership to cultivate such standards of good taste as will lead students to be dissatisfied with the vulgar, cheap and tawdry entertainments which form such a large part of our public entertainment. When college graduates have no finer taste in drama, in music or in art than the most backward and illiterate person, it is time for the college to carefully examine its training.

At the present time, with commercialism ruling stage and screen, the college has a definite responsibility for preserving that which is best in

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Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-6, 147).

<sup>110</sup> Letter from Lucy D. Slowe to Eva Carper Conic, dated February 7, 1933, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Veysey, "Liberal Culture," in The Emergence of the American University, 239-240.

the world's dramatic, musical and fine arts. Shakespeare, Goethe, Aeschylus and Moliere; Beethoven, Liszt, Verdi and Schubert, Michel Angelo, Burne-Jones and Whistler should not be strangers to the vast body of students. But unless the college assists students through a carefully planned program of activities while it has them under its influence, they will never come to appreciate the recreative value of these activities.<sup>113</sup>

Slowe's vision for her position resonated with betterment for self in the service of others.

A review of her own professional experience, participation in various organizations and her student-personnel views, reinforced values she internalized both as person and administrator in higher education.

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<sup>113</sup> Slowe, "What Contributions Can A Program of Social Activities Fostered by the Institution Make to the Moral and Social Development of the Students in Negro Colleges?" Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers.

## CHAPTER 6

### COURAGE OF CONVICTIONS: DECLINING STATUS, AUTHORITY, AND POSITION

If I have been successful in my various occupations, I believe that it has been based upon my attempts to be prepared for my work by constant study and by my practice of continuing to study with experts in my field. I feel certain that personal qualities which I hope I possess, have been a factor. I have tried to be fair and just in my dealings with people and I have tried to see my subordinates' side of every situation as well as my own. I have been frank and open with my colleagues, with my subordinates, and with my superiors. I have had the courage of my convictions even though sometimes I have had to suffer personal discomfort for standing up for them.<sup>1</sup>

The reported controversies and perceived animosities between Lucy Diggs Slowe and President Moredcai W. Johnson read like the headlines from a modern-day television show. Depending on one's perspective, there remains much to investigate about atrocious infractions against a dedicated member of the faculty or a dutiful president who was unjustly accused and vilified. Somewhere in the middle of these two extremes, the truth, or at least a portion of it, remains concealed.

Linda Perkins wrote about the tensions between Slowe and Johnson, attributing the struggle to his religious and paternalistic views.<sup>2</sup> Perkins writes, "Slowe repeatedly voiced the need for African-American women to be in control of their lives and to develop leadership skills. Johnson was no doubt offended by Slowe's criticisms of the

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<sup>1</sup> Slowe, "Memorandum to Miss Beatrice Clark," Slowe Papers.

<sup>2</sup> Perkins, "Champion of Self Determination," 96.

traditional black church and its teachings.”<sup>3</sup> Slowe was both visible and vocal about her beliefs, receiving local newspaper coverage for various speaking engagements and events hosted campus and in the community. For Slowe, the most salient concerns were inequitable salary increases, lack of additional support for the dean of women, and the status of campus housing for women. As opposed to a purely chronological account, there were a sufficient number of conflicts to warrant themes based on Slowe’s perspective.

### A Storm Brews

In 1925, three years after Slowe’s appointment, President Durkee wrote to the American Association of University Women (AAUW) to inquire about the practice of mandating the Dean of Women to reside on campus. Their reply upheld Slowe’s contention that the practice of residential stipulations was antiquated. Mina Kerr, the AAUW respondent, wrote:

During the past ten years, there has been a strong and rapid movement way from this custom. More and more presidents and boards of trustees have come to realize that women deans like men deans, women professors like men professors, do better work on the whole for students when they have some separate home life of their own, some time away from their work for rest, study and thought.<sup>4</sup>

Durkee’s letter followed Slowe’s initial indication that she would live off campus when she accepted the position. Records do not specify the reason for Durkee’s inquiry but the issue was at rest for the remainder for Durkee’s presidency. In spite of an endorsement of

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Mina Kerr to Dr. J. Stanley Durkee dated June 26, 1925, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers.

a national association, the next president would resurrect the question and move to a different outcome.

Durkee's presidency had a number of controversial periods involving both students and faculty members. In 1924, the students had a strike about an expulsion rule that became effective when a student missed twenty ROTC or physical education classes during one term. At that time, the academic deans and members of the faculty took a stance to support Durkee by threatening to suspend students who disrupted the learning process.<sup>5</sup>

In reference to the faculty, Durkee had a particular concern about the deans' control over the curriculum and schools. Durkee felt that this arrangement created too much power for the deans. Accordingly, he instituted a centralized rather than decentralized administrative policy. Richard McKinney writes,

During the periods of unrest during Durkee's administration, Alain Locke became the spokesperson for the faculty, one of whose basic complaints centered on salary inequities. In 1925, Durkee recommended assigning Kelly Miller to public relations, retiring Dean George Cook, and dismissing Alain Locke and three other dissident professors. In protest the students went on an eight-day strike.

Eventually, after much publicity of the complaints against the administration, the alumni drew up a list of charges against President Durkee. Although forty-seven professors testified before the Board of Trustees, the Board gave him a vote of confidence. The local Howard alumni formed a committee to help resolve the strike. By acknowledging the logic of some of their complaints, they appeased the students, who

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<sup>5</sup> Logan, Howard University First Hundred Years, 220-222.

ended their protest.<sup>6</sup> Even after being exonerated of the charges in 1925, Durkee elected to resign.

Rayford Logan noted the absence of recorded information as the proceedings seemed to be silent and swift. Logan wrote,

The reasons for Durkee's tender of resignation do not appear in the Minutes; nor is there evidence in the Minutes of the Executive Committee or of the two Board meetings to show that there was discussion of his reasons. Thus, within three months after the exoneration of Durkee of all charges filed against him, he resigned without recorded explanation, and his successor was chosen six months after his exoneration.<sup>7</sup>

The early years of Slowe's appointment seemed to be characterized by strife in the university community as Durkee met with opposition from multiple factions. However, the execution of her duties as the dean of women remained promising as she worked to build the program and continued to teach in order to serve the women enrolled at Howard University. The change in presidents signified a change in how Slowe executed her duties and represented the roles she promoted as dean of women.

In June 1926, the HU Executive Board nominated its first African-American president, Mordecai W. Johnson who remained in office until 1960. He received bachelor degrees from Atlanta Baptist College and the University of Chicago. Johnson was the first African-American president of the university, succeeding ten white ministers who held the office prior to his appointment.<sup>8</sup> Johnson was a mix of the ministerial and

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<sup>6</sup> Richard I. McKinney, Mordecai, The Man and His Message: The Story of Mordecai Wyatt Johnson (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1997): 56.

<sup>7</sup> Logan, Howard University First Hundred Years, 232. See pages 234-236 for details about the eight allegations against president, Durkee which included a number of faculty members leaving as a result of conflicts with him.

<sup>8</sup> Initially, Johnson declined consideration as a candidate. He was not the first choice as the first African-American president. In 1877 the former governor of South Carolina, Daniel H.

academic having experiences in the pulpit and the classroom. He taught for two years at Atlanta Baptist College, his alma mater that would change its name to Morehouse College in 1913. Johnson taught English and economics. He also coached the debate team. Johnson had additional degrees in theological studies from Rochester Theological Seminary in 1921 and a Master in Sacred Theology from Harvard University in 1922. However, he lacked leadership experience at the collegiate level. Of note, he was well acquainted with Howard University as a guest minister during special occasions. In fact, Howard University conferred an honorary degree, Doctor of Divinity, on him in 1923.<sup>9</sup> Logan described Johnson as a “fine figure of a man, almost six feet tall, with a distinct but not ungraceful embonpoint.”<sup>10</sup>

His demeanor was such that he had critics and supporters but very few, if any, who were merely lukewarm to his persona or ideas. Logan wrote,

Johnson rarely lost his temper, except perhaps in meetings of the Board of Trustees and of its Committees. (The Minutes, of course, do not state that he lost his temper; on the other hand, some of his actions reported in the Minutes permit this inference.) His anger, witnessed by many Administrators and Faculty members, was sometimes furious and frightening; when controlled, it was an effective weapon to over-power his adversaries. In addition, his unquestioned skill in debate, which enabled him to discover and exploit weaknesses in the arguments of his adversaries, upset or silenced them.

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Chamberlain, sent a letter to the board of trustees nominating Francis L. Cardozo. Cardozo did receive a minority vote. See Logan, Howard University: The First Hundred Years, 83. The Board of Trustees nominated Bishop John A. Gregg of the AME church. When Gregg declined the offer for the presidency he opted to return to South Africa to establish an AME church. Johnson vied for the position against Charles H. Wesley, a professor of history at HU. Johnson had strong and influential support from Judge Julian Mack, Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, and philanthropist, Julius Rosenwald. See McKinney, Mordecai, The Man and His Message, 58-59. Logan, Howard University: The First Hundred Years, 242-243.

<sup>9</sup> McKinney, Mordecai, The Man and His Message, 61.

<sup>10</sup> Logan, Howard University: The First Hundred Years, 249.

He was one of the great platform orators of his day. Practically never using a manuscript but relying almost entirely on an outline, his remarkable memory, and his thorough “homework,” he generally won the admiration of his audiences. He exploited his commanding physical presence and resonant voice which ran the gamut from an overpowering crescendo to almost a whisper. His gestures, which he on the whole used sparingly, were eloquent except for rearing back on his heels and the waving aloft of both arms while he flexed his fingers. Few persons who heard him were left unmoved, although many listeners had later reservations about the intellectual content of some of his public addresses.<sup>11</sup>

Both Johnson and Slowe had strong personalities with clear visions for their respective positions. Each sensed a calling to duty in their given stations. Johnson was led by his sense of Christian morality and Slowe by her calling to prepare a generation students for democratic participation in society. Slowe sought to create a campus for women within Howard University whereas Johnson sought to create a competitive university with professional schools of study. Noting their similarities, it is important to examine some of the issues Johnson had with faculty members during the early years of his appointment to establish the climate in which Slowe worked.

Historians have documented clashes and conflicts that Johnson had with a number of faculty members and administrators.<sup>12</sup> Slowe was far from alone in her confrontational interactions with President Johnson. Dean Donawa of the Dental College was one of Johnson’s first casualties. The Board of Trustees found him guilty of repeated acts of

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<sup>11</sup> Logan, Howard University: The First Hundred Years, 250.

<sup>12</sup> McKinney, Mordecai, The Man and His Message, 77-98 and Logan, Howard University: The First Hundred Years, 285-292.



insubordination as a result of circulating letters that damaged HU's reputation.<sup>13</sup> In another controversy, Johnson was displeased with the Treasurer, Dr. Emmett J. Scott, who challenged an increase in the president's salary. Johnson reportedly grew dissatisfied with Scott's lack of diligence in his financial reports and he considered resigning many times.<sup>14</sup> Johnson's malcontent was complicated further by internal and external criticism of his executive duties. Faculty attrition occurred during Johnson's initial years as president. He contended with and lost a number of distinguished male faculty members such as dismissing James A. Cobb, vice dean of the law school by eliminating his position in 1930 for unspecified reasons.<sup>15</sup> It seemed that Johnson was non-discriminating about the level of expertise, visibility, or academic promise a faculty member had. For other examples, consider McKinney's account:

Other prominent faculty members with whom Johnson had notable differences with Abram Harris in economics, Alain Locke in philosophy, E. Franklin Frazier in sociology, and Percy Julian in chemistry. Harris, a standout in his field, received a job offer at the University of Chicago. For some reason Johnson made no effort to retain him at Howard. Harris told a friend that he would have stayed if he had been made to feel wanted there. Unfortunately, Harris's position at Chicago was of a lesser rank than the one he held at Howard. According to one report, Johnson and Locke hated each other. Nevertheless, at a Board of Trustees dinner, Johnson had called on Locke to give a response for the graduate school. In introducing Locke, Johnson had said, and we love

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<sup>13</sup> Logan, Howard University: The First Hundred Years, 286.

