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THE LAST DAME OF THE DYNASTY:
THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF DR. JUNE DOBBS BUTTS

by

Je'lon R. Alexander

Under the Direction of Maurice Hobson, PhD

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2021

ABSTRACT

This thesis detailing the life and legacy of Dr. June Dobbs Butts is to shed light on not only her life, but her radical approach to highlighting the different dynamics of race, sex, and gender that made her versatile in her research field. Dr. June Dobbs Butts was a pioneer in the field of Black female and human sexuality. She encouraged Black people to be more open in sex and sexuality with each other. This research proposes the following questions: How did Dobbs Butts' early life experiences, growing up in one of Atlanta's influential Black families, chart her path to be different from the rest of her family? What does her life and scholarship mean for today's society in terms of Black feminism, gender, and sexuality? These questions are a way to understand what made Dr. June Dobbs Butts, the last dame of the dynasty.

INDEX WORDS: Black Women, Black Feminism, Black Atlanta, Human Sexuality, Black Female Sexuality, Black Family, Black couples

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2021

THE LAST DAME OF THE DYNASTY:
THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF DR. JUNE DOBBS BUTTS

by

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May 2021

DEDICATION

I dedicate this master thesis to those who have transitioned throughout my journey writing it. My dog Bailey, who was always playful and a constant reminder of joy and happiness in my family. My cousin Charmaine Savage, who was the spark of fun and energy on my dad's side of the family. Additionally, she also left her mark on the city of East St. Louis and was a constant reminder to uplift the Black community as well as to change the narrative of it. My cousin Ricardo Jackson, one of my cousins I grew up with who was a source of fun whenever I spent the night over my GG's house. During my sophomore year at Morehouse College, when I came home to visit during winter break, he told me that I was someone for which he too looked towards and respected. To Dr. June Dobbs Butts, for whom this master's thesis is written, which changed my perspective about sex and sexuality, as well as my whole outlook on things as a Black man. She is a constant reminder of what it means to be a rebel, to be outspoken, to be an independent thinker, and leaving an impact on society. In an email message on February 15, 2019, she encouraged me to read her first article published in *Ebony* magazine in the April 1977 issue called "Sex Education Who Needs It?" as well as the sexual health column she wrote for *Essence* from June 1980 to August 1982. In this email message she said this to me "Ask yourself 'has the quality of these questions about our human sexuality changed all that much since then?' I realize this scope of time may represent the entirety of your own life, but you are being ... or learning to be ... a historian and "time" will bend and stretch as will your understanding!! Hopefully, you will come to define "quality" rather than "shock value" as you measure time." I will never forget this email exchange as well as her encouragement from her to think more broadly about human sexuality and the questions she posed back then that are still relevant today. Truly this thesis is for you.

Finally, my great grandmother Gloria Jackson, (my GG) who was the rock of my family, my mother, my grandmother, a constant sense of joy, happiness, spirituality, and remaining hopeful in the times of adversity. She always called me her “professor” and always told me how proud she is of me as I continued to excel in life. To my GG, I will always be your professor and I know you continue to look over my mother, my grandmother, my entire family, as well as myself spiritually as you are now an ancestor.

This thesis is dedicated to not only to Dr. June Dobbs Butts, but to the family members plus a dog who have transitioned in my journey are a constant reminder of the importance of family, and impact you have on others.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Dr. June Selena Dobbs Butts was born the youngest of six girls to Irene Thompson and Reverend John Wesley Dobbs¹ on June 11th, 1928 in Atlanta, Georgia at Dweller's Infirmary.² All six of the Dobbs daughters were gifted and talented in their own ways. Growing up, Dobbs Butts and her entire family attended church at First Congregational Baptist Church, which was an essential part of the family upbringing and culture. She attended Oglethorpe Elementary School, which was part of Atlanta University (now Clark Atlanta University). She would “take the bus in her neighborhood, and it would take her straight to Oglethorpe.”³ From there she went on to attend the Atlanta University Laboratory High School (also part of Atlanta University). The school eventually closed in 1942, and Dobbs Butts had to attend Booker T. Washington High School, the only high school for Black children in the city of Atlanta as well as in Fulton County

¹ Correspondence from June Dobbs Butts to Gary Pomerantz, 13 April 1993, MSS: 890, Box 9, Folder 8, Gary M. Pomerantz papers, Emory University Archives, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

“John Wesley Dobbs was deemed the “unofficial mayor of Sweet Auburn district” because of his role as the highest ranking Black Mason in all of Georgia and “revolutionizing the Masons’ charitable work in the state of Georgia by turning towards revolving scholarships for their offsprings, including extending these scholarships to students from Africa.” Additionally, he served as a “community activist and transformed local politics into effective recruitment groups helping register the local population for active voting.”

² Beverly Guy Sheffield, Jo Moore Stewart, *Spelman: A Centennial Celebration, 1881-1991* (Atlanta, GA: Delmar Co., 1981), 99.

“Dwelle Infirmary was established by Georgia Dwelle Rooks, MD, after visiting the slums in the city of Atlanta, GA and was appalled by the horrendous conditions African Americans were living in. Dwelle Infirmary became the first the hospital of its kind for Black women in Atlanta, which later became an obstetrical hospital that ran successfully for over 27 years. She graduated from Spelman College in 1900, and became the first Spelman graduate to attend medical school. She graduated from Meharry Medical School with her MD with honors in 1904.”

³ Gayles Gloria Jean Wade and Mykisha Arnold, *Their Memories, Our Treasure: Conversations with African American Women of Wisdom. Volumes III-IV* (Atlanta, GA: SIS Oral History Project, Spelman College, 2006), 71.

until 1947. As an exceptionally talented student, she skipped the twelfth grade and went on to Spelman College at the age of sixteen.⁴

However, Dobbs-Butts was not the only Dobbs' child to attend Spelman College, all of the Dobbs girls attended and graduated from the institution with honors, of which the oldest three became valedictorians of their classes. Butts graduated with honors from Spelman College in June of 1948 with a Bachelor's Degree in Social Science, and a concentration in Sociology and French. She earned her Master's Degree in Vocational Guidance and Counseling at Teachers College at Columbia University in December of 1949. Afterwards, she served as an instructor and a research assistant at three Historically Black Colleges and/or Universities (HBCUs) in Nashville, TN, which included Fisk University, Tennessee State University, and Meharry Medical College. More than two decades later, she went back to Teachers College at Columbia University to obtain her Ed.D. in Family Life Education in 1969.⁵

After obtaining her doctorate, she was the first African American to be trained as a sex therapist at the Masters and Johnson Institute and served as a consultant and research associate for a year and a half. Dobbs Butts grew interested in human sexuality and sex therapy. She understood that sex and communication coincided with one another and was a part of the expression of human emotions. Through her work as a sex therapist/sex educator, she was able to bring attention to the needs of Black people in general, and Black women in particular, during a time in the 20th Century when African Americans were losing their traditional and religious-

⁴ Ibid, 72.

⁵ "Curriculum Vitae for June Dobbs Butts", June Dobbs Butts Alumna Files, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.

inspired reluctance to discuss sexual matters openly.⁶ Her work was especially necessary, considering that the discussion about sex and sexuality in Black communities were taboo because it was to be discussed privately, causing missed opportunities to have an open conversation with their spouses, partners, and their children about sex.

Dobbs Butts had a lasting impact on her students and faculty. Throughout her tenure as an educator Dobbs Butts taught at various colleges and universities including but not limited to Bernard M. Baruch College (CUNY), Sarah Lawrence College, Fordham University, New York University, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Howard University College of Medicine, University of District of Columbia, Meharry Medical College, Morehouse School of Medicine, and the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC).⁷

Her expertise and attention revolved around Black women, Black and human sexuality, human emotions, HIV/AIDS, sexual health, sexual violence, family life, premature ejaculation, faked orgasm, gender and sexual orientation. With sex being a vital part of life, Dobbs Butts advocated for the importance of sex education to help educate Black people and the youth to be connected with their sexuality and overcome their sexual issues. By the 1980s, she had her own private counseling practice in Washington, D.C., seeking patients who were married men, women, gay, transgendered, or married.

⁶ Michael McQueen, "June Dobbs Butts, Pioneer Work On Sex Therapy's New Frontier", *The Washington Post*, October 9, 1980.

⁷ "Curriculum Vitae for June Dobbs Butts", June Dobbs Butts Alumna Files, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.

Dobbs Butts authored four book chapters on human sexuality and other numerous articles for *Ebony*, *Essence*, and *Jet* magazines, and newspapers such as the *Washington Post*.⁸ In a May 1983 edition of *Ebony* magazine, when asked how she became an expert on sex, Dobbs Butts articulated "I decided I wanted to pursue this career whether others were critical of it or not. I traveled past that turning point in life, and now I don't feel that I have to justify my field of endeavor or feel embarrassed if others get embarrassed about sex. I realize that there are a lot of critics, but I've found out that nine times out of ten they have a sex hang-up themselves."⁹ Dobbs Butts pursued a career path that made her a pioneer in human sexuality. She refused to allow the challenges and criticism from people who were uncomfortable with her viewpoints about sex and Black sexuality.

In a 1980 *Washington Post* article titled "June Dobbs Butts, Pioneer Work On Sex Therapy's New Frontier" written by Michael McQueen, Rosemary Bray, a former editor of *Essence* magazine's "Good Health" section stated that she, "heard complaints that she's [Butts] too abrupt, and sometimes she can be rather blunt. But she says to people – to women – to get a sense that it's your body, your life, your relationship. You are the only person who can make it work or not work. We have a lot of women write and who don't feel bad about themselves but someone is making them feel bad—a boyfriend or lover—and June says, 'Wait a minute, wait a minute! There's nothing wrong with you. Trust yourself.' I think that's what I like most about

⁸ "Fighting AIDS With Sexual Honesty; "A Sex Therapist Says It's Time to Recognize the Bisexual Factor" in 1992; "Why Some People Consider Celibacy" in *Jet* magazine in 1997; and "Spirituality and Sexuality: A Program for Women in Alcoholism Recovery," for the *American Journal of Health Studies* in 2001. Her work left a tremendous contribution to understanding human sexuality and why sex is essential for Black people.

⁹ Charles L. Sanders, "Dr. June Dobbs Butts: How Did A Nice Lady Like Her Get to Be An Expert On Sex." *Ebony*, May 1983, 148.

her."¹⁰ Rosemary Bray's comments are a reflection of Dobbs Butts ability to go against respectability politics and those who want to tone down her views and beliefs about reproductive freedom.

By shedding light on Dr. June Dobbs Butts' life and legacy, this thesis explores how her radical approach to highlighting the different dynamics of race, sex, and gender made her versatile in her research field. The research proposes the following questions: How did Dobbs Butts' early life experiences, growing up in one of Atlanta's influential Black families, chart her path to be different from the rest of her family? What does her life and scholarship mean for today's society in terms of Black feminism, gender, and sexuality? These questions are a way to understand how Dr. June Dobbs Butts became the last dame of the dynasty.

¹⁰ Michael McQueen, "June Dobbs Butts, Pioneer Work On Sex Therapy's New Frontier", *The Washington Post*, October 9, 1980.

2 HISTORIOGRAPHY

The proposed work will be written from a narrative perspective. The literature grounding for this thesis will treat three themes. These themes include the narratives of Black women, gender and sexuality within Black communities, and a history of Black life in the American South in a postwar context. These three themes will give context to the life and experiences of Dr. June Dobbs Butts' work as a pioneer in human sexuality. It is the reason why Dr. June Dobbs Butts is known as the “last dame of the dynasty” in the context of Black activism and Black sexuality. It is also important to note why the term “dame” is being used for the Master Theses title in this context. Historically in the United Kingdom, the term *dame* is given as a title equivalent to lady as well as to the rank of knight.¹¹ In the US, it has a negative meaning and it is more informal. In “*Founding Mothers & Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society*” the author Mary Beth Norton writes how in early modern Anglo-America, “dame is used when the woman in question was of ordinary rather than high rank.”¹² These are the two examples of how the term dame is used. The use of the English definition of dame to describe Dr. June Dobbs Butts being born into a dynasty of a family that had a major influence on the city of Atlanta as well as having a different path from all of her five sisters.

¹¹ “Dame, properly a name of respect or a title equivalent to lady, surviving in English as the legal designation for the wife or widow of a baronet or knight or for a dame of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire; it is prefixed to the given name and surname.” The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. “Dame”, Encyclopaedia Britannica. Publisher: Encyclopaedia Britannica, inc, November, 1, 2016. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/dame> Access Date: September 10, 2019.

¹² Mary Beth Norton. *Founding Mothers & Fathers: Gendered Power and the Founding of American Society*. (New York: Vintage, 1997), 19.

2.1 African American Women History Scholarship in the Last 40 Years

This work will follow in the tradition of biographies written about other Black women leaders. As will be demonstrated in this section there have been a number of examples of Black women biographies, specifically about Black women pioneers, educators and civil rights leaders. My research on Dobbs Butts will follow in this tradition. I will begin by highlighting prominent research on Black women civil rights leaders of which Dobbs Butts is considered a member of that history. I will continue by highlighting narrative biographies of academic pioneers and I will finish by summarizing the history of Atlanta politics and political leaders.

The development of African American women's history, over the last forty years, sheds light on the ways in which Black women have had to navigate the world and communities while dealing with racism and sexism from within and outside of the Black race. Anna Julia Cooper's *A Voice from the South: By a Black Woman of the South*; Paula Gidding's *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America*; Deborah Gray White's *Ar'n't I A Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South*; and Jacqueline Ann Rouse's *Lugenia Burns Hope: Black Southern Reformer* are several significant works of scholarly treatment of Black women's experiences. However, and most recently, the field has grown significantly. The life and times of pioneering Black women in the likes of Ida B. Wells, Fannie Lou Hamer, Ella Baker and Shirley Chisholm, demonstrates the tenacity of Black women and what they needed to challenge an American society fraught with the arrogance of White patriarchy. An example of this treatment is Barbara Ransby's *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision*, which is critical to adequately understanding themes surrounding Black women. In this, Ransby details the life and legacy of Ella Baker, a southern Black woman who fought for the rights of Black people and played a pivotal role in three Black organizations.

These organizations include the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

Ransby's work on Ella Baker provides a strong narrative of the role of Black women in the modern Civil Rights Movement, contributing to the ways in which we study modern Civil Rights—de-centering the narrative off of charismatic male leaders such as Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and presenting newer, fresher voices to the movement. Ella Baker's strong-willed personality connects to the theoretical framework of Black feminism and Black feminist theory.¹³ As defined in by Jewel Amoah's *Narrative: The Road to Black Feminist Theory*, Black feminism and Black feminist theory is summed up as a "reflection in the stories and narrative of Black Women."¹⁴ Amoah also asserts that, "narrative is the basis or the sustenance of Black Feminist Theory. Black Women are informed and shaped by not only by their own personal experiences, but the experiences of those around them and those that came before them."¹⁵ Narratives are also a way for Black women to reclaim their voices as well as their identity. The rise of narratives from Black women such as Anna Julia Cooper, Shirley Chisolm, Ida B. Wells, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Ella Baker emphasize why narratives are an essential part of the theoretical framework for this thesis by contributing to the literature through telling the story of Dr. June Dobbs Butts' life and career.

¹³ Black Feminism is a defined social theory that is designed to uplift Black women and oppose the negativity of Black womanhood that is perpetuated by a system embedded with racial, patriarchal, and discriminatory practices.

¹⁴ Jewel Amoah, "Narrative: The Road to Black Feminist Theory," *Berkeley Women's Law Journal* 12, no. 1, September 1997, 97.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 97.

Barbara Ransby's work is a biography on Baker chronicles her life, intellect, and radical activism in the Black Freedom Struggle as a Black woman. In similar ways, the life and legacy of Dr. June Dobbs Butts mirrors the various themes of Black feminism, Black womanism, and empowering the youth that are found in Ransby's research. For example, Ransby's work discusses Baker's life, teaching pedagogy, and her beliefs as a Black woman. In this research I will detail how throughout Dobbs Butts teaching career, she taught courses around human sexuality, the psychology of the Black Family, child development and cultural influences. Her objective was to educate students to think more broadly about complex issues of Black communities.

