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# Black Club Women's Purposes for Establishing Kindergartens in the Progressive Era, 1890-1910

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

BLACK CLUB WOMEN'S PURPOSES FOR ESTABLISHING KINDERGARTENS  
IN THE PROGRESSIVE ERA, 1896-1906

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT

JEAN ROBBINS  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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To John Lake, who grew in so many ways and taught me. Thank you.

What, say you, is inspiration? Is it not an innate impulse to rise?

—Josephine Silone Yates

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## ABSTRACT

Little literature exists that examines black people's efforts to educate their young children during the Progressive Era. It was the period in which early childhood education in the form of kindergarten began to flourish in the United States and around the world. Even in the abundance of literature about kindergarten's successes and its potential to transform impoverished families, the overwhelmingly poor black population remained invisible to the great majority of researchers writing about the progress of that movement.

Yet primary historical documents, such as the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs (NACW) records, manuscripts, and Progressive Era newspapers, reveal that black women made tremendous contributions to the movement to meet the educational needs of children and families in their communities and to institutionalize kindergarten. This research will center on the black kindergarten movement through the work of two important advocates Mary Church Terrell and Josephine Silone Yates, who were the first two presidents of the National Association of Colored Women. The two women's writings will shed light on the conditions they expected kindergartens to address, how they planned to go about establishing kindergartens for poor black children, and why they thought kindergarten, in particular, would be especially beneficial to black children and families.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Little literature exists that examines black people's efforts to educate their young children during the Progressive Era. It was the period in which, after many fits and starts, early childhood education in the form of kindergarten, began to flourish in the United States and around the world. Even in the abundance of literature about kindergarten's successes and its potential to transform impoverished families, the overwhelmingly poor black population remained invisible to the great majority of researchers writing about the progress of that movement (Lerner, 1974; Peltzman, 1998; Scott, 1990).

Yet primary historical documents, such as the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs (NACW) records, manuscripts, and Progressive Era newspapers, reveal that black women made tremendous contributions to the movement to meet the educational needs of children and families in their communities and to institutionalize kindergarten. Considering the general resistance to black participation in most aspects of society, the scarcity of financial and other resources among blacks, and their lack of political power, the fact that black club women persisted in establishing free kindergartens and in pressuring for public access to kindergartens was remarkable. How did the black kindergarten movement unfold and who were its leaders? How did these leaders describe the purpose of establishing kindergartens for young black children and their families? What did the wealthy, highly educated black women at the forefront of

this movement believe that kindergartens would contribute to the effort to uplift poor blacks?

This research will center on the black kindergarten movement through the work of two of its most outspoken and powerful advocates, Mary Church Terrell and Josephine Silone Yates. These leaders were identified by examining early NACW convention records, news articles from the period, and other primary and secondary sources about the kindergarten movement. Mary Church Terrell, the first NACW president, proposed the goal of establishing kindergartens as one of NACW's top priorities, raised funds to support NACW clubs' kindergartens, and employed creative strategies to increase the availability of kindergartens for black children. Josephine Silone Yates, NACW's second president, wrote and spoke extensively on the benefits of kindergarten and on the importance of kindergarten teacher preparation. Many other black women were deeply committed to providing kindergartens for black children but as founding members and leaders of the first secular national black women's organization for the first decade of the organization's existence, Terrell and Yates emerged as leaders because they articulated the message to a national audience of educated blacks.

Terrell and Yates' writings shed light on the conditions they expected kindergartens to address, their strategies for getting club women to establish kindergartens for poor black children, and why they thought kindergarten, in particular, would be especially beneficial to black children and families. The most logical sources that reveal the women's purposes for establishing kindergartens and capture their authentic voices and actions are their articles and speeches that mention kindergarten.

Terrell's personal papers are archived in the Library of Congress and Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University but Yates' personal papers appear not to be archived formally, however her published writings appear in various periodicals and some correspondence and speeches appear in the NACW records.

Derrida described archival research as “nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement” (quoted in McCulloch, 2004, p. 51, from 1995, p. 57). This project returns us to the beginnings of kindergarten in black American communities. The original purposes, strategies, and ideals that laid the foundation for black kindergartens will provide a more complete historical account of the kindergarten movement and will reveal how two women contributed to the growth of and support for early childhood programs in the United States. Early kindergarten advocates expressed that same sense of nostalgia or hopefulness described by Derrida but about the beginnings of young children's education. In fact, the nostalgic or idealistic theme threads throughout the history of early childhood that going to the “place of absolute commencement” or correcting how and what young children learn would enable them to change the social order. Blacks were also starting afresh as newly freed people taking their first steps towards education.

The two women chosen for this study occupied a unique social position as women in the mostly male group that W.E.B. DuBois described as the “talented tenth” and as free blacks born during the tumultuous period of Civil War and the end of legal slavery in the United States. Terrell and Yates' formative years were during the Reconstruction Period when blacks made extraordinary gains in American society. They were also

among the one percent of American women and two percent of black people who graduated from college (Gaines, 1996; Gordon, 1991). These women balanced professional careers with families and club work; they spoke publicly, raised money, and worked across color lines during the stormy racial climate of Jim Crow. As national leaders, the black and white press covered Terrell and Yates' speeches and actions and their stature lent them access to American and international leaders.

Terrell and Yates both wrote extensively about the need for kindergartens especially for poor black children and families. What enabled Terrell and Yates, privileged college educated women, to identify with and reach out to poor migrants and ex-slaves? Why did they focus on establishing kindergartens for black children instead of fighting to integrate the kindergartens that were already being established in settlements, public schools, and under private auspices? How did kindergarten fit into the discourse about uplift that was a major focus of black leaders during the Progressive Era? Where did kindergarten fit into the larger debate about education articulated by W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington? And finally, were Terrell and Yates familiar with the German philosophical and curricular roots of kindergarten and with Friedrich Froebel's work? These are some of the questions that guided the research.

Kindergarten was early childhood education's first firm root in the United States. Other early care and education reforms, such as infant schools, crèches, and day nurseries were never institutionalized nor did they receive the popular support that kindergarten got and still gets; in fact, preschool is only now building toward the credibility that kindergarten possesses. Though deeply influenced by constructivist ideas, teacher-

directed positivism lingers over the early grades today. But kindergarten and preschool are rooted in Froebelian as well as American Progressive Era ideals of transforming the poor, taking the child away from the family to correct him/her; and developing children's inner spiritual forces through freedom and exploration which has evolved into the idea of child-centered practice and following children's interests. Do we still believe that children learn and that families, especially poor families, are served by the structure and curriculum built on these ideals? While this study will not attempt to assess the quality of early kindergartens for poor black children, reflecting on the stated purposes that shaped black kindergartens and the context of the historical period will lend new perspectives on the ideals and values that formed the foundations of early childhood education.

### **Research Questions**

The main questions this study will seek to answer are:

1. How did the writings of Mary Church Terrell and Josephine Silone Yates, two important leaders, affect the black kindergarten movement during the period from 1896-1906?
2. Who were Mary Church Terrell and Josephine Silone Yates and how did their identities and views about kindergarten interact with the social context of the Progressive Era?
3. What did Terrell and Yates see as the purposes of kindergarten education for black children, as expressed in their speeches and articles?

### **Thesis**

This study argues that the three basic purposes for establishing kindergartens gleaned from the writings of Terrell and Yates were to:

1. Address conditions of ignorance and poverty through education and basic self-care in the absence of any government or private social service efforts to provide these services to ex-slaves and their children.
2. Provide a compelling ideal and clearly defined goal around which black club women could organize, unify, and build a power base.
3. Provide young black children with the important developmental benefits and cultural knowledge that kindergarten could offer.

It has been argued that black women established their own clubs because they were barred from joining white clubs. While segregation was a legal reality, black club women organized to accomplish their own goals and created their own strategies to accomplish them; according to Terrell, “Let us remember that we are banded together to do good, to work most vigorously and conscientiously upon that which will redound most to the welfare and progress of the race.” (1899 speech reprinted in Jones, 1990, p. 143). For instance, NACW convention records communicate an urgency to address the survival needs of black families; these women saw education as a means for survival for the race. Establishing kindergartens was an expression of blacks’ deeply held value of schooling and education, as well as a logical focus of the NACW since the first president of the National Association of Colored Women, Mary Church Terrell, and a majority of the members had taught at one time and nearly 40% were teachers (Gatewood, 1990;

Giddings, 1984; Gordon, 1991; Knupfer, 1996). Many of the women who formed clubs were acquainted and had close bonds through church affiliations, social groups, and college and the shared experience of racism promoted solidarity. The movement to establish free kindergartens for poor black children also reflects a continuity of self-help through organized action in American black communities (Gaines, 1996; Giddings, 1980; Gordon, 1991; Lerner, 1972; 1974).

Club work provided a vehicle for middle and upper class black and white American women's awakening quest for knowledge, power, and influence during the Progressive Era. The NACW was a black parallel to white women's clubs, even self-consciously comparing itself to them, but the impetus for its dramatic growth and enduring influence was rooted in the desire to transform the black experience in the United States and to destroy what were seen as the root causes of racism, discrimination, and injustice. Kindergartens provided educated black women with a compelling ideal around which to organize, to uplift their communities, and to promote a black or Colored social agenda. In addition to socialization, pre-literacy skills, and self-regulation, Terrell and Yates saw kindergarten education as a way to teach black children how to cope with racism and to gain the profoundly desired acceptance of and equal participation in the dominant white society.

The system of American slavery generated a myth of black intellectual inferiority that still inhabits the American psyche. It is likely that blacks' value of education over the centuries is partly due to the desire to dispel this myth. Highly educated blacks used their social access and sense of entitlement to transcend legal and attitudinal barriers to



achieve their own ends and to uplift the race (Gaines, 1996; Gatewood, 1990; Giddings, 1984).

### **Rationale**

One of the most compelling reasons for writing about the history of black kindergartens is the stunning lack of material written about early childhood programs established by and for black communities (Ashelman & Dorsey-Gaines, 2001; Cunningham & Osborn, 1979; Knupfer, 1996; Peltzman, 1998). This project will fill in a missing piece of U.S. history about the contributions of black women to the kindergarten movement and highlight the accomplishments and ideas of two national leaders of the Progressive Era. Terrell and Yates did not call themselves kindergarten leaders but their words and actions proved them to be such. Bringing to light Terrell and Yates' previously overlooked historical contributions to the kindergarten movement will help to correct false assumptions that blacks were not committed to education and empower black educators standing on the shoulders of these forebears.

The lack of research on black kindergartens during the Progressive Era may partly be because one important source of data, the *Records of the National Association of Colored Women from 1895-1992*, only became available on microfilm in 1994. Researchers have addressed some of the more general themes of the black club women's movement, but black scholars are still rare in the field of early childhood education. This has meant that few early childhood scholars have chosen to reflect on the past.

Much recent research in early childhood education for black children has explored the gap in educational outcomes between racial groups and the impact of poverty on

young children and families. This study looks instead at the inputs, in other words, the priorities and values that influenced the shape of schooling for young black children as expressed by two black women leaders. Examining Terrell and Yates' purposes for establishing kindergarten provides the explicit messages that black leaders communicated through their attitudes, values, and beliefs about why kindergarten was important and what they expected it to do for poor black children and families.

The leaders in this study unquestionably intended to open up opportunities for black children and to improve the quality of black life in the U.S. However, schooling tends to funnel and sort children in relatively predictable life courses. The fact that the United States has such a dismal record of providing an equal education for black children for the 150 years since slavery ended seems reason enough to focus and reflect upon the purposes of educational leaders. Future studies might explore the reasons for our failure to institute the best practices to improve outcomes for all children. The women in this study were products of the Progressive Era social context in which Jim Crow laws, an uneven commitment and outright hostility to public schooling, black poverty, negative stereotypes, and the limited availability of teacher training for black women were realities. These legal and social constraints made Terrell and Yates' vision of kindergartens for all black children remarkable because they were able to see beyond the limited realities for blacks to something better and higher. However, they could not change economic realities, remove social limitations, or completely escape the pervasive stereotypes about poor blacks.

The available history of black early childhood education reveals the origins of current dilemmas for many non-mainstream children in early childhood education. Though patterns of living have changed during the past 120 years (e.g., more access to education for the poor and children of color), the same basic structure exists now that existed then – a two-tiered system of education in which wealthy and middle class children receive higher quality, more comprehensive early education, while the poor receive compensatory, often lower quality, less available programs (Anderson, 1988; Beatty, 1995; Cahan, 1989; Gatewood, 1990; Gordon, 1991; Knupfer, 1996; NACW, 1994; Philpott, 1978; Wortham, 1992) that have explicit goals to correct non-mainstream behavior in children and parents (Jones, 1982; Rouse, 1996). One change is that we now look to preschool to serve this function and not to kindergarten.

It is important to examine the genesis of today's challenges in early care and education in the light of the contextual social and political forces that shaped the structure that has developed. The enduring structural inequity of the two-tiered system of education is based upon clearly articulated beliefs and assumptions in Progressive Era kindergarten and social welfare literature, such as: the belief that poor children need practical/skills oriented training, but rich children should get a more academic/classical approach to education; that young children can be change agents in their families; that poor families' child-rearing approaches are maladaptive and that middle-class child-rearing approaches would be adaptive in poor contexts; that the dominant white cultural practices are preferable to black rural folk ways, and that the cultural practices and strategies (e.g., language, dress, and music) that poor and black families drew upon to

survive slavery, migration, and the enormous associated losses, were not functional.

These assumptions are embedded in the structure and priorities of early childhood compensatory education and our failure to examine them forces us to live with systems and structures that do not meet the needs of children and families. This examination of the purposes that black kindergarten leaders defined for their movement will provide an opportunity to reflect on our current priorities and purposes.

Froebel (1836/1900) originally conceived kindergarten as a set of activities and ideas that would nurture a child's unfolding essential abilities and talents from birth through parenthood but concentrating on the years before a child entered formal school at six years-old, as well as on mothers' development as teachers. American kindergarten leaders reshaped this borrowed institution to fit their cultural and political agendas (Wollons, 2000). Though its German name and parts of the original kindergarten curriculum survived, American expectations about what kindergarten was supposed to do for children changed depended on the target group of children (Jones, 1982).

### **Definition of Terms**

The term black will be used to describe Americans of African descent, including those with mixed European and African ancestry, born into slavery and freed, or born free in the United States. The term African American, in my opinion, describes blacks who intentionally immigrate to the United States from Africa, and therefore will not appear in this paper. The terms "colored" and "Negro" were in popular usage during the Progressive Era as were the terms "Afro American" or "African American" (Fortune, 1906). There has been enduring debate over what to call American people of African

heritage; in the 1890's especially, it appeared that people who chose more conservative or gradual means of gaining acceptance by white society were more likely to use the term "colored" (e.g., the Booker T. Washington approach of changing and improving the "race" to gain white acceptance). The more radical tended to prefer, "Afro American" (e.g., advocating for dominant groups to change their beliefs and for society to accept the "race"). Race language is inadequate to describe the peculiar social position of the subjects in this study that were powerful in the black context but that experienced similar constraints and limitations as other blacks in white society.

The definition of race in the United States is based on the so-called one drop rule, a Southern legal ruling that categorized anyone with even remote African ancestry including the offspring of white men and black women (mixed race people, mulattos) in the subordinate group; however, light-skinned and highly educated blacks tended to be at the top of the hierarchy within the subordinate group. Analyses of racial dynamics covered in the literature for this project generally overlooked the impact of de facto racial mixing in a society where this mixing was prohibited by law. Only Gatewood (1990) described this group's unique status among blacks and whites in some detail and Gordon (1991) briefly mentions the tensions arising over skin color and class. The composition of black leadership groups during the Progressive Era was shaped by black attitudes about skin color and heritage, but that is a topic for another study. The point here is that educated, mixed race blacks had to balance the dual identities/roles of privileged status and responsibility in the black community and their subordinate status among whites.

Their need to balance these two identities added complexity to the task of establishing kindergartens in their communities.

In Progressive Era writing (and even now), the terms black, Colored, Negro, African American usually imply a marginalized, impoverished, uneducated group. Though they considered themselves Colored or Negro, Terrell, Yates, and the other black club women did not embody the stereotypical black experience for the period. Much research and writing about blacks from the Progressive Era and beyond fails to acknowledge the complexity and range of the black experience and tends to generalize about the entire group from the experience of the poor and uneducated just as writing about whites tends to emphasize their leadership and power, and immigrants' cultural differences and language problems. The subjects in this study carried on the tradition of educated blacks who lived a third way, a melding of black and white cultural norms and practices. Their education, wealth, and access enabled them to address racial and gender injustice and inequity in very different ways than their uneducated brethren. For simplicity's sake, I will use the term black, but urge the reader to acknowledge the cultural and political complexity that is hidden beneath the veil of race.

The term *club women* will mainly refer to the educated, upper and middle class black women who belonged to the hundreds of clubs that designed, funded, and delivered social services to poorer members of their own communities across the U.S. Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, founder of the Women's Era Club and magazine, issued a call for colored women's clubs to unite in 1895. One hundred women representing clubs across the U.S. responded to Ruffin's call and formed the National Federation of Afro American Women

at their first meeting in Boston (Duster, 1970; Gatewood, 1990; Giddings, 1984; Knupfer, 1996; NACW, 1994; White, 1999). Two years later, this organization merged with another federation of clubs led by the Colored Woman's League of Washington DC and formally became the National Association of Colored Women (NACW). Today, the organization is called the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs and is the oldest existing national black non-church organization (Williams, 1994).

The term *kindergarten* will refer to the variety of settings in which children below the age of six gathered for some version of academic enrichment based on Friedrich Froebel's original conception of the garden where children discovered and unfolded their essential purpose and unique talents. *Kindergartner* is the adult who was specifically trained to facilitate young children's emergence as active, exploring, thoughtful, expressive beings through an understanding of gifts and occupations designed to stimulate young children's mathematical, physical, social and cognitive development.<sup>1</sup>

The literature review will locate this study in the historical research tradition of which it is a part. Then, it will describe the context of the Progressive Era in order to help make sense of the data that will be collected from Terrell and Yates' writings. The methods chapter will outline the research strategy and the archival sources; findings will follow in Chapters Four through Six and the discussion and conclusions will be in Chapter Seven.

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<sup>1</sup>Germans fleeing the civil war settled in the U.S. and other countries and began to establish kindergartens in the 1850's.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical literature often describes changes in educational practice by placing them in the context of the important events and beliefs of the period in question and in the context of the lives of those who initiated the change. For instance, Barbara Beatty traced major philosophical shifts in early childhood pedagogy through biographical sketches of its major architects beginning in the 1570's with Comenius through Rousseau, Locke, Owen, Pestalozzi, Froebel, and others (1995). Elizabeth Dale Ross (1976) profiled the development of preschool education through the work of Pattie Smith Hill, Susan Blow, Alice Putnam, and other prominent kindergartners' intentions, accomplishments and failures, personalities, relationships and conflicts. From Froebel's letters and diaries during his visit at Pestalozzi's school at Yverdon, Clem Adelman speculated that Froebel's passion for transforming German values was the purpose of his drive to establish kindergartens and asserted that the credit usually given to Froebel for introducing the concept of child-centered education should really go to Pestalozzi (2000). My purpose in examining the lives of two black kindergarten leaders was to add missing information to the historical record since black women's contributions to the kindergarten movement have been overlooked by the historical literature, partly to correct the perception that whites were alone in driving the kindergarten movement, but also to reveal these women's knowledge of the trends in educational theory and practice of



educating young children during the Progressive Era. It seemed vital to understand the combination of beliefs, intentions, and experiences that empowered Terrell and Yates to make establishing kindergartens for black children and families a priority for the NACW despite the relative poverty of black people, the lack of opportunities for teacher training, and the entrenched resistance from the dominant society. Another purpose was to learn about and share black kindergartners' educational philosophies. Because of the gap in published research about the kindergarten advocacy of Mary Church Terrell and Josephine Silone Yates, it seemed important to shed light on their knowledge of and opinions about Friedrich Froebel's pedagogical ideas. One of the more interesting findings was how these two leaders used kindergarten to accomplish multiple purposes in addition to educating young children and their parents.

The social context is important because the quest to establish kindergartens was, in part, a reaction against the social, political, and economic conditions of the period in which the subjects lived, which restricted blacks' and women's access to resources and participation in the wider society. Terrell and Yates were privileged because of their education, wealth, and relationships but their intent to provide the most progressive education to the masses of black children would dilute the very system of privilege from which these middle class women had benefited. At the same time, they felt entitled to be the cultural arbiters for poor blacks which left the social class hierarchy intact and which sometimes contradicted the progressive tone of their messages.

An understanding of the Progressive Era historical context enables us to recognize the social atmosphere in which the subjects functioned as well as the magnitude of their vision and accomplishments. The literature review will outline the contextual factors in the Progressive Era that raised Americans' awareness of and demand for early childhood education and kindergarten, in particular. As mentioned, in the absence of published literature on Progressive Era black kindergartens, this review gathers relevant available information surrounding the topic in order to place the findings in context. The significance of formal education for blacks and the debates about what kind of education would be most useful to black Americans, the origins of kindergarten and its translation into American society, and the women's club movement are briefly covered to provide a glimpse of the social atmosphere of the Progressive Era and of some of the challenges and opportunities facing the subjects in their quest to offer new educational opportunities for young children and families in black communities. The evolution of the black kindergarten movement, the personal experiences, beliefs, and attitudes that illuminate Terrell and Yates' drive to establish kindergartens for black children, and finally their purposes for establishing kindergarten will represent the data for this study to be presented in the findings chapters.

### **The Context of the Progressive Era**

#### *Education for Black Americans: Post Civil War to Progressive Era*

Education represented a means of survival and transcendence for black Americans over the centuries of slavery, as well as beyond. During the late 1800s and early 1900's,

education held particular meaning as a symbol of access and an economic tool for blacks that is still, in some ways, out of reach for many people of color in the United States (Gatewood, 1990; Giddings, 1984; Gordon, 1991; Rouse, 1996; Williams, 1905/1945). Kindergarten was part of a larger debate about education in black America that intensified as industrialization attracted migrants to cities where they needed to learn new skills in order to adapt and survive in a post-slavery, urban industrial environment. Kindergarten was also a part of other movements such as the drive to educate women and for women's employment.

It had been illegal in all of the Southern states for slaves to learn to read and write until after the abolition of slavery. The end of the Civil War coincided with a period of greater acceptance and support for public schooling across most of the United States and about half of all free American children attended some formal schooling by this time (Anderson, 1988). While ex-slaves supported and actively fought for universal public education, many wealthy Southern whites rejected the idea of institutionalizing public schooling; therefore, private schooling was available to wealthy children while some poor Southern whites received charity services (Anderson, 1988; also see the December issue of *Southern Workman*, 1901, p. 665). Ex-slaves organized schools for themselves and sought financial support from missionaries and other sympathetic whites (Anderson, 1988; Lerner, 1972; Scott, 1990).

During the brief Reconstruction period from the end of the Civil War until 1877, many blacks attended school and some attended integrated schools. But the right to an

education did not translate into de facto schooling for black children in the Southern states (Anderson, 1988; Gatewood, 1990). Anderson argues that blacks' "ideas about the meaning and purpose of education were shaped partly by the social system of slavery.", and "that literacy and formal education [was] a means to liberation and freedom" (p. 17). Even before slavery ended in the Northern states in the early nineteenth century, free blacks had enrolled along with white students in the popularly supported public schools and, not surprisingly, their educational experiences were completely different than those who had been enslaved (Anderson, 1988; Gatewood, 1990; Giddings, 1984). Josephine Silone Yates, for example, was born in New York to a family that had been free and educated for generations, possibly never enslaved (Majors, 1893).

The great majority of former slaves and their descendents who migrated north at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, were working age men and women with agricultural and other rural skills and little or no formal education (Anderson, 1988; Drake & Cayton, 1967; Ross, 1924; Spear, 1967). Those most likely to provide child care (grandparents, adolescents) remained in the South while the able bodied adults streamed north to work and to reunite with relatives (Drake & Cayton, 1967; Ross, 1924; Spear, 1967). Migration reconfigured the rural interdependent family and friend support network into an urban model that included only a young single worker or couple living independently, often as boarders (Spear, 1967). Since nearly half of migrant black mothers worked outside the home, they required child care during the work day (Cahan, 1989; Giddings, 1984; Knupfer, 1996; Rouse, 1996).

A long cycle of economic growth ended in the 1890s and job competition became fierce, resulting in increased hostility towards and between the hundreds of thousands of immigrants and migrants attracted to Northern cities by the promise of industrial jobs (Giddings, 1984; Spear, 1967). In her *Woman's Era* magazine column, Mary Church Terrell observes that "A glance at the advertising columns of the daily papers, in which the demand for white help is so explicit and great, is sufficient to convince one that the situation here for women laborers of the race is becoming very serious." (1894c). Upper and middle class blacks were pushed to live alongside uneducated ex-slaves in increasingly racially and ethnically segregated urban neighborhoods. The long-settled, wealthier blacks began to experience the same constraints and indignities as their new migrant neighbors in the dominant white context as Jim Crow laws and practices continued to reduce black access to work, transportation, housing, and education (Drake & Cayton, 1967; Gatewood, 1990; Giddings, 1984; Gordon, 1991; Philpott, 1970; Rouse, 1989; Spear, 1967).

The American notion of poverty as a consequence of individuals' defective coping skills overlapped with the growing consciousness of the more structural or environmental causes of poverty in society (Halpern, 1999; Lasch-Quinn, 1993) as social workers (self-selected and professional) began to delve into the lives of real people. As the economy worsened in the 1890's, some previously financially stable citizens must have recognized that the concentration of wealth and power in corporations could crush them too and the idea of social and economic reform spread. Middle and upper class

black club women reflected the same sense of social responsibility as white reformers but “lifted” the additional weight of racism and discrimination “as they climbed.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Blacks’ Expectations About Education**

This proximity of privileged and poor brought the problems of ignorance and culture shock to the attention of the entire black community. It was also clear, in the increasingly restrictive racial climate, that local government and private social service agencies would limit if not prevent black access to basic education and health services in the North as well as the South. Educated black women believed that they had solutions and that it was time for them to act. “We who know how to help and can do so, should encourage by united co-operation, by wholesome advice, and aid by all the means within our power the women of our race who are so much in need of help” (Memphis Club Report, 1896, In NACW, 1994, Reel 1).

NACW convention speakers during the Progressive Era consistently pointed out the connection between education and success/survival and they attributed to education the power to transform ignorant migrants into productive citizens (NACW, 1994). These women also felt that a certain type of education for blacks would eventually lead to the elimination of racism in the United States. Black club women’s efforts to establish kindergartens during the Progressive Era reflected a traditional emphasis on formal education, the belief that they, as educated black women, had unique contributions to

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<sup>1</sup>In 1896, the National Association of Colored Women adopted the motto “Lifting as We Climb” (Davis, 1933/1996).

make to the structure and content of kindergarten, and the power, specialized knowledge, and resources to address urgent needs in their communities (Harley, 1982).

The recognition of the club as a framework for action represented a shift in the mission of elite women's clubs which had up to then, organized for socializing, self-education, and as auxiliaries to men's church and political groups, a mirror of the larger society (Higginbotham, 1993). However, as black middle and upper class women were more likely to work outside the home this shift was less dramatic than it may have been for white club women (Gordon, 1991; Lerner, 1974). Black women had organized secret schools, literary societies, social welfare, and benevolent services long before slavery ended (Lerner, 1972; Scott, 1990; Wesley, 1984; *The Woman's Era*, 1894).

In black society, education was a symbol of access and class status (Gatewood, 1990). For instance, NACW members' own training as teachers, physicians, social workers, beauticians, and barbers enabled them to build an alternate economy with a full range of profitable services and businesses in the black community. The club women's professional stature propelled them into leadership roles in their communities (Gordon, 1991; Knupfer, 1996; Scott, 1990). And their communities, in turn, supported their leadership by donating money and time to NACW affiliates' projects (Jones, 1982; Knupfer, 1996 & 2003; Rouse, 1996).

Because of their education, upper and middle class blacks were more aware of their rights and were able to take greater advantage of the limited array of the opportunities available to blacks than the poor. Among historically free blacks

themselves, “the chief requisite for being among the ‘chosen few’ was education” (Ralph Tyler as quoted by Gatewood, 1990, p. 27) even more so than wealth and/or skin color (Drake & Cayton, 1967; Gatewood, 1990; Giddings, 1984). Educated blacks used their knowledge of the American legal system to fight inequities and to insist on their rights. For example, in 1884 Ida B. Wells won a suit against a railroad for throwing her out of a white parlor car. An appeals court overturned this ruling but for oppressed people, this victory confirmed the potential and power in education (Anderson, 1988; Duster, 1970; Giddings, 1984; White, 1999). By 1899, educated black women were taking direct political action such as when the NACW executive committee had voted to send letters to State education departments to lobby for universal kindergartens and manual training schools across the country (Anderson, 1980; NACW, 1994).

### **Acknowledgement of Segregated Services**

Establishing kindergartens reflected a genuine desire to help poor, uneducated blacks and to provide some relief to working black mothers since settlement services for poor whites and immigrants were segregated (Gordon, 1991; Higginbotham, 1993; Jones, 1982; Knupfer, 1996; 1997; 2003; Rouse, 1996). While some blacks prospered and a few held traditionally white jobs, there was little evidence that white society recognized the contradiction in advocating “education for all children” while prohibiting black children from attending kindergartens serving white children (Chicago Public Schools, 1895). Some black children attended public kindergartens in cities that did not have segregated school systems (Yates, 1905) before the great migration of ex-slaves arrived from the



Southern states and became concentrated in Northern urban ghettos. Blacks had always created their own shadow services, churches, businesses, and even government because of racism and discrimination (Anderson, 1988; Higginbotham, 1993; Drake & Cayton, 1967; NACW, 1994; Williams, 1900/1969). There was a dramatic rise in black organizations in the backlash against black participation in white institutions after Reconstruction, many originating in the protective arms of black churches (Higginbotham, 1993).

The separation between ethnic and racial groups was so deeply ingrained in the social fabric that besides blacks not receiving services from these white social service organizations, the data about the organizations serving blacks was inconsistently collected and reported. Information about the colored kindergartens established during this period is found almost exclusively in black periodicals of the Progressive Era. The directory of social services for the City of Chicago detailed the services offered by white women's clubs and organizations and of several "colored" settlements, but as late as 1918 did not include the Chicago and Northern District Association of Colored Women's Clubs (local NACW member clubs) despite the fact that there were 150 local clubs providing day nurseries, kindergartens, a hospital, homes for migrant girls, old folks' homes, nurse training facilities, reading rooms, and other vital social services for the 100,000 black Chicagoans (Davis, 1922; Knupfer, 2003; McDermott & Trotter, 1918; White, 1999; Williams, 1981). The 1,200 page *History of the Woman's Club Movement in America*, an exhaustive listing of clubs by state and thoughtful history of the General

Federation of Woman's Clubs, lists but one Negro club near Boston and one Jewish club in Louisiana (Croly, 1898) though there is reliable evidence of the existence of black women's clubs even before the Civil War (Giddings, 1984; Lerner, 1992; White, 1999) and a proliferation of black clubs by the time Croly was researching her book.

Many primary and secondary sources that claim to cover the history of American kindergartens or early childhood programs either ignore or provide only the slightest insight into the conditions and contributions of black Americans during the Progressive Era. Nina Vandewalker, M.Ed., Director of the Kindergarten Training Department at Milwaukee State Normal School, was an active researcher during the Progressive Era whose findings were widely quoted in primary and secondary sources. She was one of a tiny minority of white researchers<sup>2</sup> to mention the development of private kindergartens in black communities around the United States during this period (1908) and to include data from colored kindergarten training schools (1916) in her published work. Cahan's (1989) history of the two-tiered system of education for the poor and wealthy, refers to NACW kindergartens, but highlights white women's resolutions to support black kindergartens and fails to mention that black women themselves had established and funded kindergartens that were listed in Yates' 1905 article. An encyclopedia of

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<sup>2</sup>The Chicago Social Services Directory (CSSD) mentions white women's clubs' projects and even that black clubs exist, but does not name even the largest "colored women's clubs". The CSSD does list 2 settlements founded by interracial boards in Chicago: the Frederick Douglass Settlement established to improve race relations, formed by Ida B. Wells, S. Laing Williams (Fannie Barrier Williams' husband), and Celia Parker Woolley; and, the Wendell Phillips Settlement (which had a kindergarten) founded by Jane Addams, Sophonisba Breckenridge, and several black men and women for the purpose of training black social workers and providing services to poor blacks (Duster, 1970; Hendricks, 1998).

American progressive era reformers and settlements lists several individual whites, like Mary White Ovington, who attempted to improve conditions for blacks; however, there are no black reformers listed, nor are the NACW, the Neighborhood Union, or any other black social service organizations included (Barbuto, 1999).

The impact of concerted efforts over time to keep black Americans out of mainstream America was to erase their many contributions from history and to have made even the most prominent black leaders invisible. Osborn's *Early Childhood in Historical Perspective* (1991) is one of the rare early childhood education histories that refer to Josephine Silone Yates and Mary Church Terrell as leaders in the kindergarten movement. Peltzman's *Pioneers of Early Childhood Education: A Bio-Bibliographical Guide* lists primary sources about the kindergarten written by several black women, including Terrell and Yates (1998). Lascarides also includes several pages highlighting the NACW's advocacy for black kindergartens in her *History of Early Childhood Education* (2000). Although Beatty (1995) mentions Yates' research on black kindergartens and Anna J. Murray's work in Washington DC, she declares that "In the North, white charity groups and churches provided kindergartens for African American children" despite the fact that she cites Yates' article which listed three northern cities in which black clubs had established kindergartens (p. 108). Women's historians have done a more thorough job of examining Terrell and Yates' contributions to social service and women's rights than have educational historians.