<sup>14</sup> McKinney, Mordecai, The Man and His Message, 86.

<sup>15</sup> Logan, Howard University: The First Hundred Years, 284-285.

him. One faculty member attributed Johnson's success as president to this kind of unwillingness to overcome differences.

The basis of Johnson's dispute with Percy Julian was never publicly stated. Julian left Howard and used his knowledge in chemistry to become highly successful in the commercial world.<sup>16</sup>

Johnson had naysayers ranging from members of Congress to the faculty and other members of the Washington, D.C. community. In Slowe's case, the situation seemed to be magnified by the fact that she was isolated in her position, the only woman on staff with dual appointments in a capacity that grew to be defined only to dwindle in the face of recent changes (i.e. the Depression, university financial woes, and Johnson's vision of expanding the university).

At the time of her appointment, Slowe was the only female dean in the president's cabinet. She served on a number of committees, worked across departmental lines to serve women students, remained active with the alumni and alumnae, maintained professional activities and credentials for her position, and advocated for curricular changes in favor women's entrance into industrial occupations as part of the modern work force. On the latter point, she and Johnson shared a common view.

Although a number of exchanges took place between Slowe and Johnson over the years, they were not all contentious. For example, Johnson wrote to Slowe to thank for her for making a contribution to the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools. In doing so, he made mention of her post-graduate studies at Columbia

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<sup>16</sup> McKinney, Mordecai, The Man and His Message, 82.

University and wished her well.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Johnson supported Slowe's annual Conference of Deans and Advisers of Women.<sup>18</sup> In fact, two years before Slowe's death, Johnson greeted the same group by providing a welcome address.<sup>19</sup> Mrs. Mordecai Johnson even called upon Slowe at times for social reasons. In a handwritten letter dated February 27, 1931, Mrs. Johnson invited Slowe to attend a social gathering at their home. Mrs. Johnson wrote,

We are asking a few of the friends of the Bishop and Mrs. Thirkield in to visit them from six to eight on Sunday evening, March first. Both Mr. Johnson and I will be very happy if you can find it possible to come at that time. We will also be greatly pleased if Miss Burrill can find it convenient to accompany you.<sup>20</sup>

These were some examples of Slowe and Johnson's formal and semi-formal interactions in public and private space.

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<sup>17</sup> Letter from Mordecai W. Johnson to Professor Lucy D. Slowe dated July 23, 1930, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-3, Folder 79).

<sup>18</sup> "Minutes of the Conference of Deans and Advisers of Women," Fisk University dated March 21-22, 1930, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-8, Folder 169). The word "Advisers" is spelled in this dissertation as it appears in the original document. Johnson sent a letter greeting the conference participants.

<sup>19</sup> "Conference of Deans and Advisers to Women in Colored Schools," Howard University dated March 28-30, 1935 in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-8, Folder 175). The word "Advisers" is spelled in this dissertation as it appears in the original document. Johnson was scheduled to appear. The report did not summarize or record any of his comments.

<sup>20</sup> Letter from Evelyn J. Johnson to Dean Slowe dated February 27, 1931, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-3, Folder 71). Slowe shared a home off-campus with her long-time friend, Marry P. Burrill. There is no related verification that Slowe attended the reception. Thirkield was president when Slowe was a student at Howard University.

Where Slowe articulated her preference for vocational guidance for students and an emphasis on social science fields, Johnson also had the same view about social contributions HU students could make to society.

Johnson set forth his world vision with respect to how a university could contribute to solving common problems. He saw Howard University as making special contributions in this area. Specifically, he referred to the disciplines of sociology, economics, social philosophy, history, biology, anthropology, and relation as sources of information that would provide the intellectual resources by which African Americans and the nation as a whole could be advanced.<sup>21</sup>

As mentioned previously, Slowe advocated for women to pursue studies in social sciences and moving away from feminized occupations. In reference to community service as a means of practical employment of social science theories, Slowe wrote:

Regardless, however, of the purpose of colleges of a past day, if they are to serve the needs of the present time, they must examine and re-examine their curricular in light of changes in modern life. Since the opening of most of the Negro colleges between 1865 and 1875, momentous changes have taken place in American life affecting every phase of its existence, but no group has been as seriously affected as American women. Any discussion of the education of women must take into consideration the present status of women, their opportunities and their chances for achievement of the new order.<sup>22</sup>

Johnson and Slowe's points of view appeared similar. However, the critical issue was the implementation of those views. Slowe had settled in her position as dean of women having established herself as an expert in the field with plans to continue making campus-wide improvements for women on campus. Johnson entered his appointment with a clear plan to catapult HU into the status of an elite institution by attracting more prominent

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<sup>21</sup> McKinney, Mordecai, The Man and His Message, 62.

<sup>22</sup> Lucy Diggs Slowe, "Higher Education of Negro Women," The Dunbar News, Vol. V. no. 9, in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington D.C. (Box 90-6, Folder 132).

faculty members, expanding professional schools, raising funds through strategic efforts, demonstrating fiscal responsibility, and overhauling the internal organization of the university.

When Johnson assumed the position as president in 1926 he had a plan for change. Logan described the formidable stance Johnson had about his views when he wrote,

A controversial figure throughout his entire administration, he knew what he wanted for Howard, and he was stubbornly determined to have his own way. As a result, his years in office were years of great progress and of a great deal of dissension.<sup>23</sup>

Johnson's primary focus was money and it manifested it four specific goals at the beginning of his presidency. Logan explained,

There were four matters claiming the immediate attention of the Board: raising the balance of the Medical School Endowment Fund to meet the conditional grant of \$500,000 by the General Education Board; raising an Endowment and Building Fund for the School of Religion; the retirement of the University's deficit; obtaining increased income so as to permit raising the salaries of teachers and securing "much needed" additional teachers.<sup>24</sup>

These goals had competing priorities. It was difficult to raise money, to reduce the deficit, and to provide salary increases at the same time. In addition to these initial goals, Johnson wanted to reorganize the university. It was not until 1933, with an approval from the designated committee acting on behalf of the HU Board of Trustees that the plan was for internal organization was ratified.<sup>25</sup> Based on a number of evidenced-based studies by

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<sup>23</sup> Logan, Howard University First Hundred Years, 251.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 274-276. Abraham Flexner was the chairperson of the committee.

Teachers College of Columbia University, the Department of the Interior, and internal committees, the plan for re-organization called for streamlining some processes, i.e. discontinuing specific programs such as summer sessions as well as correspondence and evening schools. Another significant move was changing from a quarter system to a semester system. Other changes called for establishing one undergraduate school and one graduate school with the latter having five professional areas of study: medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, law and religion.<sup>26</sup> In short, 1933 was a pivotal year in terms of internal organizational changes and curricular reform at Howard University.

Upon Slowe's arrival to HU, Durkee made her a member of the Board of Deans. This periodic forum allowed to her interface with other administrators as an advocate for programs and services affiliated with the dean of women. In the years to come, her participation in this regular meeting of the deans would become problematic. By examining the climate during the time of Slowe's appointment, the intent is to gain a better understanding of some of the circumstances that may have contributed to strained exchanges with the next president whose leadership style was decidedly different and more autocratic in comparison to Durkee's.

Slowe was accustomed to making administrative decisions in keeping with what she understood to be novel educational reforms in the area of student personnel services. She had been a public speaker on the issues of educating women on coeducational campuses, advising women, administrative duties as a dean of women, and cooperative initiatives between the races with education as the common denominator. When she assumed her position as dean of women, Slowe traveled the country, interacted with

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

leading scholars, and articulated a vision of scholarship, student activities, leadership opportunities, and community. At least four years prior to Johnson's arrival, Slowe established her office as a necessary and vital campus component in both academic and student affairs. Essentially, Slowe established herself as a major contributor to the daily operations, curricular activities, alumni and alumnae organizations, and student events. As time passed under Johnson's administration, Slowe complained about the erosion of her duties through the loss of autonomy and exclusion from decision-making committees. Over the years, 1926 to 1937, Slowe and Johnson had a number of disagreements. The result of those disputes muted Slowe's voice, limited her visibility, and questioned her vitality as dean of women.

*A Delicate Matter: Advocacy and Justice for Female Students*

Early in Johnson's presidency, 1927, Slowe took a stance against a male faculty member, Clarence Harvey Mills.<sup>27</sup> A parent of a female student accused him of inappropriate comments during class. Slowe acted as an advocate by meeting with Professor Mills about the student's concern. Afterward, Mills wrote a letter to Slowe. In receipt of the letter, Slowe described it as "the vilest letters that any woman could possibly receive from a man."<sup>28</sup> Slowe sought the counsel of male administrative counterparts, Dean Dudley Woodard, Mills' direct supervisor, who recommended and supported the decision to take the matter to president Johnson. After reading the letter Johnson, Slowe, Woodard, and others agreed to avoid scandal by asking Mills to express

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<sup>27</sup> Patricia Bell-Scott, "To Keep My Self-Respect: Dean Lucy Diggs Slowe's 1927 Memorandum on the Sexual Harassment of Black Women," *NWSA Journal* 9 no. 2, (1997): 70-76.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

a formal apology to Slowe. This gesture would have avoided Mill's discreet dismissal from the faculty. However, the latter did not occur and Mills remained at HU for the next term. Upon Slowe's further questioning, Johnson agreed to another meeting with the registrar and other deans to discuss Mills' status. Based on Mill's report of failing health, all parties except Slowe suggested that Mills should be permitted to remain with HU. On the basis of principle, Slowe pressed the issue but met with resistance. Slowe wrote, "After this conference some of Prof. Mills' friends brought pressure to bear on me to change my opinion, but I could not do this and keep my self-respect of worthwhile people who might know about the case."<sup>29</sup> Slowe's stance had little to no impact on Mill's employment status at the university. He seemed to receive favor from Johnson who permitted a release from duties for one year with a partial salary while Mills pursued doctoral studies at the University of Chicago.

Slowe attributed this scandal to the deterioration of her relationship with Johnson. She wrote, "When the time came to raise salaries, he raised mine \$200 and raised other Deans with qualifications no better than mine in amounts ranging from \$850 to \$1150."<sup>30</sup> Slowe wrote further about the observation that she has been excused from meeting with the Board of Deans. Slowe's account described how her intent to act on principles drew what she believed was retaliation. In terms of consequences, the whole matter seemed to evaporate for Mills as Slowe began to sense marginalization. This was the beginning of the issue about Slowe's salary that would, at times, either persist as an independent complaint or as part of other issues.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.



