

“Building Bridges, Not Fences”: A History of Civic Engagement at Private Black Colleges and Universities, 1944–1965

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HBCUs traditionally build bridges, not fences, for their neighbors.

—Barbara S. Frankle¹

In its truest sense, higher education is aimed at fostering academic achievement and educating students for good and productive citizenship.² With this purpose in mind, over the past few decades there has been a proliferation of research on civic engagement.³ Although substantial in size and reach, the civic engagement literature is limited in

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¹Barbara S. Frankle, “LeMoyne-Owen College: Using Institutional Context for Curriculum Change,” in *Public Work and the Academy: An Academic Administrator's Guide to Civic Engagement and Service-Learning*, eds. Mark Langseth, William M. Platter, and Scott Dillon (Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Company, Inc, 2004), 166.

²Aaron Einfeld and Denise Collins, “The Relationships between Service-Learning, Social Justice, Multicultural Competence, and Civic Engagement,” *Journal of College Student Development* 49, no. 2 (March/April 2008): 95–109; Adrianna Kezar, “Assessing Community Service Learning: Are We Identifying the Right Outcomes?,” *About Campus* 7, no. 2 (2002): 14–20; Adrianna Kezar and Robert A. Rhoads, “The Dynamic Tensions of Service-Learning in Higher Education,” *Journal of Higher Education* 72, no. 2 (2001): 148–71; Alexander Astin and Linda Sax, “How Undergraduates Are Affected by Service Participation,” *Journal of College Student Development* 39, no. 3 (1998): 251–63.

³For example, A. Colby, E. Beaumont, T. Ehrlich, and J. Corngold, *Educating for Democracy: Preparing Undergraduates for Responsible Political Engagement* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003); Thomas Ehrlich, ed. *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education* (Westport, CT: The American Council of Education and Oryx Press, 2000); Barbara Jacoby, *Service-Learning in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996).

terms of depth and scope. Many scholars working in this area have sought to define civic engagement as well as service learning; service learning is believed to lead to greater civic engagement and to increase educational attainment by some scholars and practitioners.⁴ Of note, this scholarship aims to defend civic engagement by providing a philosophical justification for it, reclaiming the historic civic purpose of higher education, or providing an assessment of student outcomes, including participation in protest, voting knowledge and behavior, and the impact of service learning.⁵ The civic engagement literature also demonstrates the level of engagement among undergraduate students and provides in-depth case studies of college and university initiatives to engage local communities throughout the nation. Scholars of civic engagement have focused on many different types of majority institutions, including small private colleges, state universities, land grant institutions, and private research universities.⁶ Most of these studies draw on how the unique histories of these various sectors of higher education position them for civic engagement work as well as the institutional efforts to engage local communities.

In addition to the historical argument, much of the scholarship aims to defend civic engagement by providing a philosophical justification for it or providing an assessment of student outcomes, including participation in protest, voting knowledge and behavior, and the impact of service learning.⁷ With regard to method and data sources,

⁴Einfeld and Collins, "The Relationships Between Service-Learning, Social Justice, Multicultural Competence, and Civic Engagement," 95–109; Brian Bridges, Barbara Cambridge, George Kuh, and Lacey Leegwater, "Student Engagement at Minority-Serving Institutions: Emerging Lessons from the BEAMs Project," *New Directions for Institutional Research* 2005, no. 125 (Spring 2005): 25–43.

⁵Scott Peters, *Democracy and Higher Education: Traditions and Stories of Civic Engagement* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2010). William Talcott, *Modern Universities, Absent Citizenship? Historical Perspectives*. Working paper/Circle Series, Visiting Scholar (College Park: University of Maryland, 2005).

⁶Majority institutions are those that have a history of serving White students. Astin and Sax, "How Undergraduates are Affected by Service Participation," 251–63; Anne Colby, Thomas Ehrlich, Elizabeth Beaumont, and Jason Stephens, *Educating Citizens: Preparing America's Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003); Matthew Hartley, "Reclaiming the Democratic Purpose of American Higher Education: Tracing the Trajectory of the Civic Engagement Movement," *Learning and Teaching* 2, no. 3 (2009): 11–30; Barbara Jacoby, *Service-Learning in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996).

⁷Alexander Astin, "Promoting the Cause of Citizenship," *Chronicle of Higher Education* (October 1995): B1–B2; Elizabeth Hollander and Henry Boyte, "Wingspread Declaration on Renewing the Civic Mission of the American Research University," June 1999, <http://www.compact.org/civic/Wingspread/Wingspread.html>; Laura Gorgol, "Moving Beyond Outcomes: New Steps for Civic Engagement Research," Unpublished Manuscript (2010); Mary Jane Brukardt, Barbara Holland, Stephen Percy, and Nancy Zimpher, *Calling the Question: Is Higher Education Ready to Commit to Community Engagement?* (Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin, 2004). Astin and Sax, "How

much of the literature that pertains to the benefits of civic engagement on student learning is based only on student reflection and lacks a rigorous quantitative or qualitative approach. There are two significant exceptions: the National Study of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) both conduct quantitative research on the civic behaviors of college students.⁸ NSSE administers a longitudinal survey in which they assess college student civic development and CIRCLE has conducted a variety of research studies on topics such as voting behavior, service-learning outcomes, and civic knowledge. Historical methods and the unearthing of history to understand civic engagement are rarely ever used with the exception of setting context for contemporary efforts.⁹ While historically white institutions have experienced a fairly recent resurgence of interest in developing the civic learning outcomes of students and creating strong, mutually beneficial bonds with their communities, historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) were founded with and, in many cases, have maintained these purposes throughout their histories.¹⁰ An examination of this history will

Undergraduates Are Affected by Service Participation,” 251–63; Linda Sax, Alexander Astin, and Juan Avalos, “Long-Term Effects of Volunteerism During the Undergraduate Years,” *Review of Higher Education* 22, no. 2 (Winter 1999): 187–202. Robert Bringle, Mindy Phillips, and Michael Hudson, *The Measure of Service-Learning: Research Scales to Assess Student Experiences* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2004); Anne Colby, Elizabeth Beaumont, Thomas Ehrlich, and Josh Corngold, *Educating for Democracy: Preparing Undergraduates for Responsible Political Engagement* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007).

⁸For NSSE see: http://nsse.iub.edu/NSSE_2011_Results/pdf/NSSE_2011_AnnualResults.pdf. For CIRCLE see: <http://www.civicyouth.org/ResearchTopics/research-topics/higher-education>.

⁹Sarah Ash, Patti Clayton, and Maxine Atkinson, “Integrating Reflection and Assessment to Capture and Improve Student Learning,” *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* 11, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 49–60; Janet Eyler, Dwight Giles, Christine Stenson, and Charlene Gray, *At a Glance: What We Know about the Effects of Service-Learning on College Students, Faculty, Institutions and Communities, 1993–2000*, 3rd ed. (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University, 2001); Gorgol, “Moving Beyond Outcomes: New Steps for Civic Engagement Research.”

¹⁰John Saltmarsh and Matthew Hartley, *To Serve a Larger Purpose: Engagement for Democracy and the Transformation of Higher Education* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2011); Ira Harkavy and Matthew Hartley, *Universities in Partnership with Schools: Strategies for Youth Development and Community Renewal* (San Francisco: Wiley Press, 2009), David Maurrasse, *Beyond the Campus: How Colleges and Universities Form Partnerships with their Communities* (New York: Routledge, 2001). Matthew Hartley, “Idealism and Compromise and the Civic Engagement Movement,” in *To Serve a Larger Purpose: Engagement for Democracy and the Transformation of Higher Education*, eds. John Saltmarsh and Matthew Hartley (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 27–49; Hartley, “Reclaiming the Democratic Purpose of American Higher Education,” 11–30. For the purposes of HBCUs, see James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1865–1930* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Marybeth Gasman, *Envisioning Black Colleges: A History of the United Negro College Fund* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

illuminate the importance of this history and legacy for the modern civic engagement movement.

In addition to an increase in scholarship, institutions of higher education across the country have jumped on the civic engagement bandwagon, establishing programs, nondegree certificates, and quantifying their students' participation.¹¹ In the midst of this frenzy, HBCUs have been left out of the conversation or perhaps they have not effectively inserted themselves in the conversation. The language HBCUs have used to discuss civic engagement and service learning as well and their strategies to make it actionable have often been ignored. Those contemporary scholars writing about civic engagement have overlooked black colleges, despite a well-documented history of civil rights activity on their campuses, save for a few anecdotal exceptions.¹² A larger oversight in the civic engagement literature is in the glaring lack of historical memory about the Civil Rights Movement and how it relates to modern organizing and civic activities.¹³ To date there are only six articles pertaining to HBCUs and civic engagement out of hundreds on the topic and the majority of these are single institution case studies or reflections by college presidents.¹⁴ We review these articles below to provide context and establish one of the needs for this particular article.

In Thomas Ehrlich's influential edited book *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education*, there is one chapter related to HBCUs. The chapter, written by Gloria Dean Randle Scott, gives a short history of civic engagement and provides three often-cited case studies of engagement during the civil rights era: Bennett College for Women, North Carolina A&T University, and Texas Southern University. Although this piece

¹¹Saltmarsh and Hartley, *To Serve a Larger Purpose*; Adrianna Kezar, Tony Chambers and John Burkhardt, *Higher Education for the Public Good: Emerging Voices from a National Movement* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005); Colby et al., *Educating Citizens*.

