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The History of Social Work Education for Black People 1900–1930

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The nature and extent of the contributions of Black people to social work education during the early twentieth century is the focus of this paper. The scope of this investigation includes: the identification of prominent Black social work educators; analysis of the curricula and the Atlanta School of Social Work and the Bishop Turtle School; and a description of the four basic approaches to social work training for Black people during this development phase of the social work profession.

During the early twentieth century, social workers participated in many activities designed to promote professional status for social work (Axinn and Levin, 1975; Chambers, 1963; Cohen, 1958; Lubove, 1965; and Trattner, 1974). Social workers gave priority to the following activities during this period: 1) demonstration to the public that everybody "with love in his heart" could not do social work in a professional manner; 2) identification of knowledge and skills necessary for the practice of social work; 3) the establishment of schools for the training of social workers; 4) the development of professional organizations; 5) the publication of major books dealing with social work theory and practice; 6) the development of professional journals; and 7) an identification of values shared by social workers.

Black social workers played significant roles in the development of the social work profession, in the delivery of social services, and the establishment of programs to educate social workers (Cromwell, 1977; Franklin, 1974; Gary and Gary, 1977; Jones, 1928). For example, the third edition of *Who's Who in*

Colored America (Yenser, 1933) listed several Black social work educators who distinguished themselves during the period under study. Some of the individuals listed in this volume were: Eva D. Bowles, E. Franklin Frazier, Eugene Kinckle Jones, George E. Haynes, and Forrester B. Washington. However, the legacies of Black social work educators and leaders are missing in most histories of social welfare and social work (Platt and Chandler, 1988). In this paper, the authors will utilize primary and secondary information for the purpose of documenting the education of Black people for social work between 1900–1930. As in the past, social work is a diverse profession, reflecting the society of which it is a part. Today's social work students and faculty members need to be knowledgeable regarding the contributions that different ethnic groups in our society have made to the development of the profession.

In this exploratory effort, the authors reviewed the catalogues of the Atlanta School of Social Work and Bishop Tuttle School; conducted a selective review of the literature focusing on journals such as *Opportunity*, *Crisis*, *Southern Workman* and *Social Forces*, and examined historical documents such as *The Negro Yearbook* (Work, 1925); *Who's Who in Colored America* (Yenser, 1933) and *The Social Work Yearbook* (Haynes, 1935; Robinson, 1929; Washington, 1933). It is not the intent of this paper to focus on white social work educators for these pioneers in the field have been discussed in various histories of social work and social welfare (Abott, 1937; Bruno, 1948; Compton, 1980; Leiby, 1978; Zastrow, 1978). However, white social work educators did play important roles in the development of social work programs at historically Black colleges where most Blacks received their education for social work during the period under study.

Historical Context

In order to better understand the contributions of Blacks to social work education, it is helpful to examine briefly the social forces of this period which is very important from the perspective of social work education and American social welfare history. According to Smith and Zietz (1970), there was a significant growth of government responsibilities for the needy and the establishment of several national private welfare associations. Two of the most important and predominantly Black

social welfare agencies (the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the National Urban League) were founded during this period (Kellog, 1967; Parris, 1971; and Weiss, 1974). There was a significant shift in the Black population in the United States (Allen, 1974; Farley, 1970). In her book, *Black Migration: Movement North 1900–1920*, Henri (1975) referred to this period as “the great migration” especially between 1916–1920. She documented the basic factors such as low wages, bad treatment by whites, violence and injustice, and segregation and discrimination that influenced the movement of Black people from rural areas in the south to urban areas in the south, but especially in the north. Also, she discussed the roles played by labor agents, state and local laws designed to discourage migration, the press, and World War I in this migration process. An important question is: What kinds of problems did these Black migrants experienced as they relocated in the urban cities of America between 1900 and 1920? Studies on the development of Black areas in these cities indicate that these migrants were exposed to the following undesirable social conditions or social problems: prejudice and discrimination; lynching; violence and race riots; the concentration of vice in Black areas; slum housing; inferior education; lack of police protection; inadequate sanitation; unequal employment opportunities; inadequate health care; lack of wholesome recreation; crime and delinquency; and poor protective services for women and children (Drake and Clayton, 1945; Meier and Rudwick, 1969; Haynes, 1928; Spear, 1967; and Woofter, 1928). Black scholars and professionals were also subjected to scientific racism. According to Platt and Chandler (1988, p. 294), “. . .leading intellectuals enthusiastically constructed elaborate theories of racial differentiation to legitimize social inequality and to justify new policies of racial discrimination.”