### Threat to Autonomy

In another situation that involved Johnson's recommendation for hiring, Slowe advocated for the caliber of women who not only taught but also lived and worked in the dormitories as her staff members. As it was mentioned, Slowe was part of an elaborate and semi-formal process of promoting African-American women in advanced study for careers in education, college administration, social work, and other emerging field. Slowe held fast to the requirement that women should be professionally prepared in order to work with her. As a founding member of the NACW, Slowe contended that women could actively determine their careers and the nature of their contributions to society. Linda Perkins explains,

The first generation of Black women college graduates (1860-1890) nearly all became educators. By the 1920s, Black women began earning PhDs from leading universities in the nation and abroad. Scores had graduated Phi Beta Kappa from prestigious American institutions. As the number of these high achievers grew, they began to seek access to the new professional opportunities opening up to women.<sup>31</sup>

With these views, it is not surprising that Slowe rejected an applicant, Zelma Watson of Chicago, referred to her by president Johnson.<sup>32</sup> Slowe met with Ms. Watson a month prior to the president's request for a memorandum about the meeting. Johnson seemed to ask for Slowe's input, yet this situation concerning Ms. Watson became the impetus for another controversy. Slowe opted to write a letter directly to Ms. Watson rather than drafting a memorandum and returning it to the president. A handwritten notation

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<sup>31</sup> Linda Perkins, "The National Association of College Women: Vanguard of Black Women's Leadership and Education, 1923-1954," Journal of Negro Education 172, no. 3 (1990): 66.

<sup>32</sup> Letter to Dean Slowe from Katherine E. Beard, Secretary to the President dated November 28, 1931, Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. ((Box 90-2, Folder 27).

indicates Watson's letter was filed under "Applications – miscellaneous" in the dean of women's office. In his letter, Johnson specified an interest in recommending Ms. Watson to the Board of Trustees for employment under Slowe's auspices. Johnson wrote,

I beg to acknowledge your receipt of your letter dated December ninth with the enclosure which you sent to Miss Watson. I am sorry that you have adopted the procedure indicated in your letter. Miss Watson's letter was addressed to me and it was my purpose to answer that letter on the basis of a memorandum which I requested that you write to me.

The principle set forth in the second paragraph of your letter dated December ninth is a principle stated to contrary to the principle agreed upon in the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees and which you are now supposed to be following in your work, namely that the directors of the dormitories shall each have, in addition to their general duties as head of dormitories, a specific division of the specialized tasks attached to the office of the Dean of Women, such as vocational guidance, etc.

Assuming the third dormitory of the University will be open next year, it is possible for a place to be provided for Miss Watson or for someone else of similar qualifications. The recommendations which come to me regarding Miss Watson indicate that she is a highly desirable person. I am reflecting upon the possibility of recommending her to the Trustees and once more I request that you write me a memorandum indicating whether, in view of the known qualifications of Miss Watson, it is your judgment that she could hopefully serve Howard University in this field.<sup>33</sup>

In Slowe's reply she clarified what her staff members' duties entailed in addition to addressing Ms. Watson's lack of preparation. Slowe wrote,

I regret that my procedure in the matter of handling the application of Miss Zelma Watson for the position of Vocational Counselor to women was contrary to your wishes. My procedure was based upon your announced policy of having the various deans correspond with candidates and your very sound practices in all other instances involving appointments in my division of having me determine absolutely the personnel.

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<sup>33</sup> Letter from Mordecai W. Johnson to Dean Slowe, President dated December 12, 1931, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. , (Box 90-2, Folder 70).

One of the most satisfying things to happen during this most difficult time of organizing and molding a new staff, has been your very wise policy of not interfering with the selection of a staff. I remember last summer that in discussing the choice of a staff, you said that since I must be held responsible for the success of the women's division that I would have sole authority in choosing people to work with me.

I remember also that at the meeting of all the faculties of the University in early October of this year, you reiterated the policy of having the deans select their staff. I mention this background to indicate to you that I honestly believed that I was doing the proper thing in writing Miss Watson, sending you a copy of the letter and memorandum as you requested covering the case. I was most surprised to learn from your letter of December 12<sup>th</sup> that this procedure had displeased you.

In spite of the fact that each dormitory director has a five hour a week teaching program in the department of English, with the necessary preparation, marking of papers and conferences with students, each one of these women is now carrying a part of the work of the Office of the Dean of Women in accordance with the instructions which came to me through you from the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees. Miss Houston, Assistant to the Dean of Women, is responsible for the general and cultural program of the campus, and acts for the Dean of Women in her absence. She has carried this program every since her appointment four years ago.

Miss Tancil in addition to her dormitory and teaching duties is carrying the vocational conferences with students above the rank of freshmen. I always supervise freshmen myself, for I feel they are the most important group in our guidance program. I have met the entire class of freshmen girls every Monday this quarter at 12:00 o'clock in Library Hall.

In connection with providing a place for Miss Watson next year as head of one of the dormitories, I wish to say that Miss Watson is not qualified either by training or experience to manage a dormitory. She has had no courses in dormitory administration or personnel work in general, and could not get sufficient training in this field inside of a year. She has had no experience with college women whatsoever, and has had no teaching experience of any kind. Of course it is possible for a place to be provided for Miss Watson, but I am sure you would not sanction my providing a place for her when there are several women already prepared by training and experience to do this work. Howard University can command the services of some very fine people in this field and will not have to wait for someone to get training.

Moreover, I have already had correspondence with two women if the third dormitory had opened this fall they would be here now. It would embarrass me considerably to appoint an inexperienced person who is just beginning to train for the position, when there are available several women

of experience and training in this field. What excuse could I give for doing a thing of this sort?<sup>34</sup>

Slowe's extensive rebuttal addressed each point of concern Johnson referenced in his letter dated December 12<sup>th</sup>. The tone of both letters seemed to indicate a power struggle over the right to recommend prospective employees to the board. If Ms. Watson had been hired, Slowe might have contested the hiring against her recommendation with great intensity. Slowe reportedly communicated directly with Ms. Watson in the interest of efficiency because the president's office referred the inquiry. Perhaps Slowe was actually too efficient when she delineated the reasons why Ms. Watson was not a good candidate for hire. Slowe sustained the practice of pointing out what she considered as exceptions or illogical justifications for making decisions. Doing so, even if she were right, did not win her favor with Johnson.

Whether Slowe planned to apologize rather than to ask for permission, the consistency of Slowe's convictions prevailed. Slowe preferred to make recommendations about hiring staff that had formal training and experience in all aspects of women's services and programming. Slowe wanted to retain control and autonomy. At the risk of further disfavor or misconstrued intentions, Slowe maintained her understanding about the scope and depth of her responsibilities as the dean of women when it came to making recommendations for hiring, student housing, and expanding services for women with particular emphasis on vocational guidance.

Slowe continued to take her concerns directly to Johnson. In a letter dated February 28, 1931, Slowe addressed his leadership ability or lack thereof. In her letter to

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<sup>34</sup> Letter from Lucy D. Slowe, Dean of Women to Mordecai W. Johnson, President dated December 16, 1931, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Folder 90-3, Folder 71).

Johnson, Slowe made a transition to inquiring about the periodic meetings with the deans.

While she was making recommendations to Johnson about leadership in the interest of keeping high morale, she positioned her argument for reinstatement to the Board of Deans. She wrote,

Some time ago I placed in your hand a book entitled "Human Nature and Management" and asked you to read the chapters on "Morale" and "Leadership" respectively. I do not know whether you have had time to read these chapters but I do want to ask that you give careful consideration to the matters which I am setting forth in this statement, in the interest of good leadership and high morale.

High morale and sound leadership are based upon perfect understanding of the purposes and the plans of the leader. That you appreciate this fact was demonstrated when you became President of Howard University by the care you took to acquaint the major officers of your staff with your plans.

You called together your on Tuesday mornings your chief administrative officers and there in council we discussed the state of the University, and developed a feeling of solidarity and understanding which benefitted every one of us and made us more efficient in interpreting the University to both students and faculty.

For some reason, these conferences have not been held this year. Their discontinuance, whatever the cause, is most unfortunate, for in a university where so many divisive influences necessarily exist, it is essential that we reduce influences to the minimum if we are to function smoothly and efficiently.<sup>35</sup>

While we may not know Slowe's exact intentions, the content of her letter seemed to be a rational appeal to justify the usefulness of the weekly administrators meeting. Johnson replied:

I thank you for your letter vigorously criticizing certain statements made by me in a recent conversation with you. While I cannot agree that the statements, detached from their context in the conversation warrant any such deductions as were made in your letter, I am glad to assure you of my

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<sup>35</sup> Letter to Mordecai W. Johnson from Lucy D. Slowe dated February 28, 1931, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-3, Folder 71).

hearty accord with the guiding principles set forth in your letter and which appear in your judgment, to need vindication at this time.<sup>36</sup>

Johnson's words seemed to indicate agreement in principle yet Slowe's effort did not yield the outcome she desired. He did not reconsider and she did not relent. In subsequent written appeals to the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees and in letters to individual members of the board, Slowe revisited the issue about the unjustified loss of authority and status since Johnson no longer recognized her as a dean in the same way academic deans were acknowledged. The loss of her participation in meetings was coupled with the lack of a salary commensurate with her rank and years of service.

#### *Salary Revision Requests*

Logan wrote about the long-standing and commonly known disagreement over salary that expanded to other issues. "Dean Slowe and President Johnson were clearly not congenial. Her requests for an increase in salary were denied by the Executive Committee on October 7, 1926, and on October 24, 1927, as was her request for student help on March 9, 1928."<sup>37</sup> These issues formed the foundation for long-standing misunderstandings and differences between Slowe and Johnson.

On April 10, 1929, Slowe wrote a letter to Dr. Johnson in reference to her salary as a full time employee with a joint appointment as the dean of women and a faculty member in the English department. Slowe specified the nature of the discrepancy when she wrote, "On March 26<sup>th</sup> in conference with you I discovered that records form the

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<sup>36</sup> Letter to Dean Slowe from Mordecai W. Johnson dated March 27, 1931, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-3, Folder 71).

<sup>37</sup> Logan, Howard University First Hundred Years, 292.

Secretary Treasurer's Office had placed me in the rank of Associate Professor.”<sup>38</sup> Slowe requested a pay increase since she had the rank of full professor since June 5, 1923. In his response to Slowe, Johnson only acknowledged receipt of the information. Slowe did not receive the requested increase. Johnson wrote, “I beg to remind you of our recent conversation in which this entire matter was fully covered.”<sup>39</sup> The exact nature of the conversation was not apparent in his letter to Slowe. Undoubtedly, Slowe was dissatisfied with her salary and persisted in her efforts to be vindicated. On March 24, 1931, Slowe submitted a written address to the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees detailing her concerns about being marginalized and discounted.<sup>40</sup> Slowe specified that the nature of her letter intended to clarify the conception and status of her position as dean of women, essentially calling for the restoration of her status as it had been under president Durkee. Slowe enumerated multiple instances where her presence was excluded from board activities. She explained, “The Dean of Women has descended from a salary of \$400 above that to the Academic Deans in 1934 to the lowest paid Dean of the same academic rank, on the ‘Hill’.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Letter from Lucy D. Slowe to Dr. Mordecai W. Johnson dated April 10, 1929, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-3, Folder 69).

<sup>39</sup> Letter to Miss Slowe from Mordecai W. Johnson dated April 11, 1929, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-3, 71).

<sup>40</sup> Letter from Lucy D. Slowe to the Members of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees dated March 24, 1931, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-3, 71).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. The “hill” was an affectionate reference to the main campus. When first constructed, students took a long walk from the main road to the hill. In this instance, the reference to the hill is symbolic indicating that Slowe has been devalued as a result of losing her status in comparison to faculty members on the hill.