Fusing a radical pedagogy, epistemology, and worldview, both Baker and Dobbs Butts aspired their young protégés to change society. They objected to educational styles of teaching that restricted freedom in the classroom, especially for Black women. They believed in empowering young people with the ability to know themselves and reflect on their personal experiences to answer serious political questions. Despite Dobbs Butts and Baker having different academic interests, they both wanted to teach with a sense of freedom and give students an ability to change the world they live in. Additionally, they advocated for different causes in order to help Black communities improve their social livelihood.

Barbara Ransby's work on Ella Baker provides an important connection relating to the life and times of Dr. June Dobbs Butts by understanding Black women were always at the epicenter advocating for civil and human rights. Just as Ella Baker advocated for civil rights through the next generation of Black people, Dr. June Dobbs Butts championed for identity, human, and sexual rights generally for Black communities and Black women in particular. Like Baker, Dobbs Butts is part of a nuanced understanding of civil and human rights through

conversations particularly around gender and sexuality, LGBTQ, and women's rights. Furthermore, Ransby's work on Ella Baker exemplifies the importance of Dobbs Butts, who, from a prominent Black family steeped into the modern-day civil rights movement and extends the advocacy of Civil Rights.

The methodology in Ransby's work includes extensive primary sources which include oral history interviews with close friends, relatives and co-workers who knew Ella Baker; her personal papers housed at the Schomburg Center, correspondence, letters, and photographs. Secondary sources were also used in the book as well. The methodology serves as a guide to understanding the narrative Ransby wrote on Baker's life and activism as a Black woman and her contribution to the civil rights movement.

While Ransby and others discussed Baker and other civil rights leaders, there is not a comprehensive study on Dobbs Butts who was a civil rights leader in reproductive freedom. Furthermore, Barbara Ransby's work on Ella Baker is essential to this research on Dr. June Dobbs Butts.

2.2 African American Women's History in the Academy

In recent years, the field of African American women's history has been reinforced with a bevy of scholarship written by and for Black women. What is most useful with this shift in African American history are the ways in which Black women are able to tell their stories on their own terms. Historian Deborah Gray White's edited volume titled, *Telling Histories: Black Women Historians in the Ivory Tower*, which comprises of Black women historians not only telling of their own experiences of becoming historians, but the issues they faced in telling the stories of Black women is an important contribution to the field. This edited volume is essential

to understand how Black women scholars tell the stories of Black women. Additionally, it is important to address the role of Dr. June Dobbs Butts in educating Black women being left out of the narratives of Black women scholars, which is why this section is an integral part of the historiography and necessary to cover.

Of the scholars featured in these edited volumes, historians such as Darlene Clark Hine and Sharon Harley detail similar experiences to Dobbs Butts' experiences in the academy. An example of the experiences they share, Darlene Clark Hine's essay titled "*Becoming a Black Woman's Historian*," details her journey, which started with the influence of her grandparents, who had a significant impact on her life. "Reading, storytelling, hard work, education, family solidarity, religion, obedience, and land ownership were the foundations of Clark Hine's belief system while growing up in both rural and urban midwestern homes."¹⁶ Her mother and aunts believed that teaching, nursing, and social work were positions that were respectable, along with marriage and raising a family. It was at this point that Clark Hine decided to go from studying biology to becoming a historian to, "study the past to understand the relations between black and white and the meaning of the strange phenomenon of racism and race."¹⁷ After being influenced by other Black women she worked with on different academic projects as well as lecturing across the country, she decided to shelve her project on Black men in the legal and medical professions to write on Black women in the nursing profession. Her new project would eventually become a book entitled *Black Women in White: Racial Conflict and Cooperation in the Nursing Profession, 1890-1950*.¹⁸ This is when Clark Hine finally became a Black woman

¹⁶ Deborah G. White, *Telling Histories: Black Women Historians in the Ivory Tower*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 46.

¹⁷ Ibid, 48.

¹⁸ Ibid, 54.

historian. Clark Hine's work on Black women left a tremendous impact on future Black women historians who would produce work telling the stories of Black women. For instance, despite differences in research, numerous themes are presented in this edited volume, and various issues Black women faced in their journey in the doctorate program, transitioning to becoming a tenured professor, dealing with isolationism, sexism, patriarchy, and racism in an academic discipline primarily dominated by white men. Although the work focuses on Black women historians in the Ivory Tower, it is still essential to critically analyzing Dobbs Butts' written scholarship as a Black woman scholar. With her research in Black and human sexuality, Dobbs Butts used her work to reach Black communities in Black mainstream media such as *Ebony*, *Essence*, and *Jet* magazines in order to eradicate the misrepresentation and stereotypes of Black sexuality due to lack of access to this information.

Similarly, Sharon Harley's *The Politics of Memory and Place: Reflections of an African American Female Scholar* by Sharon Harley shares her experiences after receiving her Ph.D. in U.S. History from Howard University. Growing up in Washington, D.C., Harley's passion for history started in when she was an honors student (formerly known as "Track One") where her "history and government teachers told her a wealth of knowledge on other people's stories."¹⁹ After graduating with her Bachelor's degree from Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, she went on to Antioch College for her Master's degree in teaching with a concentration in social science, and then on to Howard University for Ph.D. in History. It was at Howard University that her research interest shifted from leftist politics and class analysis to Black women's history. The cause of this shift is a result of historian Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, who shared her dissertation on Black women

¹⁹ Ibid, 103.

in the suffrage movement during lunch with Harley, which fascinated her.²⁰ Harley understood the path she was on when she decided to become a Black woman historian. After receiving her PhD in history in 1981, she shared more of her journey of her tenure process, becoming a mother and writing essays such as, "*Beyond the Classroom: Organized Lives of Black Female Educators in the District of Columbia, 1880-1930*," "*The Impact of Black Women in Education*;" and "*For the Good of Family and Race: Gender, Work, and Domestic Roles in the Black Community, 1880-1930*." Her scholarly work exemplified her passion as well as understanding the importance of telling the stories of Black women. At the end of her essay, she concludes, "To be able to write about these and other women who combated social injustice wherever they encountered it—in nightclubs, business offices, churches, organizations hotels, theaters, and even leftist political rallies – feels like coming full circle."²¹

The stories of Black women academics that Darlene Clark Hine and Sharon Harley wrote, provide an essential understanding as to why telling the experiences of Black women matter and specifically of Black women academics. As a Black women educator, Dr. June Dobbs-Butts story should be included in this lineage of Black women educators, leaders and pioneers.

2.3 Important Influence and Significance of Black Atlanta and the Dobbs Family

Dr. June Dobbs Butts' relationship with her family played a significant role in her contributions to society. Because of her family's far-reaching influence on Atlanta's political scene, a treatment of Dobbs Butts family is also necessary. Gary Pomerantz's "*Where Peachtree*

²⁰ Ibid, 106.

²¹ Ibid, 120.

Meets Sweet Auburn: The Saga of Two Families" is a vital work to give a fair and balanced treatment to the Dobbs family. Pomerantz writes on two prominent families, the Allen's and the Dobbs, who contributed to the city of Atlanta as well as its history. His essential work provides valuable information about Dobbs Butts' family, along with being one of the most respected families in the city of Atlanta. Gary Pomerantz also details the life and legacy of Dobbs Butts' father, John Wesley Dobbs, lifelong champion for Black life in Atlanta leading up to the modern Civil Rights Movement. John Wesley Dobbs' influence was partly because he was grandmaster of the Prince Hall Masons of Georgia and the co-founder of the Atlanta Negro Voters League, which he co-founded with civil rights attorney A.T. Walden. The interviews provided by Dobbs Butts were critical to the narrative of Atlanta. Here, she detailed information discussing segregation during her youth years in Atlanta, as well as other events that occurred in her life.

Dobbs Butts' father, John Wesley Dobbs, was not only influential in Atlanta for Black people, but also to his family. Furthermore, the sacrifices from Dobbs and his wife Irene (Thompson) Dobbs paid off. Dobbs Butts described John Wesley Dobbs as "an austere person, but he was very good-hearted. He had to stick to what he believed in."²² Her father was authoritative and made most of the decisions in the household. Additionally, his perception of a woman as being, "feminine and cultured, beyond reproach yet somehow restrained."²³ The elder Dobbs' heavy handedness gives reasons why Dobbs Butts and most of her sisters rebelled against him. Pomerantz explains that the six daughters would challenge or defy him through "sneaking away to smoke a cigarette, or to apply lipstick, or to listen to blues music... things he

²² Gayles Gloria Jean Wade and Mykisha Arnold, *Their Memories, Our Treasure: Conversations with African American Women of Wisdom. Volumes III-IV* (Atlanta, GA: SIS Oral History Project, Spelman College, 2006), 69.

²³ Gary M. Pomerantz, *Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn: The Saga of Two Families and the Making of Atlanta*. (New York: Scribner, 1996), 79-80.

considered beneath him.”²⁴ They challenged him in debates on topics where he had strong views about certain things in life. While Dobbs Butts loved her father, she describes her father as a chauvinist in an interview with Pomerantz. He did not believe women and men were equal and felt that women should be protected. He resented his wife Irene (Thompson) Dobbs involvement with the integration of the YWCA and YMCA.”²⁵

In another interview, Dobbs Butts recalled growing up where she felt boys were “more important” than girls when her nephew (the late Maynard Jackson, Jr.) was born. When Dobbs Butts turned ten years old, her father John Wesley Dobbs gifted him a pocket watch. She asked him, “Why are you giving a baby a watch? It’s a pocket watch, he’s in diapers. Why are you giving a baby a watch?” John Wesley Dobbs responded, “Well because time is important, and he must know that.”²⁶ Dobbs Butts was never told time was important. Dobbs Butts said, ‘Well, I guess girls are not that important.’²⁷ Dobbs Butts’ upbringing, and observations of her father’s attitudes ultimately influenced her career and educational choices, specifically her choices to learn and teach about Black women and human sexuality. She was interested in rebelling against the misogynistic and sexist perceptions held by her father and many other men of his generation.

While there are stories and research conducted on Dobbs Butts’ home in Atlanta and other members of her family, there is no comprehensive text dedicated to her history and lineage.

²⁴ Ibid, 79.

²⁵ Interview Transcription with June Dobbs Butts on Sunday, 24 November 1991, MSS: 890, Box 2, Folder 6, Gary M. Pomerantz papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

²⁶ June Dobbs Butts. Interviewed by Franklin Abbott, 29 January 2016, Activist Women Oral History Project, Archives for Research on Women and Gender. Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University.

²⁷ Ibid.

This is a result of Dr. June Dobbs Butts being overshadowed by her father John Wesley Dobbs, her nephew Maynard Jackson, Jr., and her five older sisters in the Dobbs family.

The Legend of the Black Mecca: Politics and Class in the Making of Modern Atlanta by Maurice Hobson explicates and analyzes the evolution of the city of Atlanta which was utterly different from what Dobbs Butts knew of growing up. Hobson writes his work as “an intraracial narrative history of Atlanta that details Black political and class tensions in the modern urban South.”²⁸ According to Hobson, the city of Atlanta failed to address the ever-growing issues facing the poor and working class Black Atlantans. The politics of Atlanta only benefited white and Black upper and middle classes, including corporate businesses. Hobson’s work explores race, politics, class, and culture in order to complicate the notion of Atlanta being hailed as the “Black Mecca”, while addressing the voices of the Black masses that were left unaddressed.

Hobson’s *The Legend of the Black Mecca* fits into the larger conversation of Dobbs Butts because she grew up in a time where Black neighborhoods such as “Sweet Auburn” Avenue were economically thriving for Black people. “*The Legend of the Black Mecca: The Politics and Class in the Making of Modern Atlanta*” is essential to explain how Atlanta’s development after 1965 extend the conversation around civil and human rights. It provides a better understanding of the city Dobbs Butts was reared, but experienced a drastic difference when she returned in 1994 to serve as a visiting scientist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Additionally, it situates her family as having a strong political presence in the city of Atlanta. Furthermore, the work Dobbs Butts did would be considered radical.

²⁸ Maurice J. Hobson, *The Legend of the Black Mecca: Politics and Class in the Making of Modern Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2017), 7.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Use of Methods

Methods that were used for this research included primary resources such as direct correspondence, articles, poetry, speeches, photographs, course syllabus, faculty files, alumna files, curriculum vitae, and oral interview transcripts from various archives such as the Amistad Research Center at Tulane University, the Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library at Emory University Library Archives and Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Louis Round Wilson Library Special Collections, and Sarah Lawrence and Spelman Colleges Archives pertaining to Dobbs Butts. I have collected a series of oral historical interviews with Dobbs Butts before her passing, which demonstrates this thesis' approach as a qualitative methodological project. Additionally, the thesis consisted of conducting interviews with friends and colleagues of Dobbs Butts, who knew her personally and professionally.

Archival research consisted of the following (but not limited to): reading digital copies of Black newspapers such as the *Atlanta Daily World*, *The Pittsburgh Courier*, Howard University's *The Hilltop*, Morehouse College's *The Maroon Tiger*, as well as mainstream newspapers such as the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. For example, in the November 1, 1946 issue of Morehouse College's *The Maroon Tiger* is a sub-section heading titled "June Dobbs to Be Crowned Miss Maroon and White Homecoming". The article features Dobbs Butts and the attendants of the Miss Maroon and White Court, Irena Leota Moore and Virginia Turner, discussing their well-rounded personality and being active students in extracurricular activities as students on the campus of Spelman College.²⁹ The article provided a better understanding of

²⁹ "June Dobbs to Be Crowned Miss Maroon and White Homecoming", *The Maroon Tiger*, November 1, 1946.

Dobbs Butts's time as a student at the institution. Another example is the *Atlanta Daily World* containing various articles about Dobbs Butts and the Dobbs Family. One article in particular is entitled "Sister of Mattiwilda Dobbs To Join Trip" discussing Dobbs Butts serving as a secretary to her older sister Mattiwilda Dobbs Janzon on her worldwide tour as an opera singer.³⁰ In *The Pittsburgh Courier* is an small brief report on Dobbs Butts and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. conducting a survey on Black Baptist Ministers under Dr. Ira de Augustine Reid.³¹ These are a few examples of news articles found researching the digital archives pertaining to Dobbs Butts life as well as the Dobbs Family.

Additionally, Dobbs Butts' written scholarship from *Ebony*, *Essence*, and *Jet* magazines; the *Journal of the National Medical Association*, and the *Journal of African American Studies* will also be essential. Archival works will include personal papers and materials belonging to June Dobbs Butts. After her death in May of 2019, her papers were donated to Spelman College, where it will become part of the rest of her archival collection created in 2011. Her own personal materials provided more information on the late professor's life.

The *John Wesley Dobbs Family Papers* at the Amistad Research Center at Tulane University in New Orleans, LA contain valuable archival materials on Dobbs Butts and her family. Another collection of John Wesley Dobbs' papers are held at the DeKalb Masons Archives. This became an essential part of the master thesis's bibliography as well as understanding Dobbs Butts' father, John Wesley Dobbs. The *Josephine Dobbs and William A. Clement Papers* at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Louis Round Wilson Library Special Collections contained personal papers relating to Dobbs Butts as well as the

³⁰ "Sister of Mattiwilda Dobbs to Join Trip." *Atlanta Daily World* (1932-2003), May 25, 1955. <https://search.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/sister-mattiwilda-dobbs-join-trip/docview/491059435/se-2?accountid=11226>.

³¹ Carrie B. Harper, "Atlanta News", *The Pittsburgh Courier* (1907-1966), July 15, 1950, 10.

entire Dobbs Family. What was found in the collection were letters, Dobbs Butts's dissertation prospectus, written articles, and speeches given at conferences. For the *John Wesley Dobbs Family Papers*, the collection also contained letters from Dobbs Butts to her parents, photographs, and the Dobbs Family newsletter, which chronicled the entire family's lives and careers.

The *Gary Pomerantz Papers* at the Stuart A. Rose Emory University Library Archives and Special Collections include an extensive amount of archival material featuring interviews, transcripts, and tape recordings with all six Dobbs Sisters, and the Maynard Jackson family that will be vital to this master thesis.

A chronological timeline became essential to have a clear idea of what will be crucial to support my argument as well as providing a theoretical framework to Dr. June Dobbs Butts scholarly work. Specific theories for this thesis include the following (but not limited to): Black Feminism, Gender, and Sexuality. To use these theories, it consisted reading secondary sources of Wednesday Martin, Kimberle Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins, Jewel Amoah, and other scholars that will help shape the theoretical framework for this master thesis, including Dobbs Butts as a Black Feminist. It is also imperative for this research to provide a historical narrative of Dobbs Butts' life while discussing her written work and study. With all of the archival research conducted as well as going through the *June Dobbs Butts Papers* at Spelman College it is essential to create a timeline of events that occurred in her life as well as throughout her career. Additionally, it provided a framework to understand Dobbs Butts as a Black woman, and as a pioneer.