¹²Matthew Hartley, "Idealism and Compromise and the Civic Engagement Movement," 27–49. Hartley, "Reclaiming the Democratic Purpose of American Higher Education," 11–30.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Frankle, "LeMoyne-Owen College," 165–79. Gloria Dean Randle Scott, "A Historically Black College Perspective," in *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education*, ed. Thomas Ehrlich (Washington, DC: The American Council on Education and The Oryx Press, 2000), 263–79; Barbara DeVaux Holmes, "Encouraging Multiple Forms of Scholarly Excellence at Albany State University," in *Faculty Priorities Reconsidered: Rewarding Multiple Forms of Scholarship*, eds. KerryAnn O'Meara and R. Eugene Rice (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005); Ronald Mason, Jr., "Enhancing Higher Learning through Engagement in Community and Human Development," *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* 11, no. 3 (2006): 15–21; Michael L. Lomax, "Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Bringing a Tradition of Engagement into the Twenty-First Century," *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* 11, no. 3 (2006): 5–13.

is the most comprehensive overview of the topic, it is based on secondary literature and does not draw from archival sources beyond a few foundation reports. Regardless, Scott argues that HBCUs have had the “primary responsibility for the social, political, economic, personal and educational development of the black communities.”¹⁵ She shows, and is supported by myriad scholars, that HBCUs developed a critical mass of African Americans who supported the work of black communities through their professional positions and their personal commitment to racial equality.¹⁶ According to Scott, HBCUs boast a civic engagement mission that is inherent rather than chosen.

In 2006, the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* dedicated a special issue to civic engagement at HBCUs.¹⁷ Problematic about this issue is the lack of data and research presented in the articles. The articles are important in that they provide overviews of civic engagement and service-learning programs at HBCUs as well as reflections from key African-American leaders. However, these articles are not empirical and do not draw from archival sources, oral history interviews, datasets, qualitative interviews, primary documents, or base their findings on quantitative data. Instead, they give the reader a flavor for the types of civic engagement programs taking place at HBCUs as well as some guiding principles for thinking about civic engagement within the HBCU context. According to some critics and scholars, the work in this journal is typical as civic engagement literature is often focused on sharing case studies for practitioners and lacks data collection and scholarly analysis.¹⁸

Ronald Mason Jr., the former president of Southern University of Louisiana, penned one of the articles, arguing that HBCUs have a natural inclination to be civic minded and to prepare civically engaged students. He makes this pronouncement based on his experiences at both historically white institutions and HBCUs, stating that within the HBCU context (speaking as president) “our public posture

¹⁵Randle Scott, “A Historically Black College Perspective,” 263–79.

¹⁶John Egerton, *Speak Now Against the Day: The Generation before the Civil Rights Movement in the South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Gayle Tate and Lewis Randolph, *The Black Urban Community: From Dusk till Dawn* (New York: Palgrave, 2006); Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: Free Press, 2006); W. E. B. Du Bois, Dan Greene, and Edwin Driver, eds., *W. E. B. Du Bois on Sociology and the Black Community* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

¹⁷Melvin B. Hill, “Historically Black Colleges and Universities and their Communities,” *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 11, no. 3 (2006) (special issue).

¹⁸Cecilia Orphan, American Democracy Project 2013. (<http://www.aascu.org/meetings/adptdc14>); Hartley, “Reclaiming the Democratic Purpose of American Higher Education,” 11–30.

from the outset was that the progress of the university was tied directly to the betterment of the community around it. It was a declaration of necessity.¹⁹ Mason talks about the possibilities and obligations that HBCU presidents can embrace and employ. He sees HBCUs' missions as having a firm commitment to the underserved, their curricula incorporating experiential learning, and the potential for a faculty reward system rooted in "community and human betterment."²⁰ In fact, the majority of the articles related to civic engagement or service learning at HBCUs focus on including these activities into the faculty reward system. Students fall through the cracks. For example, in her work, Barbara Holmes chronicles Albany State University's efforts to expand definitions of scholarship in the faculty promotion and tenure process. In effect, some HBCUs are trying to acknowledge their histories and differentiate the strengths of their faculty from those at large research institutions.²¹

Barbara S. Frankle, in her case study of LeMoyne-Owen College, argues, much like Mason, that the faculty reward system at HBCUs must incorporate work in the community. She bases this recommendation on the institution's history and HBCUs' history of instilling value-laden education into their students. Frankle also argues that HBCUs need to embrace their traditional service-learning mission and join the service-learning and civic engagement movement so that they do not get left out of the conversation.²²

Like Ron Mason, Jr. mentioned above, Michael Lomax, the president of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF), wrote a reflective essay pertaining to HBCUs and civic engagement. In his essay, he calls on HBCUs to embrace their history of community engagement but in ways that build upon 21st century ideas rather than those of the past. Lomax purports that "For historically black college and universities (HBCUs) engagement is not an enhancement of their curriculum but part of their birthright." In this statement, he is stressing the fact that HBCUs have an inherent mission of civic engagement, while most historically white institutions have to add engagement activities to their curriculum.²³

¹⁹Ronald Mason, Jr., "Enhancing Higher Learning through Engagement in Community and Human Development," *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* 11, no. 3 (July 2006), 15.

²⁰Ibid, 20.

²¹Barbara DeVeaux Holmes, "Encouraging Multiple Forms of Scholarly Excellence at Albany State University," in *Faculty Priorities Reconsidered: Rewarding Multiple Forms of Scholarship*, eds. Kerry Ann O'Meara and R. Eugene Rice (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005).

²²Frankle, "LeMoyne-Owen College," 165–79.

²³Lomax, "Historically Black Colleges and Universities," 5–13.

Stephen L. Rozman and Gloria Roberts are the authors of the final article on HBCUs and civic engagement. In their work, they explore the HBCU Faculty Development Network and its efforts to engage faculty in the community. Tougaloo has a long tradition of civic engagement and civil rights activity that has most recently been explored and captured by Joy Williamson Lott in her book *Radicalizing the Ebony Tower: Black Colleges and the Freedom Struggle in Mississippi*.²⁴ The institution has maintained its focus of community outreach and does so formally with the help of its Center for Civic Engagement. It also captures the outreach activities and service-learning courses of faculty through its faculty development network.²⁵

In addition to the six articles that we mentioned above, there are a couple general writings on African Americans and civic engagement that can inform discussions of civic engagement within the black college setting. For example, in their book *African Americans and Community Engagement in Higher Education*, Evans and associates urge scholars studying civic engagement and service learning as well as practitioners who are designing and implementing service-learning opportunities to consider issues of race. They argue that race is being left out of conversations and that it plays a large role in the relationships between colleges and universities and local communities.²⁶ Other scholars have examined issues of race and gender and their impact on civic engagement within society at large. Gloria Farmer's article on black male civic engagement could also shed light on the experiences and involvement of African-American men at black colleges. Farmer argues that black male social networks play a particularly strong role in shaping how black men are civically engaged.²⁷

Another area of scholarship that is related to civic engagement and also informs our research is economic development in the communities surrounding black colleges. Although this research does not speak directly to civic engagement or service learning, it does talk about the impact of HBCUs in communities—for the most part, black communities today—and the interplay between black colleges and black

²⁴Joy Williamson Lott, *Radicalizing the Ebony Tower: Black Colleges and the Black Freedom Struggle in Mississippi* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2008).

²⁵Stephen L. Rozman and Gloria Roberts, "Tougaloo College and the HBCU Faculty Development Network: Networking for Mutual Reinforcement," *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* 11, no. 3 (2006): 81–93.

²⁶Stephanie Evans, Colette Taylor, Michelle Dunlap, and DeMond Miller, *African Americans and Community Engagement in Higher Education: Community Service, Service-Learning, and Community-Based Research* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009).

²⁷G. Lawrence Farmer, "African American Males' Civic Engagement: The Importance of Social Organization Involvement and Friendship Diversity," *Journal of African American Studies* 10, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 51–68.

communities. This interplay is particularly important historically as the demographics of the towns surrounding black colleges have changed over time and as such, so has the quality of town–gown relationships. For example, the area around Benedict College in the Edgewood–Waverly community of South Carolina “was once immersed in the livelihood of churches, schools, black-owned businesses and a medical facility, in addition to doctors, lawyers, and educators who provided renowned service to the neighborhood and other South Carolina blacks during an unforgettable era of racial segregation.”²⁸ Benedict College played a significant role in providing education at all levels to the community. However, according to Gwenda Greene’s research, the neighborhood has changed significantly since the fall of segregation and the institution plays an even more significant role in the surrounding community, often serving as a cultural and social service center for the local black citizens that have access to little else in their community.²⁹

Researchers writing on economic development are interested in the sustainability of black communities as well as the local community’s perception of the black college in their neighborhood.³⁰ Results of several studies indicate that African-American citizens in the neighborhoods surrounding HBCUs think that their incomes are higher due to the presence of the colleges.³¹ Also adding to the economic viability of the communities surrounding HBCUs are the monetary contributions of the faculty, staff, and students, demonstrating their loyalty to the community. For example, in the community around South Carolina State University (located in Orangeburg County, South Carolina), blacks affiliated with the university have been spending over \$150 million at local

²⁸Gwenda R. Greene, “Cultivating Reciprocity: The Guiding Framework for Benedict College in Partnership with the Community to Garner Economic and Community Growth,” *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* 11, no. 3 (July 2007): 53–63.

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰Thomas J. Stewart, Joseph M. Prinzinger, James K. Dias, John T. Bowden, James K. Salley, and Albert E. Smith, “The Economic Impact of a Historically Black College Upon its Local Community,” *Journal of Negro Education* 58, no. 2 (Spring 1989): 232–42; Greene, “Cultivating Reciprocity,” 53–63.

