This is to certify that the

thesis entitled

THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN SOCIAL WORKERS IN DETROIT, 1916-1940

presented by

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has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

M.A. degree in History

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Date July 29, 1994

THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN SOCIAL WORKERS IN DETROIT, 1916-1940

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A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of History
and Urban Affairs

1994

ABSTRACT

THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN SOCIAL WORKERS IN DETROIT, 1916-1940

By

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Between 1916 and 1940 African Americans in Detroit struggled against racism and social work's exclusionary barriers to provide desperately needed social services to their communities and to establish a professional base for black social workers in the city. Based largely on the papers of the Detroit Urban League and the United Community Services Central Files, this thesis examines the process by which African Americans constructed a professional social work base within the larger social, economic, and professional context of the times.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the people who have assisted me along the way. I have been truly fortunate to work with such a terrific group of people at Michigan State University. Dr. Darlene Clark Hine, Dr. Harry Reed, Dr. Lisa Fine, and Dr. Richard Thomas provided me with the academic, moral, and spiritual support needed to complete this project. They have been far more than a master's thesis committee, they have been good friends to me. As the only person that I encountered who would jump up and down with me when I discovered good source material, I must thank Pat Bartkowski, University Archivist for Wayne State University. She was exceedingly giving of her time and energy. And finally, thanks go to Tom Engelhart for reading and editing several drafts of this thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis began to take shape during a two term course on professionalization taught by Dr. Darlene Clark Hine at Michigan State University in 1991-92. When I decided to research African American women in social work, I had no idea what I was getting into. I quickly discovered that sources would not jump out at me. Instead, I would have to do a lot of digging. Detroit, however, has proven to be an ideal city to use for this type of micro study. The Detroit Urban League Papers housed at the Bentley Library in Ann Arbor, Michigan, comprise one of the most extensive League collections in the country. Additionally, the United Community Service Central Files located in the Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs at Wayne State University's Reuther Library, provides rich source material on the history of social services in Detroit.

Indeed, many have already examined the history of social work; however, few have considered the efforts of African Americans to provide social services on the professional level. As several decades of scholarship on African Americans and women has taught us, one cannot interpret the past without hearing a diverse range of voices; hence, one cannot understand the development of professional social work looking only at the experiences of white men and women. This study demonstrates that aspiring black social workers wielded the

collective resources of their communities (locally and nationally) to overcome otherwise insurmountable racial and professional barriers. Their efforts opened up professional opportunities, provided a means by which to dispense desperately needed social services, and offered the occasion to engage in "racial uplift" activities. Additionally, this study illustrates that social work has often held different meanings for blacks and whites, both as the receivers and as the providers of service. By examining the professionalization of African American social workers in Detroit, I hope to add to the scholarship on African American women, the Great Migration, the National Urban League, the history of the professions, and the history of Detroit.

I recognize that there are limits to this type of micro study. I do not intend to make generalizations about the experiences of all African American social workers based on my research. I believe, nonetheless, that this thesis can help to raise important questions applicable to other industrial urban centers between 1915 and 1940.

CHAPTER 1

MIGRATION AND PROFESSIONALIZATION

Prior to 1916 there was not a single "trained" African American social worker in the city of Detroit.[1] However, between 1915 and 1917, Detroit experienced its first major influx of black migrants from the American south. One thousand African Americans arrived per month in May, June, and July of 1916. Between 1910 and 1920 alone, Detroit's black population swelled 611 percent.[2] Not surprisingly, the social service needs of the city's black communities rapidly increased.

As a result of the vast urban migration in the first half of the twentieth century, African Americans living throughout the country discovered that social work provided professional opportunity, a means to engage in "racial uplift," and a chance to dispense desperately needed social services. However, African Americans, particularly women, faced a series

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[1]"Social Work in Detroit" March 11, 1930, Detroit Urban League Papers, Michigan Historical Collection, Ann Arbor, Michigan (hereafter cited as DULP-MHC), Box 2 File 1.

[2]Richard W. Thomas, *Life for Us Is What We Make it: Building Black Community in Detroit, 1915-1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 26-7.

of exclusionary obstacles in their attempt to gain entrance into the profession. Aspiring black social workers frequently confronted a scarcity of money for higher education, a lack of access into colleges and universities due to discrimination and segregation, and a persistent unwillingness of agencies to employ black workers or even accept them for training.[3] In these years, social work itself struggled to obtain the recognition and prestige associated with professional status.