Gradually a number of white leaders became aware of these undesirable conditions affecting the Black community and helped to develop social policies and programs designed to respond to the welfare needs of Black migrants and Black people in general (Henri, 1975; Lide, 1973; Parris, 1971). However, it is significant to note that Black people themselves worked for their own welfare. The Black church, Black women’s clubs, mutual aid and fraternal organizations, and other voluntary

associations developed strategies and programs for dealing with many of the social problems confronting Black communities (Allen, 1974; Parris, 1971; and Weiss, 1974). As a result of these social forces, an increasing number of Blacks were employed in social work. According to the U.S. Bureau of Census (1933), 1,038 Black persons were employed in the professional field of social welfare work in 1930. The figures for 1920 were 1,231, but the classification includes religious workers (the U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1923). Compared to other occupational areas, social work was considered a very desirable profession. According to Frazier (1957; pp. 550–552):

Since the mass migrations of Negroes to northern cities, there has emerged a relatively large and influential group of leaders who are primarily concerned with the social welfare of Negroes. In fact, the field of social welfare has provided one of the chief fields of employment for the educated Negro.

Because of social and economic problems and shifting social policies, there was a demand for social workers during this period, and they were employed in a variety of settings (Frazier, 1928; Jones, 1928; Oxley, 1927). A logical and pertinent question is: who educated these professionals. Social work training for Black people was somewhat similar to that of whites. Four basic approaches were used: 1) apprenticeship; 2) institutes and special courses; 3) sociology and social science courses in undergraduate colleges; and 4) schools of social work (Conrad, 1929). Even though each approach will be described, primary attention will be given to the two professional schools of social work (Atlanta School of Social Work and the Bishop Tuttle School), and the focus of this paper will be on the education of Black social workers at historically Black colleges.

Apprenticeship

This approach, the earliest method of education for social work, was not readily available for Blacks, especially in the South (Sanders, 1971). Many agencies did not hire Black social workers, nor accept them for training, although they might provide services to the Black community. The apprenticeship method involved directed and planned experiences on the part

of a potential social worker in a social agency for a given period of time with a small salary. While this approach had some merits, Black social work educators viewed it as inadequate for increasing the number of Black social workers, and improving the quality of social services to the Black community (Frazier, 1927).

Institutes or Special Courses

This method was one of the most widely used approaches to educating Black social workers, especially in the South (Frazier, 1927; Oxley, 1927). Basically, this method involved a variety of short term courses sponsored by social welfare agencies and, in some cases, cosponsored by universities. While these institutes covered a variety of social welfare topics and were taught by leading social work experts, they were not seen as substitutes for professional training (Conrad, 1929). Black social workers in the North attended many of these institutes. However, in the South, they were not able to attend institutes designated for white social workers, but several institutes were developed specifically for Black social workers. For example, in North Carolina, beginning in 1926, the Division of Negro Social Work of the State Board of Charities and Public Welfare sponsored an annual institute for Black social workers (Oxley, 1927). These institutes usually lasted for three days and were held at one of the state colleges for Black students. It should be noted that Hampton Institute in Virginia and Tuskegee Institute in Alabama also sponsored annual conferences where social welfare issues were examined (Franklin, 1974; Frazier, 1957; Ross, 1978; Work, 1925). Many Black social workers who worked in small urban and rural communities attended these conferences.