### **A Brief Kindergarten History**

Kindergarten was a radically different philosophy about children's learning and a set of strategies and activities that were expected to enable children to become aware of their own abilities and interests, to unfold children's unity with God, and to reinforce the human ideals that made children grow into good citizens. For the first time, groups of children between four and six-years old were to be educated outside the home by a trained teacher (kindergartner) in a protected natural setting. The founder, Friedrich Froebel, was a charismatic and visionary German who was deeply influenced by the Romantic era context, his own difficult childhood, and also by Pestalozzi's gentle approach at his school for poor children in the early 1800s (Abelman, 2000; Shapiro, 1983). As a young man, Froebel had studied biology and botany before he became an educator and his approach was influenced by the natural sciences as well as by his educational mentor, Pestalozzi (Beatty, 1995).

Froebel hoped to transform children's early learning experiences and women's roles, ultimately reforming the social and educational landscape in Europe and America (Abelman, 2000; Beatty, 1995; Froebel, 1900; Hewes, 1998; Shapiro, 1983). He believed that children intuit how the world works through observing nature and the qualities of geometric objects, and by participating in engaging activities because all things were expressions of the divine unity or God. Children did not need lectures full of factual knowledge but should be allowed to pursue their own interests. In *The Education of Man*, Froebel (1826/1900) said, "education in instruction and training...should necessarily be

passive, following (only guarding and protecting) [the child], not prescriptive, categorical, interfering” (p. 7). Children’s innate goodness and spiritual unity would naturally develop through activities and social situations that challenged them to actualize their desires. In their efforts to master concrete tasks that had organic connections with real life, they would learn to think and behave in harmony with others and their environment (Adelman, 2000; Froebel, 1836/1900; Harrison, 1914; Kraus-Boelté, 1907).

Froebel’s kindergarten offered literacy, practical mathematics, art, natural science, and movement through activity (activity in the sense of deep involvement and engagement of the child’s entire being [see Translator’s note Froebel, 1900, p.11]). Children would learn to express feelings and get along with others, recognize the symmetry in language, physical, musical, and mathematical relationships (Harris, 1907; Shapiro, 1983) and importantly, experience “love of the work” (Harris, 1907, p. 14; Kraus-Boelté, 1907). Although he incorporated Pestalozzi’s notion that teachers should have a deep respect for children, Froebel himself is often credited with introducing child-centered education perhaps because of the worldwide spread of kindergartens that started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and not because he originated the notion of following the child’s interests (Adelman, 2000; Beatty, 1995; Harrison, 1914). The values of play and freedom, the importance of thorough preparation of the teacher, the concept of the child as a learner, and the emphasis on social learning that arrived with the introduction of kindergarten were dramatic departures from formal education. These ideas formed the foundation of early childhood education as we know it today, though many less

successful experiments in early care and education pre-dated kindergarten in the United States (Beatty, 1995; Shapiro, 1983).

This period in history was characterized by paradigm shifts in science, religion, and economics along with the shift from slavery to freedom. Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, the year before Mary Peabody opened the first kindergarten for American children (Beatty, 1995; Ross, 1976; Shapiro, 1983; Vandewalker, 1908). Darwin's hypotheses about life on earth offered a logical and meticulously researched alternative to untestable religious origin stories. The impact of this scientific breakthrough was to trigger a cultural shift in England and the United States away from a religious (Christian) philosophical framework. Intellectuals began to embrace the scientific approach as a method of inquiry and as a framework to explore, understand, and explain the origins and evolution of life. This profound cultural shift was a part of many of the other dramatic changes underway, including the shift from an agricultural to an industrial urban economy and the flood of recently freed slaves and new immigrants into the United States. All of these major changes influenced new thinking about education.

Froebel's ideas fit the rapidly shifting cultural and economic environment of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and were consistent with black ideals of industry, freedom, and uplift. His recognition and encouragement of women's contributions to young children's learning would very likely have lent support to black club women's quest for greater political power and latitude in creating kindergartens and other social services in the

black community. The club women's strong connections with the church (Higginbotham, 1993) as well as the emphasis on religious themes in NACW speeches (NACW, 1994) certainly would have made Froebelian religious ideals seem appropriate. However, many Americans, including blacks tended to see poor and black children and families as inherently lacking and predisposed to vice (see years of convention records in NACW, 1994) while Froebel saw children as inherently good (Froebel, 1826/1900).

### **Kindergartens in the United States**

Margarethe Meyer Schurz opened the first kindergarten on American soil in Watertown, WI in 1856 and other educated German immigrants followed soon after, opening bilingual kindergartens in their homes for their own children in the late 1850's in New York City, Detroit, Milwaukee, Louisville, St. Louis (Beatty, 1995; Ross, 1976; Shapiro, 1983; Vandewalker, 1908). After the Civil War, influential Americans became familiar with the benefits of kindergartens and the kindergarten movement spread around the U.S. rapidly due to the tremendous social, political, and economic shifts in the United States and around the world. For instance, the female labor pool targeted for industrial jobs were low wage migrants and immigrants and the options for child care were extremely limited for children below school age. Women's organizations quickly recognized that kindergarten had the dual benefits of providing a safe environment for young children whose mothers were working that would also socialize and help them adapt to American culture (Vandewalker, 1908). Froebel's ideas attracted wide admiration from all strata of society, signaling a turning point in the American conception

of the child and the child's role, as well as the mother's role in educating children (Beatty, 1995; Harrison, 1914; NACW, 1994; Shapiro, 1983; Vandewalker, 1908; Wortham, 1992).

German Americans who had studied with Froebel and his protégés began to open private kindergarten training schools in the United States beginning in the 1870's, including Mathilde Kriege in Boston, Maria Kraus-Boelte in New York, and Emma Marwedel in Washington DC (Ross, 1976; Vandewalker, 1908). American women such as Elizabeth Peabody, Alice Putnam, Susan Blow, Elizabeth Harrison, Patty Smith Hill, Jane Addams, Anna J. Murray, Mary Church Terrell, and Josephine Silone Yates, seized Froebel's ideas and adapted them to fit their own visions for young children and their mothers (Beatty 1995; Branch, 1992; Shapiro, 1983; Wollons, 2000; Wortham, 1995). One of the adaptations that kindergarten took in the United States was to give women a unifying cause; as Beatty (1995) observes, "Froebel's female followers made the kindergarten one of the first and most popular of modern women's movements" (p. 39).

### **Appeal of Kindergartens, Especially to Blacks**

Mary Church Terrell, and other leaders in the American kindergarten movement, felt that kindergarten was especially suited to teaching the cultural and school readiness skills that migrant and immigrant children and their families needed, even though Froebel's curriculum was conceived as a universal program for young children (Duster, 1970; Jones, 1982; NACW, 1994; Ross, 1976; Terrell, 1899; Vandewalker, 1908). In 1873, St. Louis was the first American school system to incorporate kindergartens; Susan



Blow, who managed this effort, reported that St. Louis public school kindergarten students were found to be more prepared for first grade than those who did not attend kindergarten (Ross, 1976). Black and white social service organizations saw kindergarten as a new and powerful weapon against the evils of ignorance and un-American child-rearing practices (Gesell & Abbot, 1924; Ross, 1976). Their purported power to Americanize young immigrant children and families made kindergartens an integral tool in the settlement movement's array of social services (Vandewalker, 1908).

Teaching black children and other cultural minorities the language and practices of the dominant culture placed them on a more promising path to survival and acceptance in the urban north than their ex-slave folk-ways, foreign languages, and customs (Higginbotham, 1993). Middle class black women wanted to hasten the assimilation/acculturation of migrant blacks from rural, slave-like Southern lifestyles to independent life styles in a free, often urban society through early childhood education. Their efforts reflected the notion that if you change the child, you change the future, and if you change the child, you change the family (Jones, 1982; Knupfer, 1996; Rouse, 1996).

The kindergarten introduced, or at least coincided with, an entirely new paradigm of learning into the United States that has grown into the current value system, beliefs, and attitudes in the field of early childhood education. This new paradigm introduced not only the concept of the child as a thinking being with interests and proclivities who was inherently good (Harris, 1907; Vandewalker, 1908; Wollons, 2000), but also the radical idea that feelings and social responsibility should and could be integrated with cognitive

tasks in the learning enterprise for young children (Chicago Defender, 1912; DuCharme, 1995; Froebel, 1836/1900; Kraus-Boelté, 1907; Shapiro, 1983). Black teachers would probably have seen this as a welcome opportunity to infuse the kind of social awareness and skills into the curriculum that black children needed and that the positivist approach of the upper grades did not include.

For Americans, the ideas that early education would be performed outside the home by someone other than the mother and that play was somehow valuable were controversial partly because of the Calvinist foundations of American education but also because the American education system developed from the top down, with elementary schools becoming more common as the American population grew and the rapidly growing industrial economy began to demand more literate workers (Shapiro, 1983).<sup>3</sup> Black and poor children were an indispensable part of the labor pool in both the agricultural and industrial economies, so play must have seemed to be a frivolous pastime for those who were expected to contribute to the economic engine and to family survival (NACW, 1994).

The Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876 exposed millions of Americans to the kindergarten through demonstration classrooms; the children sang and made handicrafts, which was a complete departure from the public's concept of school which had heretofore not included the arts. However, the practical work of the kindergarten connected it to the increasing popularity of industrial training (Vandewalker, 1908). This

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<sup>3</sup>The provision of early care and education rises and falls in American history along with the economic cycles which dictate the demands upon women's time, especially poor women (Michel, 1999).

exposure is widely credited with softening public resistance to non-home settings for young children and with creating a demand for early childhood education (Beatty, 1995; Shapiro, 1983; Vandewalker, 1908). The Chicago Columbian Exposition in 1893 reinforced this theme with numerous demonstration kindergartens, some emphasizing the value of this early childhood training for poor children (Anderson, 1931; Shapiro, 1983). The decade of the 1880's brought an awareness of the social service utility of kindergarten (1976). For instance, in 1880, the Superintendent of Chicago Public Schools articulated what was becoming an increasingly common premise about poor children:

Many children, too, through neglect, become familiar with vice, if not addicted to evil habits, before entering school. If some means could be provided, by which these children of four and five years old could be gathered each day in pleasant, cheerful rooms, under the kindly instruction of intelligent, cultivated teachers, instead of running in the streets and alleys, many a young life would be saved from sorrow and ruin, and many a home and place of business strengthened and purified (Chicago School Board Report, 1880, p. 42).

As kindergarten advocates worked to remove the legal barriers to schooling for children under six years-old, kindergarten classrooms began opening in public schools mostly in Northern cities (Vandewalker, 1897; 1925). By 1892, the first kindergarten classrooms were operating in ten Chicago Public Schools paid for by The Froebel Kindergarten Association and the Chicago Kindergarten College (Branch, 1992; Chicago School Board Report, 1893).

By the mid 1890's, some critiques of the kindergarten methods and curriculum were beginning to surface from within the field (Vandewalker, 1908). A highly respected

psychologist and father of the child-study movement, G. Stanley Hall, presented his child-study approach at the Columbian Exposition. His methodology seemed to resonate deeply with those who were beginning to shift away from the philosophical or religious paradigm to a scientific or evidence based paradigm (Vandewalker, 1908). Hall appreciated Froebel's philosophy but criticized American kindergartners' reliance on German cultural influences for American urban children (Ross, 1976).

Meanwhile, W.E.B. DuBois and others at Southern black colleges were beginning to adopt social science methods to document the condition of the black population in various cities and held a series of annual conferences to share the findings. Data presented at the Hampton Institute and Atlanta Baptist College 1896 and 1897 conferences revealed the stark needs of young black children and their mothers. The conferences were widely reported in black media and were credited with motivating black women to establish kindergartens and day nurseries especially for poor children in the South<sup>4</sup> (DuBois, 1909; Logan, 1955, Shivery, 1936). Several black colleges established kindergarten training in their normal schools and after the turn of the twentieth century, public universities and women's colleges increasingly offered kindergarten courses in their normal schools (Beatty, 1995; *Southern Workman*, 1900; Vandewalker, 1916; Neighborhood Union Collection, 1995).

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<sup>4</sup>Terrell and Yates most likely used these reports to make their case for establishing kindergartens. Yates provided statistics on Black contributions to education, on property ownership, and on the number of churches that most likely came from DuBois research in her essay "Did the American Negro Make, in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Achievements Along the Lines of Wealth, Morality, Education, Etc. Commensurate With His Opportunities?" in Culp, 1902/1969.

Urban centers were the first to embrace kindergartens in public school settings and tended to enroll the greatest numbers of children in kindergarten, mainly because of the concentrations of tax money to fund them but also because of the higher populations of children whose parents worked outside the home (Beatty, 1995; Vandewalker, 1925), especially women working in factories (Harley, 1997). The numbers of children attending both public and private kindergartens grew dramatically in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century; according to U.S. Census figures, there were approximately 1,300 children enrolled in kindergarten in 1873, 38,000 in 1890, and 66,000 by 1893 (Brook, 1954; U.S. Census, 1890). These figures probably do not accurately reflect children enrolled in smaller church and private settings.

### **Free and Public Kindergartens**

The American kindergarten movement segmented roughly into the public school strand, the free or charity kindergartens run by settlement houses and churches, and those sponsored by individuals and women's clubs<sup>5</sup>, although some of these classrooms were eventually subsumed by public school systems (NACW, 1994; Vandewalker, 1908). Elite private kindergartens and kindergartens run by teacher training colleges also existed during this period, but will not be discussed in this study. Hampton and Tuskegee Institutes, Howard University, and Spelman College, all had kindergartens but these

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<sup>5</sup>Ida B. Wells opened the first black kindergarten in Chicago in 1893, because of the lack of access to white kindergartens. The Bethel AME Church housed this kindergarten and 2 formally trained black women taught the children. This preceded the formation of the NACW (Duster, 1970).

programs had institutional funding and support (NACW, 1994; The Southern Workman, 1900; Neighborhood Union Collection, 1995; Vandewalker, 1916).

As earlier mentioned, Susan Blow was instrumental in opening the first kindergarten in a St. Louis public school in 1873 and, within the following 20 years, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Chicago and New York public schools had all opened kindergarten classrooms (at least on an experimental basis) within elementary schools (Beatty, 1995; Branch, 1992; Brook, 1954; Shapiro, 1983; Vandewalker, 1908). By 1912, public school systems in at least 546 American cities had morning and afternoon sessions of kindergarten, and 867 cities offered kindergarten in public schools (Palmer, 1915). By 1928, 94% of American cities offered kindergarten as a part of their public schools, though not every school had a kindergarten classroom on site. However popular it had become in public school systems across the country, kindergartens during that period remained very common in social service settings such as settlement houses, orphanages, churches, and “institutions for defectives” (U.S. Bureau of Education, 1914, p. 5; see also: Davis, 1930; Vandewalker, 1916). By 1922, nearly 12% of American children between four to six years-old attended kindergarten. Public schools, which were racially integrated in some cities, enrolled around 500,000 while free or charity and other non-public kindergartens enrolled around 55,000 children in kindergarten (Vandewalker, 1924).

Both public and free kindergartens for immigrants focused on “Americanization through the kindergarten” (Gesell & Abbot, 1924, p. 24; Vandewalker, 1908) to

assimilate children from families with what were seen as maladaptive cultural practices as early as possible. The benefits were characterized as a means of taming unruly street children, “bringing out backward children” (U.S. Bureau of Education, 1914, p. 7), and converting the poor child and mother into useful citizens and patriots (Chicago Public Schools, 1895) in contrast to Froebelian characterizations of children as innately good. Vandewalker (1908) said that “The value of the kindergarten for the children and of kindergarten training for the teacher is being increasingly recognized in missionary work – that among special peoples in our own country, such as the Indians, Mexicans, Negroes, and Chinese – and in the foreign field” (p. 87). The kindergarten spread throughout Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa, often with the political intent of acculturating immigrants and marginalized groups (Wollons, 2000).

Public kindergarten programs were also expected to smooth children’s transition from home to school. This and other aspects of the kindergarten’s more child-centered, activity-based approach conflicted with the strict rote skills and teacher-directed approach of the typical elementary school. Public kindergartners fought to maintain the integrity of their programs and to influence first grade teachers to adopt a more child-centered pedagogy (Beatty, 1995; Claxton, 1913; Harris, 1907; Shapiro, 1983; Terrell, 1899).

Free kindergartens emphasized assimilation, morality, and citizenship for young immigrant and poor black children, as did the public programs but the charity programs had a more family-centered orientation, which usually incorporated mothers’ meetings (Beatty, 1995; NACW, 1994; Vandewalker, 1907 & 1908; Yates, 1905) and access to

other social services. Many free kindergartens opened to care for children who were left alone while poor mothers worked outside the home (Jones, 1982; Knupfer, 1996; Michel, 1999). Froebel's emphasis on spiritual unity, harmony of man and nature, and hands-on learning fit more closely with the missions of churches, women's clubs, and settlement houses than with public schools (Beatty, 1995; Michel, 1999; U.S. Bureau of Education, 1914; Vandewalker, 1908).

The social service orientation of the free kindergarten strand certainly appealed to NACW members who established kindergartens in neighborhoods struggling with poverty, ignorance, and racism. Some kindergartens focused specifically on improving nutrition, health, and hygiene (Gesell & Abbot, 1924, p. 24). Some others taught young black children manual skills such as laundering, dusting, and gardening (Ashelman & Dorsey-Gaines, 2001; Beatty, 1995; Vandewalker, 1907; 1908) which was partly related to the so-called kitchen garden, an offshoot of the kindergarten idea and also built on the popularity of manual or industrial education for blacks during this period (Johnson, 1912).

Manual training resonated deeply with the many blacks who sided with Booker T. Washington's concept of education as preparing children for the range of jobs available to blacks (Anderson, 1988; Ashelman & Dorsey-Gaines, 2001; Cary, 1900; Ottley, 1901; Vandewalker, 1907). Some educators acknowledged that industrial or manual education simply extended kindergarten teaching strategies to older children, particularly authentic activity as a learning tool (Yates, 1906a). However, instead of a means for the child to



learn the mathematical relationships between objects, kindergarten's gifts and occupations sometimes became a means of narrowing the curriculum to socialize and train black children for their limited job opportunities. The different approaches and emphases used in American kindergarten classrooms illustrate how the economic, social and political forces transformed this German concept while it was, in turn, transforming American public education and social services.

### **Women's Clubs: Building a Power Base**

Kindergarten was rooted in the women's rights movement of the late nineteenth century and the Progressive Era. Some of the earliest kindergarten advocates founded the New England Woman's Club, one of the two most powerful white women's clubs at the end of the 1860's. "The early half of the century [19<sup>th</sup>] was marked by a crusade for the cause of the better education of women as significant as that for the physical emancipation of the slave, and as devoted on the part of its leaders" (Croly, 1898, p. 11). The women's club movement was a conscious drive for women to educate themselves and to gain power (Blair, 1980; Croly, 1898; Giddings, 1984). The increase in the number of women's colleges and black colleges in the late nineteenth century contributed hundreds of energetic women with professional expectations, goals, as well as the preparation for leadership to the growing women's club movement. Because it sought to educate mothers as well as young children, kindergarten was an integral part of the growth and development of the National Association of Colored Women.

Josephine Silone Yates (1905), NACW's second president, said that "The nineteenth century opened to woman avenues of progress marvelous in extent and content and her sphere is now conceded to be wherever she succeeds best" (p. 305). However, educated women's desire to address pressing social problems, limiting stereotypes about women, and the lack of work opportunities commensurate with their skills and abilities certainly fueled the club women's movements in black and white communities (Blair, 1980; Croly, 1898; Giddings, 1984).<sup>6</sup> Their increasing leisure time, education, and confidence empowered club women, black and white to take on greater roles outside of the home and black women also used these resources to stake their claim as problem solvers for the race, partly because they thought men were doing a poor job of salvation (Davis, 1922; Higginbotham, 1993; White, 1999). Unlike the periodic efforts of individual white philanthropists to finance early care and education from as early as 1798 (Michel, 1999; Wortham, 1995), black women persisted in lobbying government to play a more universal and permanent role in solving the problem of early care and education (Anderson, 1990; NACW, 1994; Yates, 1905).

In the 1880s, black clubs across the United States were made up of mostly educated, upper and middle class women who worked to broaden their own knowledge and exposure to culture, and their social networks; to provide for the poor; and as auxiliaries to men's religious organizations (Giddings, 1984; Higginbotham, 1993;

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<sup>6</sup>Some women's historians believe that the Victorian myth of women's fragility and women's confinement to the home were a convenient way to maximize work opportunities for males (Giddings, 1984).

Knupfer, 1996; White, 1999). As this century came to a close, race relations deteriorated into unchecked brutality and mob violence against blacks and a series of legal and extra legal measures unfolded that restricted voting rights, transportation, income, and access to basic services especially in the Southern states. In this climate, it was clear that blacks could not depend upon government or white organizations to provide for the needs of poor blacks. “A Congress of the colored women’s leagues and clubs of the country was suggested long ago – should we not be moving in the matter now?” (Dietrick, in *The Woman’s Era*, 1894, March). Finally, ignited by a prominent journalist’s comment that Ida B. Wells’ anti-lynching campaign should be ignored because all black women were thieves and liars, Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin<sup>7</sup> arranged a meeting of colored women’s clubs in 1895. One hundred representatives from clubs across the U.S. responded to Ruffin’s call and formed the National Federation of Afro American Women (Duster, 1970; Gatewood, 1990; Giddings, 1984; Knupfer, 1996; NACW, 1994; White, 1999). Two years later this organization merged with the Colored Woman’s League of Washington DC and its affiliates, and formally became the National Association of Colored Women (NACW)<sup>8</sup>, a powerful national coalition of black women’s clubs

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<sup>7</sup>Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, 1842-1924, joined one of the earliest white women’s clubs, the New England Woman’s Club in Boston. In 1884, she founded *The Woman’s Era*, a newspaper for and about black women; about 10 years later, she founded the Women’s Era Club in Boston.

<sup>8</sup>The National Federation of Afro American Women merged with the Women’s Era Club of Boston and the Colored Women’s League of Washington D.C. to become the National Association of Colored Women after meeting in 1895. In 1954, the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) became the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs (NACWC).

organized to design, fund, and deliver social services to poorer members of their own communities.

### **Intersection of Social Class, Race, and Identity**

A combination of black club women's outrage at the routine racial injustice they endured, their hope for migrants' survival, and their desire to be accepted into white society were powerful motivations to provide remedial services to poor blacks across the country (Scott, 1990). Higginbotham (1993) maintains that "Blacks fostered an ideal of community that affirmed mutual identification and self-determination" (p. 49). This suggests that black club women saw their own painful struggles for acceptance and inclusion in a racist society reflected in the migrants' struggles to belong and survive and they claimed the responsibility "to make things right." Some historians describe a more permeable concept of class among educated black women, who recognized that accidents of birth and opportunities in the environment instead of inborn traits or special intelligence separated them from the poor (Giddings, 1984; Knupfer, 1996).

In comparing black and white women's approaches to social welfare programs, Gordon (1991) echoes the point that blacks perceived of the people they helped as part of their own group while white social welfare advocates were helping "others", immigrants and poor people who were "less than" and unrelated, in an effort to beautify the social landscape (also see Vandewalker, 1908). Although the language club women used to describe their poorer sisters revealed that this was not necessarily a desirable relationship, it was an inescapable one in the eyes of society. Black women's efforts to garner

government support for social services they had initiated in their communities occasionally succeeded; for instance, the Colored Woman's League of Washington, DC through Anna J. Murray's persistence, secured U.S. Senate appropriations to incorporate kindergartens into District public schools in 1898 to fund black and white kindergartens (Murray, 1900). White women during the Progressive Era were more successful in converting their volunteer social welfare efforts into stable government-funded jobs for themselves and programs that for the most part, excluded blacks (Gordon, 1991). Even with the social class distinctions within black women's ranks, the black women's clubs did not remain exclusively upper and middle class but, over time, invited more women's clubs from lower socio-economic strata into their context to broaden their power base (Giddings, 1984; Gordon, 1991; Hendricks, 1998; Jones, 1982; Knupfer, 1996; NACW, 1994; Scott, 1990; Thompson, 1914).

Uplifting the race meant that educated black people would take on the enormous job of improving the quality of life of the millions of formerly enslaved people and their children by improving "morals", educating, and providing an array of social services (Gaines, 1996). Lack of education and immorality were perceived to be the root causes of racism and discrimination during this period. Educated blacks saw themselves as leaders of the race and as role models that, on one hand, were able to distance themselves from the poor by shouldering this responsibility, but who also needed to associate with the poor to address their ignorance, poverty, and perceived immorality (DuBois, 1903; Gaines, 1996; Giddings, 1984; Logan, 1965/1997).

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a public debate began to unfold about the kind of education that would best accomplish uplift. W.E.B. DuBois (1903) felt that it made most sense to focus resources on “developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst” (p. 33) in other words, he recommended a classical education for elite blacks who would use their superior reasoning and knowledge to battle unfair racial practices and injustice while simultaneously educating the poor masses. Booker T. Washington, widely admired by whites for his conciliatory attitude towards racist practices, called for industrial education to perfect the manual skills of the poor black masses to fit them for the realities of the increasingly limited job market, meanwhile advising them to acquire as much land as they could. Black club leaders attempted to balance their support between Washington and DuBois in order to avoid alienating large groups on either side of the debate. They focused on their own agenda rather than siding with either the DuBois or Washington camps. As Giddings (1980) notes, “Although black women leaders were influenced by his formidable presence, they never became captives of the famed Washington machine” (p. 102).

While many club women praised the benefits of industrial education according to primary sources, during the early years of the club movement black women chose to sidestep the debate and focus more upon education of children and mothers and improving morals, a set of priorities shaped by the cultural boundaries of womanhood (Giddings, 1984; Perkins, 1980; also see September 1900 issue of *Southern Workman*,

“Whatever will tend to elevate the moral and physical condition of the family and make home attractive will help to diminish criminal tendencies and lessen the number of children in the chain gangs, with their pitiful tales of destitution, temptation, and injustice,” p. 500). Kindergarten seemed to satisfy the requirements of both industrial and classical education and DuBois and Washington both supported black women’s efforts to establish them (see DuBois, 1909 and various issues of *Southern Workman*). Regardless of their specific approaches, DuBois and Washington’s uplift strategies were based to some degree upon the notion that blacks needed to become educated and to adopt different cultural values and practices in order to eradicate racism and discrimination (Gaines, 1996; Gatewood, 1990; Giddings, 1984).

Beneath the club women’s stated desire to help the poor was distaste for and probably fear of what the migrant ex-slaves represented; the stereotypes that governed the treatment of blacks in general were built on images, behavior, and values ascribed to ex-slaves. Black club women seemed determined to destroy the images and behavior that fed these stereotypes as much to help poor blacks as to demonstrate that they shared white values (Gatewood, 1990; Higginbotham, 1993; Jones, 1982). The contradictory goals of improving morals, providing education, and developing racial pride by trying to adopt Victorian values characterized the ambiguity of the Progressive Era for blacks; a stance which explains why Mrs. Ida Jackson of the NACW Music Department “aims in developing a taste for classic music, and in words of no uncertain sound, denounced ‘coon songs and ragtime music’” (NACW, 1994, Reel 1, slide #00285; also see Scott,

1990). Black kindergartens and mothers' meetings were designed to teach approved behavior, morals, habits, language, and good taste in music (NACW, 1994; Rouse, 1996; Southern Workman, 1907; Yates, 1905a).

Kindergarten had its own status as an innovation that made black club women's lights shine brighter; it conferred a sense of vision and future orientation. Mothers' clubs and kindergarten gave club women entrée to poor families to uplift, while working women's appreciation (or indebtedness) ensured the club women's high position on the race/class totem pole. Black club women maintained their privileged status and built a power base through organizing clubs that met the needs of their communities. While they gained a sense of pride and accomplishment through helping (Scott, 1990), their local organizations also gained membership by showing off their successful kindergartens and other social service projects (see numerous articles in *The Colored American Magazine*, 1900-1909; and *The Chicago Defender*, 1912-1916; NACW, 1994).

Kindergarten's emphasis on families and particularly mothers' clubs provided club women with another avenue to influence and educate women not only about care for the home and child rearing but also about suffrage, temperance, and the other political causes the NACW supported, such as anti-lynching, the convict lease system, and child labor. The clubs provided an interwoven series of supports for families and not narrowly-focused, independent programs; moreover the isolation and limitations of racism imposed a high degree of interdependence among black organizations, such as black churches' and



local women's clubs' overlapping memberships (Higginbotham, 1993; Scott, 1990; White, 1999; Yates, 1905c).

Higginbotham (1992) called the church a public sphere for blacks or the point in space and consciousness that enabled black people to function freely and to conduct business, politics, as well as a wide range of services, both religious and secular. For women, black churches offered space for kindergarten classrooms, meeting space for local clubs, and importantly, organizational experience and contact with like-minded women (Cunningham & Osborn, 1979; Giddings, 1984; Higginbotham, 1993). During the 1890's, the number of secular women's groups multiplied and grew beyond the confines of the male-dominated black church; sometimes clubs bought their own buildings (Davis, 1933/1996; Giddings, 1984; Lerner, 1972; Perkins, 1980; Scott, 1990; Terborg-Penn, 1978). The NACW then assumed part of the public sphere role that the black church had played by providing a space for networks of ambitious, financially stable, educated black women who had already scaled racial and gender barriers to work on uplifting the race (Gatewood, 1990; Scott, 1990).

Rallying for kindergarten may also have been a way to demonstrate NACW's solidarity with the white kindergarten movement and other Progressive causes. The literature confirms that Terrell, Yates, and other prominent club women's values and aspirations were closely aligned with those of the dominant culture. Although black club women's attempts to participate in white clubs were often rejected, they occasionally succeeded in building alliances with parallel white organizations (Higginbotham, 1993;

Scott, 1990; *Woman's Era*, 1894 December). For instance, the National Council of Women pledged to assist the NACW with its goal to establish free kindergartens (Cahan, 1989; NACW, 1994; Yates, 1905c). Club women promoted kindergarten as the cutting edge of education, and their support not only demonstrated their allegiance to Progressive causes and gave them additional lines of communication with white educators, but also gave them an excellent tool for uplifting Black families.

“It was a famous gathering of famous women” Ida B. Wells said of the first convention of the National Association of Colored Women in 1897 (Duster, 1970, p. 243). Nearly 40% of the black club women were teachers (Duster, 1970; Gordon, 1991; Harley, 1982; Hendricks, 1998; Giddings, 1984; Higginbotham, 1993; Knupfer, 1996 & 2003). They tended to have fewer children than the average family and were married to professional or business men (Gatewood, 1990; Gordon, 1991; Harley, 1982; Knupfer, 1996). As women with college education were extremely rare even in the dominant group, the fact that the great majority of the founding members of the NACW were college graduates suggests that the NACW organized around social class lines (Gatewood, 1990; Giddings, 1984; Gordon, 1991; Knupfer, 1996).

The context of racial discrimination and hatred shaped Progressive Era attitudes to such an extent that even black people themselves, especially the wealthier settled, mixed-race blacks, saw poor blacks' behavior, dress, and other cultural norms as aberrant which placed them in a difficult position (Scott, 1990).

Even though we wish to shun them, and hold ourselves entirely aloof from them, we cannot escape the consequences of their acts.... Policy and self preservation would demand that we do go down among the lowly, the illiterate, and even the vicious to whom we are bound by the ties of race and sex, and put forth every possible effort to uplift them and claim them (Mary Church Terrell in an 1895 address, quoted in Jones, 1990, p. 144).

Middle and upper class black and white Americans during this period particularly respected Northern European culture (Gatewood, 1990; NACW, 1994) as evidenced in the German language requirements in Midwestern schools and the popularity of European education, and culture. For instance, the November and December 1894 issues of the *Woman's Era* magazine printed a two part series called Modern Education as Influenced by the Reformation (in Germany) by Josephine Silone Yates. Kindergarten's German origins and the fact that some of the leading kindergartners had studied with Froebel's wife probably added to its appeal in the United States (Beatty, 1995; Shapiro, 1983; Wortham, 1992). Travel and study in Europe was an upper class pursuit of whites and blacks (Giddings, 1984; NACW, 1994; Rouse, 1996). NACW executive board members attended a women's convention and other gatherings in Europe and saw fit to correspond with the Dowager Empress of Germany (NACW, 1994).

Black society mirrored white society with its leadership class availing themselves and their children of the best education. It is unclear how faithful NACW affiliates were to this model. Did black club women offer education designed to transform and lift the poor beyond the strictures of race, or did they follow the Booker T. Washington model, offering to acculturate migrant children and families to the Jim Crow status quo?

Primary and secondary literature discuss the class tensions in black communities, in particular upper class blacks' resistance to encroachment by the newly wealthy, their careful maintenance of class boundaries, while at the same time, their tremendous sense of obligation to help their poorer brothers and sisters (Gatewood, 1990; Gordon, 1991; Higginbotham, 1993; Knupfer, 1996 & 2003; Michel, 1999; NACW, 1994; Rouse, 1989; Scott, 1990; Yates, 1905; White, 1999; Williams, 1908). However, the literature does not mention exactly how kindergartens addressed issues of culture and class.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Research Plan and Methods**

One fruitful approach to recovering the origins of a movement that was effectively erased from history was to illustrate the purposes of its leaders. The tradition of exploring a historical development through the leadership of individuals who influenced this trend in some way seems especially appropriate for this project partly because two of the most eloquent and outspoken advocates for the kindergarten movement, Mary Church Terrell and Josephine Silone Yates, are virtually unknown in early childhood education history. Their biographical information forms a part of the data, but the study is not a biography. The subjects' opinions, personal experiences, and agendas will be weighed against the socio-political context in order to explain what motivated these women to undertake this daunting task. Life history research methods are based on the idea that the narrative is the vehicle by which human beings make meaning and assign meaning to their experiences (Moen, 2006).