Slowe's repeated requests for a salary revision went unanswered and unmet. Slowe spoke out in public spaces about such inequities when talking about opportunities for female students. Slowe advocated, "If a college accepts women students and employs women on its faculty it should given them the same status as it gives male students and male teachers, respectively."<sup>42</sup> The matter of salary had been an issue for Slowe since Johnson began his presidency. Slowe also observed the inequities between herself and her male counterparts. There was not a clear justification for this reason in the archival records viewed for this study. Instead, secondary sources point to legislation in the District of Columbia, the Federal Economy Act of March 20, 1933, that provided the impetus for a reduction in salary.<sup>43</sup> Since a large portion of the university's budget depended on federal funding this could have been a determining factor. However, Slowe's salary issues predated this law and its impact on the salary budget for faculty. From 1926 until her death in 1937, Slowe did not receive any significant raise despite her petitions.

*Howard University Internal Reforms: Questioning Slowe's Value and Intentions*

The Great Depression had a huge impact on the nation and on Howard University. In spite of that, Johnson moved forward with his vision to upgrade the university in multiple spheres. With regularity, almost monthly, Johnson and Slowe had correspondence about her duties and responsibilities. On February 16, 1933, V.D. Johnston, the university treasurer, wrote to Johnson citing specific bylaws that put the dormitories under his control. This had to be a blow to Slowe who advocated for the

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<sup>42</sup> Walton "Negro Women Seek to Better College Living," The World, Slow Papers.

<sup>43</sup> Logan, Howard University First Hundred Years, 270.



building of the dormitories for ten years before they were completed. Specifically, Johnston wrote,

Section 5 of the By-laws makes it one of the duties of the Treasurer to manage the Dormitories, Dining Halls, and other such auxiliary and supplementary operations as the board may authorize from time to time. I write to advise that the routine of this office is fairly well established now. I will be glad therefore at your discretion, for the physical management and operation of the Dormitories and Dining Hall.<sup>44</sup>

For the next several months, Slowe fought to have the bylaws changed by making the scope of the treasurer's authority narrower. In March of 1933, Slowe submitted an exhaustive five-page, single-spaced, letter to the president delineating her efforts to guide the construction of the dormitories and activities in order to serve students. Slowe wrote,

It is reasonable to suppose that the By-Law refers to financial management, but it is most unreasonable to believe that the Trustees contemplated taking away from me the control of the staff which I have assembled and trained to direct the life of the women who live in the dormitories. I have entered into no financial agreements of any kind without the written consent of the Secretary-Treasurer of the University. All contracts for food have been signed by him, and charges of any kind against students have come through him from the Trustees. This is as it should be. However, when the new Treasurer suggests that he extend his relations in women's dormitories to the control of the people who have direct contact with the women students, he is going into a field which is not properly his.<sup>45</sup>

Slowe continued by providing some historical information indicating that when the previous treasurer had control over the dormitories there were a number of complaints and conduct issues with the students. In contrast after Slowe gained control, the students'

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<sup>44</sup> Letter to Dr. Mordecai W. Johnson from V.D. Johnston dated February 16, 1933, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-3, 73).

<sup>45</sup> Letter from Lucy Diggs Slowe to President Johnson dated March 11, 1933, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-3, 73). In the Slowe Papers, there are two drafts of this letter to Johnson. The one quoted here as "COPY" printed on each page.

behavior improved as did the overall management of the dormitories. Near the end of the letter Slowe raised some critical questions about daily operations and interaction with the women working in the dormitories. Slowe asked, 'I visit the dormitories every day to check up on staff. Is he [treasurer] going to perform these duties?'"<sup>46</sup> The feud for control over the dormitories continued for several additional months. In the end, the treasurer retained control of the dormitories. By October 1933, Slowe did not have any direct responsibilities for the dormitories or oversight of any personnel working in them. Despite the fact that Slowe acknowledged the university's financial pressures and constraints, she still thought the transfer of authority was inappropriate.<sup>47</sup> By now, Slowe's authority was whittled down to nearly nothing. She wrote that the women's program had been "handicapped" since Johnson administration.<sup>48</sup> The changes in the line of authority also had a serious impact on budgeting for the dean of women. Slowe wrote,

The Dean of Women has not been given one cent for her social and educational programming this year. There are over 500 women in the University and the total budget of the Dean of Women is \$205.62 which includes postage, office supplies, repairs to equipment, and printing.<sup>49</sup>

Slowe's position had become neutralized and a shadow of its former glory.

The next move from the Howard University Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees required Slowe to move onto campus. This was a move she vehemently protested. A host of memorandums and letters were written between Johnson and Slowe,

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Open letter dated October 9, 1933, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-3, 73).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

Slowe and Executive Committee Board of Trustee members, and Slowe and her supporters.

*A Political Campaign*

In May 1933, Slowe received letters from broad spectrum of persons with whom she worked or associated in a professional role in what could be assumed a consideration to pursue other employment or matter of leverage to redeem her status as a valued member of administration.<sup>50</sup> By June, Slowe sought the counsel of an attorney, George Crawford, specifically about the matter of having to comply with the plans for her to move on campus and she appealed to different committee chairs for assistance.<sup>51</sup> Crawford's reply sealed the requirement. He wrote, "It was upon motion voted that beginning with the academic year 1933-34, the Dean of women at Howard University shall reside on the University Campus; that the matter of providing suitable quarters for the Dean of women be referred to the Executive Committee of the Board with power."<sup>52</sup> Slowe shared a letter in her possession with Mr. Crawford who took particular interest in it. Upon Crawford's request for the letter, Slowe wrote, "I am sure you realize how very careful I must be with a letter of this sort, and what possibilities of personal danger there

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<sup>50</sup> Letter from Coralie Franklin Cook To Whom It May Concern dated May 12, 1933, (Box 90-2, Folder 40) ; Letter from Roscoe C. Bruce To Whom It May Concern dated May 15, 1933 (, (Box 90-2, Folder 33); Letter from Thyrsa W. Amos To Whom It May Concern dated May 19, 1933 (Box 90-2, Folder 24); and, Statement Regarding Miss Lucy D. Slowe from Mabel Carney dated May 31, 1933, (, (Box 90-2, Folder 37), Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

<sup>51</sup> Letter from Lucy Diggs Slowe to George W. Crawford dated June 30, 1933 in Slowe Papers Moorland-Spingarn Research Center Howard University Washington, D.C. (Box 90-2 Folder 40).

<sup>52</sup> Letter from to George W. Crawford to Lucy Diggs Slowe dated July 5, 1933, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center Howard University Washington, D.C. (Box 90-2 Folder 40). Underscore appears in original text.

will be to me if the writer ever gets the idea that I am pursuing him. One can never tell what a person of this sort will do.”<sup>53</sup> The letter was not found nor its contents disclosed. However, Slowe did not ever move into the dormitories no matter how quaint or cozily it was intended to be. In what appeared to be the last letter in the series between Slowe and Crawford, she sent a lengthy typed account of her concerns to him specifying:

It seems as soon as I get over one hurdle, he sets up another. It now looks as if I will have to assume an expense of \$500 or \$600 a year for a housekeeper, or live in the dormitory in order not to disobey the instructions of the Board. It looks as if the President has created this dilemma for me to force me into the dormitory where he thinks a dean of women should be. He does not want the Dean of Women at Howard to have any administrative attending; he has always wanted her to be a matron. This is why is took me off the Board of Deans in spite of the fact that the nature of my work—as shown in my annual report—relates to every school in the University,

I asked the President to put in writing what the Executive Committee proposed to do about the house, but he refused to do this. He said it was sufficient for me to have an understanding with him. I WANT NO MORE UNDERSTANDINGS WITH PRESIDENTS, FOR MY PRESENT TROUBLE IS DUE TO MY HAVING AN UNDERSTANDING WITH DR. DURKEE.

It is obvious to me and to many other people in the University that the President is seeking a way to humiliate or inconvenience me so that in desperation I will give up the Deanship. He showed this very plainly when he placed me next to the University dump. He suggested to me. On Tuesday the 15<sup>th</sup>, that I devote myself to teaching then I could stay home. It means nothing to him that I am one of the few trained and experienced Deans in the country.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Letter from to George W. Crawford from Lucy Diggs Slowe dated August 1, 1933, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center Howard University Washington, D.C. (Box 90-2 Folder 40). The letter was photocopied and the identified author or subject of the secretive matter was Clarence H. Mills, former teacher of Romance Languages at Howard University. Crawford identified Mills as the subject in his letter to Slowe dated July 24, 1933.

<sup>54</sup> Letter from Lucy Diggs Slowe to George W. Crawford dated August 17, 1933, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center Howard University Washington, D.C. (Box 90-2 Folder 40).

Gradually after Johnson assumed the presidency, Slowe's position lost status and power. Even though Slowe did not live on campus, issues about housing and staff continued to be problematic. By 1936, Slowe sought the counsel of Dr. Mary De Garmo Bryan, a professor at Teachers College, Columbia University about a housekeeper in the women's dormitory who failed to take any direction from her. "This difference of opinion has lead to constant friction and unpleasantness resulting in conditions detrimental to efficient administration. Do you feel, as an expert in the field, that the housekeeper should be under the directions of the head of dormitories and that she should be recommended o the business manager either by me or the head of the dormitories?"<sup>55</sup> Slowe was no longer recognized in the way she had grown accustomed. In the midst the escalating pressures and dwindling status, Slowe's health began to fail.

Health was one of the primary reasons Slowe did not move to designated housing on campus. "President Johnson reported to the Executive Committee on September 19, 1933, that because of Dean Slowe's illness he had not been able to confer with her concerning her move to College Street."<sup>56</sup> Slowe had concerns about the prospective building's suitability and repeatedly articulated a need for distance from students so that she might recuperate. Slowe continued to pursue a clandestine and intentional strategy to gain the influence of members of the Executive Committee. She used her resources and alliances from other organizations to reach beyond the HU community for help. For example, Slowe had a benevolent relationship Mary McLeod Bethune as they knew each

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<sup>55</sup> Letter to Dr. Mary De Garmo Bryan from Lucy D. Slowe dated April 29, 1936, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center Howard University Washington, D.C. (Box 90-2, Folder 33 ).

<sup>56</sup> Logan, Howard University First Hundred Years, 292.

other socially and through various community organizations and charities. Bethune offered mentoring advice and strategies to address the problems Slowe faced. Bethune urged Slowe to move cautiously. During November 1933, the two wrote letters to one another about efforts to influence board members. On November 18, 1993 Bethune wrote:

I realize as never before the great handicap under which you are handling such an important position as Dean of Women of our most outstanding college for women in all the world. We count your position particularly at this time the most strategic one, and I hope and pray that the handicaps may be removed and that our work may move forward unmolested. I realize that in order to have this come through some real work has to be done and may I assure you that whatever I may have in influence and faith will be used.

I am just from Cleveland where I had a chance for an unmolested, frank conference with Dr. Garvin. May I say to you candidly that he has observed more than he has expressed and assures me that time will take care of the entire situation? As to the salary condition, there is to be, as I understand, a standard set-up according to positions and all salaries adjusted in the January meeting. I gave Dr. Dillard full information and he is to have a frank conference with the President of the Board calling his attention to some things he may have had the wrong explanation of. Mr. Tobias and I are to have a conference this week. I shall use my own sane methods to get certain things to the attention of those who need to know them and I am sure of results.<sup>57</sup>

Slowe replied gratefully on November 20, 1933:

I cannot tell you how much I am heartened by your letter which came to me to-day. I have not been very well, physically, this fall and when I came to my office this morning, I felt that I could not remain all day; but when I found your encouraging letter, here I picked up fresh courage and a new determination to see things through.