4 THE PATH TO BECOMING A PIONEER

4.1 Humble Beginnings

Before she became a pioneer, Dobbs Butts' humble beginnings started out at Spelman College. She entered Spelman in 1944 and graduated on June 7, 1948 as an honor graduate. In her Application for Admission, Dobbs Butts answers the question of "Why do you wish to come to Spelman?". In her response:

"I wish to come to Spelman because my parents and I feel that Spelman has more cultural background and high academic training to offer to Negro women than any other college. I feel that I may be better prepared for post-graduate work and post-graduate life, if my college training has been secure and well rounded. Another reason why I wish to come to Spelman is that I have four sisters who graduated from Spelman, and one who is now attending and is now a Junior. Both during the time my sisters were at Spelman and afterwards, they have always recommended it most highly; and I feel that if I come to Spelman I will enjoy it as much as they did"³².

Dobbs Butts response to the question demonstrates the sixteen-year-old exemplifying the influence from her older sisters, and what is to come in her life journey. Dobbs Butts was an active and erudite student on campus. Because the institution itself had very strict rules, which included "visiting hours were over at 5:30pm and chapel services started at 8:00am, it prompted Dobbs Butts to take transportation from across town where she lived to get to campus.³³ She had to live on campus for her senior year and whenever she visited her parents, she had to return to

³² "Application for Admission", June 14, 1944, June Dobbs Butts Alumna Files, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, Georgia.

³³ June Dobbs Butts, Interviewed by Franklin Abbott, 29 January 2016, Activist Women Oral History Project, Archives for Research on Women and Gender. Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University.

campus at 5:30pm. If a student lived in the city, they could not go home every week.”³⁴ Majoring in Social Science with a minor in French, Dobbs Butts participated in numerous organizations such as the Spelman College Glee Club (second soprano); the Atlanta University-Spelman-Morehouse Chorus; the French Club; the Young Women’s Christian Association (Y.W.C.A.), and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P.). During her junior year, she was crowned as Morehouse College’s 10th Miss Maroon and White (1946-1947) in her junior year, and served as President of her Senior Class. She also went to summer school at the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico (The National Autonomous University of Mexico), Mexico City in 1947 along with her sister Mattiwilda Dobbs later Janzon.

After graduating from Spelman, she participated in a summer project with her close friend the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., where they conducted a Baptist Minister Survey with the late Dr. Ira de Augustine Reid, who was a professor at Haverford College, and former chair of the Sociology Department at Spelman College. Dr. Reid brought “Dobbs Butts and King up to Haverford, Pennsylvania for two weeks to help them with their oral interviewing technique”³⁵. This training, was done with “twenty-five other young people who were mostly seminarians. From around the country”³⁶ was most useful to Dobbs-Butts. The interviews were collected for extensive data on Black Baptist churches and seminaries across the United States. In Patrick Parr’s “*The Seminarian: Martin Luther King, Jr. Comes of Age*”, Parr writes that in order to collect all of the data, Dr. Reid would need “young men and women to sacrifice days

³⁴ Gayles Gloria Jean Wade and Mykisha Arnold, *Their Memories, Our Treasure: Conversations with African American Women of Wisdom. Volumes III-IV* (Atlanta, GA: SIS Oral History Project, Spelman College, 2006), 72.

³⁵ June Dobbs Butts. "A Nobility of Purpose: The Little-Known Story of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and the 'Drum Major for Justice'." *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, October 16, 2011. <https://search.proquest.com/newspapers/nobility-purpose-little-known-story-rev-martin/docview/898450574/se-2?accountid=11226>.

³⁶ Ibid.

and weekends to interview Baptist ministers in different areas of the country”³⁷. The study would eventually culminate into Dr. Reid’s report entitled, “*The Negro Baptist Ministry: An Analysis of its Profession Preparation and Practices*” published in 1951.

King and Dobbs Butts conducted their study in the greater Atlanta area. They met once a week on a Mondays or Tuesdays to share information gleaned from sermons. What Dobbs Butts observed was the vitriol towards Dr. King’s father Rev. Martin Luther King, Sr., known as Daddy King. The disdain for the elder King, along with Dobb Butts’s brother-in-law Maynard Holbrook Jackson Sr. and his decision regarding donations in Friendship Baptist Church. The project lasted the entire summer of 1948, which helped Dobbs Butts to prepare for her graduate studies at Teachers College at Columbia University, where she would attain her Master’s Degree in Vocational Guidance.

After graduating from all-Black and all-womens Spelman College, Dobbs Butts enrolled at Columbia University in 1948. Here, she felt that she could “compete with white students and had a legitimate subject matter to study there.”³⁸ It was in this moment that June Dobbs Butts felt that she had found her calling and understood the influence of Spelman College and its reach in her development to becoming a pioneer.

In an oral interview conducted on February 16, 2019, Dobbs Butts explained her interests in Vocational Guidance. She says, “It was a kind of counseling that you would do for kids from junior high school and on. I felt girls didn't have enough of it. Boys would get mechanical aptitude tests, and that kind of thing. Girls didn't know what they wanted to do so often they just get pregnant. They needed to have a career or an area of study that they wanted to go to it and

³⁷ Patrick Parr, *The Seminarian: Martin Luther King Jr. Comes of Age*. (Chicago, Illinois: Lawrence Hill Books, 2018), 138.

³⁸ June Dobbs Butts. 2nd Part Interviewed by Author, February 16, 2019, Johns Creek, GA. Audio Recording. In Author’s possession.

they need to think more broadly than just being a teacher or being a nurse. Those are the two fields that women usually went into nursing and teaching.”³⁹ In this, Dobbs Butts articulates the reach of sexism surrounding counseling the counseling of children and preparing them for future careers. Moreover, she felt young girls were not getting the same preparation as young boys. Having been limited to nursing and teaching, misogyny and sexism was shown towards women in terms of what type of careers they could pursue. Dobbs Butts graduated from Teachers College at Columbia University with a Master of Arts in Vocational Guidance in December of 1949. She was the fourth Dobbs sister (Millicent Dobbs Jordan, Josephine Dobbs Clement, Mattiwilda Dobbs Janzon) to obtain a Master’s Degree from that University.

4.2 Early Career Work 1950-65

After obtaining her master’s degree, Dobbs Butts stayed in New York and worked for the YMCA Vocational Service Center, until her mother asked her to come back home to Atlanta. Her mother was having difficulty as she grieved the loss of her sister Carolyn Thompson and Dobbs Butts unmarried at the time was the only daughter her mother contacted out of all of her sisters that was available.⁴⁰ When her mother was strong enough to move on, Dobbs Butts spent the summer sending out applications for jobs and received a teaching position offer at Fisk University in Guidance for the guidance department from 1950-1952.⁴¹ In addition, she served as both part time instructor of psychology at Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State University (now Tennessee State University) in the psychology department.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Gayles Gloria Jean Wade and Mykisha Arnold, *Their Memories, Our Treasure: Conversations with African American Women of Wisdom. Volumes III-IV* (Atlanta, GA: SIS Oral History Project, Spelman College, 2006), 73.

⁴¹ Curriculum Vitae for June Dobbs Butts, June Dobbs Butts Alumna Files, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.

Following her stints at Fisk and Tennessee A&I, Dobbs Butts worked as a part time research assistant for the department of pediatrics at Meharry Medical College. Here, she worked with E. Perry Crump, M.D. from 1952 to 1953.⁴² Dobbs Butts recalled that their project focused on the norms for babies where Crump argued that “Black babies were different from white babies through the study of bone formation, eye coordination, and reflexes for grasping.”⁴³

While at Fisk University, Dobbs Butts met her husband, Dr. Hugh F. Butts, M.D. They were married on, June 11th, 1953, her 25th birthday. The couple moved to New York City and had three children, which included Lucia Irene, Florence, and Eric. While in New York City, she involved herself with Planned Parenthood, starting out as a part time coordinator and guide for an information booth sponsored by the organization at the World’s Fair in the spring and summer of 1965.⁴⁴ Eventually, Dobbs Butts served as vice president-at-large of the same organization.

During the 1960s, a host of social movements took place in the United States and the world—the modern Civil Rights Movement and the Sexual Revolution. As a voice for Black As a voice for Black women and the Black community, Dobbs Butts’s work fit squarely within the context of the modern civil rights movement and an integral part of the sexual revolution.

Despite the sexual revolution leading to a more open discussion about sex and sexuality, Robert Staples’s 1974 *Ebony* magazine article titled “Has the Sexual Revolution Bypassed Blacks?” challenged whether Black people were part of that conversation of sexual rights advocacy and radical changes in sexual attitudes. Staples asserted, “what feature of the Sexual Revolution we mean and which segment of the Black community we are talking about? The

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Gayles Gloria Jean Wade and Mykisha Arnold, *Their Memories, Our Treasure: Conversations with African American Women of Wisdom. Volumes III-IV* (Atlanta, GA: SIS Oral History Project, Spelman College, 2006), 73.

⁴⁴ Curriculum Vitae for June Dobbs Butts, June Dobbs Butts Alumna Files, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.

most reasonable answer seemed to be that some Blacks have been passed by, others are catching up and a significant number are today just as sexually together as they have always been.”⁴⁵

Staples work alongside Dobbs Butts serves as a double edged sword of how Black couples dealt with the sexual revolution.

4.3 Career Work 1960s-1970s

While living in New York City, Dobbs Butts was heavily involved in various organizations which included working in the family planning division of New York City’s Human Resources administration, campaigning for Planned Parenthood, and the New York Branch of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF). Additionally, she was involved in the New Lincoln school (her children’s school) parent’s committees. Later, she was active in local campaigns in Atlanta, where she stomped for her nephew, Maynard Jackson, during his run for vice mayor and mayor. He became the first Black Mayor of the city of Atlanta, GA⁴⁶ or any major southern city.

During the late 1960s, Dobbs Butts returned to Teachers College at Columbia University to obtain her Ed.D. in Family Life Education. She completed her studies in June of 1969 by writing a dissertation titled, *"Perceptions of the Experience of Tubal Ligation: An Exploratory Study In Fertility Control Among Twenty Low Income, Black Women."* In this study, Dobbs Butts investigated the "perceived changes either in attitude or behavior on the part of twenty low-income Black women and furthermore explores "how accurately her human-subjects perceived the experience of tubal ligation in order to reinterpret possible misconceptions and access the meaningfulness of body imagery to the subject."⁴⁷ From Dobbs Butts’ body of work, her

⁴⁵ Robert Staples, “Has the Sexual Revolution Bypassed Blacks?”, *Ebony*, April 1974, 114.

⁴⁶ Ernest Dunbar, “Seven Dobbs Against the Odds” *Look*, December 2, 1969, Vol. 33, No. 24, 33.

⁴⁷ June Dobbs Butts. *Perceptions of the Experience of Tubal Ligation: An Exploratory Study in*

interests lie in three basic areas, "their adjustment one-year post-operatively as women (Self Perception); wives (Sexual Functioning); and as mothers (Maternal Functioning)."⁴⁸ Based on her questionnaire survey for her research, Dobbs Butts not only found her research interests, but the broader mission of her life's work. A pioneer in her field, the fact that she was willing to explore the perceptions of tubal ligation and ways in which Black women attempted to understand fertility control, demonstrates her early contribution to voicing specific issues Black women face that are relevant today.

4.4 Career Work 1969-1973

After finishing her graduate studies, Dobbs Butts first served as an assistant professor in the Department of Education at Bernard M. Baruch College at the City University of New York (CUNY) from 1969-1970.⁴⁹ As an example of her reach, the newly minted professor provided in a submission in *The Reporter*, the evening student newspaper. In the February 2, 1970 edition of the paper titled "Dr. Butts Provides Fresh Air," Dobbs Butts described her teaching style and the class environment for a course she taught on the "Psychology of Childhood and Adolescence in an Urban Context."⁵⁰ In her own words:

"Because of many reasons it is unfair to single out any one member of the faculty and evaluate him or her. The Reporter has maintained this policy. We are making an exception with Dr. Butts because of the noticeably fine way she conducts her

Fertility Control among Twenty Low Income, Black Women. Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1969.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 44.

⁴⁹ "Curriculum Vitae for June Dobbs Butts", June Dobbs Butts Faculty File from Faculty/Staff/Administration Files, Sarah Lawrence College Archives, Bronxville, NY.

⁵⁰ "The Reporter, February 2, 1970" (1970). *CUNY Academic Works*.

https://academicworks.cuny.edu/bb_arch_reporter/138

class. But not only because she's good at what she does, rather because of the way she does it. This distinction separates her from the other "good" teachers. Assuredly, any student, whose brains hasn't been computerized by a slew of mechanical courses taught by mechanical teachers, will find Dr. Butts' class totally refreshing. Dr. Butts doesn't throw away textbooks. We're expected to do the required reading. However, in class we do not just regurgitate what we read. Instead, we relate. And our own opinions and thoughts are interchanged among the class. There are more angles than the self-book-interpretation.”⁵¹

This small section from *The Reporter* provides a better understanding of Dobbs Butts's early academic career, especially her teaching style in the academy. She left Baruch College to join the faculty of Sarah Lawrence College to serve as an assistant professor in both the division of Black Social Change in the Department of Psychology and the Department of Education from 1970-71.⁵²

While at Sarah Lawrence College, Dobbs Butts taught courses such as “Black Child Development” and “Family Styles and Interpersonal Relations.” These courses were of extreme importance, because it shows her teaching Black Studies at the college level when the field was in its infancy. For the Black Child Development course, Dobbs Butts challenged her students to challenge the traditional approaches in the field of child development by placing special emphasis on Black children. Devoting most of her energy to developing a psychological framework for theory and research that would consider the vast array of experiences and

⁵¹ Ibid, 2.

⁵² “Curriculum Vitae for June Dobbs Butts”, June Dobbs Butts Alumna Files, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.

dimensions of Black children—personality, family, community, and other cultural influences—demonstrates her pioneering path.”⁵³

Dobbs Butts further demonstrated her depth and breadth by teaching a course titled “The Family Styles and Interpersonal Relations,” a course focused on what was considered “basic familial patterns, which typified modern nuclear and extended families. According to her syllabus, Dobbs Butts asserted that since the family, as a social institution, is undergoing many of the ramifications of the changes and reactions to change found in society at large, this course served as a vivid focal point for which students formulated questions, and attempted significant cross-cultural research to probe some of the answers now being evolved.”⁵⁴ During her tenure at Sarah Lawrence College, Dobbs Butts pushed students to reconsider notions around the development of Black children as well as to challenge familial patterns impacting interpersonal relations in the midst of American racism.

After her stint at Sarah Lawrence College, Dr. June Dobbs Butts served as Director of the Training of Teacher Trainers (TTT) Project and assistant professor of Education at Fordham University at the Lincoln Center in New York City. She served in this capacity from June 1971 to June 1973. The TTT Project was a joint collaboration with New York School District 3, on Manhattan’s West Side hosted by Fordham University’s School of Education and three local community organizations within the same district. These organizations included the Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited (Haryou) Act-Community Corporation, the Mid-West Side

⁵³ “Letter from Janet Held to Mrs. Jacquelyn Mattfeld with Dr. Butts Course Description”, June Dobbs Butts Faculty File from Faculty/Staff/Administration Files, Sarah Lawrence College Archives, Bronxville, NY.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Community Corporation, and the lower West Side Community Corporation.⁵⁵ The project focused on improving the quality of availability and relevancy of teaching to Black and Brown children in New York City District 3. Dobbs Butts stated, “we are trying to counteract the dismal and corroding effects of poorly trained, unconcerned teachers who do not know how to teach minority-group children.”⁵⁶ In this, she demonstrates her pioneering leadership by attempting to solve issues in the education system in New York City. Thus, Dobbs Butts exemplifies the ways in which we can redefine how teachers teach in schools with predominantly Black and Brown students in District 3.

Dobbs Butts also served as an adjunct professor in the Department of Health Education at New York University in New York City in 1973. In the summer of that same year, she spent six weeks in Bermuda, serving as a Family Life Education Consultant for the Department of Education and Libraries. Her responsibilities included initiating a curriculum in sex education in the elementary and secondary school systems throughout the Bermuda Island.⁵⁷ She published a journal article on her time there entitled, “Sex Education in Bermuda: Curriculum Development and Community Implementation” for the *Journal of Research and Development in Education* in 1976. In August of 1973, she would move to Amherst, Massachusetts, where she started her new position at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, serving as an Associate Professor of Education in the Department of Public Health teaching a course on human sexuality.