Terrell and Yates' power as leaders, the fact that their vision for establishing kindergartens aligned with black values, but also their personalities, knowledge, and strategies influenced black women to establish kindergartens within a particular set of constraints and opportunities in the context of the Progressive Era. This study examines the various purposes of two leaders of the black kindergarten movement as they both

reflected and challenged the social context of the Progressive Era. Educational historian, David Tyack (1988) analyzed the history of compulsory schooling through political, organizational, and economic theoretical frameworks to demonstrate that different viewpoints lead to different interpretations of the same historical facts. The historical writing about early education seldom mentions black children and families, which has led to the tacit assumption that blacks simply did not and/or were not allowed to participate. This study will show that blacks were passionate and well-informed participants in the early kindergarten movement despite historical ignorance of these and other women's contributions that expanded educational opportunities for black and white children and despite the barriers the subjects faced to realize this goal.

### **Subjects**

It is somewhat misleading to call Mary Church Terrell and Josephine Silone Yates subjects for this study because it is not their lives in particular but their contributions to the black kindergarten movement that is the focus of this study. After a great deal of searching for details about early black kindergartens it became evident that because records of particular black kindergarten programs would be extremely difficult to find, the most accessible information was about the purposes that the leaders of this movement assigned to kindergartens. This study seeks to reveal the purpose and meaning that kindergarten held for its most vocal advocates.

In initial readings of the NACW convention records and periodicals from 1896 through 1930, Terrell and Yates were among the names that arose most frequently

advocating for kindergartens. Both women demonstrated their commitment to kindergartens through concrete actions, such as raising and donating money for clubs to establish or maintain kindergartens and publishing numerous articles describing the benefits of kindergarten. As first president of the NACW, Mary Church Terrell made establishing kindergartens one of the organization's top priorities; the kindergarten was the first department established by the new NACW (Davis, 1933/1996; Wesley, 1984). Josephine Silone Yates' articles explained the utility of Froebel's ideas to teaching and learning, emphasized the importance of teacher preparation for kindergartners, and provided some statistics about black kindergartens established during the period. The contributions that Terrell and Yates made to the early kindergarten movement have not yet been recognized in the literature about the history of early childhood education. Other black women also made important contributions to the kindergarten movement such as Haydee Campbell, the Superintendent of Colored Kindergartens in St. Louis Public Schools, and Anna Murray, who secured U.S. Senate funding for kindergartens in Washington, DC schools. It was important to choose subjects whose ideas and actions could be corroborated in public sources; therefore the fact that documents confirming Terrell and Yates actions and decisions, in addition to their own words, survived for over a century suggests that they were effective leaders of the black kindergarten movement. The marginal status of blacks in Progressive Era society obscured much of this story but the remnants contained in these women's writings can add significantly to our

understanding of black early education and the surge of women's power and influence in crafting social supports during this period.

The Progressive Era social attitudes, especially the attitudes about women and race are variables in this research because they represented a set of constraints that Terrell and Yates were attempting to change along with conditions of poverty, ignorance, and cultural practices. The social dynamics of gender, race, and class in the Progressive Era influenced the kinds of arguments that Terrell and Yates used to motivate club women to action and determined the nature of the risks these women took to remove the barriers to progress, as well as their potential for success.

### **Data Gathering Procedures**

The early intent of this study was to explore what black children were being taught in kindergartens established by black women during the Progressive Era. The search for records of kindergartens for black children began in Chicago which was a center of influence with American kindergartners such as Alice Putnam and Elizabeth Harrison establishing programs and a training school – National-Louis University was founded as Chicago Kindergarten College, and John Dewey's experiments with kindergarten launched the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools. Also, it was in Chicago that one of the earliest kindergartens established by black women was discovered – the Ida B. Wells Club founded a kindergarten at the Bethel AME Church around 1895 with two formally trained black kindergartners, one from the Chicago Kindergarten College. Although names and locations of a few other kindergartens for



black children surfaced in primary and secondary sources this line of attack proved futile. For example, the Bethel Church records had been lost in a fire at the original location and the records of several other kindergartens established by black clubs were traced to the Urban League but those records were also destroyed in a fire.

Initial searches for kindergartens established by black women or organizations were conducted in the Chicago History Museum; Chicago Defender Online Archives; the Broad Ax Online Archives; the Newberry Library; the Carter G. Woodson Regional Library's Lillian Harsh Collection of African American History; Chicago Public Schools Archives; National-Louis University Archives and Special Collections; the New York Public Library's Schomburg Center Online archives; University of Chicago's Special Collections; and the University of Illinois at Chicago Manuscripts and Rare Books section. After many more dead-ends, the search for records of free NACW kindergartens was abandoned. Records of the settlement kindergartens and of those subsumed by public school systems will probably be found in archives around the country but since the settlement and public kindergartens were not the focus of this study those records were not pursued.

Online searches were conducted through Academic Search Premier, ERIC, WorldCat, Jstor, and other scholarly search engines as well as the websites maintained by the Library of Congress, Schomburg Collection, Atlanta University Library, University of Chicago Library, Oberlin and Antioch College Libraries and other archival sources. Search terms included kindergarten(s), Negro, colored, black, early childhood education,

Progressive Era, day nurseries, NACW, Urban League, Mary Church Terrell, Josephine Silone Yates, Lugenia Burns Hope, Haydee Campbell, Fannie Barrier Williams, Ida B. Wells, Chicago Kindergarten College, and many other names (especially of specific clubs and churches that housed kindergartens) and terms that might yield primary and secondary literature about black kindergartens and the people who established them. Later in the research, it was found that Googlescholar.com and Googlebooks.com had digitized copies of valuable resources, such as selected volumes of the *Woman's Era*, the first NACW magazine and of Monroe Majors' book, *Noted Negro Women: Their Triumphs and Achievements*.

Because of the difficulty in finding records documenting day-to-day activities in black kindergarten classrooms, and the fascinating stories that began to emerge about club women's efforts to establish kindergartens, this study turned to explore the inception of the black kindergarten movement and its leaders. The most reliable information came from the records of the National Association of Colored Women because the organization documented its intentions to establish kindergartens. The rationale for choosing subjects that belonged to a specific organization was to capture contemporaries from the same social strata, exposed to the same arguments and historical conditions, to discover what they understood kindergarten to be and what they thought it would offer to black communities.

## **Data**

Documents written by Mary Church Terrell and Josephine Silone Yates represented the data in this study, including quotes from the subjects' articles, reports, and speeches that described the need for kindergartens and argued for expansion of free kindergartens. Letters from kindergartners or other advocates and information from autobiographical and biographical sources were also considered data, for instance primary sources of data also included several speeches and articles by Yates and Terrell's contemporaries. Secondary sources were historical research on women's clubs, kindergartens, social services, and black leaders. To the extent possible, the data was checked for reliability by corroborating the actions with reports from NACW clubs about establishing kindergartens and from newspaper articles published during the period.

## **Data Gathering**

The first step in identifying the subjects was to list the names of the club members who mentioned kindergarten in the microfilm copy of NACW convention records from 1895 through 1930. A search was then conducted for copies of speeches and presentations written by club members who appeared on the list of potential subjects from NACW convention programs. The searches for documents written by Terrell and Yates yielded by far the greatest number and the most relevant documents to this study and represented data collection. Unfortunately, many NACW presentations and reports about black kindergartens have still not been found but would be very useful in learning more about actual classrooms.

Archivists, Mark Burnette and Nathaniel Wilson, at National-Louis University helped to identify sources and strategies for finding old documents, while Kenneth Chandler, the National Park Service archivist that oversees the records of several black women's organizations in Washington, DC including those of NACW, shared information about where microfilm copies of those records could be found. There were many attempts to contact and engage current NACWC members with few responses. The current organization still maintains administrative offices in its second headquarters building at 16<sup>th</sup> and R Streets in Washington DC bought in the early 1950's. The existing active NACWC branches currently focus on organizing black girls.

Several secondary sources about the black women's club movement were instrumental in locating primary documents and in corroborating the information that appeared in the NACW records. Especially helpful was Wanda Hendricks book, *Gender, Race, and Politics: Black Clubwomen in Illinois* and Anne Meis Knupfer's books and articles, especially *Towards a Tenderer Humanity and a Nobler Womanhood: African-American Women's Clubs in Turn of the Century Chicago*. Michael Flug, the Archivist at the Vivian Harsh Collection at Carter G. Woodson Regional Library, was extremely knowledgeable and supportive in the early stages of this research guiding me to many helpful resources held in the collection. He introduced me to Anne Meis Knupfer mentioned above who was also interested in NACW kindergartens but unable to find records. Elizabeth Lindsay Davis' two books, *Lifting as They Climb* (1933/1996), a history of the NACW, and *The Story of the Illinois Federation of Colored Women's*

*Clubs* (1921/1997), written shortly after the period in question were extremely helpful in providing contextual information. Emily Cahan's article, *Past Caring: A History of U.S. Preschool Care and Education for the Poor, 1820-1965* (1989) provided the connection to the wealth of black women's writing about kindergarten in Progressive Era magazines. A great challenge was to identify the categories of literature that would contain leads to data about black kindergartens and its founders, in the absence of a body of work about black kindergartens. The sources that finally proved to be most fruitful were the NACW microfilm records; the *Southern Workman*, Hampton Institute's monthly magazine that carried articles about black and Indian education; the *Colored American Magazine* and *Voice of the Negro*, two black periodicals from the Progressive Era that consistently carried articles by Terrell, Yates, and other club women.

### **Primary Sources**

Primary and secondary sources, such as census reports and local government and public school records, did not always offer an accurate picture of black kindergartens because of the social attitudes that limited black participation in the society in general and that led government and social service organizations to overlook or choose not to gather data about black kindergartens or kindergartners. These sources were used with caution.

In this project, the distinction between primary and secondary sources was the time the source was written although some historians distinguish primary and secondary sources by the author's direct participation in or distance from the event or phenomenon

being researched. Sources written between 1890 and 1910 will be considered primary sources, and anything written thereafter will be secondary.

Documentary researchers value personal papers for their tendency to reveal authentic feelings and desires (McCulloch, 2004). Reports, speeches, and other public documents tend to support a certain point of view or ideology, to convince readers to take actions, or create an impression and were therefore useful in determining Terrell and Yates' purposes for establishing kindergartens. Newspapers tend to reflect the public perception of the phenomenon being studied and were used to corroborate the story that emerged mainly from NACW reports and articles by the two leaders.

Several letters shed light on both women's major concerns and styles of operating but an extensive sampling of Terrell's diaries and letters revealed her personal struggles about her duty to her race but not about establishing kindergartens. Terrell's private diaries and letters were expected to reveal whether or not she visited a kindergarten while she was in Germany and to provide insights into her motivations or personal agendas in regard to kindergartens, her plans for her own children, and finally, her private assessments of how the kindergarten movement was progressing. However, the majority of Terrell's diary entries were breezy and superficial reactions to the sights and encounters she had had during the day. The French, German, and English diaries contained several deeply self-reflective comments. The sample of personal letters focused on names identified with the kindergarten movement but some personal correspondence was included and like the diaries, the letters reveal little of her doubts and fears.

Yates' diaries have not been found, if she indeed kept diaries, but her letters to Margaret Murray Washington, the Vice President and the publisher of *The National Notes*, reveal her concerns about the progress and results of efforts to establish kindergartens.

The data was mainly collected from the following archives:

- Library of Congress – Mary Church Terrell Papers, Colored Woman's League of Washington DC Fourth and Fifth Annual Reports
- Smith College, Neilson Library – *The Woman's Era* Magazine, 1894-1897
- Chicago State University Archives – *The Colored American Magazine* and *Voice of the Negro* Periodicals
- Chicago Public Library – *The Southern Workman*, Hampton Institute Magazine

Correspondence, reports, media coverage, and notes from Terrell's term as the NACW's first president are maintained at a number of university libraries and at the NACWC Archives in Washington DC on microfilm. *The Guide to the Records of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, 1895-1992* (Williams, 1994) is available online and lists the contents of the 26 reels of microfilmed NACW archives in chronological order. The *Guide* also includes highlights from the history of the NACWC and a listing of the libraries and archives maintaining the original documents captured on 26 microfilm reels. Included on the NACWC microfilm records are convention records, issues of *The National Notes*, NACW's official newsletter, independent news articles covering NACW conventions, and some presidential papers. *The Woman's Era*,

NACW's short-lived first newsletter, contains information about local clubs' kindergarten work.

Terrell's personal and professional papers (including some related to NACW work) are divided between the Library of Congress and the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University Library in the form of original documents and microfilm. Terrell's diaries and letters from friends and professional colleagues appear in chronological order on microfilm. The Library of Congress holds some records of Terrell's club, the Colored Woman's League of Washington DC, in the Daniel Murray Pamphlet Collection.

Josephine Silone Yates' personal papers have not yet been found and probably have not been collected and archived. The most helpful guide to Yates' published writings was Yellin and Bond's *The Pen is Ours: A List of Writings by and about African-American Women before 1910 with Secondary Bibliography to the Present*. Kansas City Public Library reference librarians helped to locate a Missouri Historical Review article about Yates. The University of Missouri-Columbia, Western Historical Manuscript Collection provided the few records of the Missouri Association of Colored Women that belatedly celebrated Yates in 1986 by placing a historical marker at Lincoln University, previously Lincoln Institute, where Yates taught chemistry, English, and history until 1912.

Yates' published articles, speeches, and several letters illustrated her expectations about kindergarten for black children most clearly. As second president of the NACW,



some of Yates' correspondence, reports, speeches, and notes are maintained in the NACW archives, as a part of the Margaret Murray Washington Papers, 1900-1907 on reels 5 and 6 of the earlier mentioned microfilm records. The handwritten and typed NACW convention records from 1895 through 1992 are preserved on microfilm along with some local reports, executive board records, and copies of *The National Notes*.

The proposed study included another leader in the black kindergarten movement named Lugenia Burns Hope, whose activities are described in Appendix C. An examination of her records at Atlanta University's Robert E. Woodruff Library revealed very few insights about her concept of the kindergarten even though she became a part of the group W.E.B. DuBois called upon to establish kindergartens in Atlanta. This group of women formed the Gate City Free Kindergarten Association and established several free kindergartens around the city. Hope was a woman of action but few words therefore, the absence of data made it difficult to include her in the main study.

Some initial research was conducted to find Haydee Benchley Campbell's papers. Campbell was an influential Progressive Era black kindergartner, but extremely limited data was found, other than listings of her presentations about kindergarten in NACW convention programs. The resources required to determine if records existed and then accessing them made it impractical to include her in this study. It is possible that records of Campbell's work as the Superintendent of Colored Kindergartens in St. Louis Public Schools exist but the St. Louis Public Schools archivist position was vacant during the period that this research was taking place. St. Louis Public Schools archives would

probably be an excellent source of information as they were the first public kindergartens in the United States for black and white students. Similarly, attempts to gather information about the Model School at Antioch College, in which Mary Church Terrell enrolled at age six, met with failure as plans to fill the vacant archivist position at this institution were not in place.

### **Internal Review Board Process**

The Associate Dean of the Graduate School of Loyola University Chicago has confirmed that the Internal Review Board (IRB) process was waived for this study because the subjects are deceased and their writings are maintained in public archives. Therefore, the potential for harm to human subjects is negligible.

### **Levels of Data**

Gary McCulloch (2004), a documentary researcher, outlines the significance of levels of archival data and what researchers can expect to glean from personal records, published reports, newspapers, and government data such as census reports.

Corroborating subjects' assertions and actions through public reports, newspapers and published writings established a firmer basis for the data, as private papers are not held to a standard of truth and accuracy. Terrell's diaries were examined for references to kindergartens and for descriptions of her own early education, her priorities in regard to education, and her expectations, opinions, and hopes for her own children and children in general. The arguments that appeared in personal diaries and letters but absent from

published articles hinted at Terrell and Yates' doubts, their biases, and their goals and dreams for the race and themselves.

The second tier of documents were articles and speeches authored by Terrell and Yates for perspectives they shared with the public. The public documents were found in the periodicals mentioned earlier, the *Colored American Magazine* and the *Voice of the Negro*, which are held at the Chicago State University Library. The public writings outlined Terrell and Yates' purposes for establishing kindergartens, what they felt were the most compelling arguments for a new and daunting venture, and their underlying assumptions about the people whose support they needed to make kindergartens a reality.

Newspaper articles made up the third tier of primary documents. These articles provided insights into the popular reactions to the subjects' ideas about kindergarten. Stories about kindergarten were considered newsworthy enough to occupy a limited space in black periodicals and the frequency and prominent placement of articles suggests that kindergarten was seen as an important educational movement in the black community.

Progressive Era black periodicals printed reports and articles about kindergartens many of which are available on microfilm (see below) and are slowly emerging online:

<u>Progressive Era Black Publications</u>	<u>Current Location</u>
<i>Colored American Magazine</i>	Stored at Chicago State University in bound printed copy from May 1900 to November 1 1909.
<i>National Notes</i>	NACW's official newsletter, National Association of Colored Women's archives, Moorland-Spingarn Library and Tuskegee University's Frissell Library all hold some original documents. Entire existing publication on microfilm available from numerous university libraries.
<i>Southern Workman</i>	Stored at Chicago Public Library on microfilm from 1872-1939. Also, some volumes are available online, digitized by Google.
<i>Voice of the Negro</i>	Stored at Chicago State University in bound printed copy from January 1904 to October 1907.
<i>Woman's Era</i>	Microfilm copies of all available editions 1894-1897 are held in the regular library collection in S.C. Neilson Library at Smith College, Northampton, MA, digital copies of Volume II, 1895, can be accessed at: <a href="http://womenwriters.library.emory.edu">womenwriters.library.emory.edu</a>

Secondary sources included books, articles, dissertations, and theses written after the Progressive Era that discuss the kindergarten movement, the social, economic, political, and educational context of the Progressive Era, black history, women's, especially club women's, history, and social welfare issues. Retrospective statistical reports such as census reports also fall into this category.

### **Data Analysis**

The findings chapters present the themes from Terrell and Yates' writings that most clearly explain their purposes for establishing kindergartens. Themes emerged from a close reading of each of the speeches and articles. Then the phrases from the documents that expressed these themes were grouped and the clearest expressions of each of the themes were chosen to quote as data. The three categories of purposes that emerged from Terrell and Yates' arguments and explanations for why establishing kindergartens were important were as follows:

Desire to Address Conditions of Deprivation for Black People: This theme included statements describing the subjects' desire to address the ignorance, poverty, and limited opportunities of poor black children and their mothers. The quotes grouped under Theme one, the desire to address black conditions, delineate Terrell's and Yates' purpose of kindergarten as a way to support the general goal of uplift.

Kindergarten as a Tool for Organizing, Fundraising, and Amassing Power for Black Women: Kindergarten received a great deal of attention as an educational innovation during the Progressive Era. Terrell and Yates capitalized on this popular appeal to attract educated women to the NACW, to raise money, and to exert organizational influence or power to lobby for, build, and manage kindergarten programs. They both believed that their effectiveness as leaders would be measured by the number of kindergartens that NACW clubs established.

Developmental and Cultural Benefits of Kindergarten: Terrell recognized the developmental value of kindergarten for young children in general, and particularly for black children, including a transition year before academic schooling. Black kindergartners would be able to teach children acceptable cultural practices and how to cope with racism. Theme 3 quotes outline the reasons why kindergarten was the perfect medium to socialize poor black children.

Certainly, the purposes of people long dead cannot be completely discovered or assessed; and, as will be seen, the stated purposes are complex and at times, contradictory. Terrell and Yates' purposes for establishing kindergartens were most likely inspired not only by the desire to improve conditions for poor blacks but by a combination of altruistic, power, racial/cultural, and personal needs and desires; the process of teasing out the thematic strands was inexact and speculative. The value of this process was in discovering the different conditions that spurred black women to action in reforming education against considerable odds.

Chapter Four contains Mary Church Terrell's biographical sketch highlighting the events and circumstances that propelled her to leadership in the black kindergarten movement. Chapter Five analyzes the data from Terrell's speeches and articles, and Chapter Six contains a brief biographical sketch of Yates and analyzes her speeches and articles. The research questions are addressed in the biographical sketches of the two women, through the analysis of their writing, and in the list of kindergartens in Appendix B. The questions are:

1. How did the writings of Mary Church Terrell and Josephine Silone Yates, two important leaders, affect the black kindergarten movement during the period from 1896-1906?
2. Who were Mary Church Terrell and Josephine Silone Yates and how did their identities and views about kindergarten interact with the social context of the Progressive Era?
3. What did Terrell and Yates see as the purposes of kindergarten education for black children in their speeches and articles?

The biographical sketches of Terrell and Yates address the second research question: Who were Mary Church Terrell and Josephine Silone Yates and how did their identities and views about kindergarten interact with the social context of the Progressive Era? The analyses of the women's writing addresses the third question: What did Terrell and Yates see as the purposes of kindergarten for black children and families? Both the biographical sketches and the analyses address the first research question.

### **Limitations**

One of the most serious methodological limitations of this study are that many of the records and relevant documents that could tell the story of black kindergartens and these leaders' contributions are unavailable either because they have been destroyed or because the value of their papers was not recognized; for instance, Josephine Silone Yates' papers appear not to have been donated to any library. The absence of documents and records creates an unavoidable degree of subjectivity and conjecture in this study.

However, subjectivity and intuition are integral to qualitative research, and indeed to any research, and they were essential tools in gaining an understanding of Terrell and Yates, their purposes for establishing kindergarten, and the evolution of the black kindergarten movement.

The quality of the records that exist presents another limitation in this study. Minutes of the NACW clubs are vague, lacking in detail, and uniformly self-laudatory accounts of local club and national activities. The earliest minutes are hand-written, incomplete, and in some cases, very difficult to read. These minutes do, however, confirm that kindergartens were being established and discussed a great deal but firm details about the names, locations, teachers, adherence to Froebelian or later developments in curriculum and materials, are few and far between.

The lack of time and funding forced a choice to sample from Mary Church Terrell's copious personal papers; therefore, some relevant letters or diary entries may have been overlooked. An entire research study could be devoted to finding Josephine Silone Yates personal papers, but her private letters to Margaret Murray Washington were available because Washington's papers are maintained as a part of NACW archives. Fortunately, black periodicals and collections of essays published during the Progressive Era printed many of Yates' public speeches and articles. Archives do not generally command a high priority in terms of funding in many institutions; therefore, a few that were contacted were either disorganized or unavailable to the public for long periods. For instance, archivist positions were vacant at several institutions contacted and the Chicago



Public Schools employed a part-time archivist who was only available for several hours per week. The CPS collection had been moved to a small room without regard to any particular order and the archivist was attempting to organize and catalogue the documents when this project was taking shape.

The methods used in this research lead to a partial understanding of the black kindergarten movement because there are gaps that limit what this kind of data can teach. My own interests shaped what was discovered in this data; the intention was to draw reasonable inferences from the documents that the two women wrote. Findings will clearly state when the data are being interpreted or there is some degree of speculation. Although it is necessary to provide some clarification of the connotations of Progressive Era popular terminology, such as morality and home, these meanings may not be completely clear without a contextual understanding of the period.

The interpretation of the documents will necessarily reflect my own perspectives and experiences. Because I share many of the cultural characteristics of the subjects, I may be in a stronger position to assess some of the opportunities and constraints that faced them as well as the unique and seldom chronicled status of educated blacks. My biases may lead me to project my own values and beliefs onto the subjects; therefore, it is important for readers to be aware of the lenses through which this research was conducted (Boyatzis, 1998). Historical research is inherently biased by the researcher's interests and beliefs but from careful and systematic coding of private and public writings as well as news and public records, a factual story should emerge.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF EARLY EXPERIENCES ON MARY CHURCH TERRELL'S KINDERGARTEN ADVOCACY

The purposes that Mary Church Terrell articulated for establishing kindergartens for black children grew partly out of the interaction between her own early experiences and the opportunities and challenges that presented themselves in the Progressive Era. This chapter will explore the critical life experiences, sense of identity, and views of what was possible for blacks, what empowered her to take up this charge and will examine how her identity and views interacted with the context of the Progressive Era. Terrell's early life reveals connections to her work on behalf of the kindergarten movement which culminated in her election as first President of the National Association of Colored Women and the selection of kindergarten as one of the new organization's top priorities.

This chapter first describes how Terrell and other such leaders were influenced by the constraints and opportunities that characterized the social and political context of the late 1800s and early 1900s. It goes on to recount early experiences that helped to shape Terrell's identity as a leader who would advocate for black kindergartens and those that helped her to recognize the protective benefits of a child-centered early education. Finally, it will relate the story of how Terrell, through her club, became involved in the kindergarten movement. The biographical sketch addresses to some small extent the dire need for information about Progressive Era black women who fought for early care and

education. Terrell's life story is compelling and reveals some of the challenges that faced even the most privileged and highly educated blacks during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### **The Influence of the Historical Context on Leadership and Activism**

The hypothesis is that a particular set of contextual conditions can interact with the abilities and experiences of particular individuals to propel them into leadership. This process can be seen in the life histories of three social activists from the Progressive Era, Mary Church Terrell, Jane Addams, and W.E.B. DuBois. All three of these social activist leaders were intellectually talented and had relatively privileged early childhoods which were punctuated by personal challenges and losses. For instance, Addams was born to a prosperous family but had serious long term health problems and her mother died when she was two years old (Linn & Scott, 2000). DuBois wrestled with his father's abandonment of the family as his mother fell ill and gradually into poverty but went on to graduate from Harvard University (Lewis, 1993), and Terrell's seemingly tranquil childhood changed when her parents divorced and she was sent away to be educated in Ohio at six years old (Terrell, 1940/2005).

Teachers recognized and encouraged the intellectual talents of Addams, DuBois, and Terrell and supported them in their pursuit of advanced classical education which, at the time, was followed by a year of European travel and study, if at all possible. During this period, public education for all children was only beginning to spread across the United States, having gained an early foothold in New England but it was still a distant goal in some of the Western states (such as Illinois) and was widely rejected in the

Southern states (Anderson, 1980; Chicago School Board Report, 1880; Mann, 1848).

Terrell, DuBois, and Addams were in the tiny minority of blacks and women who had the basic foundations, the support, and the connections to gain access to higher education.

DuBois was the first black man to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard University, Terrell was the fourth black woman to graduate with a Bachelor's degree from Oberlin College, and Addams was among the fraction of one percent of white women earning college degrees in the 1890s.<sup>1</sup>

Each of these three leaders tell stories about childhood experiences in which they were deeply affected by encounters with injustice and they all resolved to push for change in society rather than adapting to the status quo. The dramatic social, political, and economic shifts taking place in American society such as the Civil War, the emancipation of millions of enslaved blacks, and industrialization during their formative years would certainly have influenced them, especially as pioneers and self-conscious and thoughtful beneficiaries of these changes. The promise of Reconstruction, though short-lived (1865 to 1877), gave rise to hopes and expectations for black people, formerly enslaved and free, that reverberated throughout American society. Reform movements proliferated in this climate of change. The sense of possibility engendered by the emancipation of the slaves motivated women also as can be seen in white women's writing from this period. Jennie June Croly, a journalist and author of a history of the national women's club movement that began in the late 1860's, reflected on the sudden growth of these clubs among white women:

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<sup>1</sup>The Bureau of Census began collecting educational attainment data in 1920, and by that time, approximately 1% of white women had college degrees.

To those who were prepared it came not only as an awakening, but as emancipation – emancipation of the soul, freedom from the tyranny of tradition and prejudice, and the acquisition of an intellectual outlook; a spiritual liberty achieved so quietly as to be unnoticed, except by those who watched the progress of this bloodless revolution, and the falling away of the shackles that bind the spirit in its early and often painful effort to reach the light...

The early half of the century was marked by a crusade for the cause of the better education of women as significant as that for the physical emancipation of the slave, and as devoted on the part of its leaders (1898, p. 11).

This quote reveals the paradox in white women comparing their hopes for freedom with the emancipation of the slaves while at the same time, refusing to admit black women to white clubs or representatives of black member clubs to white club conventions. Although poorly documented and underreported, some of the most impactful reforms were those championed by women, black and white, such as the kindergarten and higher education, temperance, suffrage, and social service movements. White and black women's organizations functioned in parallel but separate parts of the same reform movements, despite black club women's frequent overtures to white clubs and despite white club women's previous support for abolition and their claims of identification with slavery and emancipation (Scott, 1990).

During the period American historians call the Progressive Era, "The last decade of the nineteenth century and the opening of the twentieth century marked the nadir of the Negro's status in American society" (Logan, 1965/1997, p. 52). It is so described because of the government condoned, often violent backlash against blacks after the Reconstruction period characterized by deterioration of civil rights in the South, limited employment opportunities, lynching of men, women, and children, inferior schools and

public services, convict lease system, and other forms of legal victimization. Combined with the extreme constraints upon blacks, the “cult of true womanhood”, an oppressive set of Victorian values narrowly channeling women into the home and away from political and economic pursuits also qualified as a low point, if not a nadir, for gender equity that extended throughout the nineteenth century and continued to choke women’s ambitions and opportunities well into the twentieth century (Perkins, 1983). As black women, who had always provided essential financial support to the family, became educated they found their work opportunities limited not only by racism but by gender discrimination that funneled them primarily into teaching and nursing, while their less educated sisters had few choices other than domestic service. Around 88% of the NACW leadership was employed but this figure would probably be somewhat lower for the rank and file members (Gordon, 1991; Knupfer, 1996).

Erikson’s (1975) essay on *Life History and the Historical Moment* explains:

A historical period may (as, for example, the American Revolution did) present a singular chance for a collective renewal which opens up unlimited identities for those who, by combination of unruliness, giftedness, and competence, represent a new leadership, a new elite, and new types rising to dominance in a new people (p. 21).

This period of dramatic change presented the unruly, gifted, and competent Terrell, DuBois, and Addams opportunities to align American society with their visions of genuine equity and justice. They had the sensitivity and empathy to understand the struggles of the poor and oppressed having, to some degree, mastered their own difficulties in their early lives. Their ability to transcend the internal and societal limitations of their subordinate status gave them the confidence and the drive to take on

leadership roles and their effectiveness gave them currency and credibility. As Erikson suggests:

Youth depends on the ideological coherence of the world it is meant to take over, and therefore is sensitively aware of whether the system is strong enough in its traditional form to 'confirm' and to be confirmed by the identity process, or so rigid or brittle as to suggest renovation, reformation, or revolution. Psychosocial identity, then, also has a psycho-historical side, and suggests the study of how life histories are inextricably interwoven with history (1975, p. 20).

For Terrell and her activist contemporaries, there was little ideological coherence in a world in which their color and gender made them inferior to others; the ideal of a free society contradicted the reality of confining, vulnerable roles for women and a shrinking set of rights and opportunities for blacks. Terrell and DuBois' strong academic achievements disproved the myths about the inferior black intellect while Terrell and Addams' intelligence, vision, and personal power challenged the limited roles that Progressive Era American women were obliged to embrace.

Addams, DuBois, and Terrell's gender identity and/or their race made them members of subordinate groups in American society but they were the elites within the subordinate group with which they identified and with which society identified them. The legal limitations of womanhood constrained Addams but her difficulties were further compounded by the fact that she refused to marry and had a female companion. DuBois grew up as one of a handful of blacks in a small Massachusetts town and experienced very little color discrimination, but whites visiting his idyllic community introduced him to more direct racism. As he ventured out of New England, he encountered inequality and hatred and vowed to fight it. Terrell grew up in privilege and wealth unknown to the vast

majority of Americans, black or white. Humiliated because of her color as a child, she learned ways of coping that enabled her to manage harrowing experiences of racism and sexism and made it her life work to advocate for the rights of blacks and women.

In choosing to dedicate their lives to correcting social ills instead of pursuing their own personal comfort and wealth, Addams, Terrell, and DuBois were expressing the well documented common ideal of noblesse oblige among educated Americans, especially among black Americans. But, Terrell and DuBois also recognized that government at all levels was abandoning its legal responsibilities to black citizens and that the weight of these responsibilities would fall on their privileged shoulders.

Terrell, DuBois, and Addams possessed language, access to resources, cultural knowledge, and perspectives that were informed by their intimate knowledge of both power and of oppression; as members of both dominant and subordinate groups they acted as cultural interpreters between the oppressed and the powerful and had the authority and knowledge to lead. Their perspectives diverged from conventional ideas about racial and/or gender groups probably because of their unique experiences participating in the dominant spheres of higher education and leadership that was generally denied to blacks and women. They had developed effective strategies to cope with the negativity and isolation of racism and sexism. Terrell made a conscious decision to share her coping strategies with others. As members of a subordinate group, they empathized with the oppressed and gained satisfaction by using their abilities to work for lasting social change (DuBois, 1968; Linn, 2000; Terrell, 1940/2005).



Racism and discrimination are means of identifying, assigning negative characteristics, and then isolating people from equitable participation in society based solely upon their skin color. But, the impulse to belong is a strong internal human motivation and those assigned to subordinate groups because of widely held negative beliefs about their race (or ethnicity, culture, economic status, language, abilities, gender identity, religion, or appearance) tend to try to change themselves to gain social acceptance. Although at times Terrell echoed the social Darwinist rhetoric of the period by asking blacks to change to fit into white society, she also criticized whites for the unjust, inhumane, and disrespectful treatment of blacks in articles such as “Service Which Should Be Rendered to the South” (1905) and “An Interview with W.T. Stead on the Race Problem” (1907).