Against the dual tides of racial discrimination and exclusionary professional barriers, African Americans in Detroit established a base for social work within the city's black community between 1916 and 1940. Additionally, they broke into Detroit's larger social work structure. These accomplishments are significant for two primary reasons. First, black social workers provided desperately needed relief services to thousands (many of whom resided within their communities) who experienced the social and economic problems associated with urban migration, economic depression, and racial discrimination. Second, their efforts demonstrated that collective resourcefulness and alternative processes of professionalization could overcome virtually insurmountable barriers. How African Americans established a professional social work base within the larger social, economic and

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[3]Forrester B. Washington, "Negroes," *The Social Work Yearbook: A Description of Organized Activities in Social Work and Related Fields*, 1933 (New York: Russel Sage Foundation): 313-15.

professional context of Detroit between 1916 and 1940, is the concern of this thesis.

It is impossible to understand the significance of the professionalization of African American social workers without consideration of both the circumstances in Detroit, and the social workers' quest for a professional identity, in the early years of the twentieth century.[4] Industrialization and increased job opportunities in northern cities like Detroit inspired thousands to immigrate from abroad and to migrate from within the country. By 1920 Detroit became the nation's fourth largest city with a population of almost one million. Significantly, the city's black population jumped from under

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[4]Much has been written on the history and professionalization of social work. Please see, for example, John H. Ehrenreich, *The Altruistic Imagination: A History of Social Work and Social Policy in the United States* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985); Roy Lubove, *The Professional Altruist: The Emergence of Social Work as a Career, 1830-1930* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1965); James Leiby, *A History of Social Welfare and Social Work in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978); Leslie Leighninger, *Social Work: Search for Identity* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987); Stanley Wenocur and Michael Reisch, *From Charity to Enterprise: The Development of American Social Work in a Market Economy* (Urbana, IL: The University of Illinois Press, 1989). In most cases, the struggle of African Americans to gain entrance into the profession receives little attention. However, a recently published comparative study of social and settlement work in Gary and Indianapolis Indiana by Ruth Crocker gives considerable attention to African American settlement houses and workers. Please see, Ruth Hutchinson Crocker, *Social Work and Social Order: The Settlement Movement in Two Industrial Cities, 1889-1930* (Urbana, IL: The University of Illinois Press, 1992).

6,000 in 1910 to over 120,000 in 1930.[5] To African Americans living under the exploitative sharecropping and crop lien systems, the increased employment opportunities created by the first World War made Detroit and other northern industrial cities appear to be the "Promised Land."[6]

The majority of African Americans who migrated to Detroit came from Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Illinois.[7] Some were lured by labor agents stationed in the south and in other industrial cities.[8] Enticed by promises of five to six dollars a day, thousands came by train hoping to find employment upon their arrival.[9] Often these

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[5]By 1930, African Americans comprised the fourth largest segment of Detroit's population. Only the native white, Polish and Canadian communities had larger population bases. Detroit Urban League File in the United Community Services Central File, Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan (hereafter cited as ALHUA-WSU.

[6]Thomas, 25-7; Marvin E. Goodwin, *Black Migration in America From 1915 to 1960: An Uneasy Exodus* (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellon Press, 1990), 15; Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work and the Family, From Slavery to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 153. For an excellent compilation of essays on various aspects of the Great Migration, please see, Joe William Trotter, Jr., ed., *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions of Race, Class, & Gender* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1991).

[7]"The Negro Population of Detroit," ca. 1930, 14-5; John Dancy, "Negroes in Michigan: A History," 1933, DULP-MHC, Box 74.

[8]Thomas, 27.

[9]In a survey of just over 700 migrants, the three primary reason given for migrating were, for "generally better conditions," "industrial opportunity," and "financial

migrants had no clear plan about where to go or what to do. When they arrived in Detroit they "would just go into the station and sit down."[10] Professional people often had no other choice but to follow their clientele and community to the north in order to keep their businesses alive. Historian Darlene Clark Hine contends that some African American women may have migrated to escape sexual exploitation by southern white and black men and to flee domestic violence within their own families.[11]

Upon arrival in the north, many African Americans discovered an "ambiguous kind of Promised Land." For example, although Ford, Dodge, Chrysler, and the other automobile plants in Detroit created vast job opportunities, thousands of southern migrants were left unemployed. Many of the agriculturally grounded migrants lacked the basic skills essential for urban industrial work. Additionally, African Americans were often the "first fired" when the waves of economic depression hit urban industry. The influx of blacks also exacerbated the north's *defacto* racial segregation, which restricted employment opportunities for even the skilled worker. A severe shortage of housing combined with the racism

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improvement." "The Negro Population of Detroit," 18.