³¹Ralph Gallo and Ronnie Davis, “Research on the Impact of HBCUs on African American Communities,” *Metropolitan Universities* 19, no. 3 (2008): 102–120; Ralph Gallo and Ronnie Davis, “The Impact of Town–Gown Relationships on the Sustainability of African American Communities: An Examination of the Role of HBCUs,” *Journal of African American Studies* 13, no. 4 (2009): 509–23; Ankur Goel, Willie Lovett, Robert Patten, and Robert Wilkins, “Black Neighborhoods Becoming Black Cities: Group Empowerment, Local Control and the Implications of Being Darker than Brown,” *Harvard Civil Rights Civil Liberties Law Review* 23, no. 2 (Summer 1988): 415–81; Rodney Green, Maybelle Bennett, Haydar Kurban, Lorenzo Morris, and Charles Verharen, “Making Community Indicators Accessible through the Census Information Center: Howard University, Portals to the Community, and the New American University,” *Community Quality-of-Life Indicators, Social Indicators Research Series* 28 (2006): 249–66; Green, “Cultivating Reciprocity,” 53–63.

establishments for the past thirty years.³² As was found by the National Conference on Citizenship, communities that are economically healthy are also civically healthy. Therefore this economic development work has important democratic outcomes for all communities, with black communities experiencing important civic and economic gains.³³

The communities surrounding black colleges also shape these institutions as well, providing a skilled and educated workforce at the institutions. In addition, those leaders in the community often influence the direction of HBCUs by pointing out the needs of the citizens in the local area. Community leaders also serve on HBCU boards of trustees, often teach courses, are frequent participants in career-focused programs created for graduating students, and offer internships to HBCU students.³⁴

Purpose and Methodological Approach

Our goal in writing this article is to enhance and complicate the conversation around civic engagement, inserting black colleges into the dialogue by examining the ways in which these institutions have engaged local communities and citizens. Through rigorous historical research, we examined the role that black colleges have played in their local communities as well as the manifestations of their civic engagement efforts. We provide a detailed account of the myriad ways HBCUs interpreted civic engagement and a road map, which builds upon the past, that today's HBCUs can potentially follow in terms of their civic engagement outreach. We also demonstrate the ways that many HBCUs were early actors in terms of their role in civically engaging students. Our historical data and findings paint a vastly different picture than the one painted of HBCUs in the past. We offer a more complicated understanding than the one held or not contemplated, by civic engagement scholars, the public at large, and perhaps even HBCUs themselves.

Our main source of data is a set of surveys administered by the UNCF. These surveys are located in the Robert Woodruff Library at the Atlanta University Center in Atlanta, Georgia and in the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. Beginning in 1944, the UNCF surveyed its 39 member institutions, all private black colleges. The UNCF is an

³²Stewart et al., "The Economic Impact of a Historically Black College Upon Its Local Community," 232–42. For more current figures, please see annual reports from 1990 to 2011: Orangeburg Community Economic Commission, South Carolina (<http://www.ocdc.com>).

³³<http://ncoc.net/unemployment>.

³⁴Daniel Thompson, *Private Black Colleges at the Crossroads* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1973). Henry N. Drewry and Humphrey Doermann, *Stand and Prosper: Private Black Colleges and Their Students* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

organization that focuses on raising money for black colleges' operating costs as well as student scholarships.³⁵ In this article, we use these surveys to provide an understanding of the diverse civic engagement and service-learning activities of the 39 private black colleges that belong to the UNCF. The surveys are six pages in length and include thirty-five questions, both open-ended and forced choice (e.g., a range of activities are listed and survey completers are encouraged to choose all that apply). As survey completion was a requirement of securing funding from the UNCF, the thirty-nine member institutions provided robust and detailed answers to the open-ended questions about their student and community programs. However, because these surveys were required, they are also somewhat positive in nature, although not entirely. In addition, a packet of support materials accompanied each survey, providing evidence that the activities did, in fact, take place as detailed on the surveys. We drew upon the surveys as well as support materials (brochures, newspaper articles, flyers, quotes from participants). The surveys span from 1944 through 1965 and give us a window into a history yet uncovered and largely unexplored. During this time, the questions on the survey remained the same, allowing for a twenty-one-year span of data on private HBCUs and their campus activities as well as civic engagement. The surveys capture "civic engagement" using categories such as "community outreach," "community education," "volunteerism," civic responsibility, "leadership in community," and "community and culture."

As the surveys were not administered after 1965, our study is limited to the period immediately prior to and during the Civil Rights Movement. Although having survey data up through the current day would be desirable, given the importance of the civil rights era, the lack of historical inquiry on civic engagement, and the historical nature of this paper, we think that there is enough data to provide a rich picture of the civic and community engagement activities at the nation's private black colleges.

To bolster the survey data, as it does not provide a complete picture, we consulted local newspapers (including African-American newspapers) during the period of 1944 through 1965. It is important to note that black newspapers across the nation were not summarily supportive of HBCUs. In fact, during the 1930s and early 1940s, many newspaper editors (e.g., *The Chicago Defender*) were highly critical of some private HBCUs, pointing to their students' lack of concern for the larger black community and insular and even materialistic nature.³⁶ These sources

³⁵Gasman, *Envisioning Black Colleges*.

³⁶E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957).

provided us with a deeper understanding of town/gown relations in the black colleges' surrounding communities. We also consulted archives at select black colleges mentioned throughout the paper, examining student newspapers, faculty meeting minutes, faculty and staff newsletters, thank you notes from community members flyers and posters, and board of trustee minutes. Although it was not feasible to visit all of the archives of black colleges mentioned in the paper, we did visit and examine data related to civic engagement activities and attitudes at Fisk University, LeMoyne Owen College, Spelman College, Bennett College, Dillard University, Paine College, and Tuskegee University. We provide more depth with regard to these seven institutions; the remaining data show the breadth of the civic engagement activities at private black colleges. We also drew from oral histories completed with faculty, former students, and presidents of several HBCUs discussed in this paper, including Fisk University, Spelman College, Bennett College, and Tuskegee University. Oral history is a method of "collecting and interpreting human memories to foster knowledge and human dignity."³⁷ Professional media outlets, libraries, and one of the authors conducted these oral histories. Through these additional sources, we were able to gather the voices of those who were directly involved in civic engagement at HBCUs. These voices complement the UNCF survey data.

Although there are various methods that could be used to examine black colleges and their civic engagement activities, we chose historical methods for several reasons. First, given the rich historical data that is available, we think that using a historical lens through which to analyze it makes the most sense. Second, we have considerable experience evaluating historical data and contextualizing it for larger audiences and as such can make connections across the greater historical literature on black colleges and African-American higher education. Third, providing a history of civic engagement at black colleges places these institutions at the forefront of the civic engagement movement instead of in an ancillary or follower role and provides a foundation for future research. Drawing on historical missions and legacies has been an important way that majority serving institutions have justified and refined their civic work. Extrapolating this history within the HBCU context can further establish this group of colleges and universities as players within the civic engagement movement. Given the civic posture HBCUs assumed from their creation, there is the potential of a long history of engagement that pre-dates the more recent efforts

³⁷Quote is located at oralhistory.org. Need more information for this citation; Additional sources on oral history include Marybeth Gasman, *The History of U.S. Higher Education: Methods for Uncovering the Past* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

of majority institutions. If properly explored and mined, this legacy could greatly enhance the overall democratic work being undertaken by higher education institutions. A final goal of this analysis is to unveil this history so as to illuminate the contributions of HBCUs and push HBCUs in the current day to learn from and consider their past more fully.

History, Mission, and Tradition

HBCUs were established just prior to and just after the civil war by several different entities, including black and white missionaries, the Freedmen's Bureau, former slaves, and white philanthropists.³⁸ These institutions, many of which only offered a primary and secondary education, were the keys to knowledge and economic prosperity for blacks in the nation. However, the education offered and the role that these institutions have played in their local communities have not been without controversy among black leaders; much of this controversy resulted from the stronghold that white Northern philanthropists had on the institutions through the early 1930s.³⁹

Early HBCUs' lack of wholehearted support for the liberal arts and, in essence social and civic equality and participation, raised the ire of W. E. B. Du Bois and led to the long-time and often misunderstood debate between him and Booker T. Washington.⁴⁰ Du Bois advocated a liberal arts education for at least a "talented tenth" of blacks. He believed this educational strategy was necessary in order to create an intellectual elite that could advance the civil rights of all black people.⁴¹ On the other hand, Washington urged the majority of blacks to "cast down your bucket where you are" and work within the system of segregation that permeated the land. It is important to note that Washington was not opposed to a liberal arts education and in fact, he sent his children to liberal arts colleges.⁴² However, for the majority of blacks, he advocated industrial education.⁴³ In particular, Washington believed that

³⁸Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*; Gasman, *Envisioning Black Colleges*.

³⁹Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*; Gasman, *Envisioning Black Colleges*.

⁴⁰Marybeth Gasman, "W.E.B. Du Bois and Charles S. Johnson: Differing Views on the Role of Philanthropy in Higher Education," *History of Education Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (December 2002): 493–516.

⁴¹W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Talented Tenth," in *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative American Negroes of Today*, eds. Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, Paul Dunbar, and Charles Chesnut (New York: James Pott & Company, 1903), 33–75.

⁴²Michael Bieze and Marybeth Gasman, *Booker T. Washington Rediscovered* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012); Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Making of a Black Leader, 1856–1901* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

⁴³Gasman, "W.E.B. Du Bois and Charles S. Johnson," 493–516.

blacks should commit themselves to economic improvement and that eventually civil rights would follow.⁴⁴ Or, in other words, economic improvement would manifest as the result of blacks' commitment to hard work and the ownership of property.⁴⁵ W.E.B. Du Bois was not opposed to industrial education. Specifically, he believed that the mass of blacks should be educated in the "three R's and the technique . . . and duty of good work."⁴⁶ However, he also thought that black communities needed to have "thinkers and leaders" who possessed a liberal arts education.