It is equally certain that it will be impossible to elevate the masses of a backward, struggling race, until the scales of prejudice and injustice fall from the eyes of the stronger people, by whom the progress of the weaker may be so easily retarded and without whose consent and support it will require almost superhuman strength for the latter to rise. If the enactments recently made in almost every state of the South are an index of the mind and heart of the white people of that section, the hostility toward the colored man was never more pronounced than it is today and the determination to keep him as near the level of the brute never stronger than it is at the present time (Terrell, 1905, p. 182).

### **Sources About Terrell’s Life**

Much of the data about Terrell’s early life comes from her autobiography, *A Colored Woman in a White World*, published in 1940 and reissued in 2005 and from her papers in the Library of Congress. Her ability to frame issues of importance contributed to her stature as a leader and offers current researchers a wealth of primary source material authored by her and about her in periodicals and compilations of biographies.

Beverly Washington Jones, a professor of history at historically black North Carolina Central University has expanded on her dissertation about Terrell in a biography and compilation of her most important speeches called *Quest for Equality: The Life and Writings of Mary Eliza Church Terrell, 1863-1954* (1990). This chapter explores the formative experiences in Terrell's life and how they relate to her later advocacy for kindergartens.

*Early Years – 1863 to 1870*

Mary Eliza Church Terrell was born in the then Confederate state and prosperous cotton distribution center of Memphis, TN, on September 23, 1863 to Robert Reed Church and Louisa Ayers. "Baldheaded though I was, the fates were kind to me in one particular at least. I was born at a time when I did not have to go through life as a slave. My parents were not so fortunate, for they were both slaves" (Terrell, 1940/2005, p. 31). Both of Terrell's parents were also the offspring of white slave masters. Terrell's father, Robert Church, worked on his father's Mississippi River boats and had no formal schooling but he taught himself to read, while Terrell's mother, Louisa, had been separated from her own mother and grew up as her mistress's companion (her own step-sister), and passing for Creole in New Orleans before being freed and moving north to Memphis. As a slave, Louisa had been educated and spoke English and French. Her master/father had paid for her wedding. Louisa's mother, Eliza, had reunited with her daughter and lived with the Church family during Terrell's childhood and she and Terrell were quite close. Robert maintained a fond relationship with his own father throughout their lives even though his father held him enslaved (it is not clear when Robert or his

mother were freed). Terrell says of her grandfather, “I have heard my father say that Captain Church’s sympathy was on the side of the Union, even though he was a slaveholder, and that he suffered financially because he took this stand” (p. 32).

Both of Terrell’s parents were talented financially successful entrepreneurs who had experienced the emotional support of their white fathers. Through a liquor store and then far-sighted real estate investments during an 1879 yellow fever epidemic in Memphis, Robert Church eventually built one of the largest black fortunes in the South nonetheless, it was Louisa’s income from her popular hair salon that enabled the couple to buy the Church family’s first house. Louisa provided warm parenting as well as a model of independent, capable, resourceful womanhood for Terrell.

By including stories in her autobiography about the supportive connections between Terrell’s grandparents and parents, Terrell demonstrated her understanding of what enabled both of her parents to become successful on their own terms. She credited the loving support of her parents as well as her education for her own success and although sheltered and fond of her white grandfather, she was aware of the contradictions, the hierarchies, and cruelties inherent in the system of slavery.

When slavery is discussed and somebody rhapsodizes upon the goodness and kindness of masters and mistresses toward their slaves in extenuation of the cruel system, it is hard for me to conceal my disgust. There is no doubt that some slaveholders were kind to their slaves. Captain Church [Terrell’s grandfather] was one of them, and this daughter of a slave father is glad thus publicly to express her gratitude to him. But the anguish of one slave mother from whom her baby was snatched away outweighs all the kindness and goodness which were occasionally shown a fortunate, favored slave (Terrell, 1940/2005, pp. 34-35).

In the aftermath of the Civil War, newly freed blacks began to leave the devastation and poverty of the Southern countryside and flooded into Memphis seeking work and relatives who had been sold. Employers replaced white laborers with cheaper black workers, which quickly destroyed the relative racial order that had existed before the war; there was considerable white hostility towards the free blacks who had established prosperous businesses. When Terrell was three years old, the Memphis race riot of 1866 broke out in which 46 blacks and two whites were killed. During the riot, a white mob shot Robert Church in his liquor store and left him for dead although he survived. Terrell paints her father as fearless and daring as he continued to build his financial empire in the midst of this hostile atmosphere. She admired her father for challenging the violent racism that attempted to punish a black man's success. Witnessing unfairness fueled Terrell's desire to fight injustice.

With incomes from two successful businesses, the Church family had a privileged life style but racism remained an unavoidable part of their lives. Terrell's earliest memory of discrimination was at around five years-old when traveling north with her father. Robert had seated Terrell in the "best" section of the train and then left her to go to the smoking car. A conductor was in the process of removing her to the colored section of the train when her father returned and prevailed over the conductor (Terrell, 1940/2005). These experiences of privilege juxtaposed with rejection and humiliation intimidated and silenced some privileged blacks, but Terrell seemed to have gained insight and courage from them.

Terrell visited her grandfather, Captain Charles B. Church regularly but was not told that he was her grandfather until she was about five years old, perhaps to wait until she was able to comprehend the complexities somewhat, in the attempt to allay some of the confusion and anger this complicated relationship would arouse, or to protect her grandfather's reputation. Her maternal grandmother, Eliza, shared painful stories about slavery with Terrell, but neither of her parents spoke about their own experiences as slaves. It would be difficult to assess the full impact of this revelation that her grandfather had owned her father and his family members, and that although her grandfather was kind to her, he did not acknowledge their blood relationship privately or publicly.

Robert and Louisa divorced when Terrell was six years old and while this was a source of pain and embarrassment for her, she maintained close communication with both parents. Both parents recognized that Terrell was precocious and were aware of the inadequacy of the Memphis schools. Louisa and Robert enrolled Terrell in the integrated Model School in Yellow Springs, Ohio. Terrell describes the Antioch College Model School of around 1869 or 1870:

In Yellow Springs, I was sent to what I believe was the forerunner of the kindergarten in the United States. It was called the 'Model School,' and as I look back upon it today, I feel sure it deserved the name 'Model.' This school for children was connected with Antioch College, of which Horace Mann, the great educator, was first president (Terrell, 1940/2005, p. 49).

The stimulating early learning experience at the Model School made Terrell aware of the difference between it and her inadequate Memphis school.

Louisa and Robert Church's commitment to protect and provide an excellent education for Terrell was evident in the decision to plant her in the relatively benign

racial environment of central Ohio. Both Antioch and Oberlin College accepted women and African American students, an indication of the progressive attitudes of the leadership at both institutions. Oberlin College had a high school, a two-year certificate program called the Literary Course, and a four year bachelor's degree program called the Classical Course, which was sometimes called the Gentlemen's Course. Although Oberlin College had opened its doors to blacks in 1835, racial and gender barriers had not completely disappeared; for instance, it was nearly 30 years before Mary Jane Patterson, the first black woman, graduated from Oberlin's four year Classical Course in 1862, just a year before Terrell was born (Lerner, 1992; Terrell, 1940/2005). Nonetheless, it was as hospitable an environment as was possible in the context of Reconstruction Era America.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Horace Mann is sometimes called the father of public education because during his tenure as the Secretary of the Boston Board of Education, he expanded public schooling in the state of Massachusetts in the 1850's basing the school system on the Prussian model of education he had observed on a visit to Germany in 1842, while Froebel was still alive and the kindergarten was gaining public attention and support in Germany. He was deeply impressed with Pestalozzian respect for children and the affectionate relationships between teacher and student (Compayré, 1907/2002). Mann believed in free public education for all citizens and said "When its [The Common School's] faculties shall be fully developed, when it shall be trained to wield its mighty energies for the protection of society against the giant vices which now invade and torment it; - against intemperance, avarice, war, slavery, bigotry, the woes of want and the wickedness of waste, - then there will not be a height to which these enemies of the race can escape..." (1848, p. 79). Horace Mann's philosophy shaped the culture of Antioch as a haven for social justice and civil rights. In a similar vein, nearby Oberlin College had been a stop on the Underground Railroad during the pre- Civil War period and had had black male graduates throughout its history.

Elizabeth Peabody, one of the earliest and staunchest advocates of kindergarten in the United States, was Mann's sister-in-law. Peabody learned about kindergarten from Margarethe Schurz, founder of the first kindergarten in the United States. Schurz met Peabody at an abolitionists meeting in 1859 and gave her *The Education of Man*, Froebel's philosophical tome on the kindergarten. Later that year, Peabody visited Schurz' kindergarten in Watertown, WI and became an enthusiastic convert to the kindergarten cause, opening her own kindergarten the very next year in Boston (Beatty, 1995; Ross, 1976). Elizabeth Peabody spoke about kindergartens at the first meeting of the New England Woman's Club in 1868 (Croly, 1899). Elizabeth Peabody's sister, Mary, had married Horace Mann in 1843 and they moved from Boston to Ohio in 1851 to lead the new Antioch College. Horace Mann may have been aware of the kindergarten before his death but it is not likely that the Model School was a true kindergarten.

By 1870, Elizabeth Peabody and Mary Peabody Mann (Mrs. Horace Mann) had published the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of *The Moral Culture of Infancy and Kindergarten Guide*, an expanded explanation of the needs of

Louisa arranged for Terrell to live with a black family that owned a hotel and had four grown children. “No little girl could possibly have been happier than I was so far away from home, for I became a member of that family in every sense of the word” (Terrell, 1940/2005, p. 49). With the Hunster family, Terrell continued to live in privilege in comparison to most other blacks. Moving away from conflict and into a stable family with loving attachment figures provided the protective factors Terrell needed to develop the courage and strong sense of identity that enabled her to thrive. Black children had routinely been separated from their parents throughout American history to be sold as slaves, to escape slavery, or to be educated. When families had the choice, separation from parents was sometimes preferable to the negative consequences of extreme poverty, lack of education and job opportunities, and racial hostility that children would experience remaining in the South. The capacity to embrace a new family and a new school provides evidence of Terrell’s resilience and ability to cope in emotionally and academically challenging situations. This experience of separating from her parents may have helped her to empathize with those who were negotiating the separations, upheavals, and unpredictable twists on the road to freedom.

Terrell’s birth in the year of the emancipation of the slaves lent a special sense of possibility partly because of the tremendous sense of relief and celebration of that moment in history for blacks, enslaved and free, and for those whites who had worked for the abolition of slavery. Also, previously unimaginable opportunities for blacks began to

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young children that advocated for a shift in pedagogy to a cultivation of children’s talents and a rejection of the practice of keeping young children sitting silently for lectures. Horace Mann died in 1859 while still the President of Antioch College just as the first kindergartens began to gain attention in the United States.

open up during the Reconstruction period, which coincided with her early youth. For instance, the first black man to serve a full term in the U.S. Senate from Mississippi and Oberlin alumnus, Senator Blanche Bruce, was a close family friend (Terrell, 1940/2005). Colleges for women and blacks opened in the decades after her birth, and black men were enfranchised in Tennessee in 1867 even before they were granted the right to vote in all states in 1870 by the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. These dramatic new opportunities and legislative changes raised many Americans' expectations and hopes for positive changes in attitudes towards blacks.

*Eight to Eighteen Years-Old – Development of Racial Identity – 1871 to 1881*

As the only black child in her Model School classroom, Terrell faced racism and discrimination alone. She recounted:

While we were reciting our history lesson one day, it suddenly occurred to me that I, myself, was descended from the very slaves whom the Emancipation Proclamation set free. I was stunned. I felt humiliated and disgraced. ... 'Here you are' said a voice ironically, 'measuring arms with these white children whose ancestors have always been free. What audacity!' I was covered with confusion and shame at the thought, and my humiliation was painful indeed. When I recovered my composure I resolved that so far as this descendent of slaves was concerned, she would show those white girls and boys whose forefathers had always been free that she was their equal in every respect. At that time I was the only colored girl in the class, and I felt I must hold high the banner of my race (Terrell, 1940/2005, pp. 51, 52).

This learning led her to the insight that every race had been enslaved at some point in history, and that the experience of slavery was "part of the divine plan to bring out the best there is in them" (Terrell, 1940/2005, p. 51).

In being descended from slaves, therefore, I learned that my group and I are no exception to a general rule. This fact not only comforted and consoled me, but it greatly increased my self-respect. I felt I had the right



to look the world in the eye like any other free woman and to hold my head as high as anybody else (p. 56).

The idea that blacks were simply the latest in a long line of victims of slavery was a powerful coping narrative for Terrell; it allowed her emotional distance from the shame and stigma of slavery and became a source of strength and determination. This realization was a pivotal moment in the development of Terrell's identity, as it is for many black children. Terrell's identification with her enslaved ancestors and decision to challenge racial stereotypes and limitations became a part of her life mission. The coping narrative enabled Terrell to step beyond what could have been a crippling sense of shame, allowed her to establish empathic connections with other black people, and harness the courage to address the inequities. When black American violinist, Will Marion Cook, who was studying in Berlin, confided his paralyzing fear of competing with whites, Terrell sought to encourage him by sharing her insight that every race had been enslaved and that blacks had made tremendous progress in the short period of freedom (Terrell, 1940/2005).

As a black child surrounded by whites, she described a number of challenges to her worthiness and sense of belonging. It is unlikely that white teachers, in the decade after emancipation, had the tools or insights to discuss sensitive issues of race with young children in a way that would help them grasp its meaning and, at the same time, help them build healthy identities given the ubiquitous racism and discrimination extant in American society. Even now, teachers of young children often struggle to introduce issues of race or avoid them altogether and use various means to explain the history of slavery and racial and cultural differences, some that leave the child's sense of belonging and well-being intact and some that do not.

Though Terrell had black and white living family members and was, at times, mistaken for white, she chose to embrace a “Colored” identity that she used as a moral rod to help uplift other blacks, chastise whites, and pressure the powerful for opportunities and resources. Her interest in kindergartens was probably based on a desire to reach back and heal the psychic wounds from her own childhood and to help other blacks correct the thoughtless violence of education that exposed young children to their slave past without offering them a sense of dignity or worth and that penalized blacks for academic shortcomings they were powerless to remedy. Listening to her maternal grandmother’s stories had sensitized Terrell to the suffering and injustice that even the most favored slaves endured, while her father’s access and acceptance in white contexts and ability to depend on the backing of his powerful white father certainly gave Terrell a sense of entitlement and access. “So far as I can recall, as a child, whenever I saw my father in the company of white men, they talked with him as they did with other men and treated him, in general as they did each other” (Terrell, 1940/2005, p. 45).

Terrell finished elementary school in Yellow Springs public schools and entered Oberlin High School from which she graduated in 1879. By this time, the climate of the country had shifted. In the late 1870’s, Southern whites reacted to the loss of the Civil War and the economic boon of slavery by reversing the new freedoms and rights of black citizens. Poll taxes, literacy tests, separate but equal laws and practices, as well as lynching, rape, and other terrorist acts emerged that effectively maintained slave status for Southern blacks. Northern blacks experienced additional limitations on their rights and freedoms as well as growing job competition from new immigrants.

Terrell's academic accomplishments at Oberlin High School and College proved to her that she was more than equal to any white person. In her words, "I was ambitious to stand at the head of my class and I was willing to pay the price..." (Terrell, 1940/2005, p. 51). The price she paid was being the target of indifference and cruelty of less enlightened faculty and students. Although Oberlin College was extremely progressive in comparison to other institutions of higher learning during this period of history, the institution could not escape the social context of the period in which constant reinforcement of a sense of black inferiority were transmitted through popular media and culture such as minstrel shows and unflattering caricatures of blacks in the newspapers (Gaines, 1996).

To have developed self-confidence, Terrell must have learned to avoid internalizing the ubiquitous negative messages about her race and to identify sources of trust and support in an all white, and sometimes hostile environment. There is ample evidence in Terrell's accomplishments at Oberlin College that she not only mastered the ability to cope with negative stereotypes about blacks but was already speaking out for social justice and developing leadership skills. For instance, Oberlin's literary society elected her to represent the group in public debates. In one speech, she suggested that the poor should receive direct support and that,

So long as we have no organized method of looking into these shabby places, both to help the poor, and remove the wicked, crime will increase... We must remember the children. The poor boys of today are the future men and on them for the most part the prosperity of the country will depend (M.C. Terrell Papers LOC, 1880, Reel 20).

She also worked on the editorial staff of the *Oberlin Review* and graduated from Oberlin College's rigorous four year classical program along with her male classmates, rather than the two year literary strand which most female students chose (Jones, 1990; Majors, 1893/1986; Terrell, 1940/2005).

Ida Gibbs Hunt and Anna Julia Cooper, two other brilliant black educators and leaders during the Progressive Era both graduated from Oberlin's four-year Bachelor of Arts program along with Terrell in 1884<sup>3</sup>. "Previous to that, only two colored women had received that degree from any college in the United States or anywhere else in the world, so far as available records show" (Oberlin College Archives, 1972; Terrell, 1940/2005, p. 93).<sup>4</sup> Blacks who did enter higher education after Reconstruction during the later Progressive Era were the very highest achievers who knew that to graduate they had to be better than the best white students (Gaines, 1996; Gatewood, 1990; Terrell, 1940/2005).

Terrell's academic victories allowed her to prove that the stereotypes about blacks' intellectual deficits were inaccurate, so besides the rewards and accolades for her hard work she also felt she had vindicated her race. The academic accomplishments confirmed that she could trust her own perception of reality instead of the racial and gender biased dominant beliefs. In her diaries from the Oberlin years, she described a strategy for dealing with adversity drawn from earlier childhood when she discovered her

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<sup>3</sup>Although Terrell did not discuss her friendships or even her brother in any depth in her autobiography, both Ida Gibbs Hunt and Anna Julia Cooper worked with Terrell at the M Street Colored High School and were members of the Colored Woman's League of Washington DC (Gaines, 1996; Oberlin College Archives, 2009).

<sup>4</sup>Thirty-four Black women had graduated from Oberlin College with the two-year literary strand by 1884. Oberlin had at least one Black professor who joined the faculty in 1835 named Henry Cowles (Gaines, 1996; Oberlin College Online Archives, 2009; Terrell, 1940/2005).

slave ancestry – in notes for a speech in her senior year at Oberlin High School, she says at one point that we should “look for the benefits of trials, like the fire that burns also purifies.” In the same notebook she later remarks that, “tribulations bring advantages and disadvantages but the advantages are often overlooked. Our trials are the spice of life” (M.C. Terrell Papers LOC, circa 1879). Terrell clearly loved a challenge, the more complex and uncertain – the more attractive. Opportunities to change perceptions about blacks and women and opening closed minds excited her. This was not just the case in terms of race relations. She was also a passionate supporter of women’s suffrage even at the risk of alienating future suitors. In her later years, she became increasingly frustrated with the slow pace of progress for blacks and mounted more radical campaigns against racism.<sup>5</sup>

Terrell’s formative experiences taught her that blacks’ poverty and ignorance resulted from the lack of educational and work opportunities and the limitations imposed by slavery and Jim Crow; they were not the result of blacks’ genetically determined mental abilities, as was commonly believed at the time. The publication of Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* in 1859 attracted tremendous public attention to his theory of evolution and related pseudoscientific theories that proposed white racial superiority, such as eugenics and phrenology. Social Darwinists argued that blacks’ ignorance was part of what made them less evolved and they used this and other specious data to justify discriminatory treatment of blacks. Many educated blacks, including Terrell, took

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<sup>5</sup>Terrell continued to fight racism into her 89<sup>th</sup> year, when she got involved in demonstrations and a lawsuit against a DC restaurant that refused to serve blacks. This suit resulted in a Supreme Court decision to desegregate DC restaurants (Terrell, 1940/2005).

advantage of this position to advocate for increasing educational opportunities for black children.

*Nineteen to Twenty-Five – Choosing Struggle over Ease – 1882 to 1888*

After graduating from Oberlin College she spent a year in Memphis with her father and new step-mother and then accepted a teaching position at Wilberforce College, the oldest black college in the U.S., contrary to her father's expectations. "In the South for nearly three hundred years 'real ladies' did not work, and my father was thoroughly imbued with that idea. He wanted his daughter to be a 'lady' ... He was so angry with me for accepting a position to teach, he would not write to me" (Terrell, 1940/2005, p. 92, 95). Her father had financed and encouraged her college education but he and Terrell had very different ideas about the potential life trajectories for educated young black women. Terrell declared, "I could not be happy leading a purposeless existence. Situated as I was, I could not put the college education that I had taken such pains to acquire to any good use... All during my college course I had dreamed of the day when I could promote the welfare of my race" (p. 93). Realizing that Terrell was a "chip off the old block" (p. 96), Robert Church eventually forgave Terrell for defying him and doing what she felt was her duty. The fact that she experienced success when she chose to follow her own plans and ignored other people's advice strengthened her confidence and resolve in her own vision. Her mother's ability to provide the family's first house, her decision to divorce, and continued success as an independent woman shaped Terrell's sense of what women could accomplish even in a male-dominated society. Terrell recounts one of Grandmother Eliza's stories about slavery:

She was reared in the house and was the housekeeper for 'ole miss' so she rarely came into contact with the overseer. One day she went into the field on an errand and the overseer challenged her about something. She resented what he said and he threatened to whip her. 'I dared him to tech me,' she said. 'Then he started toward me raising his whip. I took out and run jes' as fast as ever I could and he right after me. When I got to the kitchen door I picked up a chair and said, ef you come a step nearer, I'll knock your brains out with this here chair. An' he never come a step nearer, neither' (Terrell, 1940/2005, p. 41).

The stories Terrell heard about her mother and grandmother's bravery, independence, and competence in a male-dominated world contradicted the Victorian values that were widely seen as the Progressive Era middle class woman's ideal. Terrell's decisions reflected those of her female models of independence but she still embraced many of the social conventions of the period.

### *Travel Abroad*

As her second year teaching at Wilberforce ended in 1886, she moved to Washington DC to accept a new teaching position at the elite M Street Colored High School. Her supervisor in the M Street Latin department, Harvard graduate Robert Heberton Terrell, would later become her husband. Terrell took a leave from M Street Colored High School in 1888 and first completed a Master's degree from Oberlin College, and then spent two years studying and traveling mainly in Germany, France, and Switzerland, paid for by her father. Her letters and diaries do not mention whether or not she visited a kindergarten in Germany. Terrell's aptitude for languages, and German in particular, partly influenced her decision to spend extended time in Europe, along with that being the fashion for wealthy young men and women of the time. German education and culture gained her, and many other Americans' admiration:

If asked where we might spend his time most pleasurably and most profitably with the least expense I should heartily recommend Berlin, the cream of European cities because of the [indecipherable handwriting] of advantages offered to the foreigner. The universities in which any specialty may be advantageously pursued are excellent (Terrell, circa 1888).

Terrell encountered few Europeans that were aware of the racial hierarchies, discriminatory practices, stigmas, and threats that she dealt with daily in the United States. The more equitable relationship between the races was a great relief to her as she settled into the rhythms of European life. People of color lived and traveled freely in Europe at the time as subjects from the colonies, American ex-patriots, and mixed children of European and African ancestry.

Terrell wrestled with the decision to stay in Europe and paraphrased Horace Mann's message to Antioch graduates to "be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity" in her September 1888 French diary entries about a conversation with a French dentist. In this rare vulnerable moment, Terrell exposed the internal tension between her driving ambition and her self-doubt:

There were a lot of things that interested him [Dr. Chapman] about me. For example, my sex, my race, But alas! Why do I have so much ambition and also fear of the spirit, and of [my] talents? Sometimes I am discouraged and I would like to be able to get rid of my desire that I (?push/have the power?) to relieve my ambition, of my grand longing to achieve something before dying. But this spiritual state isn't worthy of someone who has had as many opportunities as I have. Yes, it's true, if one has something to say, they'll find the words to explain the thoughts of their heart. Dr. Chapman told me also that one must have a good plan, a great desire to do something to advance/uplift the people, (of their?) to show them their faults, their attempts to ameliorate the condition of the oppressed, the poor, and the ignorant. It's necessary to have, like a goal/objective to write the advancement of the society. But one condition I think is necessary for my success is courage (M.C. Terrell Papers LOC, 1888, Reel 1, author's translation).



This diary entry reveals the internal tensions that Terrell grappled with as a young adult faced with important life choices. She wavered between self-confidence and self-doubt, between her ambition and the burden of responsibility that came along with her unusual wealth of opportunities, and between the desire to work for the uplift of black people and her uncertainties about her life's direction. Also, a conventional life as a homemaker still appeared to hold some attraction for Terrell despite the fact that she had stood firm against her father's desire for her to be a "lady". Choosing to realize her ambitions would result in an unconventional, but rewarding life. Later, it will be evident that she took Dr. Chapman's advice to heart about having a good plan and showing the people their faults. To do the kind of work that would genuinely benefit black people would indeed require courage given the growing resistance to black progress in the United States in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as the pressure to conform to traditional gender roles:

It is my country; I have a perfect right to love it and I will. My African ancestors helped to build and enrich it with their unrequited labor for nearly three hundred years...I saw a colored woman who had married an Englishman who belonged to a good family and was well-to-do. She had been living happily near London with a devoted husband and several children for years. Would such an existence appeal to me? I was perfectly certain it would not. I knew I would be much happier trying to promote the welfare of my race in my native land, working under certain hard conditions, than I would be living in a foreign land where I could enjoy freedom from prejudice, but where I would make no effort to do the work which I then believed it was my duty to do (Terrell, 1940/2005, p. 133).

Three European men had proposed to Terrell during her two years abroad. She weighed the benefits of a free life in Europe against the potential of making a great contribution to her race if she returned to Washington DC. There was also the possibility

of a loving supportive relationship in Washington with Robert Terrell, an intellectual peer who understood the pressures, privileges, and sacrifices of being a black pioneer. She chose to return to the United States.

*Part II – Public and Professional Life – Twenty-Five to Thirty-Five Years-Old (1889-1899)*

In 1891, the year after her return from Europe, she married Robert H. Terrell and was therefore required to give up her teaching position. She joked about her incompetence at the traditional wifely duties, especially cooking. However, Terrell was absolutely dedicated to the role of motherhood and suffered through the losses of three newborn babies within the first five years of marriage, before finally delivering a healthy baby girl Phyllis (named for the 18<sup>th</sup> century black poet, Phillis Wheatley) in 1898.

Terrell attributed the deaths of her newborn babies to the substandard black health care in Washington. Biographer Beverly Jones suggested that Terrell's wrenching experiences of loss influenced her great concern for children and her view of the fledgling NACW as a newborn child (1990).

Settling into Washington, Terrell plunged into self-improvement and uplift work with fellow Oberlin alumnae, Anna Julia Cooper and Ida Gibbs Hunt, with Josephine Bruce, an old friend and wife of the black U.S. Senator from Mississippi, and with other members of Washington DC's black elite. This group established the Colored Woman's League (CWL) of Washington DC in 1892 and one of the initial projects included a night school in which Terrell taught English literature and German as the chair of the education committee. The CWL began paying part of the salary of the University Park Mission

kindergartner by 1893 as the group realized “the value of its methods in the education of young children, especially in the direction of gentleness, forbearance and tender consideration for the rights and feelings of others” (Colored Woman’s League, 1898, p. 5).

Within four years, her influence was already evident in her new home town and beyond. In 1895, Terrell became the first black woman to be appointed to the Washington DC Board of Education and the first trustee to have actually taught in the public school system (Terrell, 1940/2005). By 1896, the CWL had established an alliance with 42 other black women’s clubs<sup>6</sup> in the region that focused on reforming conditions and providing uplift services called the Woman’s Protective Union with over 4,000 members (Colored Woman’s League, 1897).

The long held desire for a truly national organization of black women was finally actualized at a convention in July of 1896 at which the Afro American Woman’s Federation and the Colored Woman’s League merged and became the National Association for Colored Women. An executive committee representing leaders of the two former organizations elected Terrell as the President of the new NACW but local clubs maintained their own identities and lines of work. In an article for the Hampton Institute’s monthly magazine, the *Southern Workman*, Terrell’s friend and CWL colleague, Anna J. Murray noted:

In 1896, during the time of that first memorable convention of colored women held in Washington, D.C., as I listened to the earnest words of the

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<sup>6</sup>Clubs were also a major arena of social activity and race conversations during this period for men and women and not exclusively for service to the poor. Terrell also belonged to the elite black debating club, Bethel Literary and Historical Society, a card club, and the Coleridge-Taylor Society, a musical club named after the black British composer (Gatewood, 1990; Knupfer, 1996; Terrell, 1940/2005).

noble women from all over our country who came bringing the results of efforts put forth for the elevation of the womanhood of the race, it seemed to me that there was but one safe, sure guide in an effort to remove the cause of the many accusations that have been made against the race. With this conviction, I persuaded the organization of which I am a member, 'The Colored Woman's League' of Washington, D.C., to take up the promotion of the kindergarten, not only for the race in the District but for the Southland as well (Southern Workman, 1900, p. 504).

By 1898, there were six CWL kindergartens which were subsumed by the DC Public Schools and Murray credited Terrell, and other DC School Trustees with making the transfer possible (see Appendix A for the story of the CWL kindergartens). The experience of black women working together to fund and then turning over functioning kindergartens to a school system presented Terrell with a successful prototype for establishing kindergartens for black children around the country. This was the plan that she had been searching for since her Paris conversation with Dr. Chapman; whether or not she consciously chose kindergartens to become that good plan for uplift of the people that he had suggested, we may never know.

Murray articulated a theme that Terrell continued to build on about the value of kindergarten "We regard this work as a most important branch of our education, in that it strikes deep at the root of those troubles which, unless eradicated by some such substitute for the home and wise mother, will continue to retard our progress as a race" (Colored Woman's League, 1897, p. 11). The idea of establishing kindergartens for poor black children probably did not originate with Terrell, but she quickly recognized that the kindergarten system would serve multiple purposes, such as education for young children, child care, health, nutrition, and safety, guidance for parents, but also respectable jobs for educated black women.

In a historic speech on the Progress of Colored Women to the (white) National American Women's Suffrage Association in early 1898, Terrell proclaimed that "As an organization, the National Association of Colored Women feels that the establishment of kindergartens is the special mission which we are called to fulfill" (Pamphlets from the Daniel A.P. Murray Collection LOC Online, 1898). Proceeds from the sale of Terrell's pamphlet based upon this speech were donated to the NACW kindergarten fund (NACW, 1994; Terrell, 1940/2005; Wesley, 1984). As the NACW president, a professional lecturer, and a national leader in her own right, Terrell traveled all over the country speaking to audiences about the need for kindergartens for black children.

*Maturity and Moving On – Thirty-Seven to Forty-Seven Years Old (1900-1910)*

The National Association of Colored Women grew and flourished under Terrell's politically savvy care. At the end of the 1901 conference and the end of her third term, Terrell became the first Honorary President (NACW, 1994, Reel 23). Her presidential speeches always focused on the need for clubs to establish kindergartens and she tried unsuccessfully to raise enough money to hire a national kindergarten organizer to support clubs in this mission. Although the financial records of the NACW are incomplete, they show that the kindergarten fund was used to support NACW struggling classrooms. Terrell wrote increasingly pointed social critiques after her terms as president ended which appeared in magazines such as the *Voice of the Negro* and *The Colored American* and began to shift her focus from kindergarten to advocate for women's suffrage, anti-lynching, and other political causes.

### **Summary**

Mary Church Terrell spent her earliest years with two confident, supportive, and resourceful parents and formed a close attachment with another supportive family when her parents divorced. Her identity and primary relationships straddled white and black racial identification, slavery and freedom, and privilege and obligation. She epitomized the New Woman, popularized around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, who was independent, educated, confident and adventurous and at the same time, maintained Victorian propriety and gentility. Relationships with her grandmother who had been a slave and her grandfather who had been a slave owner provided her with unique perspectives about power as well as the vast changes in the lived experience of Americans in the 30 years between the 1860s Civil War period to the 1890's Progressive Era.

Repeated complaints from her Memphis school teacher led her parents to enroll Terrell in the Model School at Antioch College, which she recalled with great respect and fondness, calling it the forerunner of the kindergarten. Her excellent education there and at Oberlin College provided a set of experiences and knowledge that enabled her to emerge as a leader with an increasingly clear vision of how to secure the rights and improve the quality of life for black people. Education had also prepared her to be a productive member of American society at a time when women of means, especially married women, were not expected to work outside the home, but she felt a powerful urge to work on behalf of her race. At Oberlin College, she developed relationships with other women who had similar ambitions and goals.

Even with her profound gratitude for the Model School, the teachers had not protected her from shame and humiliation when she learned that her ancestors had been enslaved. Somehow, Terrell was able to construct a narrative about slavery that freed her from the sense of shame and made her determined to face racism where ever it appeared. At 17, she was already developing her voice as a leader giving a speech at Oberlin about the influence of poverty on children; one of her creative suggestions was for donors to give money directly to poor people instead of to charitable institutions.

During her two years of travel and study abroad, Terrell's internal struggles about her life direction surfaced and it appeared that she would have to choose between a conventional future with marriage and children or fulfillment of her ambition to improve the plight of blacks in the United States. Upon her return to the U.S., she chose a marriage partner that supported her ambitions and uplift work and was therefore able to actualize what had seemed like competing goals. Her vision for uplift began to emerge through her work with the Colored Woman's League (CWL) and with the Washington DC Board of Education. The CWL free kindergartens and kindergarten training for black women provided Terrell with a plan for uplift that aligned perfectly with black people's powerful desire for education and working women's need for safe and nurturing care and education for their young children. The black elite sense of noblesse oblige as well as Horace Mann's counsel to contribute to the welfare of humanity seemed to have shaped Terrell's public life, as she began a career of advocating for equity and fairness.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### MARY CHURCH TERRELL'S ARTICLES AND SPEECHES

Believing in the saving grace of the kindergarten for our little ones, at our first convention, as some may remember, I urged with all the earnestness that I could command, that the Association should consider the establishment of kindergartens as the special mission it is called upon to fulfill (Terrell, 1899).