[10]John Dancy, *Sands Against the Wind: The Memoirs of John C. Dancy* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1966), 55-56.

[11]Darlene Clark Hine, "Black Migration to the Urban Midwest: The Gender Dimension, 1915-1945," in Trotter, ed, 130-140.

of white real estate agents and bankers and operated to segregate African Americans into urban ghettoes "where white landlords were as eager to charge exorbitant rents as they were unwilling to maintain or improve existing dwellings."[12] In 1919, northern cities like Chicago and Pittsburgh reported the crowding of black migrants "into basements, shanties, fire bunks and other types of houses unfit for human habitation."[13] In Detroit, where the continuous stream of new arrivals diminished job opportunities and intensified problems of crime, violence, sanitation, and housing, insufficient sanitation and meager diet, made tuberculosis "almost common place" amongst African Americans.[14]

Most of the people who migrated to Detroit located in the city's increasingly congested east side St. Antoine District.[15] As the black population grew, the boundaries of what became know as the "East side colored district" also expanded.[16] Additionally, African Americans began to settle in other neighborhoods such as the Eight Mile Road district.

Even before the wave of black migration, European immigration and general urbanization trends had increased the

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[12]Jones, 183.

[13]George Edmund Haynes, "Negroes Move North. II. Their Arrival in the North," *The Survey* (January 4, 1919): 459.

[14]Thomas, 103.

[15]*Community Fund News* No. 69 (August, 1928), DULP-MHC, Box 20, File 20.

[16]"The Negro Population of Detroit," 10.

need for social services traditionally provided by reformers and charity workers. As scientific knowledge and standardized methods had provided legitimacy to many professions and disciplines in the nineteenth century, volunteer workers contemplated the idea of "scientific charity" with the underlying belief that poverty could be eradicated.[17]

As an outgrowth of organized charity and the social reform and settlement movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, social work emerged as a largely female profession. After 1900, social work increasingly attracted middle and upper-middle class educated women. These women looked for an outlet for their academic training and social skills. Social work, like teaching and nursing, provided an acceptable "feminine" occupation where paid work appeared to be an extension of sanctioned domestic roles.[18]

As a field comprised increasingly of women workers, with services directed almost entirely towards the poor, professional-ization proved a difficult process. The objectivity associated with the professional world created conflicts for women. Many struggled to reconcile expectations of femininity with the identity associated with male professional culture. Additionally, the poor and working class backgrounds of the profession's clientele lowered the

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[17]Linda Gordon, *Heros of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence, Boston 1880-1960* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 62.

[18]Wenocur and Reisch, 26-7.

prestige and status of social work as compared to that of other established professions.[19]

Professionalization may not have been a conscious goal for some early social workers, but many did have interest in upgrading their social status. Daniel Walkowitz argues that the challenge for social workers to forge a professional identity was largely influenced by the belief that professional work in the 1920's meant admission into the developing consumer economy and growing middle class.[20]

Clearly, however, many of the field's early leaders were directly concerned about professional recognition. They looked to medicine and law as models in the quest for legitimization. Advanced training, specialized education, autonomy, service orientation, and social prestige characterized each of these professions.[21] Social work's pioneering women, Jane Addams (Hull House), Sophonisba Brekinridge and Edith Abbott (the Chicago School), and

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[19]Daniel Walkowitz, "The Making of a Feminine Professional Identity: Social Workers in the 1920's," *American Historical Review* 95(October 1990): 1058.

[20]The second major point Walkowitz makes in his essay, however, is that few white women (of those entirely dependent on their own social work earnings) were able to overcome the low pay and low status of the profession and truly participate as middle class consumers. Walkowitz, 1060-62.

[21]Leighninger, 19; Wenocur and Reisch, 21-9; and Cecile M. Whalen, *Tenure, Training, and Compensation of Detroit Social Workers* (Detroit: Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research, Inc., 1938), 12. For a detailed explanation of the professionalization project see, Magali Sarfatti Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

clinical social worker Bertha Reynolds, envisioned the profession as a source of career opportunities for college educated women, and thus encouraged the replacement of upper class charity workers with a fresh group of middle-class "experts."[22] Over time, specialized case work methods, record keeping, and psychiatric techniques came to represent the "scientific" base for social work.[23]

Struggling for professional recognition, the field's leaders drove to establish professional associations to determine and monitor developing standards. Undergraduate and graduate programs sprung up at numerous colleges and universities to provide professional training.[24] After 1921, the American Association of Social Workers (AASW), with its tight admission standards and professional journal, became at once the voice and gatekeeper of the nascent profession. Concern over standards had earlier prompted the establishment of the American Association of Schools of Social Work (AASSW), in 1919, to monitor the accreditation of social work programs

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[22]Leighninger, 10-11; Walkowitz, 1057.