⁵⁵ “Spelman Graduate Directs TTT Project”, *Spelman Messenger*. February 1972, 30.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 30.

⁵⁷ “Curriculum Vitae for June Dobbs Butts (Longer Version)”, June Dobbs Butts Papers, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.

4.5 Her Time at Masters and Johnson Institute

While serving as vice president at-large on the Board of Directors of Planned Parenthood, she met renowned sex researchers William Masters and Virginia Johnson, who were widely recognized for their pioneering research in understanding human sexual responses, sexual dysfunctions, and sex therapy. For a full understanding of the reach of the Masters and Johnson Institute, a brief history of the establishment must be detailed. The couple first met each other in 1957, when William Masters hired Virginia Johnson as a research assistant for his work on human sexuality at the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. They established the Reproductive Biology Research Foundation in 1964, which was eventually renamed to the Masters and Johnson Institute in 1978.⁵⁸ Their most influential book titled *Human Sexual Response* (1966), was one of the first comprehensive works studying physiology and human sexual activity. This work discussed the four stages of sexual arousal—excitement, plateau, orgasmic, and resolution. It became a bestseller and changed society's perception toward sex.

Dobbs Butts met the couple through her friend, Martha Stuart, at a conference at the University of Notre Dame. She became acquainted with Virginia Johnson through serving on the board together for the organization called the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS).⁵⁹ Here, Dobbs Butts built a friendship with the couple, which would eventually lead to Dobbs Butts accepting an invitation to join their team in St. Louis in 1975. She

⁵⁸ Thomas Maier, *Masters of Sex: The Life and Times of William Masters and Virginia Johnson, the Couple Who Taught America How to Love*. (New York: Basic Books, a Member of the Perseus Books Group, 2009), 246.

⁵⁹ June Dobbs Butts. "June Dobbs Butts describes her work in the field of Human Sexuality", Interviewed by Shawn Wilson, 13 April 2006, The History Makers Digital Archive. Session 1, Tape 3, Story 6, (The History Makers A2006.076).

served as a researcher and a consultant at the Masters and Johnson Institute. There Dobbs Butts studied the institute's interviewing and evaluation techniques and analyzed case histories and patients seen. She attempted to broaden Masters and Johnson's study on middle class orgasm enthusiasts by broadening its mix of volunteers due to their research sample subjects lacking volunteers who were, "poor, Black, and other minority backgrounds." However, Dobbs Butts stated that "many minorities were hesitant to participate in Master and Johnson's program and were almost ashamed to admit they had a problem."⁶⁰ In an oral history interview conducted by The History Makers, Dobbs Butts described how "she liked the couple, but hated how regimented and constricted the job was because Masters and Johnson did not want to be negatively viewed as superficial or exploitive."⁶¹ Certain issues that occurred while working at Masters and Johnson Institute included, "not being allowed to talk about any other authors and their books, only their work; telephones being placed in every office where William Masters would listen to every interview and therapy sessions that were ongoing."⁶²

There were other aspects of working at the Masters and Johnson Institute for which Dobbs Butts despised. An example of this can be seen when Dobbs Butts had an opportunity to write an article for *Ebony* magazine and encountered a writing fee of \$1,000. When she asked Masters and Johnson if she had to give them the compensation, their response was, "Let us get back to you on that."⁶³ She had to work every day including the weekends which Dobbs Butts

⁶⁰Thomas Maier, *Masters of Sex: The Life and Times of William Masters and Virginia Johnson, the Couple Who Taught America How to Love*. (New York: Basic Books, a Member of the Perseus Books Group, 2009), 321.

⁶¹ June Dobbs Butts. "June Dobbs Butts recalls working with William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson", interviewed by Shawn Wilson, 13 April 2006, The History Makers Digital Archive. Session 1, Tape 3, Story 8, (The History Makers A2006.076).

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid, 256.

was not used to compared to having more free time working as a college professor. Dobbs Butts worked at the Masters and Johnson Institute for a year and a half, starting in January 1976 and leaving in June 1977. After leaving St. Louis, she moved to Washington, DC after accepting a position as an assistant professor in Psychiatry at the Howard University College of Medicine. She also took another position as a visiting lecturer in the Health Education Department at the University of Maryland at College Park. Additionally, she opened up her own private practice in family counseling and sex therapy.

4.6 Dobbs Butts Career in the 1970s and 1980s in Washington, DC

After her time at the Masters and Johnson Institute, Dr. June Dobbs Butts career not only took off, but it also proved to be a busy and proactive one. She traveled to various places conducting workshops, lectures, and serving as a consultant to various organizations surrounding sex education and family life. At the University of Maryland at College Park, she taught three sections of the same course titled “Fundamentals of Sex Education, one of the most popular courses on campus.” As a college professor who was used to teaching small and in-depth classes, Dobbs Butts described just how widespread her classes were. In a letter to written to Kathleen Jackson (now Bertrand), Dobbs Butts described how her students “brought their friends who sat on the floor as well as the stairs to listen to her lecture.”⁶⁴ Furthermore, Dobbs Butts explained that “many individuals do not become aware of their own sexuality or accept it with embarrassment. Sex and the closely tied notion of obscenity also embarrassed America as a society and create problems that must be resolved by educators and therapists”⁶⁵ in an article

⁶⁴ “Letter to Kathleen Jackson (Bertrand) from Dr. June Dobbs Butts”, March 30, 1978, June Dobbs Butts Papers, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.

⁶⁵ Susan Wood, “Shocking, Dazzling Class Crowds”, *The Diamondback*, February 7, 1978, Volume 70, No. 89, 8.

titled “Shocking, Dazzling Class Crowds” written by Susan Wood for *The Diamondback*, the student newspaper for the University of Maryland at College Park in 1978. In addition, she said that “a lot of sex involves ‘sheer exuberance and humor.’ If we make all sex education classes dull, we take all the juice out of it.”⁶⁶ These statements, in Dobbs Butts own words, demonstrate the various issues of America’s view of sex, while showcasing Dobbs Butts’s advocacy for sex education. For Dobbs Butts, making sex education fun and engaging resulted in society making about sex.

Dobbs Butts tenure at the Howard University College of Medicine was one of the most fruitful moments in her academic career. Dobbs Butts not only enjoyed teaching, but enjoyed bringing research grants to the institution. These grants focused on “Black pre-adolescents and the antecedents of teenage pregnancy within a family context.”⁶⁷ Her research followed a group of pre-teens, Black children, middle and lower income classes into their adolescence in order to find variables of which kids would get pregnant, which kids were able to avoid.”⁶⁸ According to Dobbs Butts, “they started at age nine and above, but they did not follow them to the age seventeen. Unfortunately, the funding for the research grant was not renewed when Ronald Reagan was elected into office.”⁶⁹ This was during the time the Reagan Administration made massive budget cuts towards welfare, and research programs leading up to the beginning of “reaganomics.” This eventually led to an article published titled “Sexual Development and

⁶⁶ Ibid, 8.

⁶⁷ Michael McQueen, “June Dobbs Butts, Pioneer Work On Sex Therapy’s New Frontier”, *The Washington Post*, October 9, 1980.

⁶⁸ June Dobbs Butts. “June Dobbs Butts recalls her research at Howard University in Washington, D.C.” Interviewed by Shawn Wilson 13 April 2006, The History Makers Digital Archive. Session 1, Tape 3, Story 9, (The History Makers A2006.076).

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Behavior in Black Preadolescents” with Dr. 's Ouida E. Westney, Renee R. Jenkins, and Irving Williams for *Adolescence* magazine in the Fall 1984 issue.

Besides working with other academic scholars, publishing research articles, and teaching courses at the Howard University College of Medicine, she spoke at various lecture series held at the University. In November 1981, Dobbs Butts was invited to speak at a forum on homosexuality with Howard students sponsored by the Lambda Student Alliance (LSA), now the Coalition of Activist Students Celebrating the Acceptance of Diversity and Equality (CASCADE).⁷⁰ During the ongoing struggle for gay people to gain equal rights and freedom in the United States, Dobbs Butts pointed out that “sexual rights becomes an issue only when you try to deprive people of them.”⁷¹ Chi Hughes, a co-founder of LSA (now CASCADE) remembers a memorable comment Dobbs Butts gave to the students at the forum. Hughes remembers Dobbs Butts saying, “Don’t Die Wondering!”⁷² This comment was not Dobbs Butts’s, but came from a sign that she witnessed at a Gay Rights March carried by a middle aged white woman.⁷³ Hughes said that Dobbs Butts “normalized homosexuality in a way that was academically sound and we had a chance to just be visible.”⁷⁴ The impact that Dobbs Butts had on Chi Hughes, as well as other students at Howard University at the forum, exemplifies her

⁷⁰ “June Butts Speaks On Homosexuality”, *Blacklight*, December-January 1981.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Jaimee A. Swift, “Meet Chi Hughes: The Activist Who Co-Founded The First Openly LGBTQ+ Student Organization at an HBCU.” Web log. *Black Women Radicals* (blog). February 1, 2020, <https://www.blackwomenradicals.com/blog-feed/meet-chi-hughes-the-activist-who-co-founded-the-first-openly-lgbtq-student-organization-at-an-hbcu>.

⁷³ “June Butts Speaks On Homosexuality”, *Blacklight*, December-January 1981.

⁷⁴ Jaimee A. Swift, “Meet Chi Hughes: The Activist Who Co-Founded The First Openly LGBTQ+ Student Organization at an HBCU.” Web log. *Black Women Radicals* (blog). February 1, 2020, <https://www.blackwomenradicals.com/blog-feed/meet-chi-hughes-the-activist-who-co-founded-the-first-openly-lgbtq-student-organization-at-an-hbcu>.

advocacy for Black Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) communities to make sure their voices were heard.

Jan Buckner-Walker, an alumna of Howard University, President, and Chief Creative Officer of Kids Across Parents Down and editor of the *Essence* crossword puzzle, remembered Dobbs Butts as a friend as well as a professor at Howard University. Walker had known Dobbs Butts as the mother of her Springbrook High School classmate and friend, Eric, but was able to develop a distinctive friendship of her own. Walker had graduated from Howard University in 1985. A journalist, she asked Dobbs Butts to do a speaking engagement on campus, which led to a lecture series discussing topics on “sexual and racial identities and male-female relationships held on October 4-5, 1983.”⁷⁵ Walker wrote two articles for Howard University’s student newspaper, *The Hilltop*, about Dobbs Butts speaking at the lecture that day. The impact Dobbs Butts had on students at Howard University helped educate them on the importance of sex education, sexual and racial identities.

Besides her time at Howard University and the University of Maryland at College Park, she served as Associate Professor in the Department of Counseling and Mental Health at the University of District of Columbia, another HBCU in 1983 for an academic year. Afterwards, she went on to serve as a public health analyst for DC Commission of Public Health, Division of Health Policy and Planning in 1984. Initially, she worked on a teenage pregnancy prevention program, as well as promoted vocational education and training.⁷⁶ In addition to those efforts,

⁷⁵ Staff, Hilltop, "The Hilltop 9-30-1983" (1983). *The Hilltop: 1980-90*. 80.

https://dh.howard.edu/hilltop_198090/80

⁷⁶ “March 1984 Dobbs Family Newsletter, Vol. 7 No. 3 by Willie Dobbs Blackburn”, Box 4, Folder 18: Family Newsletter: 1981-1984, John Wesley Dobbs Family papers, Amistad Research Center at Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

she was loaned to the DC Public School system to be a consultant on Teenage Pregnancy prevention and other sex-related problems such as pediatric acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS).⁷⁷

4.7 Her Writings & Activism

For most of her writings in the 1970s and 80s, Dobbs Butts discussed a wide range of topics from the aspects of sex and race, unhealthy uses of sex, gender and sexual orientation, teenage pregnancy, youth violence, and HIV/AIDS. In her studies, she noticed that Black communities in the 1970s and the 80s were did not discuss sex and sexuality in open and honest manners and was considered taboo.

John H. Johnson, the founder of *Ebony* magazine, appreciated Dobbs Butts work and asked if she would publish some of her thoughts for *Ebony*. In her own words, Dobbs Butts stated, “Johnson did not like [the] questions and answers [format]. He felt it was too narrow and a cheap type of journalism.”⁷⁸ She published her first article in the April 1977 issue of *Ebony* magazine titled, “Sex Education: Who Needs It?” It was the first-ever featured article discussing sex in *Ebony* magazine, because of the magazine’s conservative nature. The article discussed how “Black children learn about sex through imitation from their peers, what they see on television, their own environments they live in, and from their family and parents. She stated, “Sex is one of the prime concerns of our youth. They have grown up in a contraceptive culture.”⁷⁹ However, put the onus of the lack of education on the parents, asserting that “parents

⁷⁷ “September 1985 Dobbs Family Newsletter Vol. 9 No. 1 by Willie Dobbs Blackburn”, Box 4, Folder 19: Family Newsletters: 1984-1988, John Wesley Dobbs Family papers, Amistad Research Center at Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

⁷⁸ June Dobbs Butts. Interviewed by Author, March 23, 2019, Johns Creek, GA. Audio Recording. In Author’s possession.

⁷⁹ June Dobbs Butts. “Sex Education: Who Needs It?” *Ebony*, April 1977, 97.

are hesitant and embarrassed when the child asks questions about sex. The child picks up the cue and may stop asking any more questions. Parents fear their own unresolved impulses, their sexual fantasies, and are embarrassed to share these private aspects of their lives with their children. What they fail to see is that such experiences provide, or can provide, great resources of understanding”.⁸⁰ These were some of the common fears Black parents had during her time that are different from today’s generation of parents. Over the last ten years, the Belden Russonello Strategists on African-American Attitudes on Abortion, Contraception and Teen Sexual Health, conducted a survey that suggest that “African American adults overwhelmingly endorse comprehensive sex education.”⁸¹ Moreover, “eight in ten viewed contraception and STD screenings and treatment as a basic health care for women.”⁸² Furthermore, seventy-three percent of African American adults believed that teen sexual development was a normal part of growing up and all should have access to information regarding sex and contraception.”⁸³ As a result of this data, Dobbs Butts strongly emphasized, “sex education, both formally and informally has relevance for the Black community.”⁸⁴ She contended that this is best understood through three different learning styles, which include, personal learning, present-day learning, and positive reinforced learning. Through her writings, Dobbs Butts encouraged not only Black people needed sex education in order to have a healthy sex life, but that society needed to be more open with each other talking about sex as well as being able to achieve sexual liberation in a healthy manner. She would go on to write more articles for *Ebony* magazine, which included another

⁸⁰ Ibid, 97.

⁸¹ Belden Russonello Strategists LLC, *African-American Attitudes on Abortion, Contraception and Teen Sexual Health* (Washington D.C.: Belden Russonello Strategists LLC, 2013), 6.

⁸² Ibid, 5.

⁸³ Ibid, 6.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 97.

article written in their July 1977 issue titled “How To Conquer Your Sexual Fears”. In this, Dobbs Butts broke down issues that both men and women deal with when it comes to their sexual fears. From her research, she discovered that venereal diseases (VD), infertility, and homophobia, were the greatest fears for both men and women. Men articulated that impotence, premature ejaculation, and retarded ejaculation as their greatest sexual fears while women asserted non-orgasmic responses, sexual aversion, and vaginismus as theirs. Social sex-related fears included menarche and menopause, rape, problem pregnancies, diseases and operations, desertion and divorce. The discussion about sexual fears was to help Black couples communicate, as well as overcome these fears in order for their relationships to prosper and to be sexually healthy.