I have very confidence in your judgment and feel that what you have done is of the utmost value to the women in the program here. I am satisfied to leave things in your hands to manage as you see fit, for I know

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<sup>57</sup>Letter to Dean Lucy D. Slowe from Mary McLeod Bethune dated November 18, 1933, Lucy Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center Howard University Washington, D.C. (Box 90-2 Folder 28).

that your experience in over-coming obstacles will stand you in good stead in this situation.<sup>58</sup>

Bethune's letter of reply indicated advocacy and an attempt to conceal Slowe from the onslaught of the perceived attack. "We went over the situation very carefully. He understands thoroughly and is standing right by you. He told me you are not threatened at all by the Board; that you are substantial and steadfast. There need be no fear. He was startled over the salary condition and he is chairman of the salary committee."<sup>59</sup> What was promised must have given Slowe hope to remain at Howard University. Still, no significant changes resulted in terms of upgrading Slowe's salary or status.

#### *A Matter of Trust*

Simultaneously, other university issues developed and Slowe was implicated as a source of information. The university experienced financial difficulties. The primary source revenue depended on federal appropriations and fund raising efforts. Two significant issues developed during this year that fundamentally concerned money and the overall reputation of Howard University. The first issue accused Johnson of maladministration. In a letter dated February 24, 1933, Johnson wrote to Slowe about a serious matter with great implications for the university. Johnson inquired,

My dear Dean Slowe:

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<sup>58</sup> Letter to Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune from Lucy D. Slowe dated November 20, 1933, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center Howard University Washington, D.C. (Box 90-2 Folder 28).

<sup>59</sup> Letter from Mary McLeod Bethune to Lucy Diggs Slowe dated November 23, 1933, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University Washington, D.C. (Box 90-2 Folder 28). Dr. Channing H. Tobias was a Trustee and Chairman of the Committee investigating a "misunderstanding on the part of the President, Treasurer Johnston, and Dean of Women Lucy D. Slowe, concerning their respective responsibilities for the use of University dormitories, dining rooms, and general assembly rooms. Flexner appointed Jones, Hawkins, and Dr. Brown to correlate the responsibilities of the parties in question." Logan, *Howard University First Hundred Years*, 292.

Mr. E.W. Martin, Director of the National Allied Democratic Advisory Council transmitted to President Hoover, under date of February seventeenth a letter in which he spoke of “a matter which has been brought before this Council from a Committee of the Faculty of Howard University, wherein charges of mismanagement, malpractice, misappropriation of funds and padding of payrolls have been made,” and Mr. Martin, over his signature has given your name among others as witnesses.

The office of the Secretary of the Interior is requesting certain action by the University on this matter not latter than today. In order that our reply to the Interior office may be as accurate as possible, will you please advise:

- (1) Whether you have united or do unite with the National Allied Democratic Advisory Council in making the above charges and
- (2) Whether you have authorized Mr. E.W. Marin, Director of that Council, to certify your name to the President of the United States as one of the witnesses in support of said charges. Please favor the University by letting me have your written reply today.<sup>60</sup>

Slowe responded the same day denying both membership with the National Allied Democratic Advisory Council and giving permission to Mr. Martin to use her name. Where Johnson and Slowe did not have the most congenial relationship, the subject of Johnson’s letter questioned Slowe’s loyalty to the university and her character.

Meanwhile the General Alumni Association expressed dissatisfaction with the administration in 1934. Logan enumerated the recommendations in the saga that continued to unfold.

1. That there be established a fixed salary schedule, graded according to rank, with minimum automatic increase to a maximum which would remove a great deal of “existing suspicion and fear of reprisal.”
2. That there be established a probationary period of two years for teachers; thereafter permanent tenure should be ensured so long as

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<sup>60</sup>Letter to Miss Slowe from Mordecai W. Johnson dated February 24, 1933, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-3, Folder 73).



there was “efficiency and conduct becoming the rank of the employee.””

3. That the Board of Trustees avoid as far as predictable the recurring reorganizations of the University.
4. That there was a widespread belief among educators that the effectiveness of Howard University had been greatly lessened by the abolition of the School of Education.
5. That there was a widespread demand for provision for the preparation of Social Workers. The Committee had been informed that “ample representation of this pressing need” had already been laid before the Board of Trustees. The Committee requested that the Board of Trustees become responsive to this public demand.
6. That much of the misinformation would be discouraged if the Board of Trustees made public from time to time its “major rulings.”
7. That since 1930 the number of Alumni voting for Alumni Trustees had fallen from 958 in 1931 to 349 in 1934. The falling off was due to the mode of selection. The Committee particularly urged that the candidate receiving the highest number of votes be the Alumni Trustee.<sup>61</sup>

The second issue concerned the source of public disclosure. Someone divulged information to newspapers making the headlines about the treatment Slowe reportedly received when the Board of Trustees voted to require her to live on campus. Slowe initiated contact with Abraham Flexner, the Chairman of the Executive Committee, who worked in tandem with the Department of the Interior and the Institute for Advanced Study. During April 1933, Slowe made contact with key persons about having to move on campus as part of her campaign. Slowe wrote to Flexner, “I have received from the Secretary of the Board of Trustees, Dr. Scott, the vote taken at the meeting of the Board on April 28, which requires the dean of women to live on campus.”<sup>62</sup> As their

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<sup>61</sup> Logan, Howard University First Hundred Years, 296-297. The quotation marks appear in the source as indicated here.

<sup>62</sup>Letter to Dr. Flexner from Lucy D. Slowe dated May 16, 1933, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-3, Folder 57).

correspondence continued, Flexner expressed concern about the lack of confidentiality concerning the subject matter discussed in late March and early April.

Slowe wrote to Flexner to summarize what happened and to exonerate herself. In response to a letter she received from Flexner, Slowe wrote,

I have your letter of April 27 and have carefully read its contents. I regret very much that you doubt the accuracy of my statements, but I wish to reaffirm their truth.

In order to keep the record straight, I wish to relate in detail just what happened after I received your original letter of April 7. In that letter the following statements occur:

“Dr. Moorland has brought to my attention the fact that you have disregarded certain requests or orders from the Executive Committee. I beg to ask you to be on campus next Tuesday so that you may be able to appear before the Board whenever summoned.”

When I read these statements, I knew that I was about to be fired for alleged insubordination. Quite naturally I was perturbed over so serious a charge, and over having to appear before the Board to defend myself. My professional reputation, built up over twenty years was at stake. I immediately sought the advice of several friends on the matter and was advised by one of them to get in touch with Dr. Moorland by long distance phone. I did this on Saturday afternoon, April 8.

Dr. Moorland told me about the matter of living on campus, but said he did not mean to bring charges against me before the board. He spoke as if the matter could be simply settled, after I told him of the agreement I had with Dr. Durkee before I accepted the position. He spoke in the kindest sort of way, and I was very much relieved. When the person who advised me to call Dr. Moorland asked me what he said, I repeated the conversation. I believe that in seeking counsel I was doing what was reasonable and ethical. Of course, my confidence should have been strictly kept by all concerned.

After conferring with my friends on the matter, I did nothing further until I had the conference with you and Dr. Moorland. After that conference, I held no conversation with anyone about it. When these same friends asked me how I came out, I simply, “All right.”

It is possible that someone whom I consulted mentioned the matter and that in that way it got into the newspaper, but it stands to reason that I would not want the matter published because it was certainly embarrassing to me from every point of view.

I am sure that you noticed in the newspaper account that not a single word which you and Dr. Moorland gave me, in confidence, with reference to the financial situation at Howard University appeared. The

whole account was based, evidently, on hearsay in connection with what happened before my interview with you on Monday.<sup>63</sup>

For the month of May 1933, Slowe and Flexner communicated by letter and had at least one telephone discussion about the general malcontent and lack of morale on campus as well as her specific concerns about living on campus.

These issues were critical but Slowe's resistance to living on campus remained a hotbed of contention for many years until her death. In ongoing efforts to press Slowe to move into campus housing, Johnson took the matter to the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees. Johnson seemed to garner the upper hand with the committee's approval for the move. Logan described the procedures leading up to the decision.

After an executive session during a Special Meeting of the Board on April 28, 1933, it was voted that beginning with 1933-1934, the Dean of women would be required to live on campus and that the provision for suitable quarters be referred to the Executive Committee with power. On June 16, 1933, the Executive Committee voted that the President be authorized to have put "into modest and satisfactory condition," including furnishing, "a suitable suite of rooms" in the eastern half of 328-330 College Street, it being understood that the entire premises be occupied by Dean Slowe would be satisfactorily renovated.<sup>64</sup>

Of all the points of contention, exclusion from committees, salary incommensurate with the table for her peers, and limited resources, the housing issue remained the most adamantly opposed by Slowe. Besides health concerns, Slowe expressed concern about the financial hardship she would incur because she owned her own home in the community.

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<sup>63</sup> Letter to Abraham Flexner from Lucy D. Slowe dated May 5, 1933, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-3, Folder 57).

<sup>64</sup> Logan, Howard University First Hundred Years, 292.

### The Ultimatum

President Johnson and Slowe would have other misunderstandings to include the message by letter he sent to her home while she convalesced. The communication concerned Slowe's appointment of a successor because of her illness. On the surface it appeared to be reasonable except for the fact that Slowe was gravely ill and Johnson reportedly indicated that he would appoint someone within twenty-four hours if Slowe did not respond. Johnson reportedly sent a letter to Slowe requesting a recommendation for a replacement while she lay on her deathbed.<sup>65</sup> Some thought ill of Johnson's request and the gesture received heavy criticism from alumni, faculty, and students. In fact, an entire issue of the Howard University Alumni Journal tried Johnson in print with "facts, figures, and exhibits."<sup>66</sup> The publication referred to Johnson's last communication with Slowe as the "deathbed ultimatum."<sup>67</sup> Allegations continued to pour it as one contributor wrote about the ultimatum,

The subsequent Actions of President Johnson are significant as determining his malice and guild. He sends for her [Slowe's] secretary, dictates what he was supposed to have said, had her sign the statement and then fires her. The determination of Ms. Wilson to get justice and the writing of a letter to him with copy to the chairman of the Board of

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<sup>65</sup> "Trials of a President," Time March 28, 1938. <http://www.time.com> Retrieved March 27, 2009. The other allegations included misuse of government funding for college buildings indicating that HU had to return some monies. Also, there was an accusation that Johnson fired a laboratory assistant, Robert Thompson, for having an affair with his wife. Also see Logan, *Howard University First Hundred Years*, 336-338. Logan details the allegations against Johnson include the Slowe family's request that he abstain from participating or appearing at the funeral services.

<sup>66</sup> "The Case Against President Mordecai W. Johnson," Howard University Alumni Journal, Mordecai W. Johnson Papers, Archives Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 178-11, Folder 21).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

Trustees, secured for her a temporary job in the President's office and a more permanent one in the Art Gallery.<sup>68</sup>

The journal articles consisted of disgruntled faculty members like Lorenzo Turner, who stated that he was coerced to leave his position in the College of Arts and Sciences. There were other accusations of misappropriated federal funding and a general character "analysis" concerning his reported defects.<sup>69</sup> Beyond the campus grounds, the matter gained national exposure when Time magazine published an article about president Johnson recounting the accusations made in the alumni journal.