[23]The 1917 publication of *Social Diagnosis* by Mary Richmond, one of the emerging profession's most significant theoreticians, helped to establish the "scientific" foundation for social casework. Additionally, recodifying case work activities from "investigation" to "diagnosis" strengthened the perception of social work as a profession. Wenocur and Reisch, 94-5; and Leighninger, 9.

[24]David M. Austin, *A History of Social Work Education* (Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin, 1986), 1-9.

housed in American colleges and universities.[25] Obsessed with professional recognition and the status associated with it, the field's leaders on the local and national level continually asked how they could tighten standards and sharpen the exclusive role of social work.[26] For the first time in 1930, the United States Census officially listed social work as a "profession." In spite of these measures, the struggle for professional recognition had actually just begun.[27]

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[25]Leighninger, 15.

[26]For example, the 1928 Milford Report (published under the auspices of the AASW) recommended that a Masters of Social Work (M.S.W.) should become the entry-level credential for AASW membership. Walkowitz, 1054.

[27]Although the AASW continuously recommended tighter and more exclusive professional standards, many working in the profession failed to meet the established credentials. For example, of the new members admitted into the AASW between 1930-2, only nine percent actually held graduate degrees. In fact, only a little over half even held a baccalaureate degree. Additionally, most people outside of the profession still believed social work to be little more than charity giving. Leighninger, 13.

CHAPTER 2

SOCIAL SERVICES AMONGST AFRICAN AMERICANS IN DETROIT

With the exception of small Catholic and Jewish service agencies, white middle class Protestant women performed social work in the 1920's. The vast majority of men working in the agencies served as executives, with few women attaining such administrative posts.[28] These new social workers tended to blame the urban poor for their alleged "lack of initiative, on the one hand, and the lack of know-how and organizational skills on the other."[29] Even workers with good intentions frequently assumed their clients possessed a "subnormal intelligence." Although the standardized "scientific" approach intended to replace informal judgements, it often served merely to legitimize the undercurrent of prejudice.[30]

African Americans seeking social services faced widespread discrimination. Ill-equipped to handle the influx of black migrants in the first place, many agencies denied

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[28]Ibid, 10-11; Gordon, 66; and Walkowitz, 1050.

[29]Edyth L. Ross, *Black Heritage in Social Welfare: 1860-1930* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1978), 286.

[30]Gordon, 14-5.

people of color service altogether.[31] It would be inaccurate to conclude, however, that no social services existed within Detroit's expanding black communities. Actually, during the first quarter of the twentieth century, African American churches extended a variety of social welfare services.[32] The larger denominations established their own agencies to address problems of race relations and social welfare.[33] For example, Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Detroit established a social service department in 1911 to provide food, clothing, and relief to the increasing stream of migrants.[34] Likewise, Detroit's Second Baptist Church sent out representatives to meet each train that arrived from the south. The historian Richard Thomas points out that between

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[31]Washington, 313-314; George Edmund Haynes, "Negroes," *The Social Work Year Book: A Description of Organized Activities in Social Work and Related Fields, 1935* (New York: Russel Sage Foundation): 290-1.

[32]Not all African Americans in the established northern black communities held out open arms to welcome the influx of southern migrants. As historian Richard Thomas points out, as early as the 1870's, many African American elites "looked down their noses" at the growing black masses, feeling that the presence of these less "socialized" or cultured blacks threatened their social position, *vis a vis* the white community. Thomas, 10-11; and "The Negro Population of Detroit, 20.

[33]George E. Haynes, "The Church and the Negro Spirit," *Survey-Graphic* (1925), reprinted in Ross, 406-10; "History of the Negro Church in Michigan," ca. 1926, 8, DULP-MHC, Box 74; The Mayor's Inter-racial Committee, "Religion," *The Negro in Detroit* (Detroit Bureau of Government Research, 1926), 10-11.

[34]David Katzman, *Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 139.

1917 and 1918, Second Baptist proved the most important social service center for African Americans in Detroit.[35] In 1925, prominent black social work leader George E. Haynes praised the efforts of Second Baptist, designating it one of the "outstanding examples of a broad and vigorous institutional service."[36]

Likewise, throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, African American women's clubs organized on the local and national levels to attend to the social welfare and reform needs of their communities.[37] For example, the Christian Industrial Club organized in 1904 to lend support to defenseless young female migrants arriving in Detroit. Likewise, the Women's City Council, an elite African American

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[35]Thomas, 176.