Another annual short institute for Black social workers was sponsored by the Playground and Recreation Association of America. This agency employed a Black field worker who developed this institute, and it maintained a summer school for training of its workers (Jones, 1928). The content of this institute focused on leadership in play and recreation (Washington, 1933). Black social workers, and the executive secretaries of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), attended an annual summer school sponsored by this agency in Bordentown,

New Jersey (Washington, 1928). Moreover, the Atlanta School of Social Work under the auspices of The Diocese of the Methodist Episcopal Church, conducted social service institutes for Black ministers in this denomination (Haynes, 1928; Sanders, 1971). There were other special training institutes sponsored by organizations such as the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Boy Scouts of America, local Community Chest, and American Association of Hospital Social Workers, which Black social workers attended for improving their skills and knowledge of social work practice.

In discussing the institute method, Oxley (1927, p. 11), the State Director of the Negro Division observed:

While the general field of public welfare was covered in the many conference groups, community organizations, and the history, scope and objectives of social work were stressed as outstanding topics of the Institute. The chief purpose of the Institute was to give further training to those workers employed by county and city governments, and to offer special lectures for officers and workers from the many volunteer and private social agencies throughout the state.

Black social work educators were very critical of this approach to professional social work education in the Black community. Specifically, Frazier, the Director of the Atlanta School of Social Work from 1922 to 1926, believed that institutes were "a menace to any real welfare work among Negroes" (Frazier, 1927). He suggested that it was impossible to learn social work practice and theory in two or three days once or twice during the year. He was very conscious of the trend in social work education at that time. He stated: "After this method was abandoned in the south for white people, it was revived for the social work training of Negroes." The leading Black social work educators discouraged this method of training for Black social workers (Frazier, 1927; Lide, 1973).

Undergraduate Courses

The third social work training approach for Blacks, as well as others during this period, was a series of courses in sociology, social work, or social science at both the graduate

and undergraduate levels (Conrad, 1929). In these programs, students, after taking appropriate courses, could receive either a degree or a certificate. Black social workers attended some of these schools, especially in the North. In the South by law, Black students were not allowed to enroll in white colleges and universities. Therefore, many Black students in the South who were interested in social work careers attended Black colleges. The beginning of serious social work training for Blacks at the undergraduate level started in 1911 at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee when George E. Haynes established several courses in social work (Haynes, 1911; Parris, 1971; and Weiss, 1974).

Because this was the first social work training project designed for Black students, it warrants elaboration. At Fisk University, a department of social science and social work was established (Haynes, 1911). In order to give students a thorough preparation for social work, a core social science curriculum was designed. This curriculum for social work training included courses in sociology, economics, statistics and social investigations, field work, social problems, and methods of social work. Lecturers with expertise in areas such as delinquency and probation, Black women and children in cities, and principles of relief gave presentations and they attempted to provide a historical perspective regarding the conditions of Black people. Upon completion of this undergraduate program, selected students were sent to New York and other cities for graduate training in social work at such institutions as: The New York School of Philanthropy, now the School of Social Work at Columbia University and the University of Chicago.

During this period, students interested in social work could take relevant sociology and social science courses at several Black colleges such as Lincoln (PA), Wilberforce (OH), and Talladega (AL). Questions were raised relative to the need for or justifications for social work training at these institutions. Frazier (1927) argued that Black colleges with their limited financial resources, unexperienced teachers, and poor opportunities for field training, should not develop social work training programs. Instead, they should send their graduates to professional schools wherever they could gain admission.

Schools of Social Work

The final method of training Black people for social work is the professional school of social work. It has been argued that the first schools for the training of social workers grew out of the need of philanthropic agencies and they had been largely under the guidance and control of these agencies and persons engaged in social work. Schools of social work did not originate with educational authorities which had seen a need and were moved to meet it (Tufts, 1923). After Fisk University started its social work program in 1911, there was an attempt to establish a school of social work at Howard University located in Washington, D.C. in 1914; however, the idea was not supported by the faculty or the administration (Logan, 1969). During the 1920's, Black students interested in social work were accepted in all schools of social work in the North (Jones, 1928). But, there was still a need for professional training opportunities for Black social workers in the South. In this regard, during the 20's two schools of social work were established for and operated by Black people: Atlanta School of Social Work and the Bishop Tuttle School.