During the years of her presidency of the National Association of Colored Women from 1896 to 1901, Mary Church Terrell wrote a number of speeches and articles that urged NACW clubs to establish kindergartens. The ideas in these documents represented what she felt were the most compelling aspects of kindergarten. Although the local NACW affiliated clubs provided a wide range of services for their communities, such as boarding houses for single girls, care for the poor and elderly, nursing schools, savings banks, and reading rooms, her records show that during this period, Terrell concentrated her oratorical and fund raising efforts mostly on kindergartens. Certain themes arose repeatedly in the documents Terrell wrote during this period, which included her speeches, articles, diaries, and letters and these themes illuminate her purposes and motives for establishing kindergartens. This chapter shares the data that most clearly expresses Terrell's purposes for establishing kindergartens and some analysis of this data. This chapter argues that Terrell's central purposes in establishing kindergartens were as follows:



- **Kindergarten would Address Conditions of Deprivation for Black Americans**
  - The kindergarten provided a safe environment and effective framework to meet the urgent needs of poor black American children including child care, nutrition, health care, and education. Parent education was also a prominent part of the kindergarten system – mothers’ meetings provided a structure and curriculum to teach a new set of cultural norms about childrearing and homes.
- **Kindergarten as a Tool for Organizing, Fundraising, and Amassing Power for Black Women.** Terrell capitalized on kindergarten’s popular appeal as an educational innovation to attract membership and funding to the NACW and to lobby for, build, and manage kindergarten programs. Terrell and Yates both believed that their effectiveness as leaders would be measured by the number of kindergartens that NACW clubs established.
- **Developmental and Cultural Benefits of Kindergarten.** Terrell recognized the developmental benefits of kindergarten for young children, in general, and especially for black children. In particular, Terrell wanted black kindergartners to teach children strategies to cope with racism and to expose them to middle class cultural values.

The speeches and articles listed below articulate Terrell’s purposes in establishing kindergartens. They were all written or delivered during her three terms presiding over NACW conventions and appeared in black periodicals:

1. First Presidential Address to the National Association of Colored Women  
(Unpublished Manuscript in the LOC, 1897).

2. Why We Need Money (*National Notes*, 1899).
3. Why the National Association of Women [sic] Should Devise Means of Establishing Kindergartens (*National Notes*, 1899).<sup>1</sup>
4. Duty of the NACW to the Race (*AME Church Review*, 1900).

### Context of Each Document

#### ***Document #1 – Presidential Speech to delegates at the NACW’s first convention 1897***

Terrell’s inaugural speech to the members of the newly formed National Association of Colored Women in September 1897 was delivered to an audience of 61 delegates from clubs around the United States at the Howard Congregational church in Nashville, TN (Davis, 1933/1996; Wesley, 1984). The speech outlined the ambitious mission for the NACW and Terrell’s expectations for success given the unique position of educated black women. She acknowledged the power and potential that was realized in creating the first national black organization. This speech was also designed to win the loyalty of the group and to establish herself as leader.

NACW members were certainly aware of Terrell’s accomplishments through the black press; even *The Washington Post*, a white newspaper, carried news of Terrell’s election to the DC Board of Trustees (*The Washington Post*, April 6, 1895) and of the

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<sup>1</sup>The *Woman’s Era* monthly magazine was founded in 1894 by Josephine St. Pierre, a prominent Boston black activist and founder of the club of the same name. St. Pierre had orchestrated and presided over the meeting of black women’s clubs from around the U.S. in 1895 which resulted in the affiliation of over 50 clubs from 17 states into the National Federation of Afro American Women (NFAAW). After the 1896 merger between the NFAAW and the CWL, NACW affiliates submitted their news to St. Pierre to be published in the *Woman’s Era*. In 1897, the *Woman’s Era* suddenly stopped and the *National Notes* began publication under Margaret Murray Washington (Mrs. Booker T. Washington) at Tuskegee, AL. Emory University has made digitized copies of some issues of the *Woman’s Era* available online at: <http://womenwriters.library.emory.edu/abolition>.

merger between the Colored Woman's League and the National Federation of Afro-American Women (*The Washington Post*, June 28, 1896). Already a seasoned public speaker at 34 years-old, Terrell was rallying the troops for a battle with the forces of ignorance, poverty, and hopelessness that threatened black survival. Because she knew that this would be an uphill battle, loyalty to the cause and to her as the leader was essential. She did not revel in her own successes but instead praised the NACW members' intelligence, their willingness to fight, and their virtue. This praise salved the wounds of black women who were stereotyped as immoral in American society; Terrell fed their eagerness to prove their high morals and to accomplish something for the race.

The speech established a vision of this group stretching across the entire country and belonging to the American Progressive movement but Terrell acknowledged that race still separated them from the mainstream and presented "almost insurmountable obstacles in our path to those attainments and acquisitions to which it is the right and privilege of every member of every race to aspire" (M.C. Terrell Papers LOC, 1897, Reel 20). She said "Let us not only preach, but practice race unity, race pride, reverence and respect for those capable of leading and advising us" (M.C. Terrell Papers LOC, 1897, Reel 20).

She acknowledged the dramatic gains made in the 30 years since the emancipation of the slaves but also the challenges that black women faced in assuming new rights and responsibilities as free people, such as managing their own homes and educating themselves and their children. One familiar Progressive Era refrain was that the

key to racial uplift was “the home”.<sup>2</sup> She subtly credited women for the advancements the race had made since the Emancipation Proclamation and then called on them to help raise the standards of black homes; “It is, therefore into the home, sisters of the Association, that we must go, filled with all the zeal and charity which such a mission demands” (M.C. Terrell Papers LOC, 1897, Reel 20).

*Document #2 – Why We Need Money (National Notes, 1899 Article)*

The *National Notes* monthly magazine printed reports from NACW affiliated clubs, news from across the country, features (such as advice and book sections), and opinion pieces from prominent black women and occasionally from men. NACW members were implored to subscribe to the *National Notes*, so the readers were predominantly black women club members across the United States, but several prominent white club women also subscribed (NACW, 1994; Wesley, 1984). According to NACW National Organizer and historian, Elizabeth Lindsey Davis, the national organization membership more than doubled by 1904 from the five thousand members it started with in 1897 while a *National Notes* article from April 1899 states that “We now have at least two hundred clubs representing thousands of women” (Author unknown, Davis, 1933/1996; NACW, 1994, Reel 23). This article appeared in the January 1899

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<sup>2</sup>The word “Home” was a complicated concept, freighted with connotations for progressive era speakers. It seemed to be a code that white and black women used to hide the fact that they were working for political change. The elastic use of the domestic sphere and the activities associated with the home (cleanliness, nutrition, child-rearing/education, and morality) allowed women to expand the range of industrial work arenas (textile and canning industries), as well as the civic activities (local improvement activities and school board participation), for example. Men were comfortable with women in the home so it was at least sometimes, an effective veil for more controversial or political women’s club work.

edition, eight months before NACW's second biennial convention in Chicago; and kindergarten was a major topic at the convention. The tone of this article hints at Terrell's frustration with the NACW affiliates' slow pace in establishing kindergartens for black children.

Club reports in the *National Notes* often described efforts to establish kindergartens such as a February 1899 article from a Louisville, KY club, "It was planned to hold four public meetings for the purpose of arousing interest among the people of Louisville in the Kindergarten... Miss Pattie S. Hill<sup>3</sup> Superintendent of the Louisville Kindergarten's [sic] and Training Class gave an address on the Educational Value of Kindergarten Training" (NACW, 1994, Reel 23).

*Document #3 – Terrell, M. C. (1899) – Why the National Association of Colored Women Should Devise Means of Establishing Kindergartens*

Terrell details the developmental benefits of kindergarten in this article. Haydee Campbell, the Superintendent of Colored Kindergartens for St. Louis Public Schools, had delivered a speech of the same title to the NACW biennial convention of 1899 in Chicago (NACW, 1994). It is not known whether the women collaborated on the text of the

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<sup>3</sup>Pattie Smith Hill was one of the leaders in the Progressive camp of the kindergarten movement. Progressives saw Froebelian methods and materials as outdated and too abstract and battled conservative Froebelian kindergartners, like Susan Blow and William Torrey Harris. Both Hill and Blow left their respective cities to teach in New York at Teachers' College.

speech or if Campbell's speech covered the same points (the Campbell speech has not been located).<sup>4</sup>

The frequency of *National Notes* articles describing various clubs' efforts to establish kindergartens strongly suggests that club leaders had gotten the message that establishing kindergartens was an NACW priority. There were at least two free kindergartens for black children in Chicago, the NACW's 1899 convention city, one in Bethel A.M.E. Church founded by the Ida B. Wells Club and one at the Armour Institute (Duster, 1970). The phrase "the saving grace of the kindergarten" appears frequently in club reports published in the *National Notes* between 1897 and 1899 which suggests that black women embraced this idea. Terrell's article moves beyond the salvation of the race theme to describe the developmental benefits of kindergarten for children in general, not just black children.

After the 1899 convention in Chicago, the executive committee voted to "send a printed appeal to the School Boards throughout the States to introduce kindergartens and manual training schools into the public school system [sic], where they do not now exist;" (NACW, 1994, Reel 1). Terrell and two other executive board members formed the committee to carry this out. She sold printed copies of her speeches and donated the proceeds to the NACW kindergarten fund.

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<sup>4</sup>Speculation about the Campbell authorship or contribution to this article is due to the fact that the tone is somewhat more lyrical than Terrell's other writing and the breadth of this piece reveal a profound knowledge and appreciation of Froebelian philosophy and of child development. Beatty speculates that Haydee Campbell studied with eminent kindergartner, Susan Blow (1995). Campbell scored the highest grade on the St. Louis kindergarten teacher examination in around 1889 and was later appointed Supervisor of Colored Kindergartens in St. Louis (Majors, 1893/1986).

*Document #4 – Terrell, M.C. (1900) – The duty of the NACW to the race*

Versions of this article appeared in a number of publications and segments from the text were incorporated into other speeches on various occasions during the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Terrell's task in this document was to remind educated black women of their responsibilities to the race but also to invite them to celebrate and take ownership of the tremendous progress blacks had made in the brief 30 years since emancipation. She wanted to let whites know that blacks were handling their problems internally and to inform them about black progress. This article represented also a forceful and clear attempt to get whites to acknowledge and remove the remaining barriers to black progress. By 1901, Terrell had gained a national reputation and had been a Trustee on the DC Board of Education for five years. Her alliances with women leaders spanned the spectrum of suffrage, temperance, social services and other Progressive Era causes, and included other national figures like: Ida B. Wells, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Francis Willard, and Jane Addams. Some of these leaders subscribed to the *National Notes*.

The version of this speech that appeared in the *AME Church Review* was targeted to the educated upper echelons of the leadership (or those aspiring to such) in the church. Some NACW members were prominent in the African Methodist Episcopal church and used church facilities to provide services they offered as clubs (Higginbotham, 1993). Black women were able to actuate their ambitions more freely through this organization for women than they could through church organizations controlled by men. This article

catalogues NACW's accomplishments after the organization's first three years under Terrell's leadership. There is a sense of defensiveness about the fact that not every NACW affiliate had established a kindergarten during her tenure and a continuing plea for the necessity of kindergartens even though cities were gradually opening classrooms through public schools. Her tenure as president was ending and the NACW members had failed to blanket the United States with free kindergartens for poor black children.

### **Themes and Illustrative Quotes**

Quotes illustrating the three themes that appeared in Terrell's speeches and articles appear below:

#### *Theme 1 – Kindergarten would address conditions of deprivation for blacks*

Three subthemes emerged from the data about the conditions of lack for black Americans, the pervasiveness of vice, crime, and poverty, and the need for better parenting. The following quotes illustrate how Terrell framed the purpose of kindergarten as a way to address vice, crime, and poverty:

Let the women of the National Association see to it that the little strays of the alleys come in contact with intelligence and virtue, at least a few times a week, that the noble aspirations with which they are born may not be entirely throttled by the evil influences which these poor little ones are powerless to escape (circa 1897, First presidential address to NACW).

Through the kindergarten alone, which teaches its lessons in the most impressionable years of childhood, shall we be able to save countless thousands of our little ones who are going to destruction before our very eyes (1899, Why we need money).



...the whole effect of the Kindergarten system tends to prevent crime, and too great an estimate cannot be placed upon an instrumentality which saves the child from becoming a criminal. The child in the Kindergarten is not only told to be good, but he is inspired by help and sympathy to be good (1899, *Why the National Association of Colored Women Should Devise Means of Establishing Kindergartens*).

The idea that kindergarten could save people from crime was a popular theme in Terrell's and other Progressive Era contemporaries' writing; it was assumed that children living in poverty would become threats to the society. This assumption was based upon a number of realities in poor urban areas: child care was not widely available to poor working mothers and school started at first grade; urban school systems could not build schools fast enough to keep up with the influx of immigrants and migrants; truancy laws were not widely enforced; child labor laws did not exist or were not enforced in all states; and, social services were still private, segregated, and voluntary. Therefore, young children were often unsupervised or at the mercy of older children and had to resort to, sometimes illegal, ways to get their needs met thus, "the little strays from the alleys" were a common problem.

In the South where the great majority of black population remained concentrated, the urgency to save black children before they became criminals was due, at least in part, to the very real threats of the convict lease system and lynching, "Hundreds of children are being lost because of a lack of proper early moral training. Here in Georgia, the penitentiary has thirteen colored children (one a girl) under fifteen years of age; two who are eleven years old" (Cary, 1900, p. 462). Black men, women, and children in the South

could be lynched or jailed for suspicion of being involved in any remotely illegal activity. Training in which a child would be “not only told to be good, but he is inspired by help and sympathy to be good” (Terrell, 1899) suggests that Terrell expected children to internalize the ability to make wise choices and learn self-control to avoid negative influences. However, the lack of early moral training did not fully explain the large numbers of young poor and orphaned black children that Wells, DuBois, and others found being exploited.

Poverty and crime were two of the most critical problems facing black people just after the Reconstruction Era supports and opportunities disappeared. As Jim Crow laws and attitudes spread, employers hired immigrants for jobs that had formerly been performed by black workers. The “instrumentality that saves the child from becoming a criminal” (Terrell, 1899) was partly the consistent supervision, care, and guidance to keep them safely supervised, but it was also that the educational benefits of kindergarten would provide a wider array of opportunities to black children. Terrell’s presidency predated the Great Migration of Southern blacks to Northern states by nearly 20 years but poverty and crime affected uneducated and unskilled as well as educated blacks in increasingly segregated cities and in rural areas. Although NACW members were leaders in their communities and were among the wealthiest blacks, they were well aware of and deeply frustrated by the fact that they were barred from jobs for which they were qualified. Terrell attempted to reduce class barriers by helping the highly educated NACW members see what they had in common with poor mothers and to recast the

negative image of poor children as vulnerable victims of poverty, instead of criminals as they were portrayed in the media and sometimes by club women.

As mentioned earlier, the conventional wisdom among educated blacks was that middle class advancement was retarded by the ignorance and depravity of the lower classes, and that white attitudes about blacks were based on the real and perceived deficits of poorer blacks. Terrell appeared to support this position by calling for kindergartens for the “strays of the alleys”, and not for NACW members’ own middle class children. Meanwhile, she took every opportunity to counteract the crude stereotypes of black women as immoral by reminding club women of their “virtue and intelligence”. Terrell’s patronizing comments about the club women’s “virtue and intelligence” contrasted sharply with poor mothers’ “evil influences on poor little ones” and these types of comparisons may have reinforced the class hierarchy among club women. But Terrell’s unwaveringly respectful and generous descriptions of club women also reveal her compassion for women who endured constant baseless attacks on their integrity.

By using the phrase “noble aspirations with which they were born are not entirely throttled by the evil influences” (Terrell, 1897), she acknowledged that poor black children were influenced by their environments, and were not inherently evil which debunked the tremendously popular social Darwinist claims that characterized blacks as inherently less intelligent and below whites on the evolutionary scale. This sense that black children were inherently good also aligned Terrell with Froebel philosophically in a way that many American kindergartners working with poor populations did not seem to

accept. Social Darwinist comments are liberally scattered throughout the NACW records and other Progressive Era kindergartners' writings.

The purpose of kindergarten was to prevent crime and poverty by rescuing young children from the negative influences in their environments and exposing them to middle class models. By receiving kindergarten's moral training, poor children would be inspired to be good, and to reject vice and crime. Terrell said that the "whole effect of the Kindergarten system tends to prevent crime" which introduces the next subtheme under the Desire to Address Conditions of Deprivation for Black People. The following quotes provide examples of how Terrell described the purpose of establishing kindergartens as a way to educate parents:

In every organization of the Association let committees be appointed whose special mission it will be to do for the little strays of the alleys what is not done by their mothers, who in many instances fall far short of their duty, not because they are vicious and depraved, but because they are ignorant and poor (circa 1897, First presidential address to NACW).

Through mothers meetings which have been in the past year and will be in the future a special feature of the Association, much useful information in everything pertaining to the home will be disseminated. Object lessons in the best way to sweep, to dust, to cook and to wash should be given by women who have made a special study of the art and science of housekeeping. How to clothe children neatly, how to make, and especially how to mend garments, how to manage their households economically, what food is the most nutritious and best for the money, how to ventilate as thoroughly as possible the dingy stuffy quarters which the majority are forced to inhabit, all these are subjects on which the women of the masses need more knowledge. Let us teach mothers of families how to save wisely. Let us have heart to heart talks with our women that we may strike at the root of evil...

Let the reckless, ill-advised, and oftentimes brutal methods of punishing children be everywhere condemned. Let us teach our mothers that by punishing children inhumanely, they destroy their pride, crush their spirit and convert them into hardened culprits – whom it will be impossible later on to reach or touch in any way at all (circa 1897, First presidential address to NACW).

It is useless to talk about elevating the race if we do not come into close touch with the masses of our women, through whom we may correct many of the evils which militate so seriously against us, and inaugurate the reforms without which, as a race, we cannot hope to succeed (1900, The Duty of the NACW to the Race).

Let the Association of colored women ask the white mothers of this country to teach their children that when they grow to be men and women, if they deliberately prevent their fellow creatures from earning their daily bread, by closing the doors of trade against them the Father of all men will hold them responsible for the crimes which are the result of their injustice, and for the human wrecks which the ruthless crushing of hope and ambition always makes (1900, Duty of the NACW to the Race).

As Terrell's speeches and articles were published only 31-33 years after the emancipation, some black mothers of young children had been born enslaved, and a majority had been reared by parents who had no experience of freedom. The U.S. was shifting out of a cultural system of slavery in which parents had had no control over the fate of their children and were prohibited from learning to read. By the late 1890's, the U.S. government had long abandoned the task of supporting the transition of enslaved people into American society begun by the Freedman's Bureau in the 1880's and had turned to embrace Jim Crow laws and practices.

Terrell's empathy for poor black mothers can be seen in her more generous interpretation of their perceived childrearing failures than the usual characterization of

black women as immoral. She acknowledged the problems of poverty and ignorance in the transition to independent life from centuries of enslavement without blaming the masses for their difficulties but emphasized the role that educated black women could play in uplifting their poor sisters through mothers' meetings. She challenged the social Darwinist notion of the depraved black mother by recognizing that her deficits were due to poverty and ignorance, conditions over which women had little or no control.

Parent education was one of the innovations that differentiated the kindergarten from other early care and education programs and from elementary schooling. Mothers' meetings were the most popular format, although occasionally fathers were invited to events and lectures. One of Terrell's most frequent themes is the interdependence of club women and their poorer sisters, which was another way of reminding club women that the fate of the race as a whole was tied to the welfare and progress of the poorest blacks. The topics that Terrell wanted the club women to cover in mothers' meetings went far beyond the guidance, songs, and word plays set out in *Mother Play* that were often shared in white mothers' meetings (Froebel, 1895). Although the lessons in sweeping and washing sound absurdly basic, many women who did not manage their own living spaces when they were enslaved would not have been exposed to home maintenance. Margaret Murray Washington of Tuskegee, AL held monthly mothers' meetings at which these basic topics were covered but mothers were also encouraged to save money and buy land. Another popular topic at mothers' meetings and in regular club meetings was black history (Rouse, 1996; Terrell, 1940/2005). NACW's "object is the development and

protection of our womanhood, our homes and our history as an integral part of the great American nation” (Davis, 1933/1996, p. 300). According to biographer, Jacqueline Rouse (1996), Washington believed that “Stable Christian homes produced wholesome, well-balanced, race-conscious children” (p. 33). The foundation of the NACW was the notion that women and mothers were the key to uplift as reflected in the NACW motto “Lifting as We Climb.” NACW clubs generally established mothers’ meetings before they were able to establish kindergarten classrooms because of the expense involved in maintaining classrooms.

Child development was also frequent topic of mothers’ meetings. Terrell felt strongly that black mothers should understand the potentially damaging impact of harsh punishment on the child’s developing sense of identity. As a part of her continuous efforts to demonstrate the connections between club women and poor women she pointed out that poor mothers did not turn their children to crime intentionally. Terrell also asked white mothers to raise their children with a sense of fairness and justice, threatening that God would punish them if they refused.

*Theme 2 – Kindergarten as a tool for organizing, fundraising, and amassing power for black women*

The following quotes show how Terrell used kindergarten as a concept and a structure for purposes that were larger than but connected to education for black children.

As an organization of women, surely nothing can be nearer our hearts than the children, many of whose lives so sad and dark we might brighten and

bless. It is kindergartens we need (circa 1897, First presidential address to NACW).

Free kindergartens in every city and hamlet of this broad land we must have, if the children are to receive from us what it is our duty to give.” (1897, First presidential address to NACW)

Acting upon this principle of concentration and union have the colored women of the United States banded themselves together to fulfill a mission to which they feel peculiarly adapted and especially called. We have become National, because from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from Maine to the Gulf, we wish to set in motion influences that shall stop the ravages made by practices that sap our strength and preclude the possibility of advancement, which under other circumstances could easily be made... We proclaim to the world that the women of our race have become partners in the great firm of progress and reform (1897, First presidential address to NACW).

The hope of the nation lies in the children. We talk of schools for reformation; of how to cure ills, why not how to prevent? (1899, Why the National Association of Colored Women Should Devise Means of Establishing Kindergartens).

What shall we do with these children? Good people everywhere should combine to care for them and teach them, and no better or more available means present themselves than the Kindergartens (1899, Why the National Association of Colored Women Should Devise Means of Establishing Kindergartens).

To some the task of establishing kindergartens may seem too Herculean for the Association to undertake, because of the great expense involved. Be that as it may, we shall never accomplish the good it is in our power to do, nor shall we discharge our obligation to the race, until we engage in this work in those sections at least where it is most needed (1900, Duty of the NACW to the Race).

The narrative of NACW as mothers to the race fit neatly with kindergarten as a means to deliver on club women’s duty to the children. After witnessing a five year process during which the Colored Woman’s League (CWL) first partially supported, then



ran kindergartens, and finally transferred six functioning CWL kindergarten classrooms over to the DC Public Schools, Terrell probably expected NACW affiliated clubs “in every city and hamlet” (Terrell, 1897) to replicate this CWL prototype.

Getting privately founded kindergartens transferred to public schools worked in Washington DC because the CWL had advantages that few other black women’s clubs did. One of the most important advantages was that the club members had the personal wealth to initiate, and sources of club income to sustain the kindergarten classrooms until government funding became available. Specifically, Anna J. Murray personally negotiated for the furniture and equipment left over from the defunct kindergarten and paid rent to secure classroom space for the CWL kindergartens. Most CWL members contributed \$1 but several gave up to \$50, an enormous sum in the 1890’s, to the kindergarten fund. The young women in the kindergarten normal class paid the CWL to study with the nationally recognized trainer and this netted the club a robust sum of \$300 in its first year. All families were also asked to pay at least a penny for children enrolled in the kindergarten and the wealthy students were charged 50 cents per week (Colored Woman’s League, 1897).

Another set of advantages that the CWL members had was their unusually well-positioned and powerful connections that would certainly have helped to strategize and shepherd their request for appropriations for kindergartens through the Senate approval process. Such individuals included Terrell who was a Board of Education Trustee, Josephine Bruce’s husband was former U.S. Senator Blanche Bruce, and Anna J.

Murray's brother-in-law managed the U.S. Senate dining room while her husband was a librarian at the Library of Congress. Their own and their husbands' positions of power and access brought them into contact with other powerful and wealthy people (Colored Woman's League of Washington DC, 1897; Gatewood, 1990; Gordon, 1991).

"What should we do with these children?" (Terrell, 1899). It would have been unreasonable to expect clubs to individually conceive of, design, and carry out truly meaningful and impactful educational projects without some guidance. Kindergarten provided that guidance; it was a framework for clubs to follow to make "the duty" somewhat more manageable given the overwhelming educational needs of black communities across the country. The kindergarten provided a flexible enough structure that it could be conducted in church basements, sheds, or classrooms in either rural or urban areas. Moreover, the reports about the superior achievement of elementary school students who had attended kindergarten would have made establishing kindergartens an attractive project to women who were committed to racial uplift (Ross, 1976).

Kindergarten provided a career alternative for young black women who were starved for meaningful, respectable work; Terrell had in effect, opened up a new field of work for black women. Kindergarten gave a specific channel for black women's energies that would benefit poor children and club women alike.

"Acting upon the principle of concentration and union have the colored women of the United States banded themselves together to fulfill a mission to which they feel peculiarly adapted and especially called" (Terrell, 1897). This statement suggested that

the NACW was, in effect, taking on the role of government for black children. It called black club women to unify and claim their power to uplift black people. “We wish to set in motion influences that shall stop the ravages made by practices that sap our strength and preclude the possibility of advancement” (Terrell, 1897). The purpose of kindergartens would not only be to address the lack of education in black communities but also to situate black women in leadership roles instead of the subordinate, despised, and disrespected position in which American society generally placed them. NACW was the first truly national secular black women’s organization; it predated the NAACP founded in 1909 and the Urban League in 1910, the two oldest continuously operating black national organizations by 14 years.

The idea of community among blacks was defined by the common experience of race, not geography; Terrell and other speakers signaled to black women that the nation’s black children were their responsibility and it was up to them to prepare the children to lead the fight in the next generation regardless of where they lived. The sense that young children were a part of women’s domain, that club women were highly educated, and that they had a common experience of being marginalized made them “peculiarly adapted” (Terrell, 1897) to establish kindergartens and providing other social services. The adjective peculiar<sup>5</sup> had been a code word for slavery for many years. Terrell chose to flip the negative connotation of the word by suggesting that black women could use negative

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<sup>5</sup>For example, see John C. Calhoun’s 1837 Speech on the Abolition Petitions. Calhoun was Senator from South Carolina and Vice President of the U.S. who passionately defended slavery and used the phrase “peculiar institution of the South” on which the slaveholding states rely as the euphemism for slavery. Also see: Kenneth Stampp’s 1956 book, *Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Antebellum South*.

circumstances to become uniquely skilled or “peculiarly adapted” to teach young children how to function in a hostile society. This quote reflected Terrell’s strategies for coping with racism that she had begun to formulate as a child at the Model School.

The narrative of NACW members as “partners in the great firm of progress and reform” (Terrell, 1987) signaled that black women stood in alliance with white reformers who were also establishing kindergartens for poor children. Kindergarten provided a non-controversial arena in which white and black women could unite and promote a common purpose. The degree to which wealthy whites supported NACW kindergartens was unclear, other than a few individuals mentioned in club reports such as philanthropist, Phoebe Hearst who gave the CWL \$20 and a collection of books on kindergarten (Colored Woman’s League, 1898) and the National Council of Women’s formal pledge to assist in establishing NACW kindergartens (Yates, 1904). Jane Addams invited NACW members to visit Hull House during their 1899 convention in Chicago (NACW, 1994). Croly mentioned that the District Federation, a white woman’s club, was working on getting kindergarten in the DC Public Schools in her history of woman’s clubs, but did not mention the CWL’s success in transferring oversight of private black and white kindergartens to the DC Public Schools (1898). Perhaps white and black clubs’ combined efforts resulted in the transfer of kindergartens from private clubs to government oversight because Terrell and other NACW leaders interacted with white club leaders, but Croly’s history does not mention this. A thorough scanning of individual white women’s club records would be needed to substantiate this. The important point here is

that black club women were not being asked to change whites' opinions or to gain the support of white clubs but to work among their own people.

The "talk of schools for reformation, of how to cure ills, why not how to prevent?" (Terrell, 1899) meant that instead of wasting time and resources on building reformatories, that were not as effective in shaping children's behavior, the clubs should concentrate on kindergartens instead. Money was a constant need. While many white kindergartens were being funded by wealthy donors or school systems, black kindergartens' financial survival depended on the largesse of a mostly impoverished population and a relatively small group of middle class donors. NACW convention records reveal that Terrell donated the proceeds from sales of her own pamphlets to the NACW kindergarten fund. Even so, Terrell suggested that the affiliated clubs should not be satisfied with efforts that did not result in a kindergarten, day nursery, or children's club and NACW records provided evidence that club women responded.

Reports from NACW affiliates in various cities illustrate black club women's attempts to realize the organization's goals to establish kindergartens. One example was in Louisville, KY, where the Women's Improvement Club invited Miss Anna Ingalls, Principal of the Knox Kindergarten to talk about kindergarten work to build awareness of the city's black kindergarten. The club organized four public meetings at local churches with kindergarten experts, including Pattie Smith Hill, who was a rising star in the white kindergarten movement. The club reported in the *National Notes* in February 1899:

The people have been aroused and enlighten [sic], and it is the earnest hope of the club that our representative men and women will form an organization resulting in the opening of one or more Kindergartens and a Training Class for Negro Kindergartners...Realizing the necessity of trained Kindergarteners the members of the club called a mass-meeting and an organization know [sic] as the Louisville Kindergarten Association was organized. We have not opened our training school, but we hope to soon. We have purchased the outfit and only waiting to secure funds sufficient to run it for one year (NACW, 1994, Reel 23, slide #00282).

*Theme 3 – Developmental and cultural benefits of kindergarten*

The following quotes reveal a number of Terrell's expectations for what black children should gain from kindergarten. The subthemes in this set of purposes for kindergarten were that kindergarten was expected to foster children's overall development. She also expected black club women to teach young children strategies for dealing with racism and to embrace a certain set of cultural values and practices:

Quotes about how the kindergarten would foster development:

The Kindergarten play has an activity which is its own reward. Work is an activity having a definite aim. The Kindergarten is the mediation of the two, because through its adaptation to the needs of the child, its work constantly passes into play. In the Kindergarten, the little one finds an atmosphere especially congenial. Here he finds new playthings, new-plays, new associates. Here his activity is guided, not repressed. His little body is given freedom of action; his hands are supplied with ever new and beautiful material; his feet march, dance and run, aided and regulated by strains of music; he laughs when he is happy; he listens to instructive stories; he joins in the sweet child songs. His teacher is free to note his individuality and give it expression, helping him to adapt himself to intercourse with his equally free fellow-playmates.

The child does not carry from the school room a bundle of facts stored away in his memory, to be called up and presented at will, but he does carry with him the strength of accumulated experience, which equals power. Physical power is shown by physical self-control. He knows how

to use his body rightly; to stand or walk in unison with his fellows, to take rhythmic motion in physical exercises, to control hands, feet and lips for a time. His ears are susceptible to sound, as his eyes are to sight – when he listens he hears something of value, when he looks, he sees something; that is, he retains a mental picture. His hands are obedient servants and readily accommodate a pencil which traces letters instead of pictures. His lips are not lawless but respond freely, and he has gained control of language to a degree which is consistent with his mental condition. Habits of attention are formed – the child is in a state of readiness to acquire new knowledge; the readiness should exist in a degree to equal eagerness to learn more than seeking. Confidence in self is also gained. Morally or spiritually the Kindergarten child has learned, in a degree, to subordinate himself, first, to the institution and second to his neighbor. To illustrate: He has learned that certain laws exist, which he must obey, and since his reason and his faith have responded, he yields willing obedience. He has learned that he has certain rights and privileges and so has his neighbor, and begins to respect both.

And what to the cherished little child does the change from home to school life mean – from romping, unguided, buoyant freedom to the necessary, but to him, cruel, restrictions of the school room – from the tender, loving sympathy of the mother in his childish griefs and joys, to the chilling atmosphere, where order and discipline must prevail (1899, Why the National Association of Colored Women Should Devise Means of Establishing Kindergartens)?

Terrell outlined expectations for students in kindergarten to develop motor and sensory coordination, self-regulation, language, and attention, which are similar to current expectations of kindergarten students. Kindergarten was to provide the context for young children to adapt gradually to the academic routines that were so different from the “romping, unguided buoyant freedom to the necessary, but to him, cruel restrictions of the school room” (Terrell, 1899) during the kindergarten year. There was a great emphasis on moral and spiritual development which meant that children were to develop respect for authority, the ability to follow rules, and other social emotional abilities.

Terrell's progressive views about play and freedom in the kindergarten classroom, as well as the notion that teachers were guides, not fountains of knowledge, evidently met with approval from the many teachers in the NACW membership. The idea that play and physical development were integral to young children's learning was gaining currency in the larger society as settlement houses (many of which offered kindergartens as well as programs for older children) and municipalities began to build playgrounds in urban areas. Terrell touched on a Froebelian idea in her comment "The Kindergarten play has an activity which is its own reward... its work constantly passes into play" (Terrell, 1899). Froebel's (1826/1900) concept of self-activity was much more than play or simply learning by doing. Self-activity captured the essence of the moment when a child's entire self is engaged in an activity and the joy that results from the child's complete absorption in and growing mastery of the motor, sensory, and cognitive processes involved in that activity.