From the standpoint of these initial arguments, which took place in the early 1900s, through the current day, there have been debates over the purpose and role of black colleges. Although some HBCUs have remained wedded to a liberal arts mission—one that encourages civic engagement—others have adhered to a more vocational mission that teeters on industrial—but still advocates for community involvement.⁴⁷ Although black colleges have varying missions and offer diverse curricula, most have a long history of interacting with their surrounding communities and of encouraging civic responsibility. Still, there have been periods when black college leaders have simultaneously curtailed civic engagement (usually due to outside pressure) and encouraged it in safer venues.⁴⁸ With regard to activist forms of civic engagement, according to Joy Williamson Lott's research, public black colleges were less likely to promote civil rights activity due to state pressure. However, private black colleges were also susceptible to limiting student rights because their charters were held by the state.⁴⁹ As mentioned, in this paper, we focus on the private black colleges that are members of the UNCF.

As HBCUs grew and developed, they became hubs for community life within black communities. In some cases, including Fisk University most prominently, black intellectuals, poets, painters, and

⁴⁴Bieze and Gasman, *Booker T. Washington Rediscovered*.

⁴⁵Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery* (New York: A.L. Burt, 1901). Booker T. Washington, "Atlanta Compromise," Cotton States and International Exposition, September 1895, Atlanta, GA; Harlan, *Booker T. Washington*; Gasman, "W.E.B. Du Bois and Charles S. Johnson," 493–516.

⁴⁶W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Hampton Idea," in *The Education of Black People, Ten Critiques, 1906-1960*, ed. Herbert Aptheker (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973), 5–15.

⁴⁷Marybeth Gasman and Tryan McMickens, "Liberal or Professional Education? The Missions of Public Black Colleges and Universities and Their Impact on the Future of African Americans," *SOULS: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society* 12, no. 3 (July–September, 2010): 286–305.

⁴⁸Lott, *Radicalizing the Ebony Tower*; Marybeth Gasman, "Perceptions of Black College Presidents: Sorting through Stereotypes and Reality to Gain a Complex Picture," *American Educational Research Journal* 48, no. 4 (August 2011): 836–70.

⁴⁹Lott, *Radicalizing the Ebony Tower*.

authors came South after the Harlem Renaissance and created mini-Renaissances on HBCU campuses as well as in the local communities.⁵⁰ And as mentioned earlier, other than churches, there are no other institutions that have provided as much outreach, education and cultural enrichment to black families and individuals.⁵¹

Due to mass discrimination, HBCUs, by default in many ways, played a much more central role in black culture than historically white institutions played in the lives of whites.⁵² These institutions provided day care, voter registration, entertainment, adult learner programs, community outreach, food pantries, and overall community support. According to Gloria Dean Randall Scott, “The construct of civic development was the right auricle of the heart of HBCUs, joined by the left auricle of teaching and learning, and the left ventricle of creating new knowledge, all of which combined to make up the core of American higher education: teaching, research, and public service. Historically black institutions, however, always had, as the right ventricle, a fourth purpose—the pursuit of social justice, which is the core of civic engagement, and the strengthening of democracy. In many cases, the communities built themselves around these institutions. The church and the college were the only social institutions that ‘drew people together,’ acting as the centers for common interests and endeavors.”⁵³ Scott’s passion and words are powerful, yet they beg for evidence. The question remains, did these services result in civic engagement on the part of the institutions, students, and community?

Our paper looks at the myriad ways in which HBCUs and their contributions manifested in diverse forms and whether or not these contributions are forms of civic engagement. We focus on seven

⁵⁰Marybeth Gasman and Edward Epstein, “Modern Art in the Old South: The Role of the Arts in Fisk University’s Campus Curriculum,” *Educational Researcher* 31, no. 2, (March 2002): 13–20.

⁵¹Gasman, *Envisioning Black Colleges*. R. Khari Brown and Ronald E. Brown, “Faith and Works: Church-Based Social Capital Resources and African American Political Activism,” *Social Issues* 82, no. 2 (December 2003): 617–41; F. Harris, “Black Churches and Civic Traditions: Outreach, Activism, and the Politics of Public Funding of Faith-Based Ministries,” *Trinity College Paper Series*, 2007. For a comprehensive report, please see U.S. Government (2011). *The Economic Impact of the Nation’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities: A Technical Report*, which details the contributions of these institutions over time.

⁵²Scott, “A Historically Black College Perspective,” 264; Timothy J. Minchin, “Black Activism, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the Racial Integration of the Southern Textile Industry,” *Journal of Southern History* 65, no. 4 (November 1999): 809–44; James Jennings, *The Politics of Black Empowerment: The Transformation of Black Activism in Urban America* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2000). For a detailed description of the role of historically white institutions in their communities, please see John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

⁵³Scott, “A Historically Black College Perspective,” 265.

major themes, including cultural enrichment, community engagement, community health programs, town meetings, community resources, organizational collaboration, and educational initiatives. These themes demonstrate the diversity and vastness of the contributions that HBCUs made to the many facets of communities, families, and individual lives. And through our survey data, archival data, oral histories, and secondary sources, we will show that HBCUs were in dialogue and relationship with the community and the partnerships that transpired and resulted were in direct response to community needs. With no alternatives for institution-led community engagement besides the black church, HBCUs became richly embedded and indispensable in the local community.

Cultural Enrichment for All

According to the UNCF annual surveys, many of the private HBCUs provided civic engagement through cultural enrichment. The colleges' programs exposed attendees to new and different ideas, cultures, beliefs, genres of music, and knowledge. The events usually fell into one of the following categories: lectures, culture exposure, music and drama, and the arts. Generally, the programs were free and open to the community. The events were well attended, drawing people from miles around. The purpose of these events was to expose the community to things that were, in many cases, not readily accessible to them.⁵⁴ In effect, HBCUs became centers of intellectual culture in their local communities both because of their planned efforts but also because blacks had few other avenues for intellectual and cultural enrichment due to large-scale discrimination and Jim Crow practices.⁵⁵

Institutions often used lectures as a form of cultural enrichment. They would bring individuals who were local, national, and even international to speak on a variety of topics. Institutions such as Atlanta University, Morris Brown College, Bethune-Cookman College, Oakwood College, Lane College, LeMoyne College, Clark College, Fisk University, Talladega College, and Xavier University regularly held lectures that were open to the community on topics that were aimed at pushing the community to action.⁵⁶ In the words of Fisk University alumna Peggy Alsup, Fisk gave students the same message over

⁵⁴UNCF Institutional Survey, 1953.

⁵⁵Philo Hutcheson, Marybeth Gasman, and Kijua Sanders-McMurtry, "Understanding Resistance: Agency in the Face of Oppression within Higher Education, 1940-1960," *Journal of Higher Education* (2011); Gasman and Epstein, "Modern Art in the Old South," 13-20.

⁵⁶UNCF institutional Survey, 1950-1966; Hutcheson, Gasman, and Sanders-McMurtry, "Understanding Resistance."

and over with regard to being active in the community by campus speakers, “This is where we come to give you the strength that you are going to need to confront the rest of the world.”⁵⁷

According to Morris Brown College’s survey responses, “During the 1948–49 school term, Morris Brown College brought the World Heavyweight Boxing champion, Joe Louis, to its campus for th[e] dedication of its gymnasium. He made personal appearances for the people of the community, as well as for the public school children.”⁵⁸ Joe Louis’s message was one of a champion but it contained words of strength and resiliency in the face of oppression as well.⁵⁹ Bethune-Cookman College also had a strong lecture program. The college invited esteemed speakers such as First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, who discussed the rights of women.⁶⁰ Of note, it was not the norm for black people to see and be within earshot of the First Lady of the United States. Also during the 1955–1956 academic year, Bethune-Cookman invited the 1950 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Ralph Bunche, and professional baseball icon Jackie Robinson to the institution.⁶¹ Again, these individuals not only spoke to students but their talks were opened up to the larger community. According to UNCF surveys, several hundred people from the community attended the events.⁶² Oakwood College arranged for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to speak to the public during the height of the Civil Rights Movement. The event, which was described as “crowded,” was held in the college’s gymnasium and two thousand Huntsville residents were in attendance.⁶³ American novelist and playwright James Baldwin spoke at Atlanta University during the 1957–1958 academic year in a public forum.⁶⁴ Baldwin brought bold ideas and literary voice to the average black citizen in Atlanta.⁶⁵ Black colleges were bringing exposure to black communities that were completely shut out from the voices of national and international leaders

⁵⁷Peggy Alsup, oral history interview by author, 31 March 1999.

⁵⁸UNCF Institutional Survey, 1950.

⁵⁹John Bloom and Michael Nevin Willard, *Sports Matters: Race, Recreation, and Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2002).

⁶⁰UNCF Institutional Survey, 1954.

⁶¹UNCF Institutional Survey, 1955.

⁶²UNCF Institutional Survey, 1955.

⁶³UNCF Institutional Survey, 1963.

⁶⁴UNCF Institutional Survey, 1958.

⁶⁵It was quite common for well-known actors to call for civil rights action. They used their celebrity as a bully pulpit to spur change and unity within Black communities. For another example, see Ruth Feldstein, “I Don’t Trust You Anymore”: Nina Simone, Culture, and Black Activism in the 1960s,” *Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (2005): 1349–79.

of all races. These communities suffered from deep poverty, lack of transportation, overwork, and depression.⁶⁶

Clark College held the “Crogman Day Lecture” during the 1960–1961 year.⁶⁷ One of the objectives of the event was to invite the local community and alumni to campus to listen to the lectures. These lectures provided the surrounding communities an opportunity that would not have been afforded to them. Through these cultural enrichment programs the colleges were providing their communities with social capital and knowledge and in many ways doing what W. E. B. Du Bois called for—the talented tenth was reaching out to the community and lifting it up.