After the 1920 National Conference on Social Work in New Orleans, a group of Atlanta social workers, led by Jesse O. Thomas, the southern field executive secretary of the National Urban League, called a meeting to discuss the possibility of establishing a school of social work in their native city (Yenser, 1933; Ross, 1978, and Thomas, 1967). After a series of meetings between local social agencies and Black colleges in the area, on October 4, 1920, the Atlanta School of Social Work started to train Black social workers (Thomas, 1967). From 1920–1921, the Atlanta social work program was directed by Gary W. Moore, Chairman of the Department of Sociology and Economics at Morehouse College in Atlanta. E. Franklin Frazier, a prominent Black sociologist and the first Black to serve as President of American Sociological Association was the director of the school between 1922–1926. Forrester B. Washington was the director from 1927, and he continued to serve in this capacity until 1954 (Ross, 1978). Before the end of the 1920's, the Atlanta School had become a member of the Association of Professional Schools

of Social Work (Ross, 1978; Sanders, 1971). It was the only Black school of social work with such membership until 1940 when Howard University's School of Social Work program was accredited by this association (Sanders, 1971).

During the 1925–1926 school year, the Atlanta School offered the following social work courses: 1) social casework; 2) human behavior; 3) field work with social agencies; 4) community organization; and 5) social research (Sanders, 1971). By 1929, under the leadership of Forrester B. Washington, the Atlanta School recognized the importance of having Black oriented courses (Ross, 1978; Thomas, 1967; Washington, 1935). The following courses which focused on the Black experience were taught at the Atlanta School: 1) the techniques of community work among Black people; 2) industrial problems of Black people; 3) the conduct of social surveys in Black communities; 4) housing problems of Black people, and 5) recreational problems of Black people. It was believed that courses of this nature were not offered elsewhere in the United States. Apparently, the Atlanta School believed that for their graduates to be able to function as effective social workers in the Black community, in addition to traditional social work courses, they needed to be exposed to courses specifically dealing with the Black experience in America.

The qualifications of persons who wanted to become trained social workers and how to finance their educations were major issues during this period. Most Black students who entered social work training during the 20's were not college graduates. Students were admitted to the Atlanta School with only high school preparation, but some were high school graduates with teaching experience as well as college graduates (Frazier, 1927). However, the Atlanta School had as its goal to eventually admit only students with a college education, but this was unrealistic because of the economic position of Black students (Frazier, 1927). Because of limited financial resources, Black college students after graduating from college had to seek immediate employment rather than to continue on for professional training. Consequently, this economic factor limited the availability of Black college-educated students for schools of social work, especially the Atlanta School.

This exploratory examination documents that the Atlanta School of Social Work has made important contributions to the social work profession. The School admitted males and females; it provided professional education for Black students who were denied this opportunity by both private and public colleges in the South; it had an interracial faculty and field placements; it emphasized the importance of research and community organization in its curriculum; it had special courses on the Black experience in America; its faculty published in a variety of professional journals; and its curriculum was responsive to the social conditions of this period (Ross, 1978; Sanders, 1971; Thomas, 1967).

During the 1920's, in addition to the Atlanta School of Social Work, the Bishop Tuttle School, a national training center for the education of Negro women for social service and church work was established at St. Augustine College in Raleigh, North Carolina. The Bishop Tuttle School of Social Work was closely linked with religious studies (Goold, 1923; Goold, 1933; Halliburton, 1937). This School had a two-year curriculum that dedicated itself exclusively to professional training in an effort to produce qualified individuals to participate in the alleviation of poverty, disease, and despair. The School began its first session in the Fall of 1925, with Miss Bertha Richards as Dean. Miss Richards was not new to the College having served on the staff as librarian and teacher from 1915 to 1923. She was the eminent leader of the school during its pioneer days and promulgated the idea that social work and religious education were sister services. She initiated and kept alive the spirit of searching into new realms of training, new meanings of skill in the art of helping people who are destitute while concurrently attempting to improve the environment (Richards, 1932; Richards, 1939; Goold, 1935; Goold, 1939). The Bishop Tuttle School had high admission standards for the period under investigation. Entering students were required to have completed at least two years of junior college or its equivalent, and many had bachelor degrees.