Quotes about what black children would gain from black kindergarten teachers:

The necessity of increasing the self-respect of our children is important. More than any other race at present in this country, we should strive to implant feelings of self-respect and pride in our children, whose spirits are crushed and whose hearts saddened enough by indignities from which as victims of an unreasonable cruel prejudice it is impossible to shield them. Let it be the duty of every friend of the race to teach children who are humiliated on learning that they are descendants of slaves that the majority of races on the earth have at some time in their history been subjects to another. This knowledge of humiliation will be important when we are victims of racism (circa 1897, First presidential address to NACW).

Let the women of the race once be thoroughly aroused to their duty to the children, let them be consumed with desire to save them from lives of



degradation and shame, and the establishment of free kindergartens for the poor will become a living, breathing, saving reality at no distant day (circa 1897, First presidential address to NACW).

Listen to the cry of the children, my sisters. Upon you they depend for the light of knowledge, and the blessing of a good example...

If nothing more were gained than an appreciation for the songs taught in the Kindergarten, that would counteract the unwholesome food given to the children through the pernicious street songs, much would be gained (1899, Why the National Association of Colored Women Should Devise Means of Establishing Kindergartens).

Through the children of today, we must build the foundation of the next generation upon such a rock of integrity, morality, and strength, both of body and mind, that the floods of proscription, prejudice, and persecution may descend upon it in torrents, and yet it will not be moved. We hear a great deal about the race problem, and how to solve it. This theory, that and the other, may be advanced, but the real solution of the race problem, both so far as we, who are oppressed and those who oppress us are concerned, lies in the children...(1900, Duty of the NACW to the Race).

The term self-respect appears repeatedly across Terrell's writing about children as do the terms shame and humiliation. Terrell was suggesting that black children who were growing up in the context of a racist society had specific educational needs that related to their developing identities. She felt that self-respect would enhance children's ability to learn. Connecting her own early classroom experiences of shame and humiliation when she discovered her own slave ancestry with that of young black children learning about this, she recommended that black women and "friends of the race" (Terrell, 1897) teach young black children the same coping strategy that had helped her rise above a crippling sense of shame. The strategy was to inform young children that "the majority of races on the earth have at some time in their history been subjects to another." This bit of

information revealed that black people's experience of slavery was not unique; that blacks were just like the majority of the world's people. This was a very different message from the ubiquitous social Darwinist messages about black inferiority that permeated the media and social discourse during this period.

Terrell felt it was important for black middle class women to teach kindergarten because rather than shielding them from prejudice, they would teach young children how to face it and build a healthy sense of identity by exposure to black models of success. She also expected educated black women to model middle class manners and language – to expose poor children to different cultural practices. “Upon you they depend for the light of knowledge, and the blessing of a good example” (Terrell, 1899). Critiques of “pernicious street songs” and “ragtime”<sup>6</sup> lace the records of the NACW and other Progressive Era black writing, much like the criticism of rap music in current times. Because of the suggestive and racially demeaning lyrics, this music was a cultural embarrassment for NACW members who aspired to Victorian values. The songs from Froebel's *Mother Play* were the suggested standard that black kindergartners should teach.

In the introduction to Elizabeth Lindsey Davis' history of the NACW, *Lifting as They Climb*, Sieglinde Lemke says that the “paramount objective of the NACW was to train the lower classes in middle class values, manners, and skills so they could become a

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<sup>6</sup>During the late 1800's ragtime music was extremely popular. One of the most famous hits was called “All Coons Look Alike to Me” by black entertainer Ernest Hogan (see: <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/songs/question1.html>).

respectable part of the race” (Davis, 1933/1996, p. xxvi). Terrell’s formula was for club women to expose poor blacks to culturally acceptable models through kindergartens and mothers’ clubs and they would then become acceptable citizens. Froebel had reasoned that spiritual transcendence would be the basis for individual improvement which, child by child, would eventually reform the German culture and any other culture that embraced the kindergarten. Terrell’s purpose for kindergarten as a tool for social and cultural change relied less on Froebel’s notion of spiritual transcendence and more on direct instruction in approved cultural models. Her much less religious stance aligned Terrell and the NACW with the more progressive wing of the white kindergarten movement, which by the 1890’s was being influenced by a younger generation of leaders like Patty Smith Hill, the influential Louisville teacher who went on to Teachers College at Columbia University; G. Stanley Hall, the founder of the child study movement; and, John Dewey, the famous progressive educator (Beatty, 1996). These Progressive leaders for the most part, de-emphasized the spiritual and religious aspects of kindergarten.

The urgency of Terrell’s call for kindergartens is evident in the final quote for this section. The key to the solution of the “race problem” was a strong and comprehensive education for black children. She was well aware of the difficulties that educated black children would face, essentially the “floods of proscription, prejudice, and persecution” (Terrell, 1900) in American society. Her own life exemplified the power, influence, and prestige that a strong education could provide; and exposure to acceptable cultural and

language models was a part of her education<sup>7</sup>. It was no exaggeration for Terrell to say that establishing kindergartens required “herculean efforts” (Terrell, 1897) not only in terms of the cost to maintain classrooms and to prepare adequate numbers of black kindergartners, but also in terms of the courage to challenge the status quo. She and most other black leaders realized that poor blacks needed the educated middle class to play a major role in easing the transition of blacks from slavery to freedom. One of Terrell’s major contributions was the idea of uniting successful black women to mentor poor children and providing them with specific strategies to cope with “indignities from which as victims of an unreasonable cruel prejudice it is impossible to shield them” (Terrell, 1897).

There is ample evidence that club women were working to establish kindergartens and that they actively sought black teachers for kindergarten classrooms. In June of 1899, the *National Notes* printed a letter from Texarkana, Texas:

We want a kindergarten teacher of our own race in this town. We would be much obliged to you if you would help us in getting one, and in seeing for how much her services might be secured. Many of the people may not yet be awakened to the need of it, but we must have our children taught even at the expense of the few who are willing to make sacrifices for their race. Please see about this for me, and let me know as soon as possible.  
Yours Sincerely, EE Peterson.

Kindergarten’s instructional methods such as learning through play and adult modeling was a dramatic departure from the more didactic or formal instructional

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<sup>7</sup>Terrell visited the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876 at 13 years old and revealed that her grammar developed in later years. She wrote “We seen there was hundreds of other beautiful pictures” (M.C. Terrell Papers LOC, Reel 20).

methods with which elementary teachers would have been familiar. Terrell and the NACW's strategy for establishing kindergartens across the country was to raise black people's awareness of the benefits of kindergarten and to persuade middle class blacks that it was in their interest to make one more set of long term financial sacrifices for the good of the race.

### **Summary**

Mary Church Terrell made establishing kindergartens a top priority of the first secular black woman's national organization. She built a case that kindergarten was the most effective and logical means to uplift the masses of black people. The lack of education was seen as one of the most pressing problems facing black people and the root cause of poverty and racism. The kindergarten system appealed to Terrell because it seemed like an ideal vehicle for club women to teach formerly enslaved mothers about child-rearing and home care combined with a safe environment for the young children of working black mothers free from negative influences of poverty.

Terrell used kindergarten's reputation as an important educational innovation to shape the NACW clubs' focus, as a ready-made framework for clubs to use, as a way to align with white organizations, and to attract funding from wealthy donors. Kindergarten was also a new field of professional work for black women.

Support for cognitive, motor, language, and social emotional development were the benefits that young black children would derive from kindergarten. Terrell especially emphasized self-regulation and other social emotional skills as goals of the kindergarten.

The unique aspect of NACW kindergartens was that black kindergartners would enable children to learn strategies for successfully negotiating in a racist society and help them develop a sense of self-respect, which Terrell considered essential to learning.

Terrell, a charismatic leader, established the NACW as a respected national uplift organization within its first five years. She had given voice to the silenced. Her speeches and articles expressed black women's deep frustrations and their hopes for the children of the race. When her final term ended, the members of the NACW agreed to make Terrell honorary president which entitled her to life membership on the executive board with which she remained deeply involved. Although she continued to raise money for black kindergartens in the years following her presidency, her focus increasingly turned to other pressing issues that concerned black people.

## CHAPTER SIX

### JOSEPHINE SILONE YATES – THE PERIOD OF GROWTH

During the first five years of the NACW's existence, Josephine Silone Yates had been one of seven vice presidents and then became the treasurer during Mary Church Terrell's final terms as president. In the 1901 presidential election, two of the most prominent and powerful NACW members ran for the presidency, Margaret Murray Washington (Mrs. Booker T. Washington) and Josephine Bruce (widow of United States Senator Blanche Bruce) along with Yates, who had not been considered a top contender. Like Mary Church Terrell, Washington and Bruce were educators. All three of them were also born to mixed-race, wealthy families and married to famous and accomplished men; many expected for club women to continue electing the high status, Terrell-style of leader (Gatewood, 1990; Wesley, 1984). But when Washington and Bruce skipped an NACW convention reception in order to attend a white club event, "so much bitter feeling was aroused that both were defeated by Mrs. J.S. Yates of Kansas City, Mo" (*Colored American*, 1901, p. 5).

Yates evidently realized that her election meant that clubs were not interested in displays of power or status or in her personal agenda but in improving the national organization's support for the ongoing uplift projects that NACW clubs were already attempting to actualize. During her tenure, Yates incorporated the NACW which seemed to give the organization a sense of permanence and stability, an official status with the

local government, and a sense of accountability for the funds and the projects. She also identified fourteen areas of club work and appointed knowledgeable specialists to supervise the work of each department. For instance, Haydee Campbell, the Superintendent of St. Louis Public Schools' Colored Kindergartens, presided over the NACW Kindergarten Department and her role was to provide guidance to clubs who were establishing kindergartens. These changes made the NACW more responsive to the needs of its member clubs. The NACW's membership grew to around fifteen thousand members by 1904 and about twenty thousand in 1905 (Davis, 1933/1996; NACW, 1994; Wesley, 1984; Yates, 1905b). The structural changes that Yates introduced suggest that she was a careful manager; her speeches and articles reveal an analytical thinker and a deliberate planner, in contrast with the charismatic Terrell.

Although few of her private writings are available, her published writings reveal what she felt were the purposes of kindergarten. Yates wrote a great deal about Froebel and about how teachers should approach learning and her ideas were progressive and grounded in an expansive knowledge of educational history and the sciences. She traced the evolution of educational practice from Comenius to Froebel to Hall and placed black club women's work in this context. This elevated the importance of black women's voluntary educational work but it also must have reassured them that they were following a logical and effective plan.

A 1905 article called "Kindergartens and Mothers' Clubs as Related to the Work of the National Association of Colored Women" by Josephine Silone Yates provided the



original impetus for this dissertation. The article revealed the connection between the work of the NACW and the kindergarten movement by listing fourteen cities in which black club women had already established one or more kindergartens. It also provided insights about the mission and leadership of the NACW, an organization which was unknown to the author. The article led to the discovery of the NACW records and of several Progressive Era black periodicals which in turn, yielded information about educated black women's knowledge and attitudes about kindergartens during the Progressive Era as well as the names of a number of powerful kindergarten advocates. Detailed records of individual kindergartens established by black women were extremely hard to find but will hopefully be the focus of other studies. A list of the NACW kindergartens mentioned in various primary sources will appear in Appendix B.

### **Sources of Information About Yates**

During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, several collections of biographical accounts of prominent blacks across the country were published. Monroe Alphas Majors, M.D. published the most informative of these sketches about Yates in his 1893 book, *Noted Negro women: Their triumphs and activities*. Other primary sources were Lawson Scruggs' book, *Women of Distinction* in 1893 and Daniel Wallace Culp's 1902 collection of essays contributed by prominent blacks entitled *Twentieth Century Negro Literature*.

Secondary sources included Hallie Quinn Brown's 1926 collection of biographical notes, *Homespun heroines and other women of distinction*; the Western Historical Manuscript Collection's biographical notes on Yates compiled by members of

the Missouri Association of Colored Women's Clubs (MACWC) in 1975;<sup>1</sup> and Mackey and Kremer's 1996 article, "Yours for the race: The life and work of Josephine Silone Yates." Several historical encyclopedias and other secondary sources mention Yates but they provide no new information or insights about Yates' attitudes about or work in promoting kindergartens. Osborn (1991) briefly quotes a Yates article about black women's drive to educate children; it is one of the rare educational histories that connected Yates and the NACW with the American kindergarten movement. Celia Lascarides' (2000) *History of Early Childhood Education* also briefly describes Yates and other black women's contributions to the kindergarten movement. Cunningham and Osborn (1979) describe the NACW's efforts to establish kindergartens as a priority, but only mention Mary Church Terrell and Haydee Campbell. Much more work is needed to fill in the considerable gaps in knowledge about this widespread movement to establish kindergartens. As digital records of Progressive Era archival documents become increasingly available, scholars will undoubtedly uncover more of the history of black kindergartens and the women and men that worked to make them a reality.

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<sup>1</sup>The Missouri Association of Colored Women's Clubs prepared these notes about Yates for a speech read at a dedication ceremony for a marker placed where Yates Hall had once stood on the Lincoln University (previously Lincoln Institute) campus.

### **A Brief Biography of Josephine Silone Yates**

Josephine Silone Yates was born in 1859<sup>2</sup> in Mattituck, NY. “Her parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents were long and favorably known as individuals of sterling worth, morally, intellectually and physically” (Majors, 1893/1986, p. 44). She began her education in the Suffolk County public schools but circulated among relatives and friends to further her education. She was first sent to Philadelphia to attend the renowned Institute for Colored Youth, then to Rhode Island to finish high school in three years and to graduate as valedictorian, and, then on to study and graduate with honors at Rhode Island State Normal School (Culp, 1902/1969; Mackey & Kremer, 1996; Majors, 1893/1986). A gifted young child, Yates submitted a story to a New York weekly magazine when she was nine years old and though it was not printed, the publisher encouraged her to keep trying. Later, she used a pseudonym, R.K. Potter, in order to get her writing published in the *Boston Herald*, *Los Angeles Herald*, and the *Pacific* (Records of the MACWC, 1936-1986).

Yates was the first black certified teacher in Rhode Island (Scruggs, 1893). When she left the northeast to accept a job in 1881,<sup>3</sup> she had never been to the South and was there exposed to a far more polarized racial culture than existed in New England. She was

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<sup>2</sup>Various records cite 1852 instead of 1859 as the year of Yates’ birth and 1879 as the year she began teaching at Lincoln Institute, but dates cited in the Majors biography were chosen because that sketch is the most detailed and complete.

<sup>3</sup>The Lincoln University website says that Yates headed the Department of Natural Sciences from 1879 to 1889; it is not clear if 1879 or 1881 is the correct date, so the most conservative date and the one that appears in the most authoritative source was used in the text, see: Majors, 1893 and <http://www.lincolnu.edu/pages/2715.asp>.

hired to teach chemistry at Lincoln Institute in Jefferson City, Missouri, a normal school for black students, and within four years, headed the natural sciences department, and also taught elocution, and English literature (Culp, 1902/1969; Mackey & Kremer, 1996; Majors, 1893/1986). Booker T. Washington invited her to work at Tuskegee Institute as her reputation as a skilled and effective teacher grew and attracted the attention of other educators; she was one of the only black women teaching chemistry and heading a department at the college level.

In 1889, 30 year-old Josephine Silone resigned from Lincoln Institute to marry Professor William Ward Yates, principal of Wendell Phillips High School in Kansas City. The Yates had two children, Josephine Silone Yates, II and William Blyden Yates (Culp, 1902/1969; Mackey & Kremer, 1996; Majors, 1893/1986). Yates was a devoted learner and teacher and kept abreast of pedagogical and scientific innovations, published poetry, and tutored public school students after her marriage. She spoke fluent German and French and was a voracious reader; her wide ranging interests informed her writing.

In around 1904, Yates earned a Master's degree from National University of Illinois (NACW, 1994; Records of the MACWC, 1936-1986). She had been the first woman to be appointed professor at Lincoln Institute. In addition to her other subjects, she also taught history when she returned to teach at Lincoln Institute from 1902 until her death in 1912 (Yates, 1905).

### **The Club Work of Josephine Silone Yates**

In 1893, Yates helped to establish and became the first president of the Kansas City League which affiliated with the Woman's Era club in Boston and later with the National Federation of Afro American Woman's Clubs (Records of the MACWC, 1936-1986; NACW, 1994). As the club's correspondent to the *Woman's Era* monthly magazine, she reported that the Kansas City League provided lodging for single working women, adult literacy training, dressmaking, and charity for poor families. The club did not initially focus on establishing kindergartens but began to hold mothers' meetings soon after its inception (NACW, 1994; *Woman's Era*, 1894). Kansas City League club reports began to appear in the *Woman's Era* with its first edition in 1894 under Yates' byline.

Like Terrell, Yates was keenly aware of the disorganizing impact that the sudden shift from slavery to freedom was having on large numbers of people and that a successful transition into free society would require an intentional focus on the adaptation and education of millions of black people. In her first term as president of the NACW, she wrote:

Evidently one of the first things to be done by which the Negro could be reconstructed and become an intelligent member of society was to educate him; teach him to provide for himself; making him more provident and painstaking; teaching him self-reliance and self-control; teaching him the value of time, of money, and the intimate relationship of the two. Certainly not a light task (Culp, 1902/1969, p. 23).

This quote shows that Yates ideas about the educational needs of black people reflected some of the stereotypical notions about the “primitive stage of uncivilized life” (Yates, 1902) that uneducated blacks supposedly were at when they were brought to America as slaves. In later speeches and articles, she calls for teachers to be aware of black children’s special needs which were based on the deficits mentioned above.

With the growing army of energized black club women fanning across the United States, Yates continued to prioritize children’s and women’s uplift work during her presidency of the NACW. There was little competition from other organizations or government to provide for the needs of newly freed blacks although many short-lived self-help groups organized during this period (Gatewood, 1990). Kindergartens were being opened by chapters of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, black colleges, by white missionaries, and settlement houses, but with the exception of black colleges, these organizations focused on the needs of poor children and immigrant children and did not necessarily address the unique needs of black children. Yates was anxious about the progress of kindergarten work and her letters to Margaret Murray Washington at Tuskegee repeatedly asked Washington to put more energy into finding funds to support kindergartens. The following quote shows that Yates felt that demonstrable results in establishing kindergartens would give members and critics evidence of the utility of her leadership of the NACW. Near the end of her first term as NACW president in October 1903, Yates wrote to Washington:

You are not much in favor of using any surplus for kindergarten. What do you suggest then for National work? I am open to suggestions but think we should set a fund apart for something so as to point with pride to National as well as to State work...If we do not actually do some of these things there are those who will say we are doing nothing, that we have nothing to show for the three years work (NACW, 1994, Reel 5).

This quote also reveals what may have been a power struggle with Washington over how to distribute the funds raised by the NACW. It appeared that Yates had not been entirely successful in channeling surplus money into the kindergarten fund, the NACW's national work, because of the considerable power that Washington wielded from her position as publisher of the *National Notes*. But in her parting speech she announced that \$100 would be added to the kindergarten fund, which she called "but a widow's mite" certainly not enough to meet the needs of all of the clubs that wished to establish and maintain kindergartens.

When Yates' two terms as president of NACW came to a close at the 1906 biennial convention, the delegates elected Lucy Thurman, the Superintendent of the National Department of Colored Work of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (W.C.T.U.), who was the first non-educator to run the NACW. Although the W.C.T.U. was also involved in establishing kindergartens and mothers' meetings as a way to support families affected by alcoholism (Vandewalker, 1908), the NACW with Thurman as president, began to shift its focus to temperance and women's rights; kindergarten never regained the level of emphasis that Terrell and Yates had placed upon it in the NACW.

### Yates' Writing

Friedrich Froebel's influence was evident throughout the articles that Yates published especially towards the end of her presidency. She felt that his ideas about respecting children and building on their interests and teachers' knowledge of child development were applicable to education at all levels, not just kindergarten. This section will briefly contextualize and summarize the selection of speeches and articles, then analyze quotes from the articles and speeches that elucidate Yates' purposes for establishing kindergartens for black children and that give insights into her contributions to the kindergarten movement. The first article was printed in *The Voice of the Negro*, and the remaining appeared in the *Colored American Magazine*:

1. April 1905a. "Thought Power in Education"
2. May 1905b. "Report of the National Federation [sic] of Colored Women's Clubs to the National Council of Women at Washington"
3. June 1905c. "Kindergartens and Mothers' Clubs as Related to the Work of the National Association of Colored Women"
4. May 1906a. "Education and Genetic Psychology"
5. October 1906b. "The Twentieth Century Negro—His Opportunities for Success: Biennial Address of the President of the National Association of Colored Women"



*Article #1 – April 1905a – “Thought Power in Education”*

This article was written near the end of Yates’ second term as President of the NACW after she had developed a national reputation, attracted hundreds of clubs into the NACW membership rolls, and built a strong organizational infrastructure. She had returned to Lincoln Institute as a professor the year before this article was published and had earned a Master’s degree. Yates argued that American education should help children to develop “thought power” a phrase that she probably coined to connote self-control, alertness, attentiveness, and judgment through more enlightened teaching. Yates draws on many Froebelian concepts in this article, such as self-activity and sharing power, taking advantage of children’s interests to design lessons, using developmentally appropriate tasks to channel children’s energy and attention, and using nature and practical life situations as learning opportunities. She faulted “so-called teachers whose every act in the school-room stifles free and independent thought; whose anxiety apparently stops with the desire that the child make high marks in the examination and a fine show on parade” (p. 245); whose efforts (or lack thereof) weakened children’s ability to think. The skill and drill method had its limits, according to Yates.

The basic premise was that if children had the kind of education that Froebel had designed, they would develop thought power, which would give them the ability to make more informed decisions, and that this new way of thinking would enable children to understand how to take advantage of the opportunities and how to cope with the frustrations in American society. Slavery had robbed black children of the “harmonious

development of mind, body, and soul; of strong moral and intellectual fiber, or of ideas of the dignity of labor” (Yates, 1905a, p. 22). Yates felt that kindergarten would help children develop “thought power” (p. 22) and would lead children to change the American ideal from “the form of materialism that builds up colossal fortunes for the few at the sacrifice of the many” (p. 243). She felt that teachers, and especially black teachers, would need to understand that American society valued enterprise and competition and that free thinking and judgment would be most effective ways to help black children thrive in this country.

Booker T. Washington’s ideology of pulling oneself up by one’s own bootstraps was compelling to many educated blacks who had indeed faced significant challenges in getting an education and making a living and who seemed to feel that if they could do it, anyone could. The tone of this article (and the others in this publication) suggests that some educated blacks did not recognize or acknowledge that wealth, light skin, or place of birth had significantly reduced the barriers to their accomplishing goals that were unattainable for the majority of poorer, previously enslaved blacks. This position seemed to minimize the gravity and the level of resources required to address the needs of poor and uneducated blacks in the United States. In this article and several others, Yates focused her message mainly to teachers, even though the magazine targeted black intelligentsia, in general.

*Article #2 – May 1905b – Report of the National Federation [sic] of Colored*

*Women's Clubs to the National Council of Women at Washington*

The second article was the text of a speech delivered near the end of Yates' term as NACW president to the National Council of Women (NCW), a white women's suffrage organization founded by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony with which both Terrell and Yates had cultivated connections (NACW, 1994; Robbins, 1898). Yates told the NCW members that NACW "was the largest, possibly the only national, non-sectarian body of educated Negro women organized for the definite and avowed purpose of 'race elevation'"<sup>4</sup> (Yates, 1905b, p. 258). By 1905, NACW clubs represented "about twenty thousand educated, cultured, refined Negro women" (p. 259).

The speech described the history and accomplishments, as well as the priorities of the NACW which had "favored as National Work the kindergarten and day nursery idea; as before stated, mainly, as a method of getting at the root of the problem of race elevation – 'the children'" (Yates, 1905b, p. 261). This phrase, "the race problem – a problem that can be solved only by means of race elevation" (p. 262), suggests that Yates felt that it was the responsibility of black people to change in order to solve racial problems. This stance differentiated her from Terrell who certainly believed that black

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<sup>4</sup>The NACW predated the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) founded in 1909, first organized as the Niagara Movement in 1905, and the National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes originally organized in 1905 later known as the Urban League founded in 1910. Mary Church Terrell and other NACW members made important contributions to the establishment, objectives, and growth of these well-known organizations.

people needed uplifting and education but who held whites responsible for discriminatory treatment and injustices.

Terrell and Yates had both cultivated relationships with members of the NCW, but it was Yates who received NCW's written pledge to support NACW day nurseries and kindergartens. The pledge from this prominent white club provided well-deserved recognition and a morale boost for the NACW but in a review of several years of NACW financial records, no donations from the NCW were discovered. Perhaps the NCW donated to local NACW affiliates and these transactions were not reflected in national financial records or the NACW records may have been incomplete.

*Article #3 – June 1905c – Kindergartens and mothers' clubs as related to the work of the National Association of Colored Women*

The *Colored American Magazine* published monthly reports from NACW; this article recounted the history of NACW and its predecessors' involvement in establishing kindergartens and mother's clubs and explained the utility of the kindergarten system of education particularly for black families in some depth. Yates emphasized proper training for kindergarten teachers and the need for both parents to be involved in the moral and educational upbringing of children. She listed fourteen mostly Southern cities in which NACW affiliates had established one or more kindergartens and urged members to continue in this line of work.

Yates did not focus only on black issues in early education but on changing the orientation of teaching to align more closely with the philosophical and developmental

aspects of the kindergarten ideal. Much debated during this period were the relative benefits of Booker T. Washington's industrial model of education versus the classical education of the so-called "talented tenth" proposed by Professor W.E.B. DuBois. The Hampton and Tuskegee industrial model of education was based on teaching formerly enslaved people the necessary manual skills and job training to compete for the kinds of jobs available for blacks, while DuBois argued that classical education would develop black leaders who would in turn, uplift the masses. Yates looked beyond the debate between industrial versus classical education by grounding her philosophy in Froebel's idea of self-activity and connected industrial education, a powerful national trend, with NACW's national work – the kindergarten.

Yates sometimes argued on behalf of industrial education because she believed that blacks needed to be well-prepared to compete with whites for jobs. There are many reasons for Yates apparent support of Washington; she might have felt political pressure because of Washington's popularity among whites or because of her close working relationship with Margaret Murray Washington. More likely, she recognized that industrial education attracted wealthy donors, but her instructions to teachers place her philosophically apart from both the industrial and the classical ideologies to a more child-centered and developmentally appropriate model of education. She also had high praise for Professor DuBois work. It would be an oversimplification to say that Yates always sided with one of the two rival leaders, Washington and DuBois. Black women were aware of their increasing power, that they were improving conditions for black

Americans, and that it was unnecessary to polarize the organization by choosing sides in this debate. In reality, blacks needed more access to all kinds of education.

*Article #4 – May 1906a – Education and genetic psychology*

Steeped in the popular scientific terminology of the period, this article outlined the evolution in approaches to early childhood education from Comenius, the 17<sup>th</sup> century educational philosopher, who recognized the value of shaping education to the developmental stage of the child and then showed the relationships between Comenius and Froebel to child-study which was G. Stanley Hall's great contribution to the field of psychology. Child-study was a branch of the new field of genetic psychology which used natural science methods of observation and experimentation to test hypotheses instead of philosophical reasoning. The scientific approach had a profound impact on the field of early childhood education through the liberal or progressive wing of the kindergarten movement (Shapiro, 1983; Vandewalker, 1908).

Yates (1906a) used G. Stanley Hall's terminology, calling the child "a psycho-physical organism" (p. 296) and discussed the variations in individual genetic endowments that interact with the environment and influence learning. Her scientific and educational background enabled her to recognize the importance of proper preparation for teachers and to condense complex ideas about development into clear strategies for teachers and messages for parents in her articles and speeches.

This article provides evidence that black educators were aware of and knowledgeable about the various approaches to the education of young children, and

specifically the heated debates between conservative Froebelians and advocates of child-study and other kindergarten-influenced innovations. Yates viewed child-study as a point on the continuum of developing knowledge about the processes of learning that naturally evolved out of Froebelian ideas. Like other moderate kindergartners, she did not consider child-study to be a threat to the kindergarten curriculum as conservative Froebelians did.

*Article #5 – October 1906b – The twentieth century Negro—His opportunities for success: Biennial address of the President of the National Association of Colored Women*

The fifth document is the text of a speech delivered to the NACW membership at the end of her term as president. She challenged black people to take advantage of the opportunities that were presenting themselves in the twentieth century even though the tide of racism was at its height. The speech recounted black success stories in the “less than forty years of freedom” (Yates, 1906b, p. 228) and declared that the inspiration of the race was inevitable but could come sooner if educated blacks helped to develop race pride and morals in the youth and exposed children to new arenas, such as acquiring land, establishing businesses, inventing machines, and creating fine art. Yates drew on evolutionary theory as well as the Bible in her departing address:

What, say you, is inspiration? Is it not an innate impulse to rise? (Yates, 1906b, p. 227)

For three centuries a remarkable chain of events, of transitions, has been preparing the Negro of the United States for a higher, perhaps for a final evolution, and the end is not yet. He is now passing through a fiery ordeal scarcely less crucial than his former state of servitude, and will he be able

to stand the test? Will he seize the opportunities that now present themselves to him? Will he show the world that he has a mission among the nations of the earth not alone measured by his physical faculties? We think so, but it is exceedingly necessary at this critical stage in our development, when inspirations are leading us forward to a higher life, to foster within our young people that sort of race pride that will enable us religiously to believe that some good things may come out of Nazareth, i.e. out of our own race (p. 228).

This paragraph suggests that Yates (1906b) accepted the idea that blacks' faculties were inferior and in need of evolutionary change, but that education could spur the necessary change. Most of the article argues that despite the specter that nearly destroyed the black population and the "fiery ordeal" (p. 228) of Jim Crow laws, lynchings, and other desperate racist acts, some blacks had managed to become cultured and civilized. In order for the black masses to become integrated into American society however, they needed to develop a sense of race pride by learning about black heroes and heroines like Phyllis Wheatley and Benjamin Banneker. Race pride would enable black children to build confidence in their own ability to thrive even in a racist society.

If Yates (1906b) did not fully align herself with Booker T. Washington's philosophy, she at least embraced the idea that blacks should buy land and control the means of production. This article encouraged black people to seize the opportunities that existed even if still limited. Land and home ownership were two important ways to build self-respect - "the possession of land is the strong right arm of liberty" (p. 230). Uplift was accomplished by basically taking advantage of whatever opportunities were available to stake a claim on America. Yates enumerated the stereotypical frailties of black people



in this article and contrasted them against the successes of the resilient few but also the power that black women could wield with organized, unified, and focused action.

### **Themes and Related Quotes from Josephine Silone Yates' Articles**

#### *Theme 1 – Desire to address conditions of deprivation for black people*

Although her rationales are not as clearly articulated as Terrell's, Yates declares that education will uplift the poor and consistently states that the purpose of kindergarten is to uplift the masses of poor blacks. The subthemes were that club women were the moral and intellectual key to uplift and that education would reduce crime and make the race more civilized.

...Not until each city, town and hamlet are provided with kindergartens, open and free to all, as Froebel so earnestly desired, can it be said that to these "little ones" has been given the power to rise along the highest level of possibility (1905c, *Kindergartens and Mothers' Clubs as Related to the Work of the National Association of Colored Women*, p. 305).

Day nurseries and Kindergartens are being founded, and thus do we aim to strike at the root of the race problem – the children – and aim properly to start these children on the road to success (1906b, *The Twentieth Century Negro—His Opportunities for Success: Biennial Address of the President of the National Association of Colored Women*, p. 241 ).

Yates echoed Mary Church Terrell's 1897 message "Free kindergartens in every city and hamlet of this broad land we must have, if the children are to receive from us what it is our duty to give" (M.C. Terrell Papers, LOC, 1897). Educated, black women had always seen it as their duty to uplift the masses. It was also widely agreed that education was a solution to the race problem but Yates took that idea and made it specific by locating "the root of the race problem" (Yates, 1906b) in the children. The claim that

the race problem would be solved by saving young black children was much like white kindergartners' belief that kindergarten would Americanize (and thus save) immigrant and poor children. If kindergarten and mothers' meetings were indeed as effective as they were purported to be, then it would have made the work of establishing them seem absolutely necessary. The purpose of her speeches and articles was to motivate club women to take on the heavy burden of establishing kindergartens, the organization's national work.

In framing the race problem as mainly a task of educating young children and mothers, it might seem a more manageable problem and a problem that club women had the tools to address. The "race problem" (Yates, 1906b) was a commonly used but seldom defined term so it could mean anything from the unmet basic needs of many blacks to the pervasive racism or violence that was inflicted on black people. Yates generally characterized the race problem as the lack of education and initiative among poor blacks and not so much the problem of injustice and racism. Assigning the race problem to children unduly simplified it and seemed to leave whites with no responsibility for righting historic wrongs or changing unjust laws and practices. Minimizing the problems of the race may have been Yates way to cope psychologically and a way to persuade club women that the NACW's chosen strategy to address the race problem through establishing kindergartens was possible and worthwhile. If adequate resources had been channeled into establishing kindergartens, the next generation may indeed have been on a much firmer footing, but that was not to happen.