However, in many cases, the goal was not only to enhance the intellect of those in attendance, but also to lead them to action in terms of fighting for their civil rights.⁶⁸ For example, in 1958, when Martin Luther King, Jr. came to Greensboro, North Carolina to speak, Willa Player, the president of Bennett College, was the only person in town willing to host the Civil Rights leader. All of the other leaders—black and white—of the churches, schools, and community organizations were afraid to step into controversy due to the fallout from the Montgomery Bus Boycott. In the spirit of civic engagement, Willa Player spoke up and said, “This is a liberal arts school where freedom rings, so Martin Luther King can speak here.”⁶⁹ Through her actions, Player showed her students and those in the local community what it meant to be civically engaged and active. Player saw education as much more expansive than merely classes and learning from books. She believed that educational benefits reached beyond a single individual, she understood the impact and rippling effect that education has on society and taught students about their role in changing the larger world. In her words, education involves the freedom of expression. It was living up to your ideals, building a quality of life in the community that was acceptable to all. It was respect for human dignity and personality. And it was a recognition of values that applied to all persons as equals and all persons who deserved a chance in a democratic society to express their beliefs.⁷⁰

⁶⁶C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955).

⁶⁷UNCF Institutional Survey, 1961.

⁶⁸Robert H. Brisbane, *Black Activism: Racial Revolution in the United States, 1954–1970* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1974); Gasman, *Envisioning Black Colleges*; Hutcherson, Gasman, and Sanders-McMurtry, “Understanding Resistance.”

⁶⁹Willa Player, interview by Mike Rallings, National Public Radio, 31 July 1997. See also Gasman, “Perceptions of Black College Presidents.”

⁷⁰Willa Player, oral history interview, Greensboro Voices, 3 December 1979.

Occasionally, lecture series on HBCU campuses were made possible through donations and grants that the institutions sought out in order to execute them. For example, at Samuel Huston College, a donation from Roy L. Smith, who was the editor of the *Christian Advocate*, “established a Mary L. Smith lectureship.”⁷¹ The lecture series allowed for the college to bring one national lecturer a year for a public speaking engagement. Samuel Huston College not only provided lectures for the college community but the larger community as well. Over 4,000 community members attended the Mary L. Smith lecture series during its six-year run.

Morris Brown received a grant from the Sperry Hetchinson Foundation “for the purpose of sponsoring public lectures in the social sciences” during the 1961–62 and 1962–63 school year.⁷² One of the themes for the lectures was “The Negro in a Changing American Society.”⁷³ Tougaloo College’s Social Science department received a \$5,000 grant, which was meant to invite speakers with national reputations.⁷⁴ Two lecture series developed as a result; one on anthropology and another had multiple topics such as state laws, voting, and politics. With these lectures, the HBCUs provided basic civic education for students and the broader community.

Cultural exposure through events and programs was another form of civic engagement. At first glance a reader of this article may comment that all colleges and universities offer cultural events’—perhaps, but these were not available (and in some cases still are not accessible) to African-American communities. For several years, Clark College invited the residents of Atlanta to cultural programs on Sunday evenings.⁷⁵ These events were free and open to the general public, opening up avenues of learning that were rarely available to blacks.

Knoxville College formed a group called the “Committee on Cultural Activities” that was charged with bringing distinguished writers, intellectuals, and artists for events that the community could attend.⁷⁶ Knoxville also had a cultural film series during the 1953–1954 academic year.⁷⁷ In February of 1965, Xavier University’s International Relations Club held an event called “Night of Africa: Freedom & Unity in Africa.”⁷⁸ This program was open to the public, garnered a significant

⁷¹UNCF Institutional Survey, 1950.

⁷²UNCF Institutional Survey, 1962–1963.

⁷³UNCF Institutional Survey, 1963.

⁷⁴UNCF Institutional Survey, 1963.

⁷⁵UNCF Institutional Survey, 1950–1953.

⁷⁶UNCF Institutional Survey, 1953.

⁷⁷UNCF Institutional Survey, 1954.

⁷⁸UNCF Institutional Survey, 1965.

audience, and made linkages between the plight of black Americans and Africans.⁷⁹ Through this program, Xavier engaged African nationals, bringing them to campus to discuss the similarities and differences in their personal journeys as compared to black Americans. Xavier's program also invokes the legacy of W. E. B. Du Bois's talented tenth and his subsequent writings in which he advocated for blacks to see their connections to their African ancestry and heritage.⁸⁰

LeMoyne, Morris Brown, Fisk University, Spelman College, Bethune-Cookman, Hampton Institute, and Stillman College all held cultural programs and events on a regular basis. These programs aimed to enhance the cultural understanding of local blacks and diversify the cultural pallet of students. According to Prince Rivers, who was the student body president at Fisk University in the early 1950s, international visitors played an enormous part in his development in college:

The Fisk International center was the hub of the intellectual community. Through it, Fisk provided entertainment and education for all of Nashville. For example we used to have a film series every Saturday and Sunday night and we'd play foreign films and the Nashville community was welcome . . . Fisk was one of those places in Nashville where all people could get together and mingle without concern.⁸¹

Cultural enrichment also included music and drama programs. Samuel Huston College's A Cappella choir played at many churches (both black and white) and was in high demand. According to the survey "The organization is frequently referred to as 'Ambassadors of Inter-racial Good Will.'"⁸² Spelman held dramatic events on campus and invited high school seniors during the 1951–1952 academic year.⁸³ These plays emphasized the changing roles of women in society and exposed students to strong female role models. Talladega College "presented a weekly radio broadcast as a community service."⁸⁴ The radio program, narrated by students and faculty, delved into controversial topics such as voting rights and segregation in the workplace. African Americans were not encouraged to vote by the mainstream radio stations or newspapers so the role of HBCUs was crucial to the civic engagement and political activity of black citizens.

According to the UNCF institutional surveys, in 1953, the Dillard University Choir sang with the members of the New Orleans symphony

⁷⁹"Xavier University Unites Blacks," *Louisiana Weekly*, 17 February 1965, 7A.

⁸⁰"Xavier University Unites Blacks," *Louisiana Weekly*. For Du Bois's perspective, see W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Education of Black People*.

⁸¹Prince Rivers, oral history interview, 1999, 2003, transcript.

⁸²UNCF Institutional Survey, 1950.

⁸³UNCF Institutional Survey, 1952.

⁸⁴UNCF Institutional Survey, 1951–1952.

and opera. This was the first time that an interracial performance of symphony and opera was held in the Deep South.⁸⁵ According to the students at Dillard, “We were proud to show our talent in front of an interracial audience. Many of these people didn’t know that we had these abilities. More than that, we may have changed their minds about mixing with Blacks.”⁸⁶ Again, these cultural events may seem to lack a connection with civic engagement; however, they provided the public, including black and white audiences, with a more enlightened view of African Americans and their diverse talents and intellect. In addition, on several occasions, these performances brought together whites and black under the same roof, sitting side by side as they listened.⁸⁷ The power of social interaction cannot be underestimated during this time period given that social equality was deeply frowned upon and mixing of the races in social settings was avoided at all cost.⁸⁸

Another area that emerged from the surveys in the area of cultural enrichment was intercultural and interracial relations. Some HBCUs during this time intentionally tried to affect change in race relations.⁸⁹ While mentioning lecture programs during the 1950–1951 season/academic year, Johnson C. Smith University stated, “Through these programs much is being done toward the improvement of race relations. The major events in the series are held in the city auditorium where there is absolutely no segregation.”⁹⁰ In 1956, LeMoyne College conducted its first Race Relations Conference.⁹¹ The institution felt it was its responsibility to have such an event. Approximately 100 community leaders attended the conference—both black and white. According to the school’s faculty newsletter, which was often a contentious publication, the event “did much to increase communication among those of different races.”⁹²

Paine College mentioned that it was “widely known as a center of inter-racial work.”⁹³ The college held an Inter-racial Weekend

⁸⁵UNCF Institutional Survey, 1953.

⁸⁶“Students Perform with Local Symphony,” *Courtboullion* (New Orleans, LA) 27 September 1953, p. 3, Dillard University Archives, New Orleans, Louisiana.

⁸⁷Ibid. Gasman and Epstein, “Modern Art in the Old South,” 13–20.

⁸⁸For a detailed explanation of the taboo nature of social interaction between blacks and whites during the 1940s through 1960s, see Gasman, *Envisioning Black Colleges*; see also Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*; John Egerton, *Speak Now Against the Day: The Generation Before the Civil Right Movement in the South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

⁸⁹William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

⁹⁰UNCF Institutional Survey, 1951.

⁹¹UNCF Institutional Survey, 1957.

⁹²LeMoyne Owen Faculty Newsletter, located in LeMoyne Owen College library, Memphis, Tennessee.

⁹³UNCF Institutional Survey, 1956.

Student Conference. There were roughly 50 students. These students were predominately white and from colleges and universities in Georgia and South Carolina. By 1956 the program had been in existence for nearly 20 years. According to students that participated in the Interracial Weekend, the experience “opened my mind,” “changed my perspective,” and “made me rethink my ideas about others.”⁹⁴

Xavier was another institution to host an interracial conference; its annual interracial Sunday in New Orleans. The event was well received, with approximately 550 people in attendance. Participants were students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds from high schools and colleges. The goal of the meeting was to assess race relations in America through discussions and intergroup dialogue. The event also sought to enhance interracial competency.⁹⁵ Along with black churches, HBCUs were often champions of interracial dialogue in the South, daring to push against the status quo.⁹⁶

Community Education

HBCUs often provided basic educational opportunities for the local communities. These opportunities came in many forms and ranged from continuing education to general education to supplemental education.⁹⁷ This decision to make education available to disenfranchised black community members was particularly important during this time, as segregation was the norm. For example, Benedict College had several programs to educate the community. The first was holding evening courses on campus for in-service ministers who were undereducated and therefore could not take regular courses at the institution.⁹⁸ Similarly, Benedict offered courses to teachers and other community members who were unable to take courses like traditional students. The college also held a six-week course on child development, hoping to educate young women about child rearing.