Based on Slowe's writings, the unique opportunity that HU once afforded turned into a hostile environment. Slowe documented a sense of growing ostracism and diminutive stature as she attempted to cling to post. Throughout the years, she suffered from a number of colds, influenza, fatigue, and other health ailments. On October 21, 1937, Slowe convalesced at her home before dying of kidney disease. She was 54 years old. Like Johnson, Slowe's supporters and admirers commemorated her life with a special edition of NACW journal. Applauded for her intellect, dedication, professionalism, and years of service, the letters and comments elevated Slowe to martyrdom. Without question she was a pioneer, an innovator, and a visionary in her field. The qualities that made her strong also make her weak. The stubborn and tenacious qualities Slowe possessed did not allow her to think past the difficulties she had in her later years at Howard. She was paralyzed and unable to maneuver out of the situation so that she could entertain other possibilities. As evidenced by use of her professional and personal network, Slowe used her resources to help her remain at Howard as opposed to

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<sup>68</sup> "Editorial," Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

finding more congenial alternatives. Slowe had flaws that manifested in her need to be vindicated. It was the price of her convictions.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

#### “A Good Book”

If a jealous lip, or hurtful tongue  
Disturb thy mind or sear thy soul  
Turn my quiet page and know  
That soft within these leaves  
There lies much that make life  
Worth the while:  
Balm for sorrow,  
Freedom from care,  
Rest after toil;  
Friendship, companionship  
For each changing mood and  
Passing hour<sup>1</sup>

#### Historical and Social Contexts

It is interesting to note that Slowe’s attendance at HU from 1904 to 1908 represented, by way of participation, the trend that would have a direct trajectory to her occupation as Dean of Women. A review of her career accomplishments can be taken in context with the great historical events of her lifetime. Born in 1883, she was a member of the first generation of African-Americans born into freedom on American soil after the Emancipation Proclamation in 1862. Slowe’s completion of high school as an academic leader indicated exceptionality, as few women of color were high school graduates. She then pursued collegiate study at Howard University on a scholarship as one of few, male

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<sup>1</sup> “A Good Book,” Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-1, Folder 15).

or female, recipients. She taught high school and became a certified teacher at a time when the requirement was novel. As principal of the first junior high school for African-Americans, she undertook a great experiment in the shadow of WWI. Her career in public education gained momentum during the progressive era ushering in a period of educational reform that allowed Slowe to take advantage of a novel experiment.

Between the aftermath of the Great War and the Great Depression, she established the standard for operating the office, Dean of Women. In that capacity, Slowe wrote, published, traveled various places to speak, taught, and administered the office as Dean of Women. In her capacity of dean, Slowe saw the completion of one mission to have on campus housing for women. By 1931, Howard University had three dormitories for women. She advocated for expanding her division to include vocational guidance and residential assistance. She contended with opposition to her vision for women on campus. Slowe worked as an advocate for the women she mentored and the profession she represented in hopes of capitalizing on new opportunities. Her accomplishments were and still are formidable. The passage of time cannot reduce the magnitude of her contributions to African-American women's history in higher education. Her friendships with Roscoe C. Bruce, Thyrsa W. Amos, Mary McLeod Bethune, and network of other educators guided her decision-making and activities. Slowe was an informed professional working from a standard of excellence. Slowe's participation in social and professional activities set her apart from her colleagues. Her willingness to accept precedent-setting assignments as a risk-taker ensured her legacy. In her personal life, she maintained an appreciation for fine arts and cultured things. As part of the exploration of this aspect of



her life, some attention is given to her long-term cohabitation with Mary Burrill, a noted playwright and local English teacher.

Today, in large universities, the combination of admissions, registration, and financial aid equate to what is known Enrollment Management Services. It seems that Slowe was making efforts towards that end. If she had greater support for her vision then her legacy to African-American women, Howard University, and education at large could have had possibly a more visible and powerful influence on higher education. This is a reasonable conclusion given the clear evidence of support from reputable scholars and notable dean of women. Additionally, HU's reputation grew to be recognized as an elite institution for African-Americans.

Colleagues and developing personnel practitioners sought out Slowe's presence and perspective on best practices. Slowe's assertion about gender inequity on the HU campus seems like it would have been well-founded in that African-American women had few opportunities to be educated in single-sex environments except for Spelman, Bennett and at one time, Tillotson. Slowe understood this dynamic as she advocated for equity in opportunity and compensation. To a degree, Slowe understood that education experiences for African-American women could only parallel but not actually replicate the professional structures of white women in the academy because of race. Slowe's life and her achievements speak to the complexity of the intersections of race, class, gender, and region.

#### *Leadership and the isms of Race, Class, Gender, and Region*

African-American colleges and universities, Slowe's name was synonymous with effort, excellence, and uncanny ability to weigh the risks of something new versus the

best possible outcome. In her position at HU, she corresponded often with white colleagues who were also esteemed in their own right. She used this knowledge as a broker and liaison when she shared information with other African-American deans of women in an effort to standardize processes and the office simultaneously.<sup>2</sup> Slowe's concurrent presidential appointments and terms for the Deans of and Advisors to Women of Colored Schools and the National Council of Negro Women demonstrated the extent of her administrative abilities and skills. To this end, she initiated professional associations such as NACW and NAWDCS in addition to her membership in many community organizations. She maintained decision-making positions in both organizations while continuing to execute her administrative and teaching duties. For the professional associations, Slowe's aim was to create points of access for African-American women to be supported and exposed to developing trends in the profession. In reference to the NACW, Perkins explains the primary purposes for existence.

The organization's president, Lucy Slowe, make clear that the NACW was not a political or social organization. She stated that the purposes of the group were primarily to raise the standards of colleges where Black women were being educated, to improve conditions for Black women faculty, and to encourage the advanced scholarship among women graduates. Slowe stated that the organizations should attempt to further Black women's higher education on the international level by providing scholarship to foreign study.<sup>3</sup>

Even though Slowe had some white female supporters and collaborators, race remained an issue. Slowe often worked in isolation being the only or one of a few African-

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<sup>2</sup> Letter from Viola L. F. Chapman Dean to Lucy D. Slowe dated March 3, 1937, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-2, Folder 38); Chapman requested a copy of the student handbook to use as a prototype. Also see Letter from Eva Carper Conick, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland Spingarn Research Center (Box 90-2, Folder 39).

<sup>3</sup> Perkins, "The National Association of College Women," 67.

American women involved in national associations. On the matter of race, Sarah W. Sturtevant of Columbia University wrote,

Miss Slowe was one of those rare souls to whom had been given the privilege and pain of taking leadership along comparatively new paths of human progress. She put her intelligence and the power of her personality behind the ideal standards of education and achievement, and of personal living for the women of her race. As the dean of women in Howard University, and a recognized leader not only in that institution but in all Negro education, she struggled against great difficulties, some of which came from within her own racial group and some from without.<sup>4</sup>

From within the race, Slowe contended against discrimination and limitations formed because of gender. Some scholars group the issues that white women and African-American had in education as similar and distinguished only by the difference in priorities. For example, Barbara Solomon wrote,

Black women faced many of the same issues as white graduates, but with different emphasis. Both worried about financial rewards, vocational training, social graces, occupational choice, marriageability, and family-career dilemmas, but these concerns had different implications for black women. They constituted the majority of the educated of their race, a fact that in part accounts for the very high proportion of unmarried black alumnae.<sup>5</sup>

Slowe fit this model in terms of having different personal and professional priorities, not to mention that she never married. Gender would remain a focal point of inequity as Slowe argued for curricular changes and vocational guidance on the students' behalf while contending for salary, rights, privileges and autonomy for women faculty and administrators.

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<sup>4</sup> Sarah W. Sturtevant, "Memorial Tributes to Lucy Slowe," Journal of the National Association of College Women, 14 (1937): 50 Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-7, Folder 158).

<sup>5</sup> Barbara Miller Solomon, In the Company of Educated Women, A History of Women in Higher Education in America (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985): 179.

But unlike her white peers, Slowe created professional organizations due to the racism she endured in the existing national and regional organizations. Carolyn Bashaw discussed the issue of race and the National Association of Deans of Women recounting Slowe's and her protégés' dissent about annual meetings held in cities where African-American deans could not find hotel accommodations.<sup>6</sup> Because of race, Slowe could not step completely into the existing structures as a professional dean of women nationally. Instead, she spent her energies recreating structures in a segregated society that would serve to promote the needs of African-American women administrators while simultaneously using education as an equalizer to promote race collaboration. Still, race limited income-earning potential. "The salaries of black college women rarely approached those of the white college-bred."<sup>7</sup>

Gender and race were not the only social factors that had an impact on Slowe's career. Class was also a consideration to the extent that Slowe worked in ways to promote mobility while using class as a means of stratification within the race too. Slowe was a beneficiary of education's portability between classes. Her own life attested to this. Slowe remained involved and strongly urged her students to participate actively in community service as a means of contributing. These activities along with her own personal commitments to community activities demonstrated that she had compassion and concern for the less fortunate members of her race. It was characteristic of Slowe to identify students with pressing financial needs and limited social and civic exposure in order to encourage, to support, and to monitor their transformation through their college

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<sup>6</sup> Carolyn Bashaw, "Stalwart Women," 106-106.

<sup>7</sup> Solomon, In the Company of Educated Women, 181.

years and into professional endeavors. However, unlike the midwestern pioneering deans of women, Slowe and her subsequent followers did not come from affluent families.

Rather, they resembled southern white women who worked at state schools who represented an alternative reality. Carolyn Bashaw explains the difference.

Most studies of academic women, including those few deans of women, highlight the “conventional plot” of early professional women, focusing on privileged circumstances, elite education, employment at prestigious institutions and northeastern connections. Two of the best known women to hold the office of dean of women, Marion Talbot and Lucy Sprague Mitchell, dominate the literature. Raised in comfortable circumstances, these women attended either prominent public research institutions or elite women’s colleges. Although they both held the deanship at institutions outside the Northeast, Talbot at the University of Chicago and Mitchell at the University of California at Berkeley, each maintained close connections with the northeastern women’s network.<sup>8</sup>

Slowe’s experience was different because she did not have an affluent heritage. A member of the emergent middle class, Slowe was still distinguished from many members of her race because she had graduate education, worked in a post-secondary setting, published articles, and traveled to speak on a topic, educating African-American women, as a recognized expert.

Slowe used her credentials and training to establish a line of demarcation on the basis of expertise. This had some class distinctions that intersected with race. For example, the eligibility standards for the NACW were rigorous in response to race restrictions that prevented African-American women from joining the AAUW. Linda Perkins describes the discriminating admission criteria. She wrote,

The National Association of College Women had stringent membership requirements. The organization only accepted graduates of institutions that were recognized by the American Council on Education (ACE) and the American Association of University Women (AAUW). Consequently,

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<sup>8</sup> Carolyn Bashaw, “Stalwart Women,” 19-20.

only graduates of white institution or Howard or Fisk were eligible for membership. The question of membership qualification became one of continual controversy as the group expanded nationally. The NACW's rigid membership requirements were an attempt to maintain an equivalence with the AAUW, which also had high standards for membership. The AAUW, for example, required its members to hold liberal arts degrees. That qualification alone excluded most Black women college graduates, the great majority whom had been in teacher training programs.<sup>9</sup>

Slowe's situation was unique because she advocated for exclusivity in some groups like the NADW while attempting to promote exposure to African-American members in other groups like the annual conferences sponsored for Deans and Advisors of Women in Colored Schools.

Technically, Slowe was in an urban, fast-paced city that was influenced by industrialization, Washington, D.C. Generally speaking, industries in northern cities had afforded better employment and educational opportunities for African-Americans especially in comparison to certain areas of the southeastern United States during the period from 1880-1910. Having had access to graduate education at a well-respected institution, Teachers College at Columbia University, Slowe possessed educational and social advantages that permitted her to find developing niches in both public education and higher education administration. Slowe attempted to use education as a bridge to close the gap that race presented as a barrier to her vision of educating African-American women.