From June 1980 to August 1982, Dobbs Butts served as a columnist for *Essence Magazine*. The column, "Your Sexual Health", was a popular and award-winning column that consisted of Question & Answer format, engaging readers. Dobbs Butts loved the title of column because “it provided a refreshing candor as it addressed issues of sexual awareness.”⁸⁵ The title of the column changed several times in order to be more “inclusive and intimate,” which led to the title changes of “Our Sexual Health” to “Sexual Health”.⁸⁶ There were a few instances where Dobbs Butts was given the opportunity to write short essays for the magazine which included, “On Masturbation”, and “On How To Get What You Want in Bed.” This freedom, given by the editors of *Essence*, allowed her to express her “thoughts [to] explore some of the more intricate aspects of human sexuality in greater depth than the usual succinct format of “Q&A” allowed.”⁸⁷

⁸⁵ “June Dobbs Butts, “Essentially Yours” n.d.”, June Dobbs Butts Papers, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

The numerous articles and Q & A responses in *Ebony*, *Jet*, and *Essence* proved to be groundbreaking in all three popular Black magazines. This was due to Dobbs Butts strong advocacy to encourage Black people, particularly Black women, to not only have a voice when it came to sex and their own sexualities, but to dispense information providing accessibility to the Black community regarding this topic.

For the rest of her career, Dobbs Butts brought attention to other issues such as HIV/AIDS, views on gender in Black communities, unhealthy aspects of sex, and other issues regarding human sexuality. One of her most powerful articles was “Is Homosexuality a Threat to the Black Family?”, written for *Ebony* magazine, which addressed the myths and stereotypes that Black people had towards Black gay men. In her conclusion for this essay, she says that homosexuality is not a threat to the Black family. Dobbs Butts argued emphatically, “For many members of these groups, there is but one choice, and that is heterosexuality, so they condemn everyone who differs from this norm. I would urge that they consider this thought: individual homosexuals have been a part of the Black race during our entire history on this continent.”⁸⁸ In addition, Dobbs Butts says, “our internal problem —and the real threat to the Black family —is the violence of a few of us and the seeming indifference of the multitude.”⁸⁹ Dobbs Butts took on the issues of homophobia in Black communities head on. She encouraged Black people to understand that “their sexual similarities outweigh their sexual differences.”⁹⁰ Dobbs Butts addressed the issue of the AIDS epidemic when it negatively impacted Black people as well as the LGBTQ communities also. She pointed out how Black people were in denial about the

⁸⁸ June Dobbs Butts. “Is Homosexuality a Threat to the Black Family”, *Ebony*, October 1981, 144.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 144.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 144.

HIV/AIDS crisis, which disproportionately infected them as well as the issue of having to change their sexual behavior to avoid getting infected and passing the virus to other people.

Dobbs Butts grew up in a household of a race man. Her father, the late John Wesley Dobbs dedicated much of his efforts towards civil rights in Atlanta. The Dobbs family home was a place for Black activists to stay. Dobbs Butts was in the middle of civil rights activity while growing up, which influenced her heavily. She applied her learned experience to activism—issues that she centered her life’s work. Involved in various organizations such as National Organization for Women (N.O.W.), advocating for abortion rights, Dobbs Butts carried on the family tradition of activism. As early as the 1960s, she encouraged friends and family members to donate money for women’s reproductive rights—an issue that she took head on by marching on Washington. This example showcases the narrowness of Black perspectives on their stance about women’s reproductive rights. In accordance with Loretta Ross chapter titled *African American Women and Abortion*, Dobbs Butts further asserts that male patriarchy and conservatism attempt to police women’s bodies, especially Black women. Dobbs Butts advocacy for abortion rights, especially poor women, came to the fore when she participated in the National Organization for Women’s (NOW) “March for Women’s Equality, Women’s Lives” in April 1989, which was an effort to get the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) passed. In a 1989 interview with the *Washington Post* with journalist Dorothy Gilliam, Dobbs Butts stated, “poor women won’t get economic progress unless fertility is under the woman's control . . . the poor are lacking power because they haven't been helped to control their fertility.”⁹¹ Her powerful words addressed the economic issues faced by women in general, and Black women in particular while advocating for them to be in control of their own bodies.

⁹¹ Dorothy Gilliam, “Women of Color 1 Voice” *The Washington Post*, April 10, 1989.

4.8 Dobbs Butts Career late 1980s & 1990s

In June 1987, Dobbs Butts was awarded a two-week study at the Swedish Institute, in Stockholm, Sweden, to study the institute's approach to AIDS Education. She was astounded by the fact that the country had the lowest incidences of HIV/AIDS in Europe at that time. While there, she gained a mentor who introduced her to people in other areas such as business, education, social work, and medicine. Towards the end of her stay, she wrote a report on her time at the institute.⁹² Upon returning to Washington D.C., Dobbs Butts brought English version literature detailing Sweden's efforts towards HIV/AIDS. The literature contained multifaceted marketing—posters, joke books, videos, and literature on HIV prevention. Some of marketing asked questions such as “How do you talk to your children?; How do you talk to each other?; How do you get to the gay community?”⁹³ Despite her efforts to get the literature implemented by the D.C. Commission of Public Health, her suggestions were ignored by Dr. Reed V. Tuckson, who served as Commissioner of Public Health of D.C. at the time (1986-1989).⁹⁴

As the 1990s yielded a better understanding of sex, HIV/AIDs and with an impending American culture war, Dobbs Butts wrote more articles for *Ebony* magazine. One of them was titled “Sex and the Modern Black Couple,” which appeared in a 1991 edition of the magazine. In this article, she noticed that Generation X was willing to open up more about their sexual issues as well as their own sexuality compared to previous generations. In this she says that “they [Generation X] have the opportunity to free themselves of inhibitions and phobias which plagued

⁹² June Dobbs Butts. “June Dobbs Butts Recalls Her Work as a Public Health Consultant in Sweden”, Interviewed by Shawn Wilson, 13 April 2006, The History Makers Digital Archive. Session 1, Tape 4, Story 1, (The History Makers A2006.076).

⁹³ June Dobbs Butts. “June Dobbs Butts Recalls Advocating for Initiatives to Prevent HIV”, Interviewed by Shawn Wilson, 13 April 2006, The History Makers Digital Archive. Session 1, Tape 4, Story 2, (The History Makers A2006.076).

⁹⁴ Ibid.

older generations. They may become more expressive in other areas of their lives as a consequence of the sexual “freeing up.”⁹⁵ Dobbs Butts continued advocate for Black couples, as well as the community, to continue to have an open dialogue about sex and sexuality openly. That same year, Dobbs Butts would take on her new position at Meharry Medical College, serving as an assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences.

Between the 1950s to the 1990s, Dr. June Dobbs Butts produced groundbreaking work in order to dismantle the fear and stereotypes surrounding Black sexuality, as well as being a voice to Black women in order to encourage them to be in control of their own bodies. Here are some responses about her work and career as a sexologist bestowed on her by her friends. When one of her friends stated, “Your daddy (John Wesley Dobbs) never would have approved of this,”⁹⁶ Dobbs Butts responded, “Maybe not right away, but he would have loved it later. It would not have fit into his anything, his upbringing, his outlook on life. We don't know. It's a landscape that's still being charted.”⁹⁷ When she wrote for *Essence*’s award-winning column “Sexual Health”, her sisters did not receive a direct response right away. When Dobbs Butts finally had the chance to ask one of her sister’s replied, “Well to tell you the truth June, it turned my stomach. I didn’t think Black women would write about things like that.”⁹⁸ There was this conservatism Dobbs Butts noticed not only in her sisters but in certain viewpoints for some Black women. In an 1980 article from *Essence* magazine entitled “Good Health! Goes to the Source!”, Dobbs Butts received negative responses to her openness in her practice as a sex

⁹⁵ June Dobbs Butts. “Sex and the Modern Black Couple”, *Ebony*, February 1991, 130.

⁹⁶ June Dobbs Butts. “June Dobbs Butts Talks About the Early Research into Human Sexuality”, Interviewed by Shawn Wilson, 13 April 2006, The History Makers Digital Archive. Session 1, Tape 3, Story 7, (The History Makers A2006.076).

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Michael McQueen. “June Dobbs Butts, Pioneer Work On Sex Therapy’s New Frontier”, *The Washington Post*, October 9, 1980.

therapist as well as presenting at conferences about sex and sexuality.⁹⁹ In her own words, she says, “Women spend so much of their time hiding from themselves- and caring for the needs of others – that it’s hard for them to accept the notion of themselves as sexual beings.”¹⁰⁰ Dobbs Butts was encouraging Black women to be more open with themselves by not being confined to respectability politics and conservative views surrounding their own sexuality. Her groundbreaking work provides a better example of how she became a pioneer as a Black sexologist and family life counselor.

⁹⁹ "Good Health! Goes to the Source!" *Essence*, May 1980, 68.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 68.

5 PUT YOURSELF FIRST: THE PERSONAL MEETS THE POLITICAL

Throughout Dobbs Butts's impactful career and life as a sex therapist and counselor, she experienced numerous trials and tribulations that would take a toll on her both professionally and personally. Dobbs Butts dealt with a tumultuous divorce from her husband, Hugh, and confronted her own sexual molestation at four years old, braved her battle with alcoholism, and grieved the passing of her parents and close friend the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. amongst others. These were numerous traumatic events Dobbs Butts confronted. The following is a poem written by Dobbs Butts herself about the sexual molestation she experienced at four years old.

5.1 Sexual Trauma

"Pinky"

(Copyrighted by Dr. June Dobbs Butts)

*"When I was a child, the first trip I made alone
Was around the corner to the store to buy candy.*

*The store was on the far side of Mrs. Jackson's house
And on our side, she "let roomers".
My Father said "They bring down the neighborhood."*

*Sometimes, at night, we could hear them fussing
But I always liked one large, laughing man.
We called him Pinky because his hands were
Black with pink insides.
I thought his eyes and teeth sparkled.*

*Once when I was going to the store, he called out
"Hey June, you want some candy? Come inside."
I felt strange as I went up the steps
And stranger still when, inside his room,
I saw our house - framed by his bedroom window.*

*Suddenly, Pinky swept me up in his arms, rocking me like a baby.
He placed me on his bed, tickling - and kissing me all over.
He took my long braids all alose - only Mama combed my hair.
All I could do was cry.*

*I recall feeling like I was smothering and wondered if I'd die.
Finally he let me go and I ran home.*

*My mind shuts down on what happened after that.
I remember feeling afraid Mama would spank me for the BAD HAIR
Flying around my head like a small cloud.
I recall feeling my Daddy would kill Pinky - if he only knew.
But I repressed the whole thing: put it out of my mind!*

*Then years and years later - in my late thirties, I began analysis.
Concentrating back on young childhood memories, I began to recall.
I phoned one of my sisters long distance just to ask
"Did a man named Pinky live next door to us?"
When she said "Sure - don't you remember him?"
I panicked again.*

*It took years to get over my little 4-year-old terror.
To learn to forgive means first venting all that ANGER!
It means learning to pray to God for help -
Asking for help so I can help others - and help myself get well.*

*I still don't remember what happened when I got home.
But I am not afraid anymore.
And I am not ashamed.
Not anymore.
I learned that victims get victimized by their own fears.¹⁰¹*

The poem titled, "Pinky" describes the trauma inflicted onto Dr. June Dobbs Butts by "Pinky," a boarder neighbor who lived next door to the Dobbs family when she was a child. The pain, fear, and anger she felt as a child recurred later as an adult was a form of trauma that simply could not be erased. In a writing draft called, "The Challenges of Being June", Dobbs Butts asserted that being "more traumatized that Pinky had taken my hair a loose than I was outraged over being violated, I repressed the whole incident. And, in typical victim mode, I blamed myself for "whatever happened – for 35 years."¹⁰² The fear of speaking out as well as

¹⁰¹ "Pinky" (Copyrighted – June Dobbs Butts), June Dobbs Butts Papers, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.

¹⁰² "The Challenges of Being June", June Dobbs Butts Papers, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.

blaming oneself, a form of self-gaslighting, are examples that Black women go through when they speak out against Black men who have preyed upon, inflicted abuse, and/or sexual violence onto them. The last sentence of her poem titled “*Pinky*,” Dobbs Butts stated “I learned that victims get victimized by their own fears.”¹⁰³ These are relevant words for Black women overcoming their fears of speaking out against their abusers in the present day.

5.2 Marriage to Hugh Florenz Butts, M.D.

Another traumatic experienced by June Dobbs Butts was her tumultuous marriage to Hugh Florenz Butts, a physician she met during her years at Fisk. The marriage lasted for eighteen years and brought forth three children; Lucia, Florence, and Eric. The marriage unraveled as early as 1970 because of male-female competition. Dobbs Butts mourned the marriage for eighteen years.

Dobbs Butts met Hugh Butts in the faculty dining hall at Fisk Quarters on his 26th birthday in December 2nd 1952. This meeting occurred while she was teaching at Fisk University, and at the time while Hugh was at Meharry Medical College as a student. On February 5, 1953 Hugh penned a letter to John Wesley Dobbs, Dobbs Butts’ father, Dr. Butts asking for his blessing before they were wedded. The letter reads:

Dear Mr. Dobbs,

I hope that you and Mrs. Dobbs are enjoying the best of health. I’ve often thought of you both since Christmas, reflecting especially on some of the enjoyable times we had together. It really was a memorable holiday.

¹⁰³ “Pinky” (Copyrighted – June Dobbs Butts), June Dobbs Butts Papers, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.

As June has told you I've asked her to marry me. The formulation of any plans toward this goal, however, would be grossly deficient and well nigh impossible were not your consent, advice, and blessings to be obtained.

We both observed that it seemed like putting the proverbial "cart before the horse" to mention a definite date to you before this letter had been penned, but in our enthusiasm to have our plans and your synchronize, we thought that procedure could be modified.

My plans after graduating begin of course with internship for a year, after which I intend to do a residency – the exact specialty being still undetermined. This will probably entail between three and five years. I've discussed those things with June and she has graciously consented to settle in New York. There are, of course, several details involved in this change of focus such as recurring living accommodations and employment which await further planning on our part, and we heartily entreat you to join us by advancing any suggestions you may care to.

I deem myself singularly honored and fortunate to be acquiring June as a wife. The basis of the union is our mutual love, but she is the embodiment of so many wonderful traits that this union shall be enriched severalfold, and if in turn shall have to strive to prove worthy of her love and faith. So be perfect all that the bond now requires is your blessings.¹⁰⁴

Sincerely,

Hugh

This letter adds a piece to the relationship with the elder Dobbs. Hugh graduated from Meharry Medical College with his medical degree in the spring of 1953. Three days later, they were wedded on June 11, Dobbs Butts's 25th birthday at in the Dobbs family home in Atlanta.

¹⁰⁴ "Letter from Hugh Butts [to John Wesley Dobbs] asking for June", 5 February 1953, Josephine Clement Papers, 1937-1998, The Southern Historical Collection at the Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Because John Wesley Dobbs was the Grand Worshipful Master of the Prince Hall affiliated Masons of Georgia, the highest ranking Black Mason, he had significant influence. Dobbs made sure that any man marrying into his family be initiated into the Prince Hall Masonic order. When the elder Dobbs attempted to initiate Hugh into Masonry, Dobbs Buttsorted, “you don’t have to [do this for my sake],” referring to the invitation.¹⁰⁵ As John Wesley Dobbs had done with all of his previous son-in-laws, Hugh expressed interest in joining the Masonry, which pleased the elder Dobbs. Hugh was given his time to be at the Masonic Lodge on Auburn Avenue for the initiation, which was a two day event.¹⁰⁶ As they drove back to New York City after the wedding, Hugh expressed her father’s love for Dobbs Butts that he gleaned from the conversations that were had with John Wesley Dobbs, during the masonic ritual. Hugh Butts articulated, “your father really loves you.”¹⁰⁷ The couple moved to New York City on their honeymoon, where he would begin his internship at the Morrisania Hospital in Bronx.¹⁰⁸

Besides giving birth to her three children, Dobbs Butts also had a twin miscarriage, which took its toll on her physically and emotionally. The couple socialized together in New York City, which included their involvement in the exhibition of “The Portrayal of the Negro in American Painting” held at the Forum Gallery in New York City in the fall of 1967 hosted by the New York Council of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) where Hugh Butts served as the

¹⁰⁵ Auburn Avenue Research Library, “Ascension: The Untold Formative Years of Dr Martin Luther King Jr”, April 22, 2018, YouTube video, 1:33:15, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KCyzL_N7_Qw&fbclid=IwAR2f7syt7uMJJNgi38POLJZCwSLxFyvtjaagBs2MqTAKmc96ALhwbpu0vuY

¹⁰⁶ Gayles Gloria Jean Wade and Mykisha Arnold, *Their Memories, Our Treasure: Conversations with African American Women of Wisdom. Volumes III-IV* (Atlanta, GA: SIS Oral History Project, Spelman College, 2006), 70.