Bethune-Cookman provided community consultation on the significance of voting and voter disenfranchisement, helping citizens fight unfair practices and laws aimed at stripping them of their civil rights. Morehouse College held annual institutes on marriage and family life.

⁹⁴ Student comments are lifted from surveys completed about the Inter-racial Weekend. Surveys are located in the Paine College Library, Augusta, Georgia.

⁹⁵ UNCF Institutional Survey, 1956.

⁹⁶ Brown and Brown, “Faith and Works,” 617–41; F. Harris, “Black Churches and Civic Traditions: Outreach, Activism, and the Politics of Public Funding of Faith-Based Ministries,” *Trinity College Paper Series*, 2007.

⁹⁷ Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*; Daniel Thompson, *Private Black Colleges at the Crossroads* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1973).

⁹⁸ UNCF Institutional Survey, 1950.

The programs were created with the intention of better preparing community members for the challenges to the family foundation. Philander Smith College joined the cause of providing education for those who did not have access. The institution's 1950 UNCF survey states, "An evening college was opened last September. Among the offerings are standard courses toward a collegiate degree and adult education courses. It enrolled 100 persons that otherwise would have been denied the opportunity to go to college."⁹⁹ Due to the efforts of Philander Smith College in the early to mid-1950s, over the course of five years, one hundred individuals who were unable to attend college because of obligations to their family were awarded their bachelor's degree.¹⁰⁰

During the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s several other HBCUs developed adult education and extension courses that "brought in many members of the local community."¹⁰¹ In many ways, the adult education and community education offered by HBCUs fulfills the legacy and desire of Booker T. Washington in that it reaches out to the larger black community and prepares them for the workforce.

Community Health Programs

At a time when African Americans were consistently denied access to mainstream health care systems, HBCUs were using their resources to help their respective communities. According to historians studying race and medicine in the United States, black colleges and black college medical schools were often the only institutions willing to listen to and reach out to black communities.¹⁰² To provide some context, consider that in the 1940s and early 1950s, quality health care, or health care at all for that matter, was still limited for most blacks. The ratio of black physicians to blacks in general continued to be very low and grew even more so as the decade progressed. In the Southern states in 1942, for example, there was one white physician for each 1,060 white citizens and one black physician for each 5,832 black citizens. By 1948, the situation had worsened: there was one white doctor for each 1,262 white citizens and one black doctor for each 6,203 black citizens.¹⁰³ Black citizens had

⁹⁹UNCF Institutional Survey, 1950.

¹⁰⁰UNCF Institutional Survey, 1954.

¹⁰¹Quoted material is from Dillard University Archives, New Orleans, Louisiana. See teacher education files.

¹⁰²Todd Savitt, *Race and Medicine in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century America* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2006); Marybeth Gasman with Louis W. Sullivan, *The Morehouse Mystique: Becoming a Doctor at the Nation's Newest African American Medical School* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012).

¹⁰³Joseph L. Johnson, "The Supply of Negro Health Personnel-Physicians," *Journal of Negro Education* 19, no. 3 (Summer 1949): 346-56.

few options and as such, HBCUs and their efforts to reach out were essential to the citizen's well-being.

Faculty members at Bennett College worked hand in hand with Greensboro health officials to establish a mental health clinic.¹⁰⁴ Bennett's Health Services also provided health examinations for children in the community. These were often the only examinations afforded these children.¹⁰⁵ Bishop College saw the need for a clinic at a time when there was no county health clinic in the predominately black county. Through the collaborative work of Bishop, the Texas Tuberculosis Association, and the State Department of Health, three health centers were established for black community members.¹⁰⁶ The Tuberculosis Association was a major partner of HBCUs and black health care at the time.¹⁰⁷

Livingstone College trained forty female seniors through an American Red Cross training and nursing program. The purpose of providing the senior women with this education was to better prepare them to take care of their families. According to the Livingstone faculty meeting notes, "students gained real world experience and gave to the community at the same time." That paper also noted that those in the local community expressed their appreciation to the young women.¹⁰⁸ Another course at the institution allowed for students to go into the community and provide in-home care for the sick and elderly.¹⁰⁹ Other institutions worked with local hospitals to positively affect their community. Some created programs that worked with specific groups such as the hearing or speech impaired and children with cerebral palsy. Although historically white institutions also reached out to communities to promote health care, HBCUs were not supplementing services, but instead providing vital care and serving unmet needs.¹¹⁰ Not only were blacks denied services at the majority of white facilities in the South, but there was a significant shortage of African-American doctors throughout the South and the entire nation.¹¹¹ In order to become economically viable as advocated by the writings of Booker T. Washington, blacks needed access to regular health care. The cultural enrichment noted earlier provided blacks with increased cultural capital but

¹⁰⁴UNCF Institutional Survey, 1950.

¹⁰⁵UNCF Institutional Survey, 1951.

¹⁰⁶UNCF Institutional Survey, 1951.

¹⁰⁷Gasman, *The Morehouse Mystique*.

¹⁰⁸Livingstone College Nursing Faculty Meeting Notes, 1952, Livingstone College Archives, Salisbury, North Carolina.

¹⁰⁹UNCF Institutional Survey, 1952.

¹¹⁰Savitt, *Race and Medicine in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century America*; Gasman, *The Morehouse Mystique*.

¹¹¹Gasman, *The Morehouse Mystique*.

HBCUs also aided in the everyday lives of blacks who lacked access to basic needs, combining the philosophies of Du Bois and Washington.

Town Meetings, Forums, and Political Initiatives

In the 1950s and 1960s, civil unrest was a common theme in many African-American communities throughout the South.¹¹² In particular, according to Scott, students from HBCUs “exercised the highest and most intensive form of ‘civic engagement’ when they led the movement of engage the entire country in the pursuit of social justice . . .”¹¹³ HBCUs provided a platform to address community issues. One vehicle for this type of civic and political engagement was mass media. Hampton Institute had a thirty-minute radio show for thirteen weeks during the 1950–1951 academic year.¹¹⁴ Faculty, students, and leaders of the community presented on the show and addressed civil rights topics. Lincoln University in Pennsylvania used both radio and television to communicate with their community. Two professors led the television show and used the facilities of a local television station. The television program expanded in 1955 to include staff and students and have a variety of civil rights related programming. In the mid-1950s through mid-1960s, Morehouse College also had a television series called “The African Character.”¹¹⁵ Guest appearances included Horace Mann Bond and Morehouse College President Benjamin Mays.¹¹⁶ Mays also gave weekly speeches to students related to civic engagement. He tried to “motivate the students to live creatively in order to manage what he defined as a social revolution in America.”¹¹⁷ He was referring to the *Brown v. Board* decision and wanted students to understand its potential impact in the community, on their lives, and throughout the nation. Mays felt that the nation, the South and the Atlanta area were not ready for the high court’s decision and wanted to make sure his students were prepared for what he saw as a potential crisis.¹¹⁸ Heavily influenced by W. E. B. Du Bois, Mays also saw the role of black colleges as expansive and profound, noting that these institutions were “the country’s first truly interracial, intercultural, and international centers of

¹¹²Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*; Brisbane, *Black Activism*.

¹¹³Scott, “A Historically Black College Perspective,” 265. For another detailed exploration of HBCU student involvement in the civil rights movement, see Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*.

¹¹⁴UNCF Institutional Survey, 1952.

¹¹⁵UNCF Institutional Survey, 1964.

¹¹⁶UNCF Institutional Survey, 1965.

¹¹⁷Scott, “A Historically Black College Perspective,” 268.

¹¹⁸Scott, “A Historically Black College Perspective”; Benjamin E. Mays, *Born to Rebel: An Autobiography* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2003).

education . . . Unhindered by the traditional customs of the past, they are free to become ongoing experiments in democratic education.”¹¹⁹

The Morris Brown Chapter of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Incorporated sponsored a forum with local civil and business leaders open to the public on the topic of the effects of public planning on African Americans in Atlanta.¹²⁰ The program was called “What Does Atlanta’s City Plan Have to Offer You?”¹²¹ For seven years between the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Political Science Department of Atlanta University sponsored Town Hall meetings on political and social issues.¹²² These meetings brought local, state, and national figures to speak to the public about controversial civil rights and civil liberties issues. At Lincoln University, the “Community Service League” brought campaigning politicians to the community.¹²³ This action by Lincoln enhanced the community’s exposure to political issues and helped to make sure they were making informed decisions when voting.¹²⁴

In the early 1960s, sit-in protests in stores began at North Carolina A&T University, but were supported by Bennett students.¹²⁵ According to the survey as well as historian William H. Chafe, who has written extensively on civil rights activities in North Carolina, these demonstrations eventually led to integrated counter service being provided by local businesses.¹²⁶ Bennett College president Willa Player was supportive of students, and in fact, promoted student activism on and around campus. She saw civic engagement and the pursuit of civil rights as part of a liberal arts education.¹²⁷

Benedict College was awarded two \$5,000 grants by the Ford Foundation to conduct a voter registration project.¹²⁸ The scope of the project was to contact and urge African-American citizens of Columbia,

¹¹⁹ Benjamin E. Mays, “What’s Ahead for Our Negro Schools,” *Together* 6, (1962): 32–33; see also, Mays, *Born to Rebel*.

¹²⁰ See *Atlanta World*, the local Black Newspaper, “Morris Brown Fraternity Plans for the Future of Blacks,” *Atlanta World*, 3 November 1954.

¹²¹ UNCF Institutional Survey, 1954.

¹²² UNCF Institutional Survey, 1957–1963.

¹²³ UNCF Institutional Survey, 1957.

¹²⁴ Gasman, “Envisioning Black Colleges”; Gasman, “Perceptions of Black College Presidents.”

¹²⁵ UNCF Institutional Survey, 1961; Gasman, “Perceptions of Black College Presidents”; Scott, “A Historically Black College Perspective.” For a detailed discussion, see Willa Player, oral history interview, Greensboro Voices, 3 December 1979.