The Bishop Tuttle School provided a two-year course of study in theory and field work (St. Augustine Bulletin 1925-1930). In 1925-1926, the following courses were required for

their students: a) Bible (New and Old Testaments—and history of Christianity); b) Religious education (teacher training, church school administration, and educational psychology); c) social work (casework, community organization, recreation, club work, hygiene, child welfare, and sociology—with emphasis on the Negro's contribution to the life of this country); d) home-making (dietetics and hygiene and practical problems); and e) field work.

The Bishop Tuttle School emphasized that its curriculum was organized around integrating classroom instruction with practical work in the community. In this connection, the school had a community center which served as a laboratory for community organization and group work students, in addition to serving as a recreational and educational facility for neighborhood residents. Students were also assigned field work placements in other social services agencies for 12 weeks in their second year. Some of the placements included; Wake County (NC) Department of Public Welfare; Family Service Societies of Raleigh (NC), Richmond (VA), Durham (NC), and Winston-Salem (NC); St. Agnes Hospital (Raleigh, NC); and North Carolina State Board of Charities and Public Welfare (Raleigh, NC).

Although the Dean at Bishop Tuttle (Bertha Richards) did not have an undergraduate degree, the other faculty members had Bachelor and Master's degrees. Students also received instructions from special lecturers at the School of Public Welfare, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. The following professors from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill gave lectures at the Bishop Tuttle School: H.D. Meyer; T.J. Woofter; W.B. Sanders; J.F. Steiner; and H.W. Odum. Also, Dr. Franklin O. Nicholas from the American Association for Social Hygiene gave several lectures during this period (Oxley, 1927; Oxley, 1927; Halliburton, 1937).

This investigation suggests that the Bishop Tuttle School played an important role in helping to professionalize social work training for Black people between 1900–1930. The school designed a curriculum which was responsive to the social conditions of Black people; it offered a course on the Black experience; it had a unique course on club work which was a major approach to community development in the Black community;

it tended to place great emphasis on the role of religion and home management in social work; it was successful in providing scholarships for its students; it had an interracial faculty; it was able to recruit female students with college level training; and it was under the leadership of a woman.

Concluding Comments

In this paper, the authors utilized an exploratory historical method for gathering information on the development of social work education for Black people at historically Black colleges during the first three decades of the twentieth century. After discussing the social forces affecting the Black community and Black social workers, the authors described four basic approaches to social work training for Black people. Although each approach was examined, most of the discussion centered on two schools of social work—the Atlanta School of Social Work and the Bishop Tuttle School. Analyzing the catalogues of both school and the writings of Black social work educators, it was discovered that the Atlanta School placed great emphasis on the commitment to teaching about the Black community and the importance of social research and community work in its curriculum. In regards to Bishop Tuttle, the curriculum tended to give priority to home management, club work, and religion. To a large extent, the Bishop Tuttle School's emphasis on family life and religion was reflective of the concerns of a college sponsored by the Episcopal Church and an all female student body. Although all four approaches to social work training were utilized between 1900–1930, Black social work educators discouraged apprenticeship and institute and special courses methods. They believed that the most appropriate approach for the training of Black social workers was at Schools of social work with some consideration given to such training at undergraduate colleges.

Further research is needed to fully explore the development of and type of training for Black social workers during the early part of the twentieth century. For example, we need to know whether or not Black educators debated the pros and cons of graduate verses undergraduate training like white educators did during the 1920's. More information would be useful

regarding the achievements of graduates of the Bishop Tuttle School and the Atlanta School especially when compared with students including Black students in other schools of social work. Exploring the impact Black social work educators had on social work as whole and the barriers which they might have faced would further clarify the contribution of Black social work scholars to the profession in its developmental phase. Providing more information on the curriculum pertaining to the Black experience would be helpful to educators who are currently struggling with ways to integrate such information in social work curriculum. Answering these inquires could serve as a parameter for developing a more in-depth analysis of social work education for Black people during the first three decades of this century.

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