¹⁰⁷ Auburn Avenue Research Library, “Ascension: The Untold Formative Years of Dr Martin Luther King Jr”, April 22, 2018, YouTube video, 1:33:15, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KCyzL_N7_Qw&fbclid=IwAR2f7syt7uMJJNgi38POLJZCwSLxFyvtjaagBs2MqTAKmc96ALhwbpu0vuY

¹⁰⁸ "Miss June Dobbs Weds Dr. Hugh F. Butts of N. Y." *Atlanta Daily World* (1932-2003), June 18, 1953. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/491006221?accountid=11226>.

chairman, while Dobbs Butts served as the Co-Chairman of the exhibition respectively. In addition, they served as hosts for the culinary arts exhibition entitled, “The Portrayal of the Negro in American Cooking” that same year.¹⁰⁹

Dobbs Butts’s marriage to Hugh unraveled due to male and female competition. After receiving her Ed.D. Hugh thought she should hang it on the wall as an accolade and wanted her to only be a wife and mother. Those these are respectable titles, Dobbs Butts wanted more and aspired towards that. Hugh disparaged sex education and did not see human sexuality or sex education as important. Dobbs Butts felt it reached a fever’s pitch and “crystallize[d] that we were moving in different directions.”¹¹⁰ The direct result of this is due to an unsaid and seething intramarital competition because of the takeoffs of both of their respective careers. When Dobbs Butts asked Hugh to attend a conference held at the University of Notre Dame so that she would not be alone. He rejected her. Dobbs Butts remembered that Hugh dismissed her efforts by stating “do your own thing... that will be nice, I’ll see you when you get back [and] we’ll have Thanksgiving.”¹¹¹ It left her feeling rejected as she had attended numerous conferences her Hugh to support him in his work. This became another indicator for Dobbs Butts that her marriage was falling apart.

Other problems evolved when the Buttses purchased a 138-acres of land in Vermont. Dobbs Butts proposed renting out the property as a ski lodge. She placed advertisement in a magazine, which infuriated Hugh. He vehemently expressed his anger by asserting “he was not

¹⁰⁹ “The Portrayal of the Negro in American Painting” Exhibition Catalogue, Forum Gallery, New York, 1967; Preface by June Dobbs Butts and Hugh F. Butts, and invitation, June Dobbs Butts Papers, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.

¹¹⁰ Michael McQueen. “June Dobbs Butts, Pioneer Work on Sex Therapy’s New Frontier”, *The Washington Post*, October 9, 1980.

¹¹¹ June Dobbs Butts. “June Dobbs Butts recalls meeting William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson.”, Interviewed by Shawn Wilson, 13 April 2006, The History Makers Digital Archive. Session 1, Tape 3, Story 4, (The History Makers A2006.076).

going to allow anybody to live there and pay rent.”¹¹² Additionally, Dobbs Butts shared that King’s widow, Coretta Scott King, wanted to spend a summer at the Vermont property to write a book about her life with the King. She had a woman that was going to work with her during that time. Unfortunately, Hugh did not allow her to rent out the property and Dobbs Butts had to call and apologize to Mrs. King that she could not rent out the Vermont property due to her Butts’s objection to it.¹¹³ Besides this, Hugh Butts would not even participate in the *Look* magazine article, “Seven Dobbs Against the Odds,” that featured Dobbs Butts, her sisters and their families, nor be in the picture for it as well. Hugh Butts commented, “They’re just trying to make white America feel better. I can’t stand that idea, that they’re just trying to make white America feel better. They really want to talk about Black people? Talk about a poor, hardworking family while they’re still in Mississippi.”¹¹⁴ Dobbs Butts’s responded to him, “But they’re talking about a family of achievers, and Mattiwilda was making it in opera, especially in Europe – not here, in this country, but in Europe.”¹¹⁵

Finally, Dobbs Butts found out that Hugh was having an affair with a woman at his job. The outside woman in the affair was named Clementine Riggsbee, who served as the chief social worker at the Harlem Hospital. Dobbs Butts pointed out that she had felt that the two were having an affair before she even found out, due to Clementine visiting their home many times for dinner. During this time Riggsbee was married to Junius Kellogg.¹¹⁶ When Riggsbee and

¹¹² June Dobbs Butts. Interviewed by Author, March 2, 2019, Johns Creek, GA. Audio Recording. In Author’s possession.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ June Dobbs Butts. Interviewed by Franklin Abbott, 29 January 2016, Activist Women Oral History Project, Archives for Research on Women and Gender. Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Frank Litsky. “Junius Kellogg Is Dead at 71; Refused Bribe in 50’s Scandal,” *The New York Times*, September 18, 1998, A27. <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/09/18/sports/junius-kellogg-is-dead-at-71-refused-bribe-in-50-s-scandal.html>

Kellogg divorced, Kellogg knew she was going to marry Dr. Butts, because he was her boss.¹¹⁷

To many, this is a typical issue where power is in place of love often seen in extramarital affairs of all types.

Hugh Butts planned to marry Riggsbee going to Mexico, where he could get a Mexican divorce, because it was legal at the time.¹¹⁸ Dobbs Butts never wanted to divorce because she did not want the marriage to be over, but her lawyer told her to let him go and not embarrass herself or Hugh. He was out of the relationship and her lawyer advised to let him go.¹¹⁹ What made Dobbs Butts grant the divorce was finding out Riggsbee was carrying triplets, after taking fertility medicine. Dobbs Butts suffered irreparable damage from the marriage at the hands of a controlling Hugh Butts.

In his new marriage to Riggsbee, Hugh Butts asked Dobbs Butts if their son Eric could be the best man in their wedding. Dobbs Butts objected to this idea because Eric was too young to take on the role as best man and Hugh could not make plans behind her back. Furthermore, Hugh Butts showed no intentions of inviting their two daughters to the wedding. Dobbs Butts

“Junius Kellogg was an ex-basketball player for the Harlem Globetrotters, and was the first African American to play basketball for Manhattan College in 1951. He then joined the army, and later returned to graduate with his class in 1953. He joined the Harlem Globetrotters in 1954, until he ended up in a car accident paralyzing him and damaging his spinal chord. He turned towards coaching for the wheelchair basketball team the Pan Am Jets, leading to four international championships. Then in 1966, he became the first deputy commissioner and director of strategic planning for the Community Development Agency in New York City.”

¹¹⁷ June Dobbs Butts. Interviewed by Author, March 12, 2019, Johns Creek, GA. Audio Recording. In author’s possession.

¹¹⁸ “Known as the quickie divorce, the Mexican Divorce only required 24 hours of legal residence and only one spouse had to be present in court. It was used by many Americans and by Hollywood stars. The old law came to an end on November 7th 1970, when the new law required three month residence instead of one day, and both spouses must be present for a decree to be granted. In addition, if the couple have children they must also be there in order to award custody.”

“Rush for Divorces Precedes Change In Law in Juarez,” The New York Times, November 8, 1970, p. 11, <https://www.nytimes.com/1970/11/08/archives/rush-for-divorces-precedes-change-in-law-in-juarez.html>.

¹¹⁹ June Dobbs Butts. Interviewed by Author, March 23, 2019, Johns Creek, GA. Audio Recording. In Author’s possession.

presents the sexism and misogyny that she endured during her marriage to Butts.¹²⁰ Despite her own feelings, Dobbs Butts would have brought Eric to visit if given a chance. Moreover, Hugh Butts never got over his anger towards Dobbs Butts for not allowing Eric be his best man.

Eventually, Hugh Butts stopped paying child support, which escalated an already volatile situation.¹²¹ Dobbs Butts took Hugh to court four times to force payment of child support. Dobbs Butts recalled having to go to court in New York City, as well as having to meet with a counselor because of accusations that Dobbs Butts “made his life difficult for him”. Another point Dobbs Butts made was with her and her Hugh being counselors to other people, but when it came to being the subject matter and seeking counseling, he did not want to do that. In her words she said: “He did not ever want to take that role of learning from others. He wanted to be in charge. So we were doomed to fade out.”¹²² Dobbs Butts summarized, “I had a good marriage, but a bad divorce.” Dobbs Butts divorced Hugh Butts in December of 1971, a year later her mother Irene Thompson Dobbs passed away. The strain from her failed marriage was why she grieved her mother’s death more than her father’s.

Dobbs Butts wrote a submission for *SAGE: A Scholarly Journal on Black Women* titled, “Goodbye, Mama Be Home When I Get Back,” a reflection on the feeling of not having her mother as long as her five sisters did growing up. Years later, she realized that her mother loved her uniquely. One memorable moment shared by Dobbs Butts was on her twenty-fifth birthday wedding day. Her mother did not let the wedding overshadow her birthday, and made sure there was room for birthday celebration. Dobbs remembered her mother saying, “you gotta have some

¹²⁰ June Dobbs Butts. Interviewed by Author, March 2, 2019, Johns Creek, GA. Audio Recording. In Author’s possession.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² June Dobbs Butts. Interviewed by Author, March 23, 2019, Johns Creek, GA. Audio Recording. In Author’s possession.

you in here.”¹²³ This memory asserts how her mother emphasized that she must celebrate herself. She made frequent visits to see her mother in the nursing home, as she was nearing the end of her old life. At the end of the essay she concludes:

*“Maybe that’s the whole point about memory: it serves to reinforce the lesson which Mama taught me all her life. Contentment means growing up, wiping your own tears away. It means giving real meaning to the ordinary as well as the inevitable events of life, not just the “good times.” It means celebrating life itself and getting on with the business of cherishing family and friends. THANKS, MAMA!”*¹²⁴

The memories Dobbs Butts held of her mother and her wisdom were important to understand how much her mother meant. Despite the fact she was overshadowed by her husband, John Wesley Dobbs, Irene Dobbs played an important role to Dobbs Butts and her sisters’ life and upbringing as Black women.

5.3 The Passing of her Father and Close Friend Dr. King

On August 30th, 1961, June Dobbs Butts’s father John Wesley Dobbs passed away. The elder Dobbs was a race man and civil rights titan. “The death of her father seemed more natural”, Dobbs Butts said.¹²⁵ According to journalist Gary Pomerantz, Dobbs Butts and her older sister Josephine Clement, spent time at their parents’ home collecting their father’s belongings for five weeks until they stumbled upon memorabilia he kept from all six daughters titled, “The Dauntless Dobbs Girls” of Spelman College.¹²⁶ The memorabilia contained, “report

¹²³ June Dobbs Butts. “June Dobbs Butts Describes her Mother”, Interviewed by Shawn Wilson, 13 April 2006, The History Makers Digital Archive. Session 1, Tape 3, Story 1, The History Makers A2006.076).

¹²⁴ June Dobbs Butts. “Goodbye Mama! Be Home When I Get Back!”, *SAGE*, Fall 1987, Vol. IV, No. 2, 48.

¹²⁵ Gloria Jean Wade Gayles and Mykisha Arnold, *Their Memories, Our Treasure: Conversations with African American Women of Wisdom. Volumes III-IV* (Atlanta, GA: SIS Oral History Project, Spelman College, 2006), 74.

¹²⁶ Gary M. Pomerantz, *Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn: The Saga of Two Families and the*

cards, letters, programs from their performances, and a paper trail of his private crusade.”¹²⁷ Both sisters were not only brought to tears by the memorabilia book, but never knew their father as very sentimental.

Another personal moment where Dobbs Butts remembered her father focused on when she married Hugh Butts. After the marriage failed, Dobbs Butts realized that her father was really proud of her. Dobbs Butts stated, “I think my dad was determined that he would have no favorites, probably because he had heard about parents having favorites. He would often say, “I treat all my children the same, and I love them all the same.”¹²⁸ Despite this, the elder Dobbs was proud of his daughter and, “he admired me asking questions and talking about ‘unpopular things.’ It embarrassed him, but he was proud of me.”¹²⁹ Her father’s admiration for her determination, willing to seek truth by asking him uncomfortable questions despite how unpopular or embarrassing they were, exemplified how much he loved and respected his daughter.

Less than seven years after the death of her father, Dobbs Butts’s childhood friend, Dr. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was assassinated in Memphis, TN on April 4th, 1968. Dobbs Butts pointed out her concerns with the attention that King was getting due to his crusade for social justice. She feared for his life and the very fact that he was not afraid of death made it that much more complicated when he died. She returned to Atlanta, GA for his funeral, and staying with a college friend, the Juanita Sellers Stone. There, they went over to the home of the late Rev. and

Making of Atlanta. New York: Scribner, 1996, 286.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 286.

¹²⁸ Gayles Gloria Jean Wade and Mykisha Arnold, *Their Memories, Our Treasure: Conversations with African American Women of Wisdom. Volumes III-IV* (Atlanta, GA: SIS Oral History Project, Spelman College, 2006), 70.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 70.

Mrs. Martin Luther King Sr. to pay their respects as well as see if they needed any sort of assistance. Dobbs Butts was given the task to sew the black veils on the hats to be worn by several women in the King Family, including Coretta Scott King and Christine King Farris.

Reflecting on the friendship between Dobbs Butts and King, they had grown up in the same neighborhood known as Old Fourth Ward. Dobbs Butts was thirteen years old when the King Family moved into the home of 193 Boulevard in the summer of 1941. There, Dobbs Butts not only became friends with Dr. King, she became childhood friends with King's younger brother, A.D. and his sister, Christine. Her father's austere rules during her childhood only allowed his daughters to be around certain boys and the King brothers were the only exception. Dobbs Butts and King's friendship grew out of sharing sociology classes together during their undergraduate years at their respective institutions, Morehouse and Spelman College as well as sitting in King's car "having long talks about the future."¹³⁰ They would talk very frankly about sex and race as well as swap ideas with each other.¹³¹ Dobbs Butts remembered a word of advice that King gave her when he was seventeen years old. He brought the word, "agape," a Greek word which means create a good will, to Dobbs Butts attention. Based on this conversation, "Agape [was] beyond liking; [it was] beyond [the physical.] To do good will or [better yet] 'We shall overcome'."¹³² This advice not only exemplified what King was able to engage in the modern civil rights movement, it also defines Dobbs Butts's good will. Goodwill towards Black

¹³⁰ Nedra Rhone and Helena Oliviero. "Local In-Depth Knowing King: Finding the Real MLK in 2018: Personal Recollections Put Civil Rights Icon Back in the Realm of People." *The Atlanta Journal - Constitution*, March 25, 2018. <https://search.proquest.com/newspapers/local-depth-knowing-king-finding-real-mlk-2018/docview/2017569258/se-2?accountid=11226>.

¹³¹ "Telephone Interview with June Dobbs Butts on Sunday, Nov. 24, 1991", MSS: 890, Box 2 Folder: 6, Gary M. Pomerantz papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

¹³² June Dobbs Butts, "The Black Woman and Sexuality," *Spelman Messenger*, Spring 1984, 48.

society as a Black sexologist and family counselor, which is the reason why she became a sex therapist.

When King skyrocketed into the public conscious during the modern civil rights movement, Dobbs Butts expressed “how afraid for him she was realizing M.L did not have any sense of fear that he was vulnerable and being the most giving person, she knew.”¹³³ In a speech she gave at the 1998 Martin Luther King Jr. National Holiday Celebration at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, she says, “I say unto you that far down the echoing corridors of history – Martin Luther King, Jr. will be remembered – and loved — for his willingness to forget personal danger and to live out his credo by becoming that Drum Major for justice. Don’t you know he tried to do that?”¹³⁴ Her speech summarizes her sentiments of her childhood friend’s legacy on what he tried to accomplish as a one of many Civil Rights leaders.

5.4 Battle with Alcoholism

Another issue Dobbs Butts confronted was her battle with alcoholism. Her addiction started around 1953, after she married Hugh Butts. Even after the tumultuous marriage ended, she still struggle with drinking. Out of counseling, she had no intention to end her addiction which made her miserable. In 1988, Dobbs Butts realized she had an alcohol addiction when she found out that her son Eric struggled with addiction. She expressed that, “she could not handle alcohol very well and said, it grows on you and incapacitates you in so many ways.”¹³⁵ In her

¹³³ Auburn Avenue Research Library, “Ascension: The Untold Formative Years of Dr Martin Luther King Jr”, April 22, 2018, YouTube video, 1:33:15, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KCyzL_N7_Qw&fbclid=IwAR2f7syt7uMJJNgi38POLJZCwSLxFyvtjaagBs2MqTAKmc96ALhwbpu0vuY

¹³⁴ “June Dobbs Butts, “Tribute Celebrating the 69th year of Dr. King’s birth, the 30th year of his Death and the 13th year of the National Holiday”, January 19, 1998, June Dobbs Butts Papers, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.