¹²⁶ Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*.

¹²⁷ See Willa Player, oral history interview, Greensboro Voices, 3 December 3, 1979; Willa Player, “The Case for the Liberal Arts College,” United Negro College Fund Papers, 1964; Willa Player, “Report to the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees,” 1960, Bennett College Archives, Greensboro, North Carolina. Gasman, “Perceptions of Black College Presidents.”

¹²⁸ UNCF Institutional Survey, 1963.

South Carolina and the surrounding areas, to meet the qualifications and to register for voting. The project was able to get 3,000 citizens to qualify and register for voting.

Lane College held a two-week institute on issues related to school desegregation. According to the Lane College 1966 UNCF Institutional Survey,

The program was supported by the Office of Education of the Federal govt [government] under Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The participants included two teachers, one Negro and one White, from 15 recently desegregated schools in the Knoxville area. The program consisted of lectures, films, field trips, and a survey of human relations problems in desegregated schools within a 120 [mile] radius of Knoxville.¹²⁹

In most cases, the programs offered by HBCUs were the community's only exposure to accurate representations of issues such as voting rights and desegregation efforts throughout the nation.¹³⁰

Of course, there were exceptions in terms of support for civil rights activity and engagement. For example, Joy Williamson-Lott in her book *Radicalizing the Ebony Tower: Black Colleges and the Black Freedom Struggle in Mississippi*, details the presidency of Jacob Reddix of Jackson State University. Due to pressure from the State of Mississippi, the president caved in and gave up the names of student protestors and civil rights activists. Rather than engendering activism, President Reddix kowtowed to the white establishment, betraying the trust of students and those in the surrounding community.¹³¹ Likewise, in 1960, when the women of Spelman College set out to protest discrimination at a local restaurant, then president Albert Manley discouraged them, noting that they should focus on their studies first. He also discouraged talk of civil rights agitation, citing the femininity of the students. According to Marion Wright Edelman, who as a student at Spelman at the time, "To my shock and dismay, Dr. Manley... urged Spelman students not to participate. He stressed all the dangers but none of the values at stake."¹³² Black colleges, depending on their location, leadership, and context, have different histories of supporting interracial dialogue, civil rights agitation, and civic engagement.

¹²⁹UNCF Institutional Survey, 1966.

¹³⁰Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*; Egerton, *Speak Now Against the Day*.

¹³¹Lott, *Radicalizing the Ebony Tower*.

¹³²Harry Lefever, *Undaunted by the Fight: Spelman College and the Civil Rights Movement, 1957-1967* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005). Marion Wright Edelman is quoted by Harry Lefever in his book.

Use of Resources

HBCUs also allowed the community to use their resources; resources in the sense of facilities and personnel. One facility that was often used by the community was the library. Atlanta University's library allowed the community to use its facility for checking out books but also provided a meeting place for community organizations.¹³³ According to a community member survey administered by the library each year, black members of the Atlanta community thought that the use of library books provided a "window to the world" and that being on the college campus served as an impetus to "organizing and motivating local citizens in the fight against segregation."¹³⁴

The Daytona Beach community used Bethune-Cookman's library facilities.¹³⁵ The institution also served as an interlibrary loan service site. This library was the only one accessible to African Americans in the community, offering access to a world outside the South. At Paine College, a staff member named Reverend W.L. Buffington founded the Faith Cabin Libraries.¹³⁶ These were libraries set up in local communities in Georgia and South Carolina. The project existed nearly fifteen years prior to the survey and continued until at least 1960. The program grew exponentially over the years. By 1957, there were seventy library centers and more than 300,000 books available.¹³⁷ This was another service that would not have been available to these communities if the institution had not established it.¹³⁸

Talladega College had a "Community Library and Bookmobile" program.¹³⁹ The Community Library program made the library's facilities available to the local community. The Bookmobile provided services in a "simple capacity" to the rural areas, primarily around Talladega County in Alabama. In addition to these services, the institution allowed community organizations to conduct meetings in the library without charge. Near LeMoyne College there was a low-income residential development with around 1,800 children. Seeing a need, the

¹³³UNCF Institutional Survey, 1950–1952.

¹³⁴Atlanta University Library Community Survey, years 1950–1959, located in the Robert Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center, Atlanta, GA.

¹³⁵UNCF Institutional Survey, 1951–1952.

¹³⁶UNCF Institutional Survey, 1950–1960.

¹³⁷Details of the organization and operation of the library system as well as myriad newspaper clippings and testimonials from those in the community can be found at the Paine College library, Augusta, Georgia.

¹³⁸For an extensive discussion of the lack of libraries in Black communities, see Marybeth Gasman, "Sisters in Service: African American Sororities and the Philanthropic Support of Education," in *Women, Philanthropy, and Education*, ed. Andrea Walton (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 194–214.

¹³⁹UNCF Institutional Survey, 1950–1962.

institution established a “special children’s library” for the children of the community to use.¹⁴⁰

Given the access and freedom that reading brings, HBCUs contributed greatly to neighboring communities through the establishment of libraries. Of note, most black middle-class social service organizations also invested in ways to bring books and library services to black communities. There was a firm belief in the minds of educated blacks that reading and exposure to knowledge would lift up the black population overall.¹⁴¹

HBCUs often allowed the community and local organizations to use other facilities on their campuses.¹⁴² Benedict College provided many local organizations access to their classrooms and cafeterias for meetings. Johnson C. Smith’s local community used the campus’ auditorium, gymnasiums, and athletic fields. The community members of Memphis regularly used LeMoyne College’s lecture halls and cafeteria. Tougaloo College’s church was open to and often used by individuals in the community for religious services and community organizing. Xavier University allowed the local community, including the local “Negro” high schools and elementary schools, community organizations and members, and Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) to use their athletic facilities including the stadium, gymnasium, and softball field. At first glance, providing facilities to local black citizens may not seem significant, however, these citizens had few other facilities save the black churches, which were limited in size.

HBCUs not only allowed the community to use their facilities as resources, but they also provided their faculty, staff, and students as resources for the community. For example, Morehouse’s ministers were often used throughout the community.¹⁴³ And the institution’s all-black male college’s Student Christian Council supplied local churches with youth leaders, schoolteachers, recreational leadership, and organizational leadership.¹⁴⁴ As African Americans were often not allowed to assemble in public places in communities, having access to the HBCU facilities was vital to their ability to organize, plan, celebrate, and worship. And, in many ways, bringing the community onto the HBCU campuses was a manifestation of Du Bois’s talented tenth doing what he wanted them to do in terms of teaching and uplifting local black

¹⁴⁰UNCF Institutional Survey, 1957–1958.

¹⁴¹The notion of “reading” and racial uplift is beautifully depicted in Heather Williams’ book, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

¹⁴²UNCF institutional Survey, 1950–1966.

¹⁴³UNCF Institutional Survey, 1950.

¹⁴⁴UNCF Institutional Survey, 1954.

communities.¹⁴⁵ At the same time these campus exchanges allowed for this talented tenth to better understand those blacks with little education but employable skills.

Community Organization Collaborations

Often HBCUs collaborated with government agencies, community, or national organizations to achieve their goals of civic or community engagement. Bennett College worked with L. Richardson Memorial Hospital, the YWCA, the public library, and elementary and secondary schools to execute a study focused on agriculture and science programs during the 1949–1950 academic year.¹⁴⁶ The next year the program was expanded to include participation from the Girl Scouts and local newspaper.¹⁴⁷

Paine College along with the Women's Division of the Christian Service of the Methodist Church supported the Bethlehem Center.¹⁴⁸ The center was a community program with a kindergarten and clubs for older children. It provided an opportunity for students at the institution to participate in community service and training.¹⁴⁹ In collaboration with the Girl Scouts of America, Boy Scouts of America, YMCA, YWCA, and local churches, Philander Smith College developed a leadership training program for community members.¹⁵⁰

Talladega College held a position on the Community Cooperation Committee, which was an eight-person committee with representation from the college, various schools, organizations, and churches.¹⁵¹ The committee accomplished a great many things including an African-American voter registration program, youth recreation program, and kindergarten. At Hampton Institute during the 1956–1957 academic year, the Hampton Institute Book Bazaar took place.¹⁵² It was cosponsored by the Children's Book Council of New York City, the Hampton Chapter of the American Association of University Women, the Hampton City Schools, the *Newport News Daily Press*, and WVEC radio and television. This event was open to the public.

¹⁴⁵ Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*; Egerton, *Speak Now Against the Day*; Du Bois, "The Talented Tenth," 33–75.

¹⁴⁶ UNCF Institutional Survey, 1950; See also Bennett College faculty meeting minutes between January 1950 and December 1950 for a thorough discussion of this topic. These minutes are located in the Bennett College archives, Greensboro, North Carolina.

¹⁴⁷ UNCF Institutional Survey, 1951.

¹⁴⁸ UNCF Institutional Survey, 1950.

¹⁴⁹ UNCF Institutional Survey, 1950.

¹⁵⁰ UNCF Institutional Survey, 1955.

¹⁵¹ UNCF Institutional Survey, 1953–1955.

¹⁵² UNCF Institutional Survey, 1957.

Bishop College developed a Tutorial Program for public schools students.¹⁵³ The project was the result of the collaborative effort of the YMCA, an organization referred to as “SUMU” and the Zale & Hogg Foundations. The program served 250 students during the 1965–1966 school year. Engaging organizations in the local community and throughout the nation brought more exposure to the work of HBCUs. It also exposed students to career and volunteer opportunities. In many ways, the civic engagement with community organizations exemplified the philosophies of both Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois by bringing together the talented tenth with the larger community of African Americans and creating a sense of collaboration.