The statistics of education and of crime show, and are sufficiently reliable to prove, that Negro criminals do not come from the educated refined classes – and such classes exist, contrary to the doctrine of some who attempt to give us wholesale condemnation – but from the most illiterate, the stupid, the besotted element; from the class that has not been reached by the moral side of education. Let us then endeavor to work upon the moral nature of the great mass of our people, and especially upon the young boys and girls, until the whole mass is lightened by the quickening influences of Christian education. (1906b, *The Twentieth Century Negro – His Opportunities for Success*, p. 238)

“Negro criminals do not come from the educated refined classes” (Yates, 1906b).

Like Terrell, Yates knew that black club women would like to distinguish themselves from uneducated women. Although educated blacks suffered from limitations in opportunities to work to their potential or level of education, they certainly had access to better jobs and more opportunities to earn income from the goods and services they provided to black communities. There were many unflattering comments about the poor and ignorant as compared to the so-called refined Negro in Yates’ writings although she occasionally pointed out that slavery was responsible for the ills and ignorance of vast numbers of people. Yates expected kindergarten to transform the poor child by exposure to the refined and educated club women.

“Come let us live with our children,” for the future of the entire human race depends upon the harmonious, symmetrical and three-fold development of the children; as their elders may we not be recreant to the sacred trust that a moral obligation delivers to parents. (1905c, *Kindergartens and Mothers’ Clubs as Related to the Work of the National Association of Colored Women*, p. 305)

The intensity of the language in this comment: “‘Come let us live with our children,’ for the future of the entire human race depends upon” (1905c, *Kindergartens*

and Mothers' Clubs as Related to the Work of the National Association of Colored Women, p. 305) is probably for dramatic effect but it suggests some frustration that at the end of her term as NACW president, the organization still had not accomplished its goal of establishing kindergartens in every town and hamlet. Yates outlined even more clearly in this article, the role that kindergarten could play in ameliorating the growing strains of a society in which new immigrants were arriving in the cities in greater numbers and taking jobs formerly held by black people. Unlike Terrell, she seldom spoke of working mothers' needs for child care.

Much stress is placed upon the Mother's Club, the establishment of kindergartens and day nurseries, for the reasons that these organizations strike, as it were, at the root of the whole matter (1905b, Report of the National Federation [sic] of Colored Women's Clubs to the National Council of Women at Washington, p. 259).

Observation soon taught the pioneer workers that mothers' clubs, day nurseries, kindergartens...institutions so managed as to preserve the independence of the one helped – or, to teach this spirit where it might be lacking (1905c, Kindergartens and Mothers' Clubs as Related to the Work of the National Association of Colored Women, p. 307).

Kindergartens and mothers' meetings run by club women would help develop the self-reliance and independence that was thought to be lacking in poor blacks. In the final speech to the NACW as president Yates said "in the nineteenth century, necessarily, we leaned upon others, in the twentieth we must learn self-reliance" (1906b). This statement suggests that Yates believed that it would be unwise to expect that supports for poor blacks like the Reconstruction Act of the 1870's would be resumed in the Progressive Era. To survive in the twentieth century, blacks needed to be alert to the opportunities

that existed, limited though they might be. Blacks also needed to create opportunities of their own, as the NACW was doing by supporting clubs that were establishing kindergartens with small amounts of funds and technical assistance and providing some scholarship money to young women to take kindergarten training.

“Observation soon taught the pioneer workers...to preserve the independence of the one helped” (1905c) Yates clearly expected that kindergartens and mothers’ clubs would help promote not just the independence of black children but of the kind of initiative that she called “thought power” (1905a) that had been smothered during the centuries of slavery. She presaged the current debate about support services robbing vulnerable populations of the incentive to become independent. NACW clubs offered a comprehensive array of social services in addition to kindergartens but the serious lack of funding often prohibited these kinds of services from being delivered consistently or widely.

The education of humanity is then, practically, within its own hands; and the immediate object to be sought by each parent, by each educator, in securing instruction for the child is the best possible environment; this found, heredity eventually will take care of itself. (1906a, *Education and Genetic Psychology*, p. 294)

“The education of humanity is then, practically, within its own hands” (1906a, *Education and Genetic Psychology*, p. 294). Yates was suggesting that the means and the knowledge to educate the American black population were available and not only by the hands of the NACW membership. A great number of private and land grant colleges and schools for blacks had opened in the latter part of the nineteenth century and some white

institutions admitted black students. Several clubs held independent training classes for black kindergarten teachers, including the Colored Woman's League training school that had started a few years earlier in Washington DC. Yates was very hopeful that large numbers of blacks would become educated and she frequently reminded them take advantage of the opportunities open to them instead of complaining about what they did not have. Yates use of the term uplift was almost synonymous with education, and education should stimulate thinking and problem solving, not simply factual knowledge.

*Theme 2 – Kindergarten as a tool for organizing, fundraising, and amassing power for black women*

The following quotes illuminate the various additional purposes beyond the strictly educational that Yates thought the kindergarten could offer. Sub-themes for Yates were similar to those for Terrell and included, strengthening the NACW and gathering the human and financial resources needed to accomplish the mission of establishing kindergartens.

The thoughts included in this plan show that colored mothers, teachers, and club women generally are alive to the best interests of the race; and through kindergartens, mothers' clubs and all other forms of its work, the National Association of Colored Women hopes to be a valuable instrument in the task of "Lifting as we climb" (1905c. Kindertartens and Mothers' Clubs as Related to the Work of the National Association of Colored Women, p. 311).

Yates emphasized black mothers, teachers, and club members' unity of purpose; kindergarten focused the efforts of black women to actualize the NACW's purpose as an uplift organization. Working to establish kindergartens lent the NACW a reputation for

progressiveness. However, to maintain its reputation as an effective uplift organization, it needed to highlight results of its kindergarten work thus Yates announced financial assistance for several kindergartens. This statement also shows that Yates saw kindergarten as a means through which to bring together and unite the women of the race, the educated and the poor, under the auspices of the NACW.

It has favored as National Work the kindergarten and day nursery idea; as before stated, mainly, as a method of getting at the root of the problem of race elevation- 'the children'. In this idea it has not wavered as may be seen from the fact that aid has been extended to several kindergartens from money donated to the Ways and Means Committee from the sale of pamphlets published at the cost of the National body; and from individual contributions; also, from the additional fact, that the resolution introduced by President J. Silone Yates of the National Association of Colored Women at the last triennial council of Women of the United States and unanimously passed by that august body, pledged the members of the latter organization to assist the National Association of Colored Women, in every possible way, in their very laudable efforts to establish kindergartens and day nurseries (1905b, Report of the National Federation [sic] of Colored Women's Clubs to the National Council of Women at Washington, p. 261).

The acknowledgement of the needs of working women made its "favored National work the kindergarten and day nursery idea" (1905b, Report of the National Federation [sic] of Colored Women's Clubs to the National Council of Women at Washington, p. 261) extremely popular with black women as evidenced by the burgeoning growth of the organization. Hundreds of people bought Terrell's pamphlets about the kindergarten knowing that the money would be donated to a fund to establish kindergartens. However, Yates focused here more on the kindergarten as an attractive fund-raising theme and refers frequently to the need to continue raising money.

The NACW's kindergarten focus provided common ground on which to build relationships with white women's organizations, such as the National Council of Women (NCW), the white organization that pledged to assist the NACW with establishing kindergartens and the National Congress of Mothers, which later became the Parent Teacher Association. Terrell and Yates had both cultivated relationships with white club leaders and both had been invited to speak at NCW conventions. The opportunity to tell the NACW's story in front of a group of white peers built NACW morale by demonstrating to a white organization that NACW members were equally educated and refined. Furthermore, they were initiating education projects in their own communities in a period when the society still viewed black women as ignorant, lazy, and licentious. Yates may also have wanted NCW members know that black women were not simply waiting around for white charity but were actively raising funds to support the NACW's longstanding commitment to free kindergartens.

The National Body has been urged at each biennial meeting to set aside a fund, however small it must be in the beginning for this purpose [establishing kindergartens], and now that the organization has taken out Articles of Incorporation, it is in position to receive bequests, legacies, and endowments, that will help to make the National Association of Colored Women, one of the great forces of the age in the solution of the race problem, - a problem that can be solved only by means of race elevation (1905b, Report of the National Federation [sic] of Colored Women's Clubs to the National Council of Women, p. 262).

Incorporating allowed the NACW to demonstrate the organization's sophistication and integrity to wealthy donors. That the NACW put itself "in a position to receive bequests, legacies, and endowments" (1905b, Report of the National Federation



[sic] of Colored Women's Clubs to the National Council of Women, p. 262) to support the national work of kindergartens was a visionary step which depersonalized the organization, gave it its own corporate identity, and protected individual members from liability. That Yates called the NACW "a valuable instrument in the task of 'Lifting as we climb'" (1905c) or "one of the great forces of the age in the solution of the race problem" (1905b) suggested that she was intentionally crafting the identity of the NACW as the pre-eminent uplift organization.

In the "Kindergartens and Mothers' Clubs" article, Yates used the term "nation-making" (1905c) to describe black women's growing ability to organize effectively and address a common goal of race elevation. She clearly expected black women to take growing responsibility for elevating the race therefore the NACW needed the organizational strength, vision, funding, and strategies to be effective. Yates recommitted to the NACW's original strategy of establishing kindergartens to fulfill the organization's mission to uplift the race. Establishing schooling was a responsibility of state governments, so in some ways, the NACW was taking on the role of government by choosing to establish kindergartens. "The solution to the race problem – a problem that can be solved only by means of race elevation" (1905b) meant that blacks needed to gather their own resources and use existing opportunities to heal and rebound from the ravages of slavery instead of trying to eliminate societal barriers to black participation.

We desire during the convention to lay upon this Altar of our hopes, as a free will offering for the support of kindergartens, the small sum of One Hundred Dollars. It will represent but the widow's mite, toward an extensive work, may we not

hope that there are those who, seeing our efforts toward self-help, will increase this amount (1906b, *The Twentieth Century Negro – His opportunities for Success*, p. 241).

The National Association is an incorporated body, hence in position to receive bequests, donations and endowments, and we have every reason to believe that as the work of our noble women, East, West, North, South, becomes more widely known, financial assistance will flow into our treasury for the development of our efforts in establishing kindergartens, day-nurseries, schools of Domestic Science, and other much needed accessories to race elevation (1906b, *The Twentieth Century Negro – His opportunities for Success*, p. 241).

One of the important roles of an organizational leader is to raise money and Yates seemed more than comfortable repeatedly reminding the membership that they needed to contribute to the kindergarten fund. Yates certainly solicited wealthy donors; her letters to potential supporters might be found in the papers of philanthropists of the period. Yates addressed a number of important white women's and men's clubs and no doubt, raised money from the contacts that she made in these contexts.

A great field of usefulness, therefore, lies before colored girls who have sufficient love for the work to make proper preparation; and who, with true missionary spirit, will go into the missionary field and develop kindergarten ideas and principles among both parents and children; for the harvest is truly great, but the laborers few in this particular line of professional teaching (1905c, *Kindergartens and Mothers' Clubs as Related to the Work of the National Association of Colored Women*, p. 309).

As a field of work, Yates did not try to market kindergarten teaching as glamorous or easy but she appealed to club women's missionary spirit as well as their desire to move into professional work. The articles, "Thought Power in Education" (1905) and "Education and Genetic Psychology" (1906) explain in great detail how

teachers could put Froebel's philosophy in practice in the classroom. They also relate how kindergarten ideals and practices served the special needs of black children.

On a practical level, the NACW appeared to function as a clearinghouse to match trained black kindergartners with jobs around the country (see: Yates, 1905c; and the request for a teacher "of our own race" in National Notes, 1899). In 1901, NACW established a scholarship fund that would pay half the tuition and board for two young women to attend kindergarten training class (NACW, 1994).

During this period in the white kindergarten movement, a conflict had been brewing between traditional Froebelians like Susan Blow, a professor at Teachers College and the initiator of the first public school kindergartens and progressive educators influenced by psychologist, G. Stanley Hall, the father of the child study movement (Vandewalker, 1908). The progressives were represented by educators like John Dewey who thought that strict adherence to Froebel's curriculum and materials was unnecessary and that the social aspect of young children's learning needed greater emphasis (Beatty, 1995). Although one of Froebel's great contributions was the idea that young children needed play, his approach attempted to steer play to achieve specific learning goals. Some progressive kindergartners advocated children's free play, and designed new materials to replace the kindergarten gifts and occupations which they felt were narrow, too abstract, and irrelevant to American children's needs (Allen, 1988; Cuban, 1992; National Society for the Scientific Study of Education, 1907; Wheelock, 1907).

The progressive kindergarten faction finally won control of the agenda and ideology of the kindergarten movement and took over leadership of the main professional association and philosophical heart of American kindergarten movement, the International Kindergarten Union. Turning away from the Froebelian spiritual and individual development, progressives embraced the scientific orientation to education as well as the social reform mission of the kindergarten (Beatty, 1995; Cuban, 1992; Hill, 1907; Vandewalker, 1908). Similar to the way she handled her position on the Washington versus DuBois debate, Yates gave credit to both sides of the kindergarten debate and then outlined her own philosophy that went beyond the points of contention to arrive at a practical blending of the most useful ideas from both camps (see Yates' articles mentioned above, especially "Genetic Psychology and Education", where she places child study in its historical context).

### *Theme 3 – Developmental benefits of kindergarten*

Theme 3 quotes outline Yates' ideas about the particular purposes of kindergarten for black children and for children in general. The subthemes are about teacher training, the value of play, race pride, and changing cultural practices.

This was Froebel's idea in his wonderful evolution of the kindergarten theory and system. A system which he devised and intended, not alone for the period of infancy and youth, but also for each succeeding stage of development; therefore, to this system we may look for many of the basic principles of genetic psychology. Froebel's master mind here reveals to us the psychology of play in education, and the value of play as an educative force; the value of expression through the kindergarten gifts; through language; and later by means of drawing, clay modeling, writing, etc. (1906a, Education and genetic psychology, p. 294).

In this quote, Yates shows her great admiration for Froebel and the educational value of the kindergarten and reminds readers that the system was designed to influence teaching in general, not just early childhood teaching. In this and other articles, she asserts that Froebel's kindergarten was the foundation for the developing field of psychology (then called genetic psychology) and its offshoot, child study. She felt that the most fruitful approach for the young child was to be allowed to play and to follow his or her own interests because "a motive for independent thought is present and active only when the mind of the learner is at work upon subjects of personal or individual interests" (1905a). As mentioned earlier, Yates felt that thought power was an essential ability that black people needed to succeed in American society.

The idea of the "kindergarten theory and system...devised and intended for infancy and youth, but for each succeeding stage of development" (1906a) may be one of Yates most important contributions to black educators and one of kindergarten's most important contributions to the field of education. The kindergarten system addressed the whole child, not just the cognitive aspects of learning and sought to engage the child in learning through his or her own interests. These ideas were not completely alien<sup>5</sup> but they certainly departed from the teacher-directed style of education that was the norm at the time. Yates further developed the concept of thought power as she urged teachers to reflect on the question of "How shall the teacher help the pupil help himself?" (1905a) to

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<sup>5</sup>See Horace Mann's reports to the Massachusetts State Board of Education in *The Republic and the School* where he lays out a philosophy that is very much influenced by his visit to Prussian schools which included a Pestalozzian school.

encourage them to emphasize active learning, critical thinking, and problem solving in their own classrooms. Much of Yates writing was aimed at influencing the quality of teaching for all black children. Yates saw play as an “educative force” (1906a) and saw language and artistic self-expression as important to younger and older children.

From the very beginning, the natural, the normal child shows its self-activity, its mental processes by tearing objects to pieces (to the utter dismay of mater-familias) to get at their true inwardness, materially speaking; asks, “Why is this?” and “Why is that?” until the impatient parent, and even the so-called teacher, attempts to curb this natural or innate desire of mankind from infancy to maturity, to arrive at the truth, by the curt, “Don’t ask too many questions,” if nothing harsher (1905a, Thought power in education, p. 244).

How much better to develop this progressive God-given power by leading the apparently destructive spirit of the child into a constructive channel through the medium of kindergarten methods, handicraft, or manual arts; and from possibly idle curiosity into intelligent questioning, in matters of every day life. (1905a, Thought power in education, p. 244)

“The natural, the normal child shows its self-activity, its mental processes by tearing objects to pieces” (1905a, Thought power in education, 244). This phrase reflects Yates’ grasp of Froebel’s concept of self-activity,<sup>6</sup> a concept that describes a child’s motivation to learn and explore through deep engagement in and curiosity about something that s/he chooses to do. In this same article, Yates compares the child’s process of learning to the scientific method which is the “innate desire of mankind...to

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<sup>6</sup>Self-activity was one of the central concepts in Froebel’s theory of how children learn, and it meant the child’s total engagement or attention to an activity which represented the “free and spontaneous representation of the divine in man, and through the life of man, which, as we have seen, is the ultimate aim and object of all education...” (Froebel, 1826/1900, p. 10). Self-activity was related to motivation, and was described as a cycle of curiosity, investigation, and discovery with an intrinsic reward of joy (Froebel, 1826/1900).

arrive at the truth” (1905a, *Thought power in education*, 244). She appears to be using this example as a teaching moment for black parents and “so-called teachers” (1905a, *Thought power in education*, 244) who probably regarded tearing objects to pieces as naughtiness instead of a necessary step on the path to learning. Yates wishes for black teachers and parents to find gentler ways to channel this natural impulse to explore in order to lay a foundation for young children to grow into thinkers and inventors.

The immediate object to be sought by each parent, by each educator, in securing instruction for the child is the best possible environment; this found, heredity eventually will take care of itself.” (1906a *Education and Genetic Psychology*, p. 294)

Such environment presupposes a place where the child’s physical, mental, moral and spiritual powers may have complete development – a place where the beautiful link between nature and child not only will remain unbroken, but where from day to day, from stage to stage, the entire chain is purified, strengthened and ennobled through the intimate relations of color, form, size, distance, direction, number, etc., with which he is daily and hourly associated (1906a *Education and Genetic Psychology*, p. 294)

“The immediate object to be sought by each parent, by each educator, in securing instruction for the child is the best possible environment; this found, heredity eventually will take care of itself” (1906b). Kindergarten with a well-trained teacher represented the best environment for young black children in Yates’ reasoning, because the child would develop thought power and be exposed to positive cultural influences, as will be seen later. Heredity is one of the scientific themes that arise in Yates writing. Here, she predicts that the impact of kindergarten would so improve the child’s potential that his or her offspring would also be positively affected; this must have been deeply appealing to

the hopes of the club women who saw examples of failed potential all around them.

Yates may also aimed to build the morale of those struggling to raise the money to establish kindergartens or to reassure the clubs who had established kindergartens that their work would affect future generations through the children and families that they were serving. Her outlook on the purifying effect of kindergarten was similar to Froebel's own sense that young children would attain a sense of spiritual oneness if they had the freedom to learn in ways that were natural to them and to explore the nature of things with a well-trained teacher; kindergarten would improve children and eventually transform German society.

Like Terrell, Yates expected the proper home and school environment to address the whole child and not just the child's academic learning. Yates reasoned that the influence of educated, and in her mind, more evolved black women providing kindergarten instruction and guidance to poor women in mothers' clubs, would "purify the entire chain" (1906b) and improve the trajectory of poor blacks. Sexual promiscuity, alcohol consumption, and crime were the high priority moral problems mentioned in club records from at least, 1897 through 1905. Blacks needed to develop initiative, self-control, intelligence, dependability to overcome these moral problems according to Yates. The underlying assumption was that a wholesome kindergarten environment would replace bad morals with better traits naturally through association with educated black teachers.



Much stress is placed upon the Mother's Club, the establishment of kindergartens and day nurseries, for the reasons that these organizations strike, as it were, at the root of the whole matter, at the same time the Association urges the formation of musical clubs, for the study of high-class music, believing that music in the Negro is a heaven-born gift that should be cultivated to its highest extent, and that should never be allowed to degenerate into low and unseemly amusement calculated to degrade rather to elevate the race (1905b, Report of the National Federation [sic] of Colored Women's Clubs to the National Council of Women at Washington, p. 259).

Popular black music, especially ragtime, was much maligned in NACW records around the early twentieth century. Her comments about class and cultural practices reveal that she felt that music had the power to influence people; and seemed to hold the stereotypical notion of blacks as genetically musical. This is a pointed example of how educated black women wished to change cultural practices of the poor to be more acceptable to the dominant group.

The power of sustained, well directed, accurate thought, is attained only by creating and stimulating in the developing child habits of attention to matters in hand whatever that matter for the moment may be. And concentration, or concentrated attention, is such an important requisite in the acquisition of thought power, that while prolonged attention is not to be expected of children, yet quick and concentrated attention for brief intervals should be emphasized and required; the length of time increasing with the years (1905a, Thought power in education, p. 244).

Over time, Yates' speeches and articles described how her own ideas resonated with Froebel's notion of the unity of man and nature and the spiritual aspects of his philosophy. The beauty of the kindergarten system for Yates was that it addressed "physical, mental, moral and spiritual" (1906a) development. The classical, lecture-style pedagogical approach neglected physical development and opportunities to connect with

nature in its intellectual focus, while the industrial approach over-emphasized manual training and neglected the intellectual and aesthetic. Kindergarten pedagogy represented an evolved blend of industrial and classical education. While she wanted teachers at all levels to incorporate a kindergarten or child-centered approach, Yates still felt that both industrial and classical education were essential for black communities to thrive.

The prime requisite of a well-equipped kindergarten is a well-trained teacher; and too much stress cannot be placed upon this part of the matter...Moreover, the training of kindergarten teachers for colored children must be such that it is well adapted to the special needs of the stage in race development which the Negro of the United States now exhibits (1905c, Kindergartens and Mothers' Clubs as Related to the Work of the National Association of Colored Women, p. 309).

As an admired and highly respected college professor, Yates certainly valued good teaching and crafted her messages to teachers to stress the importance of understanding benefits of the kindergarten teaching approach for all children. It would be difficult to assess how receptive club women, especially teachers, were to her pedagogical ideas but the fact that she wrote and spoke frequently about the value of the kindergarten system and was re-elected president for a second term suggests that her ideas were popular at least to a majority of the club women. As mentioned earlier, she had a negative assessment of the "stage in race development which the Negro...now exhibits" (1905c, Kindergartens and Mothers' Clubs as Related to the Work of the National Association of Colored Women, p. 309). Yates' expectations for kindergarten closely fit the special needs of black children for initiative, creative thinking, and high moral standards.

In sections where the system of public instruction for white and colored children is not separate, colored children are likely to be provided for from the standpoint of kindergartens; but wherever the law provides for a separate system, or wherever kindergartens, as in the South, have not yet, to any extent, become a part of public instruction, here the work of establishing kindergartens rests largely upon mothers' clubs', or even upon individual effort. Where kindergartens are supplied to white children and the system is supposed to grant equal facilities, though in separate schools, our women have been, and are, urged to present the needs, the special needs, of colored children for this department of training (1905c. *Kindergartens and Mothers' Clubs as Related to the Work of the National Association of Colored Women*, p. 308).

Education, from its initial period, to be practical must be adapted to the ideals of this strenuous age (1905a, *Thought power in education*, p. 244).

NACW presidents had to balance a diverse set of political realities of the clubs from rural Alabama to New York City to Omaha. The needs of cities that had racially integrated kindergarten public school classrooms were, perhaps, less urgent but no less important than the needs for rural populations, where schools for poor whites were not necessarily established, much less schools for blacks. "Our women have been, and are, urged to present the needs, the special needs, of colored children for this department of training" (1905c). This is one of the few times that Yates directed NACW members to demand their due from the American political system. Most of her writing exhorts blacks to help themselves, but on this point she was adamant. The special needs of black children were to surmount negative stereotypes and learn to become self-active or to develop thought power, as she repeatedly said.

"Education...must be adapted to the ideals of this strenuous age" (1905a). Yates felt that the critical thinking skills that black children would get in kindergarten would

prepare them to compete for jobs in an increasingly industrial economy. Education was supposed to help children develop thought power over all, but also to increase their attention, to strengthen their interpersonal skills, to help them develop personal initiative, and to give them an appreciation for beauty and nature. Progressive kindergartners tended to focus on the social and emotional learning and the ideals of citizenship that kindergarten could promote through building a sense of community, while social emotional learning was important for Yates, intellectual development was the primary goal.

### **Summary**

Yates' early exposure to a variety of educational settings, the sacrifices she and her parents made to attain her education and her own experiences as a teacher and a mother certainly contributed to her perspective on the best way to educate young children. As a talented student, she was promoted beyond her grade level because of her advanced reading ability, having learned to read from her mother pointing out words in the Bible. The fact that she moved away from her family to take advantage of a better education among other black children at Philadelphia's Institute for Colored Youth must have given her a perspective on the importance of being taught by black models of success and intellectual rigor.

Yates ideas about what kindergarten could offer to young black children reveal that she had a theory of how blacks needed to change to survive and thrive in the industrializing economy of the United States. Her theory was similar to that of other

black leaders' but Yates wanted to start earlier to change the trajectory of black lives; before poor black children were exposed to the "streets" they needed to be exposed to the attractiveness and joy of life in school because they needed to learn to think creatively to work around the constraints of racism and discrimination. Black children also needed to learn about the accomplishments of the race to develop a sense of pride and self-respect.

She said, "The entire history of education proves that each type of civilization produces its own peculiar type of education, and must therefore bring forth in the process of arriving at this civilization both general and specific problems" (1905a, p. 242). Yates' ideas about the benefits of the kindergarten approach for younger and older children address the peculiar type of education that she felt black children needed at this point in their history. In her mind, kindergarten would help black children learn to use their minds to make use of the limited opportunities that existed for them in a racist society, and overcome the sloth, ignorance, and carelessness of centuries of slavery.

While the Washington versus DuBois debate raged and black leaders felt the need to choose sides, Yates politely acknowledged each side while working hard to push the kindergarten agenda, to transform teaching from "drill work" into authentic and interesting "work that requires additional thought" (Yates, 1905a, p. 246). She said "Imagine for a moment the thought power behind and making thought-expression possible in, the matchless paintings of Raphael, of Michael Angelo, and other masters of this art...behind New York's subway" (p. 246).

Yates was a progressive educational thinker whose great contribution was to understand and articulate the benefits of Froebel's child-centered pedagogy to address the needs of black children. Other educators such as Horace Mann in the 1840's had advocated a child-centered approach but Yates was able to articulate the message that giving children the freedom to follow their interests would motivate deeper engagement in learning. Child development knowledge, content knowledge, and knowledge of educational history were essential to teachers in Yates' opinion. Evidently, the NACW membership appreciated these ideas because they elected her to two terms and the organization grew dramatically during her tenure as president.

There are a number of plausible reasons for the tone of anxiety that creeps into Yates' writing about kindergarten. One worry may have been that she would fail to carry out the mission of the NACW articulated by her predecessor, Mary Church Terrell and then be viewed as an ineffective leader. Another may have reflected her concern about the growing legal restrictions that pushed black men out of the voting booth and growing immigration that pushed blacks out of work, multiplying the needs of poor blacks. She was clearly concerned about the growing demand for literate and skilled labor in the rapidly industrializing American economy. Finally, she may have begun to realize that the small number of elites would not be able to address the needs of the legions of uneducated blacks. On more than one occasion, Yates said that poor blacks were less evolved than whites, a popular pseudoscientific notion during this period. Her confidence that kindergarten would solve the race problem may have been shaken by the

slow growth of free black kindergartens and the lack of funds to make significant inroads towards this goal.

The election of the brown-skinned Yates as the president of NACW surprised many because it upset the hegemony of the light-skinned leaders that had founded the NACW. Black newspapers reported, “some of the delegates contending that Mrs. Bruce is not a full blooded Negro and that they wanted their association to be presided over by one who hadn’t the ‘white taint’ in her veins” (NACW, 1994, Reel 5). The fact that club women voted to elect Yates over Washington and Bruce suggests several things, first of all that the ideal of race pride held great meaning for the membership; Yates never failed to mention the extraordinary accomplishments of blacks in the forty years after slavery ended. By choosing a brown-skinned woman, NACW members were choosing to trust themselves instead of what white society dictated as the standard. White society had elevated Booker T. Washington into national leadership but the NACW membership chose not to elect his powerful wife, Margaret Murray Washington, to lead the NACW, choosing to reject the dominant group’s preferences in black leaders. Yates exemplified the qualities that the NACW needed at the time, a steady, thoughtful, person with a specific plan for uplift; a woman who was able to relate to the membership in ways that the wealthy and privileged Terrell, Bruce, and Washington could not. Yates would never have been mistaken for white and had experienced the indignities and limitations that went along with having black skin but she had also risen to the top of her field despite the barriers that would have kept out most women and most blacks.

There was a subtle but consistent theme in Yates and Terrell's writing that captures the sense of obligation that educated black women felt to teach poor blacks to replace their own cultural practices with more acceptable ones in order to improve the prospects of the entire race. Both women thought that kindergarten was perfectly designed to address this task; in fact, kindergarten was expected to perform a similar function among immigrants. Yates' rationales about the need to establish kindergartens suggest that her priority was to acculturate black children and mothers to the standards of the dominant society rather than to fight racial inequity and injustice directly (Mackey & Kremer, 1996).

The NACW membership was aware that kindergarten was one of the organization's major uplift tools, but Yates must have realized that club women needed additional motivation to initiate the considerable work involved in establishing kindergartens. Yates grasped that this group of club women could impact the future of hundreds of young black children. By establishing kindergartens, Yates felt that the children of the race were being placed on a path that would lead them away from ignorance and poverty and guide them to fuller engagement in American society.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

A history of black kindergartens has not yet been published but the initial research in this study provides evidence that black women's clubs played a major role in making kindergarten one of the few enduring reforms in American education. In presiding over the first secular national black woman's organization in the United States from 1896 to 1906, Mary Church Terrell and Josephine Silone Yates emerged as leaders of the black kindergarten movement because they made establishing kindergartens the NACW's priority. They informed thousands of people about the benefits of kindergarten, initiated fund-raising efforts to support kindergartens for black children, and provided professional support to NACW affiliated clubs as they attempted to establish kindergarten classrooms across the United States. Terrell and Yates wrote extensively about kindergarten during the period from 1892 to 1906.

The major themes that arose across both Terrell and Yates' writings about the purposes of kindergarten are that it would provide:

1. Club women with a means to address conditions of deprivation for black people.
2. A tool for organizing, fundraising, and amassing power for black women.
3. Developmental and cultural benefits for young black children.

The black kindergarten movement evolved in parallel to the white kindergarten movement, with the earliest classrooms established and maintained by women's clubs. Black women worked to get state governments to take the responsibility for funding and housing kindergartens in public schools and were, in some cases, successful such as the Colored Woman's League of Washington DC getting the U.S. Senate to appropriate money for black and white kindergartens to be incorporated into the DC Public Schools. Many clubs relied on black churches to house their kindergarten classrooms and were able to hire well-prepared teachers from private kindergarten training classes established by black clubs.

Besides the private Washington DC training class established by the Colored Woman's League, the Woman's Improvement Club also established a class for black teachers and a kindergarten for black children in Louisville, KY. Private and land grant black colleges such as Haines Institute in Augusta, GA, Hampton and Tuskegee Institutes, Atlanta University, Spelman College, and the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia all had kindergarten classrooms and offered some teacher training classes that may have included kindergarten training during the Progressive Era. The black women who wrote about kindergartens demonstrated a strong grasp of Froebelian ideas and expressed informed opinions about the evolving debate between traditional Froebelians versus and Progressive kindergartners around the idea of free play and the appropriateness of the materials called gifts and occupations..

For Terrell and Yates, kindergarten symbolized the survival of the race through black children. Both leaders believed that kindergarten specifically would provide young black children with child-centered, engaging activities that would support their social, cognitive, language, and physical development, and importantly, poor children would receive guidance from refined, educated black women. The concern about morality, that black children were being lost to crime and vice, was a prevalent theme in Terrell's writing and, although this specific theme arose less frequently in Yates' writing, her concerns were about blacks' stereotypical lack of initiative and carelessness.

Terrell felt that young black children needed well trained black kindergartners to teach them how to cope with racism and discrimination and to teach them about their history. Teaching young black and white children about American slavery continues to be problematic because very few teachers of young children have adequate preparation to teach about the racial and cultural aspects of American history knowledgeably and with sensitivity to the developing identities of young children. Even now, almost 150 years after the Emancipation Proclamation, American society has not developed a common language about race or a sense that it is necessary or productive to hold these conversations. Terrell saw in the structure and approach of kindergarten the methods to arm black children with protective coping tools before the stigma of racial inferiority could derail the development of healthy identities and a sense of self respect. Self-respect was a strong theme in both women's writings about kindergarten. Terrell described self-respect as a kind of emotional reservoir for young black children to draw from when they

faced humiliation and racism while Yates saw self-respect as one of the foundations of learning, the confidence that allowed children to take risks and express curiosity.

Similar themes emerge in the two women's speeches and articles, but Yates emphasized the need for black children to develop critical thinking, creativity, initiative, and to be alert to the opportunities that were available to them. Terrell held whites responsible for the deprivation and ignorance of the masses of black people and on many occasions, demanded that white children be taught to be fair, just, and inclusive of blacks. Yates, on the other hand, held blacks responsible for finding creative ways to get around the barriers to black people's entry into meaningful work and full participation in American society. She felt that even though the centuries of slavery had "left him no noble incentive to labor...and thus tended to render him improvident, careless, shiftless, in short, demoralized his entire nature" (1902, p. 22). In Yates' eyes, the onus was on black people to gain moral and intellectual strength through education.