¹³⁵ June Dobbs Butts. “June Dobbs Butts Describes Her Struggles with Alcoholism”, Interviewed by Shawn Wilson, 13 April 2006, The History Makers Digital Archive. Session 1, Tape 3, Story 10, (The History Makers A2006.076).

own words, Dobbs Butts described that alcohol made her personality change. She was argumentative, sloppy, would run her thoughts together when she would ordinarily have a clear mindset. After reflecting, she realized that she was not pleasant she was an alcoholic.¹³⁶ Additionally, a clear indication of Dobbs Butts's addiction was that when she cooked, she put wine or brandy in everything except for desserts.¹³⁷

In 1988, Dobbs Butts joined Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) to combat her alcoholism. While confronting her own battle, she became a certified addiction counselor. In 1990, she served as an instructor for The Center for Addictions Training & Education of the Washington Area Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Inc. (WACADA). The course was titled, "Human Sexuality and Addictions". The course had two outlining goals; A knowledge base about human sexuality based on insights from the inter-related fields of Sex Research, Sex Therapy, and Sex Education; and a positive perspective for adults whose socio-sexual development has been arrested due to alcohol/drug."¹³⁸

In addition to her course for WACADA, Dobbs Butts also taught a seven-week counselor training course titled, "Sexuality and Recovery" for the Addiction Prevention Recovery Administration (formerly known as Alcohol Drug Abuse Service Administration (ADASA) for the District of Columbia). Furthermore, Dobbs Butts's confrontation with her own alcoholism allowed her to help others who were battling it themselves. Dobbs Butts stayed sober for 31 years continuously, which was a badge of honor that she wore proudly.

¹³⁶ June Dobbs Butts. Interviewed by Author, March 23, 2019, Johns Creek, GA. Audio Recording. In Author's possession.

¹³⁷ June Dobbs Butts. "June Dobbs Butts Describes Her Struggles with Alcoholism", Interviewed by Shawn Wilson, 13 April 2006, The History Makers Digital Archive. Session 1, Tape 3, Story 10, (The History Makers A2006.076).

¹³⁸ The Center for Addictions Training & Education of the Washington Area Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Inc. WACADA 1990 Spring-Summer, Catalog of Course Offerings, Washington D.C., 1990, June Dobbs Butts Papers, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.

5.5 Her Relationship with Her Children

Dobbs Butts' alcoholism had a negative impact on her relationships with all three of her children. She said her children felt that she was a different person without sober judgement. In addition, Dobbs Butts described that she was hard to talk to; would get silly and laugh or wander off a subject. She remembered that her children would not talk with her after dinnertime was over but ran to their rooms and locked their doors. The main cause of this is her own struggle with alcoholism.

After her marriage, Dobbs Butts was careful about not bringing men into her life, in general, and into her home, in particular. When dating, she would get a babysitter for her children and would go out of town to meet men.¹³⁹ In addition, she made sure to not let any of her romantic interests interfere with her children, because she did not want any of the men she was dating trying to get to them.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, she was trying to protect her children.

By the time all her children were off to college, they all struggled to get through. Their tuition was not paid on time and they were put out of the dining halls, dormitory, and their classes. Both daughters and their only son had to work in order to stay in college.¹⁴¹ Her son Eric was working in a downtown Atlanta hotel and started attending Howard University in 1981. He struggled academically, financially, and socially. Dobbs Butts withdrew Eric from Howard the following year and enrolled him into Morehouse College in 1983. Eventually, Eric dropped out of college and disappeared. Dobbs Butts was unable to find him for several years. She noted her

¹³⁹ June Dobbs Butts. Interviewed by Author, March 23, 2019, Johns Creek, GA. Audio Recording. In Author's possession.

¹⁴⁰ June Dobbs Butts. Interviewed by Author, March 2, 2019, Johns Creek, GA. Audio Recording. In Author's possession.

¹⁴¹ June Dobbs Butts. Interviewed by Author, March 23, 2019, Johns Creek, GA. Audio Recording. In Author's possession.

son enrolled in Alcoholics Anonymous and has been sober since 2014. Dobbs Butts noted that she was proud and happy for Eric's accomplishment.¹⁴²

One issue dealing with her son was his struggle with loneliness and wanting a better relationship with his father. In her own words, Dobbs Butts stated that her ex-husband wanted to get custody of Eric. He flew his son out to see him but would not let his daughters Lucia and Florence come and visit him, displaying a tone of hypocrisy, sexism, misogyny, and disrespect towards his two eldest children and to Dobbs Butts.¹⁴³

During this time, their oldest daughter Lucia, had already began her studies at Smith College, while her younger daughter Florence and Eric Butts were still living with Dobbs Butts. Lucia eventually transferred to Amherst College, graduating with her Bachelor's Degree in 1977. She would not allow her mother to lecture at any of the institutions she attended. Dobbs Butts told Lucia, "I'm not coming to work in the kitchen, though there's nothing wrong with that. I'm coming to lecture."¹⁴⁴ Dobbs Butts described her Lucia's personality as very disciplined and self-conscious. She played the piano very well. However, if someone did not compliment her, especially when they sat and listened to her play, she would fly into her room upset.¹⁴⁵ This is an example of how Dobbs Butts described the extremely sensitive nature of her oldest daughter. Dobbs Butts also said she did not make friends easily and kept to herself a lot. Lucia died on August 21st, 2011 as a result of cancer.

¹⁴² June Dobbs Butts. Interviewed by Franklin Abbott, 29 January 2016, Activist Women Oral History Project, Archives for Research on Women and Gender. Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University.

¹⁴³ June Dobbs Butts. Interviewed by Author, March 2, 2019, Johns Creek, GA. Audio Recording. In Author's possession.

¹⁴⁴ Michael McQueen. "June Dobbs Butts, Pioneer Work On Sex Therapy's New Frontier", *The Washington Post*, October 9, 1980.

¹⁴⁵ June Dobbs Butts. Interviewed by Author, March 2, 2019, Johns Creek, GA. Audio Recording. In Author's possession.

Her middle child and second daughter was Florence. Dobbs Butts described her as “very good-looking, extremely dark with gorgeous hair, beautiful eyes, and delightful and funny.” She had a warm and vibrant personality. Florence graduated from the University of Maryland with her Bachelor’s Degree in the summer session in 1981.¹⁴⁶ Her daughter nicknamed “Flory,” started a group called Flory’s Group which included a mix of musical instruments, painting, cooking, and dancing. Dobbs Butts enjoyed Florence’s and her family’s company, who visited her whenever she traveled to conferences, or when she lived in Washington DC. However, a moment occurred when Dobbs Butts and her daughter had a falling out when Florence asserted that she was a bad mother due to her alcoholism. Dobbs Butts stated, “I think I was a good mother, but I wish I had been an even better one.”¹⁴⁷ Here Dobbs Butts realized that with all that her she tried to be, she needed to be more for her children, who were sensitive to her issues during her alcoholism. Here, she reinforced that being a good mother meant listening to her children, as well as trying to understand them. The relationship between Florence and Dobbs Butts improved, and they began to have better and heartfelt conversations in 2019, just before Dobbs Butts transitioned. Some of those conversations included the discussions of the collection of Zen Fables that Florence had rediscovered. Dobbs Butts read them to her children years ago and her Florence would reread them to her and talk about it. Through these Zen Fables, Dobbs Butts looked at them as a form of a prayer service, because people see a bigger truth coming out of it, as well as to relate and to meditate. In addition, in an oral interview she says:

¹⁴⁶ “The Dobbs Family Newsletter June 1981 Vol. 4 No. 4, by Willie Dobbs Blackburn”, Box 4, Folder 18: Family Newsletters: 1981-1984, John Wesley Dobbs Family papers, Amistad Research Center at Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

¹⁴⁷ June Dobbs Butts. Interviewed by Author, March 2, 2019, Johns Creek, GA. Audio Recording. In Author’s possession.

“Some of the things we wanted or we tell ourselves we want, when you really look deeply into the situation, what we want maybe is attention, or comfort, or somebody to listen to us, to admire us, something to make you feel good. It is when you make somebody else happy that you are the [happiest]. So the hero in the book is the one who can come through a difficult situation. Do something for someone else and that's your reward. That's one lesson I have learned that making others happy, not just smile, but better off or comfortable.”¹⁴⁸

Through the Zen Fables, her reflection present her willingness to not only to make others happy, but to improve their quality of life through her own work as a Sex Therapist, a counselor, a Black woman, and as a mother.

5.6 Conclusion

In an interview with one of Dobbs Butts closest friends, Franklin Abbott, Abbott stated “Dobbs Butts had a strong personality that would have never allowed herself to be dominated. She had to put up with a lot of sexism that was systemic within the men in her family, her ex-husband Dr. Hugh F. Butts, and even with people she worked with.”¹⁴⁹ The trials and tribulations Dr. June Dobbs Butts dealt with in her life showed examples that were relatable to the issues Black women face today when dealing with misogyny, sexual violence, sexism that are connected with battling cis-hetero male patriarchy in not only just in society but dealing with Black men in our own Black communities and families.

¹⁴⁸ June Dobbs Butts. Interviewed by Author, March 12, 2019, Johns Creek, GA. Audio Recording. In Author's possession.

¹⁴⁹ Franklin Abbott. Interviewed by Author, August 21, 2020. Zoom & Audio Recording. In Author's possession.

6 FINAL YEARS & LEGACY

6.1 Returning to Atlanta

In 1994, Dr. June Dobbs Butts returned to her hometown of Atlanta, Georgia to accept a position as a Visiting Scientist at the Center for Disease Control (CDC) from its former director Dr. David Satcher. She served in that capacity for seven years. More specifically, she served as a community liaison for the agency Public Health Practice Program Office (PHPPO), who coordinated with CDC's public health input into the Atlanta Empowerment Zone. Established in November 1994, as "a ten-year, \$250 million federal program to revitalize the poorest neighborhoods in Atlanta focusing on workforce development, giving poor men and women a second chance residential center, and helping high school drop-outs."¹⁵⁰ There, Dobbs Butts focused on helping community-based organizations stop teen pregnancy, which she saw as an essential part to drug and violence prevention".¹⁵¹ Other tasks included, "looking at violence as part of public health, working in a subdivision area for a few years, and looked at public health programs."¹⁵²

While serving as visiting scientist at the CDC, she travelled extensively to conferences engaging research around AIDS for the CDC; a medical convention in Florida; and a conference at Vorhees College where Dobbs Butts presented a paper titled, "Breaking the Cycle of Violence Against Women."¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ John Sherman, "Empowerment Zone: Boondoggle or Aid to Poor?," Atlanta Business Chronicle , November 6, 2000, <https://www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/stories/2000/11/06/editorial5.html>.

¹⁵¹ "Family Heritage" 1st Congregational Theme April 20th." *Atlanta Daily World (1932-2003)*, April 17, 1997. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/491787580?accountid=11226>.

¹⁵² June Dobbs Butts. "June Dobbs Butts Remembers Teaching in the Atlanta University Center Consortium", Interviewed by Shawn Wilson, 13 April 2006, The History Makers Digital Archive. Session 1, Tape 4, Story 5, (The History Makers A2006.076).

¹⁵³ "The Dobbs Family Newsletter December 1994 Vol. 20 No. 2 by Willie Dobbs Blackburn", Box 4 Folder 21: Family Newsletter 1993-94, John Wesley Dobbs Family papers, Amistad Research Center at Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

At this particular conference, Dobbs Butts's speech opened when she uttered, "Violence, which is perpetrated upon young women is almost always sexual in nature". Her point was that society encourages male sexual aggression, and sexual violence against with the morally feeble excuse, "Oh well – he just got sexually aroused"¹⁵⁴. Dobbs Butts called out sexual violence for what it was, and drew a line in the sand especially for all men who continued to allow it to happen without unpacking, as well as unlearning patriarchal and misogynistic views that are harmful towards women. In her speech she proposed three solutions towards combating sexual violence:

1). "Offer Sexuality Education and Services – by adopting three methods of implementing the strategy to offer it which includes, Heterosexual Concerns, Homosexual Concerns, and Common Sexual Concerns."

2). Eliminate Hazing in Fraternities and Sororities. Dobbs Butts asserts that "Hazing is clearly violence with a college degree" as well as an example of the "sexual paraphilias known sadism and masochism." The solution is helping students learn how to cooperate and "have a ball" replacing "cut throat competition."

3). Foster "Study Circles" for Academic Credit which Dobbs Butts expresses that for HBCUs, building self-esteem is an essential part of healthy development for young women because of the sexual "double standard."¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ "Breaking the Cycle of Violence Against Women – June Dobbs Butts, Voorhees College, October 24, 1994", Josephine Clement Papers, 1937-1998, The Southern Historical Collection at the Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

These three working strategies were what Dobbs Butts proposed to HBCU administrators in order to combat against violence towards women. She concluded her speech by stating, “When our HBCUs initiate changes in the above described areas of campus life, I am sure we will see a break in the cycle of violence against women!”¹⁵⁶ Her speech at Voorhees College spoke to the issues of sexual violence towards Black women and holding men accountable for their violent actions.

To expand on her point, she spoke at the 1982 symposium *Black Women and Public Policy: Issues for the 1980s* discussing violence against women at her alma mater Spelman College. In this speech, she asserted the “need to reeducate people to the pitfalls leading to violence.” She also noted stated, “Mothers make excuses for their sons and that women aid to put down other women with society’s double standards. We put ourselves down for the man’s pleasure; think about your long range. Love yourself a little more. Respect your sisters. Seek new self-esteem.”¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, she addressed the issue of men and sexual ignorance in the 1983 *Ebony* magazine interview article by Charles Sanders titled, “Dr. June Dobbs Butts: How Did A Nice Lady Like Her Get to Be An Expert On Sex?” When addressing the errors that Black men make in sexual relationships, she stated, “Too few Black men feel that a woman is a real pal. Too many think, Well, she’s O.K. as a ‘good-time thing.’ When a man only shares his innermost feelings with other men, when he has no close friends who happen to be female, then he cuts himself off from understanding more than half the world. He misses out on female thinking which can be rich, sustaining and often downright humorous.”¹⁵⁸ As for sexual ignorance, Dobbs

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ “Violence Against Women”, *Spelman Messenger Campus Issue 1982/83*, 1983, 16.

¹⁵⁸ Charles L. Sanders. "Dr. June Dobbs Butts: How Did A Nice Lady Like Her Get to Be An Expert On Sex." *Ebony*, May 1983, 144.

Butts stated that “Many of us need basic sex education. We simply don’t know anything—certainly not enough—about human sexuality. For example, many men believe that the vagina is nothing more than a receptacle for his pleasure rather than an active organ in its own right. They don’t know that this part of the woman is quite resistant to penetration unless and until she is psychologically ‘turned on.’”¹⁵⁹ These points, articulated from 1982 and 1983, were still relevant in discussion sexual violence towards Black women in 1994 when it comes to dealing with Black men. Later, Dobbs Butts participated in a forum on “Breaking the Cycle of Violence” hosted by the National Education Service Foundation in Washington DC held in November of 1994. This would continue the conversation about youth violence as well as violence towards women. This is just a glimpse into Dobbs Butts activities when she served as visiting scientist for the CDC. But how does this bode today? How is it discussed in literature and classrooms? Again, this needs to be developed even more.

In 1995, Dobbs Butts worked with the Employee Assistance Program to establish a chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) in Atlanta. Through her own experience, she believed “alcoholism to be a chronic, progressive, and potentially fatal disease. At the opening meeting for the newly established Alcoholics Anonymous chapter, seventy-five people were in the audience.”¹⁶⁰ Also, Dobbs Butts “traveled to Detroit, Michigan’s Wayne State University to conduct a seminar for the freshman class and to team-teach with Dr. William Chavis, a professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Wayne State University’s medical school.”¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 146.

¹⁶⁰ “Dobbs Family Newsletter, March 1995” Vol. 20, No. 3 by Willie Dobbs Blackburn”, Box 4, Folder 22: Family Newsletter: Dobbs Family, 1995-1997, John Wesley Dobbs Family papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

While maintaining a busy schedule as a visiting scientist at the CDC, Dobbs Butts continued to visit family whenever she travelled. If she was unable to visit family members in town, she made phone calls. In 1995, her daughter Florence, and her granddaughter Aisha, moved in with her. Dobbs Butts attended the Dobbs Family Reunion in 1997 and eventually travelled to Bermuda with her sister, Mattiwilda Dobbs Janzon, after the reunion. Dobbs Butts displayed a lot of balance and priority involving her career and family when she moved back to Atlanta.