Elementary and Secondary School Involvement

Education in the South was limited for African Americans due to systemic problems rooted in segregation, racism, and inequality in funding, facilities, and resources.¹⁵⁴ HBCUs saw a need and responded. In cooperation with the Austin Public Schools, Huston-Tillotson College assisted in operating a community nursery school, which included preschool and kindergarten.¹⁵⁵ In a mutually beneficial exchange, Huston-Tillotson also maintained a “special laboratory school” during the first half of every semester.¹⁵⁶ It provided supervised training of thirty teachers and education for one hundred elementary school children. The Austin Public Schools assisted with this school.

Barber-Scotia College provided a similar six-week nursery school program for students taking courses in child psychology, Child Growth and Development, and Nursery School Procedures.¹⁵⁷ The 1958 survey claimed, “It provides pre-school experience for children which has proven a great asset in their adjustment to regular school activities.” And, Bennett College’s Children’s House offered services to local parents and nursery school children beginning in February 1954.¹⁵⁸ And, of note, according to both Bennett College faculty and staff newsletters and internal memorandum, being on the college campus often served

¹⁵³UNCF Institutional Survey, 1966.

¹⁵⁴Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*; Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. Vanessa Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

¹⁵⁵UNCF Institutional Survey, 1951.

¹⁵⁶UNCF Institutional Survey, 1955.

¹⁵⁷UNCF Institutional Survey, 1958.

¹⁵⁸UNCF Institutional Survey, 1954–1955.

as an impetus for community members to enroll in college or take night classes.¹⁵⁹

Bennett College also established “Youth Day,” which was for female high school seniors and their advisors.¹⁶⁰ The purpose of the annual weekend event was to enhance interest and provide guidance in pursuing higher and vocational education. Although not all of the female students attended Bennett for college, they expressed gratitude for the experience to learn about college and the application process.¹⁶¹ In 1952, over hundred students and advisors attended the event.

Spelman and Morehouse received a three-year grant of \$225,000 from the Rockefeller Foundation.¹⁶² The money from the grant was used to establish a precollege program for high school students (tenth to twelfth grade), which began in the summer of 1964. The students were selected based on their high academic achievement and ability. The program conducted classes during the regular school year and during the summer. Spelman also was a participant in “Project Opportunity,” which was a talent identification program for underprivileged black and white students in the seventh grade. The goal of the program was to guide and assist the selected students through secondary school and on to college successfully.

During the Christmas holiday, several student organizations at Xavier donated toys, food, and clothing to rural schools.¹⁶³ Xavier also operated two performing arts schools.¹⁶⁴ The Junior School of Music educated city elementary and high school students on how to play instruments and instrumental musical performances. The Junior School of Art offered training to talented seventh to twelfth graders in the area of art.

The Department of Sociology at Paine College conducted a survey on “population trends and racial content” in a specific area of Augusta.¹⁶⁵ The Augusta Chapter of the Council on Human Relations used the information from that survey to gain control over a school in the area. The school was for white students only but was not used regularly and had not been for two years. Armed with the previously

¹⁵⁹ See internal faculty and staff newsletters and memorandum from 1952 to 1956, which detail enrollment and application increases as a result of community members visiting campus for the various programs. See Bennett College archives, Greensboro, North Carolina.

¹⁶⁰ UNCF Institutional Survey, 1952.

¹⁶¹ See the Bennett Banner, October 6, 1952, located online at North Carolina Digital Newspaper Archive (<http://www.digitalnc.org/collections/newspapers>).

¹⁶² UNCF Institutional Survey, 1965–1966.

¹⁶³ UNCF Institutional Survey, 1954.

¹⁶⁴ UNCF institutional Survey, 1955.

¹⁶⁵ UNCF Institutional Survey, 1961.

mentioned information, the council was successful in acquiring the school for African-American students. Overall, HBCUs supplemented the educational experiences of African Americans at all levels adding to the civic engagement in local communities. Likewise, the students of HBCUs benefited from the firsthand experience of working with primary and secondary schools, enhancing their knowledge of the social issues among the greater black communities surrounding black colleges. These partnerships between HBCUs and the surrounding primary and secondary schools exemplify the ethos of Du Bois's talented tenth philosophy, which called for the formally educated to lift up and work with those yearning for education.

Conclusion

Despite being ignored by most scholars who study civic engagement, black colleges have a rich history of civic engagement. We have shown through the use of surveys of all private black colleges, archival materials from seven individual black colleges, and oral histories that black colleges must be included in civic engagement discussions in order for these discussions to be truly representative. Black colleges' students, faculty, and staff historically have played significant roles in local communities in terms of providing health, literacy, voting, education, and gathering space. Many of these roles were risky given the oppressive and racist climate of the Jim Crow South, while others were entrepreneurial in nature. In addition, black college students and faculty as well as some administrators fought vehemently for civil rights and registered African Americans to vote. Of note, these examples were not isolated as the UNCF's colleges shared their civic engagement activities and, as a result, some public HBCUs adopted similar programs throughout the country despite threats against their leaders.¹⁶⁶

Scholars within the civic engagement movement have pointed to the dearth of diversity within practice and scholarship.¹⁶⁷ Yet, given the absence of meaningful inclusion of HBCUs, these criticisms lack nuance and genuine effort to change the civic engagement conversation in ways to make it more inclusive. Scholarly and practical discussions of civic engagement should begin with HBCUs as their history exemplifies the definition of being civically minded. Their institutional civic commitments grew out of necessity long before there was a movement to reclaim the public dimensions of higher education and thus those that study civic engagement would benefit from this long-standing history. These institutions have played a vital role in cultivating a black

¹⁶⁶Gasman, *Envisioning Black Colleges*.

¹⁶⁷Hartley, "Reclaiming the Democratic Purposes of American Higher Education."

middle class that understands civic engagement as one of the main avenues for the education and survival of blacks as a people.¹⁶⁸ They also instilled a sense of social justice in their students that promoted greater engagement in the decades following the civil rights era.¹⁶⁹

Unlike the majority of colleges and universities, HBCUs have a long and rich history of sponsoring “solutions to community problems” and responding to human needs that clearly sets them apart. In the most practical sense, civic engagement at black colleges developed critical thinking and problem solving skills on the part of students.¹⁷⁰ Both the historical data and current examinations (as exemplified in the limited civic engagement literature on HBCUs) can tell us more about the benefits of participating in civic engagement and student learning for black students. Black colleges had the power to place blacks in the best position to advance their own interest in civil society.

Yet, we are left wondering if HBCUs today still *collectively* instill this sense of social justice. These institutions continue to create and shape Du Bois’s talented tenth, but do their graduates engage the larger black community around salient issues and lift up the surrounding black communities as Du Bois prescribed? This question echoes a larger debate within higher education that sees higher education’s role as being strictly professional and ignores the important civic role that academia plays.¹⁷¹ In our view, this larger debate, similar to that of Washington and Du Bois, represents a false choice.¹⁷² As HBCUs have historically shown, higher education can serve both civic and professional functions and is strengthened by this pursuit. Perhaps black colleges are building on their foundation of civic engagement. In 2010, for example, HBCU students performed more community service than their counterparts at majority institutions (55.5% vs. 43%) and were more politically active (27% vs. 18%).¹⁷³ Scholars and practitioners need to pay attention to these important institutions and examine their contributions in full. There is much to be learned from the civic engagement activities that took place during the civil rights era. The lessons are valuable for today’s African-American students and for today’s black colleges—some

¹⁶⁸Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*.

¹⁶⁹Scott, “A Historically Black College Perspective.”

¹⁷⁰American Association of Colleges & Universities, *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future*. Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges & Universities, 2012. (http://www.aacu.org/civic_learning/crucible/documents/crucible_508F.pdf).

¹⁷¹Stanley Fish, *Save the World on Your Own Time* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

¹⁷²Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*.

¹⁷³Campus Compact, Indicators of Engagement Project, 2011.

of which have maintained their commitment to civic engagement, but others that have waned in their dedication.

Much of the civic engagement movement in the United States has operated from a client/service provider model. This approach often allows largely white student groups to be infused with an inflated sense of power that disempowers the communities being “served.” Because black colleges are part of their surrounding communities and have educated those in these communities, they are less likely to fall into the trap of the client/service provider model as described by Harry Boyte and Nancy Kari.¹⁷⁴ Instead, they can operate with a sense of family and obligation to uplift their race for mutual benefit. Black colleges not only had but continue to have the potential to change individuals and empower local communities.¹⁷⁵ As demonstrated throughout this article, the communities around black colleges are often economically depressed (although rich in creativity and commitment to the people in the community). Because civic and economic health have been proven to go hand in hand, these communities can only benefit from the intervention, care, and attention of the black colleges that live next to them.¹⁷⁶ And black colleges can only grow and become stronger with the support of local communities. Although some colleges and universities literally built walls and “fences” around themselves in order to remain separate from the minority communities living nearby, black colleges were (and most continue to be) hubs of community and civic engagement and forums for justice.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴Harry Boyte and Nancy Kari, *Building America: The Democratic Promise of Public Work* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University, 1996).

¹⁷⁵Mikyong Minsun Kim and Clifton Conrad, “The Impact of Historically Black Colleges and Universities On the Academic Success of African-American Students,” *Research in Higher Education* 47, no. 4, (June 2006): 399–427.

¹⁷⁶<http://ncoc.net/unemployment>, accessed August 1, 2013.

¹⁷⁷Judith Rodin, *The University and Urban Revival: Out of the Ivory Tower and into the Streets* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Marybeth Gasman and Adriel Hilton, “Mixed Motivations, Mixed Results: A History of Law, Interest Convergence, and Historically Black Colleges and Universities,” *Teachers College Record* 114 (July 2012): 1–34; Hutcheson, Gasman, and Sanders-McMurtry, “Understanding Resistance;” Gasman and McMickens, “Liberal or Professional Education?,” 286–305.