Regionalism was a real consideration within the country. Charles Eliot referred to it when he made public comments about educating African-Americans. For Eliot, one

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<sup>9</sup> Perkins, "The National Association of Colored Women," 68.

significant factor was the number of African-Americans which was disproportionately represented in regions i.e. southern states versus northern states. Eliot wrote,

(1) I do not approve of the exclusion of colored people from libraries or parks. In cities where the proportion of colored people is large it might be more convenient to provide in libraries separate tables or desks for colored people. (2) I have no theoretical objection to the separate care laws of the south, provided that equally good accommodations are provided for blacks and whites; but during my recent journey to the South I saw instances in which equally good accommodations were not provided, particularly as regards the higher priced accommodations.<sup>10</sup>

Slowe was not exempt from the impact of regionalism on her career. Her choice to follow the example set forth by the faculty members at Teachers College predetermined a course for her professional career. For example, Bashaw discusses some of the regional differences between southern white women and the northeastern women. Bashaw writes,

Acutely attuned to these political differences, [Adele H.] Stamp [dean of women at the University of Maryland] characterized the combatants in succinct terms: “the Sturtevant-Amos group” versus “our gang.” Thyrsa W. Amos, president of the NADW, led an unsuccessful campaign to close the Headquarters Office, so essential to deans of women on the geographical margins. Despite this setback, however, she and Sturtevant continued to be potent forces within the NADW. From New York and Pennsylvania, respectively, Sturtevant and Amos also exerted great influence in the two states that supplied the largest contingents of NADW members.

Unlike the Sturtevant-Amos faction, Stamp and the majority of her allies or “my crowd,” as she termed them, worked at land grant institutions, not as academics but as practitioners, confronting daily a host of problems with no textbook solutions. These deans, she believed, represented the heart of the profession. Among her partisans, the dean counted colleagues not only from the traditional areas of the NADW leadership, the Midwest and the Northeast. This faction, however, like the profession itself, also included deans from secondary schools, private institutions, and women’s colleges. Rather than graduate school affiliation, however, the common denominator for this group was their status as practitioners who struggled on the front lines, often at isolated nonelite

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<sup>10</sup>See a letter dated April 30, 1909 in Henry James, Charles W. Eliot President of Harvard University, 1869-1909, Vol. II, 166-167.

institutions, to claim for women students their right to a comprehensive collegiate experience.<sup>11</sup>

Slowe cast her lot with Amos and Sturtevant thereby defining herself by the standards Teachers College superimposed on the profession. Those standards were academically-based and considered elite by some.

When region intersected with race, Slowe found herself in a different quandary. Membership in regional associations was problematic because of her race, and to some degree, the lot she chose by way of affiliation with Teachers College. At least one of the African-American women affiliated with Slowe questioned the Columbia University influence over dean of women as a profession. In a letter to Slowe dated September 27, 1930, Juliette A. Derricotte, dean of women for Fisk University, expressed reservations about the plans Columbia University reportedly considered making to prepare African-American women in the field of student personnel services. Fisk University is a southern university located in Nashville, Tennessee. Like some of the other southern women, region had some bearing for Derricotte who was also a product of Columbia University. Derricotte wrote,

This letter comes, however, in regard to a letter which I have had from Miss Mabel Carney of Teachers College and following the conversation which I had with her in New York in September. Miss Carney tells me that Miss Sturtevant is interested in having two centers of training in colored colleges. She tells me that she has proposed one such center at Howard University and is proposing that we have a center in Nashville. I believe that the proposition is to be financed by the General Education Board in the next year or two.

Of course you know the questions which come up in my mind immediately. The first is how far do we, as a group of Negroes in education, follow the General Education Board's program in financing Negro education which really means controlling Negro education? What shall be the effect of training centers for Negro deans or advisors of girls,

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<sup>11</sup> Bashaw, "Stalwart Women," 102.



on Negro women interested in personnel matriculating in the larger Universities offering courses in personnel work? I realize that no Negro group is able to finance certain educational projects on the same scale as the General Education Board.

The substance of my questioning is that I want to be sure that our eyes are wide open as we accept any of this money. I realize also after having seen all of the women and all of the conditions under which people work in these colored schools that it would be detrimental to the group to have certain women with such meagre background and training matriculate in some of these larger Universities. Can we control the types of persons who come to such training centers? I would be very glad if you would let me know just how you feel on this proposition. I am going to be in New York all next summer and I have not yet decided whether I shall go on working in personnel administration directly or whether I shall go on in psychology. I want to see far enough ahead the need in Negro education in the South to see where I will fit in.<sup>12</sup>

Because Fisk was considered by many people, white and African-American, to be an elite institution at the time, Derricotte's comments about the risk of surrendering autonomy as a result of philanthropic efforts were timely and scrutinizing. For the sake of this research, Derricotte called into question the influence that Teachers College had. Based on this letter, the centers would have been major undertakings. The notion that this discussion could take place at Teachers College about African-American schools without direct input from the women who would be most directly affected poses some concern. Both Slowe and Derricotte attended graduate school at Teachers College. If not concern, the recognition that the discussions in the absence of those affected were at least paternalistic. Perhaps one criticism that some white deans had with Amos, Sturtevant, and the like were accurate. With the exception of Amos who was a dean of women at the

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<sup>12</sup> Letter to Miss Lucy Slowe from Juliette A. Derricotte dated September 27, 1930 in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-2, Folder 47). The word meagre is spelled as it appears in the original document. The questions Derricotte posed are beyond the scope of this work. This writer did not discover any evidence of concrete efforts to start the centers as Derricotte described them.

University of Pittsburgh, Sturtevant never worked in the field. She studied and developed theories leaving the actual practice to others.<sup>13</sup> With the responsibility of training students who had a number of obstacles, challenges, and shortcoming to surmount, Derricotte insinuated that having prerequisites for admission to the centers would be appropriate. On one hand, this seems consistent with the reality that there was great variation within the race in terms of academic preparation, family background, and access to resources. On the other hand, it may have been indicative of the elitist notions about the profession, dean of women, which Teachers College promoted.

About Slowe, Roscoe Bruce wrote: “She is a woman of intellect. Moreover, she uses her own mind. She is rich in initiative. She is steadfast in her basic convictions. She cannot be constrained by fear or by favor to say one word that she does not believe justified. She is no sycophant.”<sup>14</sup> However, the very trait that made her unique and distinctly refreshing also created friction and tension as she took risks to pursue what others could not or did not want to see. She was confrontational about her convictions and relentless in the pursuit of what she considered just, even at her own risk. Her convictions and actions taken because of them may have stirred up issues that people did not want to examine. Based on her writings, Slowe knew how to push and pull when it came to her students yet she may not have exercised the same delicate balance with the president and board members at Howard University.

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<sup>13</sup>Bashaw, “Stalwart Women,” 101. Bashaw writes, “Furthermore, two of its faculty, Ruth Strang and Sarah Sturtevant, were recognized authorities in the field of student personnel work, directing graduate research and publishing enormous studies of the profession. Although neither had practical experience as dean of women, both became influential forces within the NADW.”

<sup>14</sup> Letter of recommendation for Lucy Slowe from Roscoe C. Bruce dated May 15, 1933, Slowe Papers.

To say she was stubborn and lacked patience may be accurate only when countered by the fact that she was also a visionary with a burning impetus to serve students and her race through education. Additionally, Slowe remained loyal to the institution, to her alma mater, and to her students. Slowe wrote,

The Dean of Women, I believe, cannot be constantly changing her particular location in an effort to better herself socially or financially. I do not mean, however, that she can never move to another situation. I am saying that she must be motivated by the consideration of the possibility of her doing a better job, or her being of more use in some other place.<sup>15</sup>

Research efforts for this study did not definitively identify whether or not Slowe had alternative career choices. It is reasonable to think that some options could have materialized because of her networking across the country to speak publicly, representing her professional associations, and learning best practices in her field. She was on the board of a number of local charities and maintained her connections to the public school system. In her letter to Slowe, Derricotte gave indications that she was at least weighing other options and anticipating trends. Even so, there may have been no other option for Slowe, if it were not for the sake that as an African-American administrator and faculty member, she was at the premier institution, Howard University, for her race. On the one hand, she was a trained expert who functioned in a hybrid capacity as an administrator and a faculty member. This lack of exclusivity to one area made her unique in some regards but at risk too because it was difficult to give full allegiance to either administration or teaching. One could argue that she was undoubtedly an administrator; however, she pressed faculty membership because of two interrelated reasons, income and status. She described her position as having “the rank of a professor and the

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<sup>15</sup> Slowe, “The Business of Being a Dean of Women,” Slowe Papers.

administrative duties connected.”<sup>16</sup> To Slowe’s way of thinking, faculty status elevated the dean of women’s role and kept the position from being devalued and resigned to a second-tier of administration i.e. “social” dean versus academic dean. When petitioning for a salary increase, Slowe wrote, “I am respectfully requesting the Executive Committee to reaffirm my status as Dean in Howard University with the similar right and privileges enjoyed by the academic deans.”<sup>17</sup> Status, respect, parity, and autonomy of practice were important aspects of optimal working conditions for Slowe. This point still leaves an unanswered question as to why Slowe did not change to pursue a position as a full-time professor. As mentioned in a previous chapter, she had the rank of full professor but did not act fully in that capacity.

Evidence lacks as to how Slowe used or did not use the letters of recommendation and support generated from the May 1933 campaign. Perhaps the economy did not lend itself to securing other employment or Slowe’s health continued to be frail thereby limiting options. In either case, Slowe did not pursue a position to return to the public school system. Her reputation preceded her so it seems that securing a position would have been a reasonable option. After fifteen years in higher education, Slowe may have liked the autonomy of daily operations that the office of the dean of women afforded. There were problems; however, in comparison to the relative sense of freedom Slowe’s

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<sup>16</sup> Slowe, “Memorandum on the Department of the Dean of Women, Howard University,” dated October 8, 1920, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-3, Folder 73).

<sup>17</sup> Letter to the Members of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of Howard University from Lucy D. Slowe, Dean of Women, dated March 24, 1931 in Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-3, Folder 73).

option to stay may have justified. Whatever the case, a consideration of how Slowe may have performed and what she might have achieved is warranted.

On race and her career, Slowe wrote, “Shall all of my occupational experiences have been among colored people, I cannot say that race has added or hindered me. I believe that if I had been white that I might have occupied a larger position from a national standpoint, but this is only surmise.”<sup>18</sup> Slowe did not speak about gender and her career. Perhaps this was because she was in a gendered field or that her co-educational experiences minimized a focus on gender because she competed with best, male or female. Without hesitation she would have been a contender for many of the viable academic positions in the country if she had been white, male, or both. Nevertheless, her accomplishments remain a feat of sheer determination, intellect, and personal conviction on her part and the fate of conditions that aligned to her favor.