Her position at the CDC paid for her teaching positions, which included serving as adjunct professor at the Public Health Sciences Institute at Morehouse College for two years; a Research Fellow in the Department of Community Health and Preventive Medicine at Morehouse School of Medicine for another two years; visiting CDC Professor in the Department of Pastoral Care at the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC). During this time, she taught courses at ITC, which included Chemical Dependency & Addiction Prevention (2001), and Spirituality and Sexuality (2002). The objective for students in Dobbs Butts's Chemical Dependency & Addiction Prevention course was to demonstrate knowledge of chemical and behavioral addictions as well as prevention methods, acquisition of spiritual counseling skills, written reports on change (-i.e., how the field work experience was perceived (objectively) by youthful offenders as well as (subjectively) by seminarians. For her Spirituality and Sexuality course, students had to demonstrate a personal code of ethics based on knowledge of biological, social, and spiritual aspects of human sexuality, acquisition of counseling skills involving listening and self-disclosure, an appreciation for the art of meditation, and practicing teamwork through rudimentary research skills.

In an oral interview conducted by History Makers, Dobbs Butts discussed her Spirituality and Sexuality course. Here, she explained that she could not tell seminarians what kind of sexual person to be. Only they knew their dreams because that is more biological due to human sexuality being part of biology and culture.¹⁶² For her Addiction and Recovery course, she had seminarians in her course who were former drug users and had sexual problems but still attend church and eventually get married.”¹⁶³ Dobbs Butts introduced two courses to the curriculum at ITC and continued her work as a sexologist, visiting scientist and professor for the CDC.

6.2 Family Transitioning

As the years passed, Dobbs Butts lost those who were closest to her, of which were her sisters. As the youngest Dobbs girl, she outlived them all. Her sister, Millicent Dobbs Jordan, passed away 1991 at the age of 80; seven years later, her sister Josephine Dobbs Clement passed in 1998 also at the age of 80; in 1999, her eldest sister, Irene Dobbs Jackson, passed away at the age of 90; her sister, Willie Juliet Dobbs Blackburn, passed in 2011 at the age of 101; and the sister closest to her in age, Mattiwilda Dobbs Janzon passed away in 2015 at the age of 90. For four years, Dr. June Dobbs Butts was the only Dobbs sister left in the Dobbs Family. She lost her oldest daughter, Lucia Irene Vincent, to cancer in 2011. Her friend Franklin Abbott pointed out what challenged Dobbs Butts was the “difficulty of being less famous and not being as noteworthy as her five sisters, her father John Wesley Dobbs, her nephew Maynard Jackson, and

¹⁶² June Dobbs Butts. “June Dobbs Butts Remembers Teaching in the Atlanta University Center Consortium”, Interviewed by Shawn Wilson, 13 April 2006, The History Makers Digital Archive. Session 1, Tape 4, Story 5, (The History Makers A2006.076).

¹⁶³ Ibid.

close friend Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. By the time all of them passed on Dobbs Butts humorously said “it’s my turn now”.¹⁶⁴

6.3 Final Years

As Dobbs Butts aged, she began to experience a series of illnesses. In 2003, she underwent heart surgery at Emory University Hospital.¹⁶⁵ Years later, she was sent to hospice four times. However, her fighting spirit allowed for her to be released back to her family. In 2019, Dobbs Butts health failed and she was put on hospice for her final days. Dr. June Dobbs Butts passed away on May 13, 2019, at 90 years old. She left behind an endearing legacy of activism and goodwill that deserves to be known. Dobbs Butts was not just your ordinary Black woman. She was a Black scholar, sex therapist, family counselor, and a Black feminist whose bold and radical ideas on sex and sexuality left an impact on the Black community as well as Black women. Quite simply, she was the “Last Dame of a Dynasty.”

6.4 The Personality of Dr. June Dobbs Butts

In oral interviews with Dobbs Butts, she shared some of her favorite things. Her favorite place to travel internationally was Rome because of its beauty. For domestic travel is New York City for being multifaceted, because people did not have to spend too much money and were able to do so many things for free like parks were very orderly during her time of living. Her favorite color is blue; she loved working with her big sisters, and loved to dance and says, “she could dance all night.” Dobbs Butts also loved being in places like meadows where she could run and play and just roll in the hills for fun. Some things she always wanted to do but never had the

¹⁶⁴ Franklin Abbott. Interviewed by Author, August 21, 2020. Zoom & Audio Recording. In Author’s possession.

¹⁶⁵ “Postcard from Mattiwilda Dobbs Janzon to Pierce (Lu) Allgood.”, 2003. Purchased by the author through eBay; now donated to Spelman College Archives to be part of the Mattiwilda Dobbs Janzon Papers Collection, Spelman College, Atlanta, GA.

opportunity in life included growing vegetables, and even learning how to swim. In the History Makers oral history interview she was asked did she have any desire to be something when she grew up when she was a little girl in the first grade? Dobbs Butts response was that she wanted to be Amelia Earhart because she was her idol as a child. She wanted to be an aviatrix, but unfortunately she lost her bravado and courage.¹⁶⁶ Dobbs Butts' personality can be described as humorous, intellectual, full of wisdom, and free-spirited. She was an independent thinker and a rebel at heart.

As an adult, she was always an atheist due to her upbringing and her father was never a religious fanatic. Additionally, her own viewpoint of God changed, because she does not use gender to categorize the creator. The type of origin, she believed, is like the mother light and more so believed that God is not a man but a woman. During my final interview with her on April 26th, 2019, she shared some final words of wisdom to Dr. Maurice Hobson and myself. What she shared was this,

“Every birth is individual. Doctors will tell you every birth they go to there’s something new, something slightly different. Older mother, younger mother, sickly baby, better, or stronger baby, something is a little different, but we are more different as people as we die. The story of our birth is often repeated, but you will never know the story of your death. With death you got to go through it. You don’t leave it; you go through it and then we’re someplace else”¹⁶⁷.

What she said was about balance, and when we come into this world, we leave out of this world, and we must live our lives to its fullest potential.

¹⁶⁶ June Dobbs Butts. “June Dobbs Butts Describes her Schooling in Atlanta, Georgia” Interviewed by Shawn Wilson, 13 April 2006, The History Makers Digital Archive. Session 1, Tape 1, Story 10, (The History Makers A2006.076).

¹⁶⁷ June Dobbs Butts. Interview with Je’lon Alexander and Dr. Maurice Hobson. Tape recording. Personal Interview. Johns Creek, GA, April 26, 2019.

6.5 The People She's Met In Her Life

Dobbs Butts met as well as worked with various people throughout her life and career. This included scholars such as Dr's. Gail Wyatt, Ouida Westney, Renne R. Jenkins, and Irving Williams to name a few. Outside of academia, she met various notable people which included Audre Lorde, and Dr. Jocelyn Elders, Dr. Ruth Westheimer who was one of her colleagues at Teachers College at Columbia University when she was getting her doctorate degree. Dobbs Butts describes Dr. Westheimer as "having a path similar to hers, being a livewire, funny, humorous, and insightful".¹⁶⁸ For Dr. Jocelyn Elders, Dobbs Butts cannot recall when she met her but she recalls hearing her speak because she was writing at that time before Dr. Elders became the 15th Surgeon General of the United States (1993-1994).

Dr. Gail Wyatt, a clinical psychologist, sex therapist, and professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at UCLA was also a close friend and colleague of Dobbs Butts.¹⁶⁹ Wyatt describes her as a pioneer in human sexuality. Dobbs Butts and Wyatt met through conferences as well as mutual friends that knew they were specialized in Black sexuality. When it came to writing with Dobbs Butts, Wyatt in her words said "was a joy; she was a brilliant and working woman, with innovative ideas and strong opinions."¹⁷⁰ Wyatt and Dobbs Butts contributed a book chapter entitled "The Sexual Experience of Afro-American Women: A Middle-Income Sample" for the book, *Women Sexual Experience: Exploration of*

¹⁶⁸ June Dobbs Butts. "June Dobbs Butts Describes How She Became Involved in Sex Therapy", Interviewed by Shawn Wilson, April 13, 2006, The History Makers Digital Archive. Session 1, Tape 3, Story 3, (The History Makers A2006.076).

¹⁶⁹ Wednesday Martin. *Untrue: Why Nearly Everything We Believe About Women, Lust, and Infidelity Is Wrong and How the New Science Can Set Us Free*. (Little Brown Spark, 2019), 217-221. "Dr. Gail Wyatt, became the first licensed Black woman psychologist in California and published the nation's first study on African American female sexuality in 1988, using a 478-item structured interview she developed herself known as the Wyatt Sex History Questionnaire."

¹⁷⁰ Gail E. Wyatt. Email to Author, August 9, 2019.

the Dark Continent” in 1982. Dobbs Butts was responsible for the discussion of the book chapter entitled, “Further Thoughts on a Group Discussion by Black Women about Sexuality”

Throughout the years Dobbs Butts and Wyatt kept in touch by phone or email, and had many laughs about life and their children’s antics. These were the memories Dr. Gail Wyatt remembers about Dobbs Butts when they worked together as colleagues on things they were passionate about, which was human sexuality.

Jan Buckner-Walker remembers Dobbs Butts as a woman who “never touted her accomplishments, or even hear her say anything about her professional or her acclaim; she was not self-impressed, she just did excellence.”¹⁷¹ Additionally, “she did not have limits on people’s possibilities, she was an unlimited person in terms of what it is you can do with your life along with not agreeing with sexual norms and constraints.”¹⁷² Walker says Dobbs Butts was the only grown person she was friends with who was divorced when she was a student at Howard University. One-word Walker uses to describe Dobbs Butts is “unrestricted” in terms of her thinking and way of living where she was not restricted about what she thought about in regards to membership and society in which she was not a part of it, nor did she not sign onto the social contract of it, which included restrictions about age, gender, and race.¹⁷³

Franklin Abbott met Dobbs Butts through his friend Jeff Glauser, who knew her as well as her sister the late Mattiwilda Dobbs Janzon, at a recreational center in Atlanta for seniors. This was around the time she was very ill, and Glauser shared one of Abbott’s poems about what happens when we pass through and out of this life which was meaningful to her in a sense that Dobbs Butts felt that she was not going to survive her illness. Abbott recalls that Dobbs Butts

¹⁷¹ Jan Buckner Walker. Interviewed by author, July 28, 2020, Atlanta, GA. Zoom & Audio Recording. In Author’s possession.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

was a spiritual person but not a religious person or a practicing Christian; however, she did believe in a higher power. Dobbs Butts asked to meet Franklin Abbott while she was living in Buckhead while preparing to move to a different senior living center in Johns Creek, GA. Abbott remembers Dobbs Butts always being herself, so gregarious, and had a vibrant social life. There was a gathering of people or a party she had, and Jeff Glauser and Franklin Abbott were the only white men there; however, they felt included and it never seemed to be a barrier in Dobbs Butts and Abbott's friendship. He always felt a sense of welcome in her world. There were many things that Franklin Abbott appreciated about Dr. June Dobbs Butts, which was her having a big heart and being compassionate which is the one word he best describes her. She always made time for people, having a kind word, and was always concerned in terms of how others were doing."¹⁷⁴ The memories from Franklin Abbott about Dobbs Butts continue to exemplify her impact on the people she held close to her heart.

6.6 The Impact & Legacy of Dr. June Dobbs Butts

Wednesday Martin, PhD a feminist author, and social researcher features Dr. June Dobbs Butts in her latest work, *"Untrue: Why Nearly Everything We Believe About Women, Lust, and Infidelity Is Wrong and How the New Science Can Set Us Free."* Additionally, Martin features Dobbs Butts alongside another pioneer, Dr. Gail Wyatt. Martin also mentions today's sexologist and sexuality educator Frenchie Davis, who follows the footsteps of Dobbs Butts and Wyatt through "helping her audience understanding the impact between sexuality and spirituality, sexual agency, sexuality development and diversity in order to create a sex positive culture."¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Franklin Abbott. Interviewed by Author, August 21, 2020. Zoom & Audio Recording. In Author's possession.

¹⁷⁵ Frenchie Davis. About Frenchie Davis. Libido Talk. March 10, 2020.
<http://www.libidotalk.com/about-2/>

Today, a recent journal article entitled, “Balancing the Sexology Scales: A Content Analysis of Black Women Sexuality Research” written by Dr. Candace Nicole Hargons cites, Dobbs Butts as “a foremother in sex positive Black research, after writing her 1977 journal article, “Inextricable Aspects of Sex and Race” calling for a more comprehensive examination of Black sexualities.”¹⁷⁶ Additionally, Hargons notes that research on Black women sexualities continued to be understudied and scarce along with not enough research literature on sex-positivity attending to Black women’s intersecting identities.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, Hargons concludes, “a greater research emphasis on sex positivity and intersectionality will lead to a better understanding of how worldviews, culture and identity influence the sexuality and sexual behaviours of Black women.”¹⁷⁸ The work Dobbs Butts contributed to Black and human sexuality left an impact on the Black community in order to extricate the negative views pertaining to Black sexuality, as well as Black women to create a new image of sex positivity. As Hargons already mentioned in her journal article, more work must be done regarding Black sexuality today.

In the context of Black Feminism, Dobbs Butts encouraged Black women to be liberated sexually and spiritually. Additionally, she wanted Black women to realize there is nothing wrong with their bodies or even themselves individually and not be confined by patriarchal, misogynistic, and sexist societal beliefs. In her own words Dobbs Butts says, “Today’s woman certainly can choose. She can choose and she must choose whether to have children and how many and how to conduct her life and take care of her body.”¹⁷⁹ Dobbs Butts encouraged Black

¹⁷⁶ Candice Nicole Hargons et al., “Balancing the Sexology Scales: A Content Analysis of Black Women’s Sexuality Research,” *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, August 3, 2020, pp. 1-15, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2020.1776399>, 8.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 8.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 11.

¹⁷⁹ June Dobbs Butts, “The Black Woman and Sexuality,” *Spelman Messenger*, Spring 1984, 50.

women to have a choice in terms of their decisions in life including having children. Another point she emphasizes for Black women is understanding, “Love is a fantasy. Remember that talk is cheap. Talk about a book you’ve read or a lecture at Spelman. Don’t just be on the receiving line. There’s a wide range of feelings. When our feelings are in control, we are happy with ourselves.”¹⁸⁰ One last word of wisdom Dobbs Butts offered to the students at Spelman College at the end of her session on The Black Woman and Sexuality course, she says “find out more about your body. Don’t just continue life, but hold on to the good parts. Let us trust each other — tall, short, light, dark, educated, uneducated, fat, thin, gay or straight. If you are interested in a total female sexuality, be honest. It’s the beautiful sex organ between your ears, not between your legs that follows what your mind says. Stay whole and stay well.”¹⁸¹ These powerful words from Dr. June Dobbs Butts is what made her stand out as a Black sexologist and a family counselor. Her work left a pivotal mark for current Black sexologists and feminist scholars who continue the work she already started.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 50.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 50.

7 CONCLUSION

The life and legacy of Dr. June Dobbs Butts is she came from humbled beginnings. She was a Spelman woman, a New Yorker, a diva, a rebel, and an independent thinker who was outspoken towards improving the sexual livelihood of Black women. What made Dr. June Dobbs Butts different from her five older sisters and the entire Dobbs Family was redefining what it meant to be a Dobbs. While all five of her sisters were successful and impactful in their endeavors, Dobbs Butts was the fresh disturbing wind of change in the family. Rev. Elizabeth Mitchell Clement, relative of Dr. June Dobbs Butts gave the eulogy at her memorial service said, “Dobbs Butts job was to re-interpret that code when she arrived almost a full generation after her oldest sister. Her job when she came along—her GIFT, if you will—was to bring fresh meaning to the legacy and its impact on the world.”¹⁸² Dr. June Dobbs Butts did just that by re-coding what it means to be a Dobbs, a pioneer in human sexuality leaving an everlasting impact on Black communities and Black women which is why she is the last dame of the dynasty.

¹⁸² Elizabeth Mitchell Clement, Eulogy for June Selena Dobbs Butts “A Fresh Wind to Celebrate”, Eulogy, First Congregational Church, UCC, Atlanta, GA, June 11 2019.

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