Kindergarten was expected to offer young black children the kind of learning that would give them a sense of belonging, achievement, and self-actualization. These benefits, whether or not kindergarten could actually deliver them, were compelling enough for some club women to risk public failure, worth the uphill battle against entrenched ignorance, poverty, grief, racism, and discrimination and, finally, worth spending their social and financial capital to establish them. Black political gains during the brief Reconstruction period may have given Terrell and Yates hope that large scale social uplift was possible. The choice to take on a centuries-old battle for education could

also reflect a certain naïveté for these women who, unlike the majority of blacks of that period, had an unusual array of financial and emotional supports that enabled them to be successful.

More research is needed to analyze how effectively black women leaders used their access and power beyond advocating for kindergartens and other services. Fannie Barrier Williams, an NACW founding member and wealthy Chicago journalist, criticized affiliated clubs for their failure to establish kindergartens on the scale that would lift whole communities (Williams, 1908). In her view, the local clubs' slow progress in establishing kindergartens was partly due to club women's poor education and management skills, but also the unwillingness of highly educated women to compete with their uneducated sisters for leadership. It is still unclear whether the lack of recorded history about black kindergartens is due to the club women's failure to accomplish their stated goal to establish them, to the inhospitable racial environment that silenced many positive contributions blacks made, or to the fact that club women were establishing kindergartens but not documenting their work.

The class distinctions between the women establishing kindergartens and those who were targeted for service certainly influenced club women's perceptions of the needs of the children they served. The Southern Federation of Colored Women (SFCW) aimed to wipe out the sense of exclusiveness:

That a few of the 'upper crust' should get together and kindergartenize their own children would be effective in deepening social distinctions in the race and in

strengthening its fatal tendency to make of externals a standard which belongs properly to inner worth (1901, p. 105).

Further research in primary documents may reveal how local black club women responded to the needs of the students and their families in the kindergartens they established and will hopefully describe their more specific goals and intentions in providing kindergarten for poor black children. Despite the quote above, there is little evidence that club women's children attended the free kindergartens that they worked to establish, so it is likely that black club women effectively maintained the socio-economic distance between themselves and poorer blacks. Club women did, however feel that they themselves needed to be uplifted out of negative stereotypes and the limitations of a racist society even as they sought to uplift poor blacks. As future researchers find more complete records of Progressive Era black kindergartens, they may begin to learn about the differences between the kindergartens for poor and those for wealthier children and to what extent the educated club women repeated the pattern of offering a practical/industrial form of kindergarten for poor blacks as opposed to the classical model of education that they wanted for their own young children.

Yates call for blacks to use their ingenuity to rise out of the pit of ignorance and poverty resonated with Booker T. Washington's concept of self-help. She also asked teachers to reflect on how to help the pupil help him or herself. Yates felt that the key to the success for Progressive Era blacks was to develop their "thought power"; her speeches and articles frequently recounted stories about the initiative, common sense, and

resourcefulness of successful blacks from the nineteenth century. Yates strongly believed that the kindergarten system was designed for children to develop the qualities that contributed to “thought power,” which were initiative, critical thinking, and resourcefulness as well as diverse forms of self-expression. Black children thus prepared would be able to take advantage of the opportunities that were available and to succeed without forcing whites to change.

Terrell’s confidence in black people was unshakable; she said that poor black children needed kindergarten because they would be the future leaders of the race. On the other hand, Yates felt that poor blacks were behind on the evolutionary scale because of the numbing and de-civilizing effects of slavery, and would need expert help in making the necessary cultural shifts to gain entry into society. Terrell acknowledged educated blacks’ distaste for the less refined but reminded them that all blacks were judged by the standard of the poorest and most ignorant of the race. Like a great number of her peers, Yates wanted acceptance from the dominant society but Terrell, on the other hand, wanted equality and justice. These stances became evident in reviewing what each woman chose to emphasize and repeat.

Both Terrell and Yates’ stated purposes for establishing kindergartens for poor black children connected strongly with the values of the educated black membership of the NACW, which resulted in members taking action to establish such kindergartens. Much additional research is still needed to uncover evidence of black club women’s efforts to establish kindergartens during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. These two

leaders made kindergarten a unifying goal for the NACW along with other urgent health and emergency services, and in doing so, were able to attract members to the organization and to build a power base. The NACW would not have gained the commitment of thousands of members if its goals were perceived as irrelevant or if it were seen as ineffectual.

Terrell appealed to NACW members to save the children, a compelling message for mothers and for women who had had little opportunity to play a meaningful and powerful role in contributing to society and furthermore, to be seen as virtuous instead of depraved, as they were often portrayed. Terrell characterized kindergarten taught by educated black women as the antidote to the inevitable life of crime that faced poor innocent black children. She and Yates saw it also as a non-threatening arena in which women could exercise and amass power, and a useful transition to formal schooling, all in a neatly packaged system.<sup>1</sup>

American society was increasingly open to the idea of kindergarten because more women worked outside of the home and needed to place their children in safe environments during the day. A number of the kindergartens established by black club women provided not only safe and stimulating kindergarten environments but also health,

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<sup>1</sup>Mothers' meetings, a more practicable and less costly feature of kindergartens, were very popular across the NACW clubs but gradually became detached from kindergarten operations as was the case in dominant communities. The mothers' clubs were more welcome in settlement houses than they were in public schools where there was no conceptual space for mothers. Schools struggled mightily to adapt to the social curriculum of kindergarten. As mothers' clubs and women's organizations grew in power and shared resources and leadership, the National Congress of Women and Parent-Teacher Associations gained a role in public schools. The NCW dropped the first part of its name in the 1920's and became simply the PTA (Woynshner, 2003).



hygiene, and nutrition for the children. The Gate City Free Kindergarten Association in Atlanta, the Colored Woman's League kindergartens in DC and the Hope Day Nursery in New York City (which had a kindergarten curriculum) provided medical check-ups, clean clothing, meals, and other services for students (Colored Woman's League, 1897; Griffin, 1906; Logan, 1955). Mothers' meetings offered club women the opportunity to teach poor mothers about health and hygiene practices as well as ways to economize.

Kindergarten opened up a new field of professional work for women, which was particularly attractive to young black women who had few career alternatives. The majority of black women were employed in domestic service; even in 1940 nearly 65% of black women were so employed (Gordon, 1991; Lerner, 1992). According to Giddings, black women's anxiety about domestic work was not only the inadequate wages but their vulnerability to the sexual demands of their employers (1984). Low wages, vulnerability, and desire to provide successful models to their children made kindergarten training and other educational programs attractive to black women; and their educational attainment rates were slightly higher than those of black men by the 1940's (Gordon, 1991).

Both Yates and Terrell had an unusual ability to synthesize the theoretical innovations of the day into a compelling vision for establishing kindergartens. The number of classrooms established as a result of Terrell's and Yates' efforts is not certain and may never be completely accurate, but in the primary documents reviewed so far, at least 30 NACW clubs across the country established kindergartens during the period from

1893 to 1910. If in 1899 there were approximately 200 NACW affiliated clubs, then 15% of the clubs had followed through on the charge to establish kindergartens. Even though the records are not accurate it appears that the strong emphasis on kindergartens did not garner an equally strong result in the number of kindergartens established. The cost of teacher salaries, space, supplies, and materials were an insurmountable barrier in many communities; black clubs were seldom able to sustain kindergartens over time because of the lack of access to funding. Atlanta's Gate City Free Kindergarten Association found that it cost approximately \$1,200 per year to run a kindergarten and in the absence of wealthy donors club women resorted to bake sales, track meets, in-kind donations from local businesses, and free visits from black physicians (Logan, 1955). To put the challenge of fundraising to cover the annual cost of running a kindergarten in perspective, local clubs paid dues of \$2.00 per year to the National organization; and individual donations to the kindergarten fund tended to be \$1.00. In 1897, there were approximately 82 clubs affiliated with the NACW representing 5,000 women – the total income from April 1896 to December 31, 1897 was \$239.74 nowhere near enough to support even one kindergarten (NACW, 1994).

From the early days of the NACW, Terrell encouraged women to turn private free kindergarten classrooms over to the public schools but even after public school systems began to adopt the kindergarten, few black women had the political acumen or influence to make this happen. When the Colored Woman's League transferred its kindergartens to the public schools in Washington DC, the CWL members and friends represented some

of the wealthiest and most powerful black families in the United States. Terrell herself was a Trustee on the DC Board of Education; Anna J. Murray, the master mind of the project had persuaded Phoebe Hearst, the philanthropist to support the first kindergarten classrooms and to donate \$1,000 for the kindergarten training class. Although the black upper class had the time and resources to establish women's clubs, their ability to finance on-going classrooms and teachers was limited at best.

The issues of economic class and skin color were subtexts in this project. They are volatile topics among black people, but are seldom discussed in education literature. Terrell was aware of the privileges or unfair advantages that her skin color offered her. Occasionally, she chose to use this privilege but she was not blind to the inequities that most black people faced and she did not try to protect her privilege by keeping quiet about inequities in American society, as was common among upwardly mobile blacks in the Progressive Era. Many middle class blacks had embraced white stereotypes and cultural values to the point where they too looked down upon poor blacks even though they had no more rights or respect than their poor brothers and sisters. The poor have commonly been viewed as responsible for their own poverty in the United States; poor blacks have carried the dual burden of being blamed for conditions that they did not create and being barred from opportunities that would enable them to rise out of poverty. Terrell called whites to task for maintaining and reinforcing the barriers to black progress, and called on educated blacks to reach out to the poor and help them. Race unity and race pride would give children self-respect, an attribute she felt was essential

for young children. The DC Board of Education unanimously passed Terrell's resolution that February 14<sup>th</sup> be celebrated in DC public schools as Frederick Douglass Day in February 14, 1897 and she said,

Colored children need to be taught self-respect and pride in their own group. Nothing can do this more quickly and more surely than teaching them that certain representatives of their race have accomplished something worth while and have reached lofty heights in spite of the fearful disadvantages under which they have labored. (Terrell, 1940/2005, p. 170)

Terrell and Yates both had the vision to redefine education for young black children in ways that went far beyond conventional educational practice of the period. With the vast numbers of uneducated blacks weighing down the progress of the black middle class, Terrell and Yates both saw that kindergarten represented the possibility of a completely new kind of education for blacks; they laid out the plans and strategies to establishing kindergartens and informed club women and others about the benefits of kindergarten. While they may have invested overly optimistic expectations of the power of kindergarten to solve the race problem and of black club women to be able to initiate and maintain this comprehensive form of education, the plan was widely accepted. In the searches of primary and secondary literature, no articles attacking the idea of establishing kindergartens were found.

The initial impetus for the merger of the two large black women's clubs into the NACW had been a letter stating that black women were prostitutes and liars. Victorian values influenced the concept of morality during this historical period which broadly

encompassed chastity, integrity, hygiene, self-denial, religiosity, and rejection of sensual pleasures, in general. Morality was a sensitive topic among black women as they were routinely portrayed as licentious and untrustworthy. Morality was also linked to crime and vice. Establishing kindergartens offered black women themselves and the general public a more accurate image than the one that the press painted of them.

The two leaders used kindergarten to redefine the image of the educated black woman as pure, intelligent, and industrious in contrast to their reputation in popular media. Yates and Terrell's writing documented black women's dedication to the high moral purpose of establishing kindergartens. Describing what poor black children would get from attending kindergarten; Terrell told black club women that "Upon you they depend for the light of knowledge, and the blessing of a good example" (M.C. Terrell Papers, circa 1897, Reel 23). Yates wrote that "The organization now represents a membership of about twenty thousand educated, cultured, refined Negro women" (1905b, p. 259) and; "With educational advantages far superior to those of past generations, we now have opportunity to show the world that the criminal Negro is not the educated Negro" (1906b, p. 238). These flattering descriptions of black club women must have been much appreciated by the NACW members but they also accentuated the class distinctions between club women and the poor.

Liberal white women's organizations like the National Congress of Mothers and the National Council of Women reached out to the NACW, but black club women eventually chose not to work with them. Southern white women had successfully rejected

the proposed participation of black women in white club events on several occasions.

The work of establishing kindergartens unfolded along separate racial lines, with some white groups and missionaries establishing charity kindergartens for black children such as the Free Kindergarten Association for Colored Children in New York City, Lucy Wheelock's kindergarten in a black section of Boston, a group of whites in Moorestown, New Jersey, missionaries in Calhoun, Alabama and Atlanta, GA (see Beatty, 1995; Free Kindergarten Assn. for Colored Children, 1899; Logan, 1955; Southern Workman, 1901).

Although it would be impossible to quantify the contribution that the kindergarten ideal made to the empowerment of women's organizations, the fact that kindergarten remained an NACW department for at least 30 years suggests that it provided a sense of purpose and fulfilled the vision and mission of the NACW as uplifting black children and women. Kindergarten was certainly a symbol for the NACW and black people of starting afresh with the supports that children needed to become functional adults. It was also a laudable focus for women, because the benefits touched many families.

The powerful specter of slavery and its impact upon blacks cast its influence on all of Terrell and Yates' writings despite the fact that these documents were written over thirty years after the emancipation proclamation. The distortions that would allow American leaders to support the unjust and cruel practices and laws of slavery and Jim Crow and the resulting limitations on the growth and development of black people and of the entire society provide painful lessons about the social damage of inequity. The lasting effects of American society's failure to address blacks' educational needs over the 150

years since the end of slavery can be seen today in the persistent social problems facing poor black communities with low education rates. To address these enduring social ills will require profound self-reflection and honesty among educational leaders and practitioners, at the minimum.

The major difference between Terrell and Yates's messages about kindergarten was based in their views of blacks' potential. Terrell's optimism about the trajectory for blacks was probably based on her own experience of navigating racial barriers to emerge as a highly successful leader and compelling presence in any context that she entered. Yates too must have faced challenges and isolation but she also achieved great success. The somewhat more doubtful tone of her writing may have resulted from a recognition of the magnitude of the problems facing the race.

Paradoxically, Yates' embrace of the dominant view that blacks were less evolved resonated with many conservative blacks of the period and it reinforced the social class distance between educated and uneducated blacks. Terrell directly addressed educated blacks' distaste for the poor; her demand for the educated to reach out to the poor gave club women permission to act to address inequities whether or not they changed their opinion of poor blacks.

The kindergarten movement attracted whites who had been involved in anti-slavery, women's suffrage, temperance, settlements, social services, and other liberal causes and therefore, some white club leaders were receptive to contact with black clubs. Education and social services continued to be high priorities for black clubs because the

clubs often provided the only social services in their communities. As white clubs began to concentrate their efforts on women's suffrage, black women's clubs fought for re-enfranchisement of black men in the South as well as for universal voting rights. Kindergartens and mothers' clubs remained high priorities in black communities. Black club women often provided literacy as well as citizenship classes for adults in addition to kindergarten for the children.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

The research for this topic was wide ranging and changed directions over the course of the project as it encountered dead ends and missing records. The following are suggestions for future research related to the topic of early childhood programs for black children during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, an area that needs a great deal more attention from early childhood scholars if we are to understand how the field has developed to the point it is at currently.

- Early black kindergarten records – Initial research to find the records of several black kindergartens in Chicago, such as the Bethel AME Church kindergarten established by the Ida B. Wells Club turned up no documents that originated in the classrooms, although a few primary and secondary sources mention these kindergartens. A search for kindergartens established by black women might be more fruitful using the names of other prominent black kindergartners and by searching for local club records, such as the Colored Woman's League of Washington DC, the Phyllis Wheatley Club of Chicago, and the White Rose Mission in New York. Another possibility would be to



seek the records of NACW regional federations, especially the Missouri Association of Colored Woman's Clubs and the Southern Federation of Colored Woman's Clubs. The names of prominent black kindergarten advocates were discovered well after the search for classrooms was abandoned and include, Haydee (spelled various ways) Benchley Campbell and Helene Abbot of St. Louis; Mrs. S.J. Gray of Chicago; Margaret Murray Washington, of Tuskegee, AL; Anna Evans Murray of Washington DC; Victoria Earle Matthews of New York; and, Alice Dugger Cary of Atlanta. Primary documents detailing black kindergartens might be found by exploring archives in St. Louis, MO, Kansas City, MO, Washington DC, New York, NY, and Tuskegee, AL.

- Some historically black colleges and universities conducted kindergarten classes on their campuses and also provided kindergarten teacher preparation. Most likely sources of records are Hampton, Tuskegee, and Howard Universities, Spelman College, Haines Institute in Augusta, GA, Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia, PA, and Miner Teachers College.
- Researchers might find records from kindergartens for black children in the archives of public school systems, especially those of St. Louis, MO and Washington, DC.
- It would be important to learn about the progress of day nurseries established by black clubs, as quality child care was also a focus of many clubs and working women during this period. Some day nurseries employed trained kindergartners but most focused on child care for working parents.

- Mothers' meetings were an informal means of parent education widely conducted by women's clubs and were certainly more numerous than kindergartens as the costs were negligible. This aspect of the kindergarten system provided a means to bring poor and middle class women together although they were not exclusively for poor women. The Southern Federation of Colored Woman's Clubs would most likely be a fertile starting place for researchers interested in the political and educational work of black rural women. The superintendent of mothers' clubs at the NACW was Susan Paul Vashon of St. Louis, MO.

### **In Sum**

The fact that Mary Church Terrell and Josephine Silone Yates and their contributions have been so long overlooked in early childhood education is an example of how racism and discrimination have obscured important aspects of our American history. Part of the benefit of this project was to begin to document these women's ideas, challenges, and vision for educators, especially for black women in the twenty first century who share the sense of responsibility to uplift the race, and to acquaint black women with their ancestors. History chose to silence these women because they said and did things that had the potential to upset the status quo which still needs to be challenged if the United States truly intends to provide more equitable early childhood education opportunities for all children.

This project revealed that the problems that black educators articulated over a century ago have still not been adequately addressed. Persistent gaps in quality and

availability of early childhood programs and gaps in outcomes is one example. The problem of perceiving equity in race, culture, and social class and helping educators to understand the hazards and benefits of teaching young children to assimilate to middle class values and overlooking the lived reality of poverty and racism is another. Mary Church Terrell recognized the crucial need for teachers and parents to help children manage the complexity of membership in a stigmatized group which is still a valuable role for early childhood educators in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

APPENDIX A

STORY OF THE COLORED WOMAN'S LEAGUE OF  
WASHINGTON DC KINDERGARTENS

By November of 1896, Murray had rented the quarters and furnishings of the defunct University Park Mission kindergarten and the CWL had raised the funds to open two kindergarten classes of around 20 students each, a free morning kindergarten class for poor black children and an afternoon class for “those more fortunately conditioned” (Murray, 1900, p. 505; see also Colored Woman’s League of Washington, 1897). Poor families were asked to pay a penny a week, and the middle class families paid fifty cents a week. The CWL kindergartens provided not only a safe and stimulating environment but also hygiene, medical treatment, nutrition, and clothing for the children of poor working parents. The report does not detail the activities of the middle class kindergarten students but mentioned that the morning and afternoon classes played together at their Christmas party.

The CWL initially hired a white kindergartner to teach the morning and afternoon sessions, at the same time, the club initiated a training class for young black women to be trained by white kindergartner, “Mrs. Louise Pollock, a trainer of national reputation” (Colored Woman’s League, 1897, p. 10). The CWL took in \$300 for tuition from the 15 students in the kindergarten teacher training class and these students gained classroom experience in the free kindergarten. In 1897, Murray and the CWL already had decided to lobby for kindergartens to become a part of the public school system and presented a proposal to the U.S. Senate (the legislative body responsible for appropriations for the District of Columbia) to fund the incorporation of the now, six black kindergarten classrooms into the DC Public Schools. After a number of attempts, the Congress finally

approved a \$12,000 appropriation; \$4,000 for the black kindergartens and \$8,000 to incorporate the white kindergartens in 1898 (Murray, 1900). In the first year, the Board of Education hired four of the six black kindergarten teachers; within the next two years, they had hired 21 black kindergartners (Murray, 1900).

## APPENDIX B

### LIST OF BLACK KINDERGARTENS ESTABLISHED BY NACW CLUBS

City	State	Name	Address	Supdnt	Free-Public-Private	Enrollment	Source	Initiating Club	Year Started
							Cary, 1900, Southern Workman, p. 463; DuBois, 1908, Efforts for Social Betterment among Negroes, p. 57	"The club women (colored) of Montgomery, Ala, have already established a day nursery and hope soon to have a kindergarten." Cary, 1900, P.463. Anna Duncan Club paid tuition?	
1 Montgomery	AL						Natl Notes 00315, August 1899		
2 Cantagbrigia	CO				vacation school		Natl Notes 00316, August 1899; Murray, 1900; Colored Woman's League, 1897	Colored Woman's League of Washington	1896
3 Washington	DC	University Park		Mrs. John F. Cook (League president)	6 classrooms subsumed by DC Public Schools in 1898		Natl Notes 00336, January 1900	Mrs. Nora Henry & Woman's Improvement Club almost completed bldg for kdgtn & raising \$ for furnishings	
4 Daytona	FL				Free		Natl Notes 00391, May 1901; Yates, June 1905	Mary C. Terrell, Addie Hunton, & Anna E. Murray of DC, and Rebecca Lowe of Atlanta-	
5 Atlanta	GA	Maggie Murray Kdgn			Free		Col Am Mag, p. 310	all donated funds	



	City	State	Name	Address	Supdnt	Free-Public-Private	Enroll-ment	Source	Initiating Club	Year Started
6	Rome	GA	Kindergarten		Anna Ingraham?	kdgrm - 10 cents/week, also mothers' club		00403 May 1901	Pentacost Fortune reported this in the Natl Notes, Ingraham reported the kdgrm & that a white woman's club donated 50 cents a month	
7	Atlanta	GA	No. I	Johnson's Row at Cain St.	same teacher for 12 years	Free (Gate City Assn)		Neighborhood Union box 12, folder 24	Neighborhood Union	1905
8	Atlanta	GA	No. II	near Air Line shops	8 years	"	"	"	"	"
9	Atlanta	GA	No. III			"	"	"	"	1906
10	Atlanta	GA	No. IV			Free - Leonard St Orphanage & Presbyterian Mission pay for this kdgrm. Students pay in-kind with coal, etc. Businesses donate buttermilk, bread, etc.				1906
11	Atlanta	GA	No. V			Free - Sewing guild gives clothes		"		1907

	City	State	Name	Address	Supdnt	Free-Public-Private	Enrollment	Source	Initiating Club	Year Started
12	Chicago	IL	Armour Institute Bethel AME Church (NOT Bethel Mission Kindergarten started by WCTU in 1883. [Vandewalker, 1908])	33rd & Armour		Free	150	Duster, 1970	Armour Institute was an institution of higher learning targeting low income students. The kindergarten classrooms were racially segregated.	
13	Chicago	IL		4440 S. Michigan Ave				Duster, 1970	Ida B. Wells Club	1895
14	Chicago	IL	Quinn Chapel	2401 S. Wabash Ave		Free		Natl Notes 00407, April 1902		
15	Chicago	IL	Butler Mission	Tennessee Town (possibly in Central Church)		Free		Yates, June 1905 Col Am Mag, p. 310	Terrell and "Mesdames Harper & Mossell of Philadelphia, Butler of Atlanta, and Miss Addie Howard of DC donated pamphlets for the support of this work". (Yates, 1905, p. 310)	
16	Topeka	KS	Sheldon Kindergarten & Mothers' Club			Free		Natl Notes 00392, May 1901; Yates, June 1905 Col Am Mag, p. 310		
17	Louisville	KY	Knox Kdgm		Anna Ingalls	Free		Natl Notes 00283		

City	State	Name	Address	Supdt	Free-Public-Private	Enrollment	Source	Initiating Club	Year Started
18 Louisville	KY		East end in Main St. Public School	Miss Ida Nugent, Principal	Free - incorporated into Louisville Public Schools after 1st year along with the colored teachers		NACW Convention Records 1899, Reel 1, 00202; Col Am Mag, August 1906, p. 83-90	Women's Improvement Club of Louisville reported in 1899 "Object is to increase kindergarten facilities for our children in Louisville and to form a training class for colored kindergartners. Arrangements have been made, and we hope to see the realization of both objects in September."	1899
				Miss Martha Crozier, teacher (one of 6 of the first class of trained kindergartners probably trained by Patty Smith Hill)					
19 Louisville	KY		West End		Free - eventually incorporated into Louisville Public Schools		Colored American Magazine, vol. 11, August 1906, p. 83-90	White women established this kindergarten	
20 New Orleans	LA						Natl Notes 00356 Jan 1900	(Phyll Wheatley club gave \$10)	
21 New Orleans	LA	Free Mission Kindergarten		Miss Moore	Free		Natl Notes 00408, April 40 1902	Kindergartners did home visits. This classroom was most likely in New Orleans	

	City	State	Name	Address	Supdt	Free-Public-Private	Enrollment	Source	Initiating Club	Year Started
22	St. Paul	MN						"	LA Turner & FL McGhee	
23	Kansas City	MO	Free kindergarten ?			Free		NACW Convention Records Reel 1, 00168	Progressive Study Club "Object of Club, self improvement & to increase the establishment of kindergartens.	1899
24	St. Louis	MO			Haydee Campbell			Natl Notes 00335		
25	?	NJ				free		Natl Notes 00386, Feb 1901; DuBois, 1908		
26	New York	NY	?	East side mission		Free	(96 in all age groups, fewer in kdgrn)	Col Am Mag, August 1906, p. 83-90 Natl Notes 00429, July 1904; DuBois, 1908, Efforts for Social Betterment among Negroes, p. 61	Kindergarten Club of New York	
27	Xenia	OH	?			Public			Twentieth Century Club	
28	Philadelphia	PA	O.V. Catto School		Miss Malinda Amos (teacher)	Public		Woman's Era, May 1895, p. 5	Woman's Era reported 10 public school kdgrns in the city (Most likely Philadelphia).	pre-1895

City	State	Name	Address	Supdt	Free-Public-Private	Enrollment	Source	Initiating Club	Year Started
29 Philadelphia	PA	?		Miss M. Inez Cassey and Miss Florence Cozzins (teachers)	Public		Woman's Era, May 1895, p. 5		
30 Charleston	SC	Alice D. Carey Kdgm			free		Natl Notes 00391, May 1901; Yates, June 1905 Col Am Mag, p. 310 DuBois, 1908, Efforts for Social Betterment among Negroes, p. 127	Terrell donated pamphlet funds to this kdgm	
31 Anderson	SC				Free			Thurman Kindergarten Club	

## APPENDIX C

### BRIEF DISCUSSION OF BLACK KINDERGARTENS AFTER 1906

To gain a fuller picture of the kindergartens established by NACW affiliated clubs and of the black kindergarten movement in general during this period will require extensive research in personal papers, church records, black newspapers and newsletters, the records of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), and other primary sources. Kindergartens that were mentioned in primary sources used for this dissertation are listed in Appendix B. Future researchers will have the task of finding records from individual kindergartens; the most likely to be available will be those established by the HBCUs. The remaining section of this chapter will describe what has been uncovered so far about the black kindergarten movement among club women between 1905 and 1910, starting with a brief discussion of the Gate City Free Kindergarten Association and Lugenia Burns Hope.

### **Atlanta's Black Kindergartens**

Miss Amy Chadwick,<sup>1</sup> a White kindergartner in Atlanta, started a model classroom called the Jones' Kindergarten in around 1885, which closed due to lack of funding (Shivery, 1936). There is some evidence that Atlanta University offered kindergarten as early as 1869 when it opened as an institution to educate recently freed slaves and Civil War refugees (Atlanta University Presidential Records, 1998). But these early experiments were fleeting as attempts to educate blacks were resisted in an actively hostile racial climate.

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<sup>1</sup>Amy Chadwick's name appears in records of Hope, DuBois, Shivery and none explicitly mention her race, but because of the financial means she controls as a single woman, to start a kindergarten and to fund a second one, it is assumed that she is white.

Evidence of the increasingly dire needs of black children and families was gathered in a series of sociological studies conducted by Atlanta University Professor, W.E.B. DuBois in 1896, 1897, and 1905. After the 1905 conference, *Methods and Results of Ten Years of Study of the American Negro*, DuBois asked Miss Gertrude Ware, the kindergarten training school teacher in the normal school, to help organize kindergartens and day nurseries for the children of black Atlanta. The Gate City Free Kindergarten Association (GCFKA) was launched in 1905 with Mrs. Gertrude (Ware) Bunce as president, Lugenia Burns Hope chairing the fundraising committee, and a core group of educated black women connected to the Atlanta black colleges. The GCFKA opened two kindergartens later that year in the poorest sections of black Atlanta and three more opened over the next three years. Funding was precarious and inadequate. Individuals such as Miss Chadwick, the first teacher, Mrs. Raoul, and Miss Perry who were members of the Inter-racial Committee gave money and granted free rent and services, while pastors and prominent black businessmen, such as A.F. Herndon and white businesses, such as Proctor & Gamble, donated financial and in-kind resources to the kindergartens to use and to sell. The organization raised funds from students and faculty at Atlanta Baptist College, Spelman College, Atlanta University, and from local churches with sales of baked and sewn goods and sports and musical competitions. Soon, the organization changed its name to the Gate City Day Nursery Association although the children still had a half day of kindergarten. The overwhelming need was for a safe and



nurturing place for children while their mothers worked (Neighborhood Union Collection, 1995).

The Neighborhood Union Collection, 1908-1961 in the Atlanta University Center, Robert Woodruff Library Archives and Special Collections contain Louie Shivery's thesis on the history of the Gate City Free Kindergarten Association as well as several references to Lugenia Burns Hope's involvement with the GCFKA. The core group of women who ran this organization broadened the scope of their work to address a wider array of health, education, and environmental issues plaguing black Atlantans. Hope established the Neighborhood Union to work for the "moral, social, intellectual, and religious uplift of the community and the neighborhood in which the organization or its branches may be established" (Neighborhood Union Collection, 1995, Box 1).

Her concern about the stressful and unhealthy lives of the young children in the black neighborhoods surrounding Atlanta University motivated her to establish kindergartens. When she became a mother, her concern was intensified because of the lack of options for her own two sons. Unlike Terrell and Yates, Hope observed firsthand the plight of the poor, initially visiting homes to collect data from a section of black Atlanta and visiting black schools so that she could advocate for better facilities, longer school days, and to extend the number of years of schooling for blacks (Neighborhood Union Collection, 1995; Rouse, 1989). Although her name is connected with the kindergarten through her involvement with Gate City Free Kindergarten Association, kindergarten was not her main focus over time. In an undated speech, Hope said,

“Children are naturally so sweet and innocent that it seems like a truly serious offense to distort their little minds and plant there seeds of hatred and prejudice” (NU Collection, 1995, undated speech, Box 1, folder 25). Although she recognized that she and other educated blacks would shoulder the responsibility for education and uplift of poorer blacks, she kept the pressure on local government to provide equitable services for blacks.

### **Other NACW Kindergartens from 1905 to 1910**

The minutes of NACW biennial conventions, news accounts in black periodicals, and the *National Notes* all contain evidence that black club women had established or planned to establish kindergartens, but actual classroom records for the free kindergartens were not found. Future researchers are likely to find more information about classrooms and curriculum in local public school archives in cities that adopted kindergarten, such as St. Louis, where Haydee Campbell supervised the colored kindergartens in the public schools than they will about free kindergartens established by club women. The papers of William Torrey Harris', the Superintendent of St. Louis Public Schools or Susan Blow may reveal more of the story of St. Louis Colored kindergartens (Leidecker, 1941).

Convention records from 1906 (when her terms as president ended) stated that Yates would donate the proceeds from book and pamphlet sales to benefit the NACW kindergarten fund. Although convention records from the years that follow Yates' presidency mention kindergarten less and less, club women continued to make presentations about kindergarten at the national conventions and it was still considered a

part of the uplift strategy. Mothers' meetings continue to be reported in the *National Notes* and in convention addresses as well. At the 1908 biennial in Brooklyn, a "motion was forwarded to take up some line of work specifically its own. The matter of adopting kindergarten work was discussed by Mesdames Macon, Carey, Anthony, Frohman, Scott, and Miss Hallie Q. Brown" (NACW, 1994, Reel 1, slide #00339). It was also "Resolved, that we recognize the value of formative agencies and make redoubled efforts to throw around the young people of the race helpful influences, establish kindergartens, organize Christian associations, forming clubs for boys and girls, maintaining reading rooms and libraries, and opening schools in neglected districts" (NACW, 1994, Reel 1, slide #00344).

A *National Notes* report from the 1908 convention advised women to employ "the methods used by the clubs of Louisville, Kentucky until the kindergarten shall become a part of the public school system" (NACW, 1994, Reel 23, slide #00453), a strategy used by the Washington DC Colored Woman's League ten years before that had provided reliable on-going funding and black teachers. At the 1908 convention, the only address that focused on kindergartens was from Miss Pauline Miller from Charleston, SC. The kindergarten department appeared on NACW department lists until 1920, it did not appear on the 1922 roster, but then reappeared in 1924 under Phoebe Gardner of Phoenix, Arizona (Reel 1, slide # 00692).

The NACW was a stable on-going organization by 1910 and was no longer trying to justify its existence by dazzling the public with an innovative program. By 1910 in the

general kindergarten movement, the intense power struggle between the strict Froebelians and the Progressives had settled as the conservatives retired and Progressives acknowledged some of the flaws in child-study methodology and softened their resistance to the contributions of Froebel (Ross, 1976; Shapiro, 1883).

Public school systems around the country continued to open kindergarten classrooms so in some cities, the demand for free kindergartens for black children was increasingly being met, however the half day of school did not address the issue of safety as many black mothers worked outside the home. Segregated social settlements still operated kindergartens however many private free kindergartens could not sustain themselves over time without a dependable stream of funding. Hope for public kindergartens and acknowledgment of the difficulties of sustaining free kindergartens seemed to ease the pressure for free kindergartens for black children gradually over the first decade of the new century.

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## VITA

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