#### The Credible Veil and the Veneer of Sexuality

Lucy Diggs Slowe never married nor did she have any children. Instead, she pursued her career aspirations relentlessly while cohabitating with a long-time friend, Mary “Mamie” Burrill. All the while she sustained a credible veil based on her professional standards, expertise, and unique experiences as a pioneer in both public and higher education. As if all of these facets of her public life were not enough, she participated and support several community organizations. Suspected by many to be homosexual, the nature of their relationship was not conclusively determined using the historical methods employed in this study. They lived together and shared a home for fifteen years at 1256 Kearney Street NE. Burrill helped to care for Slowe during times of

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<sup>18</sup>Slowe, “Memorandum to Miss Beatrice Clark,” Slowe Papers.

ill health and defended Slowe after her death. In order to get a better understanding of their relationship, it is necessary to examine Burrill's life and activities. The aim is twofold: to better understand possible motives for Slowe's definitive stance to remain in Washington, D.C. thereby dismissing the possibility of relocating for professional reasons; and, to better understand a likely source of hostility that president Johnson had toward Slowe.<sup>19</sup>

Mary Burrill was in 1884 and raised in Washington, D.C. Burrill was one of the first African-American graduates from Emerson College in Boston.<sup>20</sup> Burrill actually earned two degrees from Emerson. The first was completed in 1904. Over 25 years passed before Burrill returned to Emerson to complete her second degree in Literary Interpretation in 1930.<sup>21</sup> Between receiving her two degrees, Burrill worked at both Armstrong and Dunbar High Schools in Washington, D.C. She taught English and related

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<sup>19</sup>President Johnson reportedly had similar antagonism toward Alain Locke who was the first African-American Rhodes Scholar. Locke held positions at Howard University as an assistant professor of English and professor of philosophy. See Logan, *Howard University*, 294 and 304. Locke was one of a number of professors who lost his position only to regain after representation from the alumni association petitioned for his reinstatement along with other few other faculty members. Locke was also a key player in the Harlem Renaissance. In reference to Locke's sexuality see Leonard Harris and Charles Molesworth, *Alain L. Locke: The Biography of a Philosopher* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008). For information about homosexuality and the Harlem Renaissance, see the following: Christa Schwarz, *Gay Voices of the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2003) and Thomas H. Wirth (ed.) *Gay Rebel of the Harlem Renaissance: Selections from the Work of Richard Bruce Nugent* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2002).

<sup>20</sup>Pat Ferrucci, "Influential Playwright First Known Black Emerson Graduate," <http://media.www.jsons.org/media/storage/paper139/news/2003/02/12/EmersonNews/Influential.Playwright.First.Known.Black.Emerson.Graduate-254587.shtml>. Internet: Accessed 31 January 2010. Ferrucci explains that some other African-American students attended Emerson during the same period as Burrill. However, since the school did not classify students by race, Burrill may be the first known African-American but possibly not the very first to graduate from Emerson.

<sup>21</sup> Frank Cha, "Burrill, Mary P. (Mamie)," *African-American National Biography Vol. II* eds. Henry Louis Gates and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): 75.

drama subjects for forty years. Her sister, Clara Burrill, married Roscoe C. Bruce, the one-time Assistant Superintendent of Schools in Washington, D.C. Bruce was the one who hired Slowe as the principal of the Shaw Junior High School. Slowe, Burrill, and Bruce traveled in the same professional circles. Burrill was known for talents as well-respected educator, local performer, and playwright. She published her first play, *Aftermath*, in 1919 and is credited with mentoring up and coming African-Americans in theatre. Of note, “Willis Richardson, for example, became the first black dramatist on Broadway with his 1923 play *The Chip Woman’s Fortune*.”<sup>22</sup> Burrill’s second play, a one-act production, *They That Sit in Darkness*, appeared in the September, 1919 periodical The Birth Control Review.<sup>23</sup>

Similarly in terms of avocations, Slowe and Burrill shared many interests and events which included hosting special guests in the home they shared. Some of the interests they had included theatrical presentations and social gatherings in Washington, D.C. Of the former, “Burrill narrated the Christmas production of *The Other Wise Men* with the Howard University Choir for a period of fifteen years.”<sup>24</sup> This is equivalent to

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 74. Italics appear in the original document.

<sup>23</sup> Mary Burrill, “They That Sit in Darkness,” [http://www.one-act-plays.com/dramas/they\\_that\\_sit\\_in\\_darkness.html](http://www.one-act-plays.com/dramas/they_that_sit_in_darkness.html). Internet: Accessed 31 January 2010. This play examines the plight of a poor African-American woman in the South who is the mother of a great number of children and in ill health. At issue is the lack of knowledge about birth control as a viable means of decision-making to curtail the impact of poverty on her life. Miss Elizabeth Shaw is the a white visiting nurse who stated the following:

MISS SHAW: [*fervently*] I wish to God it were lawful for me to do so! My heart goes out to you poor people that sit in darkness, having, year after year, children that you are physically too weak to bring into the world--children that you are unable not only to educate but even to clothe and feed. Malinda, when I took my oath as nurse, I swore to abide by the laws of the State, and the law forbids me telling you what you have a right to know!

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. Italics appear in the original document.

the duration of Slowe's career at HU in its entirety. Of the latter, Burrill was apart of a socially elite group of intellectuals hosted by Georgia Douglas Johnson.<sup>25</sup> Johnson had connections with affluent African-American families such as the Robert and Mary Church Terrell and Bond family.<sup>26</sup> Adele Alexander provides an account of prominent and talented African-Americans meeting regularly in an informal social network. She writes,

A number of people in Washington's creative vanguard (such as Johnson, Grimke, Burrill, and Locke) stayed in the nation's capital tied to work, homes, and friends. Others (Ellington, Hughes, Toomer, Zora Neale Hurston, and James Reese Europe, among them) left, seeking greener pastures and broader opportunities for artistic expression in more open-minded New York City.<sup>27</sup>

Alexander identified Slowe as Burrill's "companion" indicating that they both belonged to this exclusive "clique" of intellectuals.<sup>28</sup> With Slowe and Burrill's obvious living arrangement came the assumption that they had a "romantic friendship." As the term is used to describe Boston marriages, Lillian Faderman provides a working description of such a relationship when referencing a famous white couple, Sarah Orne Jewett and Annie Fields. She writes,

These women were usually feminists and almost always career women, or otherwise financially independent of men, and they tended to live in couples, in long term, devoted relationships. The female pair was

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<sup>25</sup>Gloria T. Hull, Color, Sex, & Poetry: Three Women Writers of the Harlem Renaissance (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1987). This book chronicles the lives of Alice Dunbar-Nelson, Angelina Weld Grimke, and Georgia Douglas Johnson. See chapter four to learn more about Johnson's Saturday night salon gatherings (155-211).

<sup>26</sup> See Adele Logan Alexander, Homelands and Waterways: The American Journey of the Bond Family, 1846-1926 (New York: Pantheon, 1999). The detailed historical account of a family over three generations provides a depiction of the African-American renaissance that was characterized by activity in Harlem, New York.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 458.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 488.



inseparable: they not only shared a home together, but they also had mutual friends, they vacationed together, they were totally involved in one another's life and devoted to each other.<sup>29</sup>

As Faderman describes it, Slowe and Burrill had an overwhelming resemblance to the living, emotional, social, and professional circumstances that she describes. A question remains as to whether or not they were physically intimate. Research efforts for this study did not focus on their sexual activities. However, there is some question about Burrill's early teenage experiences with Angelina Weld Grimke. Although the evidence is not conclusive, it is highly persuasive in terms of begging the question about Burrill's sexual preference.<sup>30</sup>

Leading up to Slowe's death, a well-wisher expressed sympathies and referenced Burrill's caretaking activities. In the letter Nancy Atwood wrote, "You are being well cared for in the hands of a good doctor, 'Miss Epps' who can do so much to make you feel comfortable, Miss Burrill, and M.E. to fill in all the gaps."<sup>31</sup> While it is unclear who the other persons are, it is clear that Burrill remained a central figure in nursing and nurturing Slowe during her last days. Burrill pursued efforts to exonerate Slowe's reputation by writing to Abraham Flexner as much as seven months after Slowe's death. Additionally, Burrill worked to preserve Slowe's place in history as she had handwritten

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<sup>29</sup>Lillian Faderman, "Nineteenth-Century Boston Marriages as a Possible Lesson for Today," in Boston Marriages: Romantic but Asexual Relationships Among Contemporary Lesbians Boston Marriages ed. Ester D. Rothblum and Kathleen A. Brehony (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1993): 29.

<sup>30</sup>Brett Beemyn, "The New Negro Renaissance, A Bisexual Renaissance: The Lives and Works of Angelina Weld Grimke and Richard Bruce Nugent," in Allida Mae Black, Modern American Queer History (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001): 36-46.

<sup>31</sup>Letter Miss Slowe from Nancy Atwood dated September 26, 1937, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spangarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Box 90-2, Folder 25).

notes on memorabilia in Slowe Papers. The eulogy itself speaks to Burrill's affection, loyalty, and dedication to Slowe. Burrill wrote,

Because I believe that Time, the unerring appraiser of all human values, will give Lucy D. Slowe a secure place among those great spirits who have wrought mightily for our race; and because the Eulogy by Dwight O.W. Holmes interprets her character and her work with such truth and beauty, I have given it something of permanency in these printed pages.

May Lucy D. Slowe's spirit of helpfulness and courage and devotion to duty abide with us always.<sup>32</sup>

The couple lived together over the course of two decades, the 1920s and 1930s. During that period much changed in the landscape of American culture, economics, politics, and educational climate. When considering the ramifications about Slowe's possible sexuality and homosocial events, Slowe's tenacity about maintaining her status as dean of women coupled with living independently on her terms become more apparent.<sup>33</sup> Even if it were not for matters of passion and privacy, Slowe established herself as an advocate for developing young African-American women as valued members of the academy and future, self-sufficient contributors to society.

### Reflection

As I reflect on the life of my maternal grandmother, Roxie Inell Weaver Miller, who was born in 1913, she would have been an ideal recipient of Slowe's mentorship. My grandmother was articulate, witty, and self-determined. I can recall her saying that

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<sup>32</sup>Mary Burrill, "Forward, Eulogy at the Obsequies of Lucy D. Slowe," Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers.

<sup>33</sup> Anderson, "Brickbats and Roses," 285. Anderson writes,

As was true of many activist white women in this period, she relied extensively on a homosocial network of women activists and educators for emotional and political support. She worked primarily with and on behalf of women; her home served as a center for women students, activists, and friends as well as a refuge from the stresses of her job."

she would argue with a sign post just to make her point! Her zest for learning was mitigated by extenuating social and familial factors. With her college career curtailed, Miss Roxie remained keenly interested in education for its intellectual enticements and the opportunity for social mobility. Slowe's life and career experience speak directly to the lives of women who had similar aspirations but circumstances and the timing of unexpected changes in the course of life limited access to higher education, academic interests, and careers related to the academy. Unlike Slowe, my grandmother did marry and have a child and she remained a matriarchal figure to extended family members. This meant that she had many of the things Slowe declined to pursue and for the same reason she did not have many of the things Slowe mastered.

A study of Slowe's life provides an example of an alternate discussion about a voice that had been muted because of being different, but no less important or fascinating and rich but no less complicated. This study seeks to add to the growing and existing body of knowledge about the history of higher education, one voice at a time, by sharing the story of a Virginia-born girl who grew up to make major contributions to post-secondary leadership.

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## APPENDIX A

*Howard University*



*Washington, DC 20059*

April 16, 2010

Ms. Lisa Rasheed  
1754 Cedar Lake Court  
Conley, GA 30288

Dear Ms. Rasheed:

Congratulations upon the completion of your dissertation entitled **Lucy Diggs Slowe, Howard University Dean of Women, 1922-1937: Educator, Administrator, and Activist**. I hereby give you formal permission to quote and cite from the Papers of Lucy Diggs Slowe, as submitted to us through partial manuscript.

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Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joellen El Bashir".

Joellen ElBashir  
Curator

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