[36]Haynes, 407.

[37]In recent years a vast literature on African American women's clubs has developed. Please see, for example, Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984); Linda Gordon, "Black and White Visions of Welfare: Women's Welfare Activism, 1890-1945," *The Journal of American History* (September 1991); Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Women in the Middle West: The Michigan Experience* (Historical Society of Michigan, 1990); Hine, *When the Truth is Told: A History of Black Women's Culture and Community in Indiana, 1875-1950* (Indianapolis, IN: The National Council of Negro Women, 1981); Gerda Lerner, "Community Work of Black Women," reprinted in *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Dorothy Salem, *To Better Our World: Black Women in Organized Reform, 1890-1920*, Volume 14 in Darlene Clark Hine, ed. *Black Women in United States History* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Publishing Inc., 1990); and Anne Firor Scott, "Most Invisible of All: Black Women's Voluntary Associations," *The Journal of Southern History* LVI (February 1990).

women's club established in Detroit in 1921, took part in the full range of uplift and social reform work. They visited schools, provided suitable clothing for poor youngsters, and even sponsored summer camps for needy children and mothers.[38] Noting the work of Detroit's Progressive Women's Civic Association, formed in 1925, one writer maintained that "These ladies are always on the alert to any problems pertaining to our race, and they aid in remedying them if possible."[39]

Notions of "scientific charity" and more "professionalized" social services entered into the social work of Detroit's churches and club women. The 1920 report, *The Negro in Detroit,* recommended that churches either employ trained social workers or get rid of social services altogether as "these one half trained social workers [were] duplicating each others efforts, interfering with the work of established agencies and in general cluttering up the welfare work in the city." The report insisted that church leaders institute and maintain uniform standards of work.[40] On the contrary, the 1926 *Negro in Detroit* report praised the increasingly "scientific character" of the social services provided by club women, adding that like the trained social worker the club woman responded "to the necessities of the

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[38]Hine, *When Truth is Told*, 15.

[39]Quoted in Thomas, 222.

[40]Forrester B. Washington, *The Negro in Detroit* (Research Bureau, Associated Charities of Detroit, 1920).

general community."[41]

Indeed, the increasingly "scientific" character of social service work within Detroit's black communities was influenced by the larger professional transition from charity giving to case work. More important to this shift, however, was the establishment of the Detroit Urban League (DUL) in 1916. Without question, the League played the most significant role in establishing a sound employment base for African American social workers in the city. Additionally, the League insisted that social work amongst blacks be transformed from charity giving to professional case work.

Under the direction of Forrester B. Washington, a social worker trained at Harvard and Columbia, the DUL followed the lead of the National Urban League (NUL) by making the training and placement of African American social workers a key task. The NUL was established in 1911 under the leadership of George E. Haynes and Eugene Kinckle Jones, to address the issues of housing, employment, health, and discrimination that contributed to the eroding social and economic circumstances of African Americans in urban areas.[42] The League's leaders

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[41]The Mayor's Inter-racial Committee, 14.

[42]*Bulletin of National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes*, Report 1912-1913, Announcement 1913-1914, "Foreword," Vol. III, 2 (November, 1913): 5-8, reprinted in Ross, 240-42; For a complete history of the National Urban League please see, Nancy Weiss, *The National Urban League* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); and, Jesse Thomas Moore, *A Search for Equality: the National Urban League, 1910-1961* (University Park, PN: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1981).

believed that urban conditions made it essential to prepare young and motivated African Americans for professional social service work.[43]

When John Dancy, a man trained in social work at the University of Pennsylvania, took over the Detroit League in 1918, he expanded the black social work network already developing within the city and nation.[44] He made connections with the traditionally white public and private social agencies, maintained active communication with League branches throughout the country, became involved with the Detroit branch of the AASW and Federation of Settlements, and established contacts with sociology programs (some of which later organized separate departments of social work) at local colleges and universities.

Dancy's efforts clearly fell in line with League directives in the early 1920's. The NUL continuously sounded the need not only to train African American social workers, but also to provide opportunities for employment. According to Eugene Kinckle Jones, this meant inducing white agencies "to add Negro social workers to their personnel [so] that Negroes may have a share in performing their duties which bring them to better social conditions."[45]

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[43]Weiss, 73.

[44]For more information on Dancy, please see his memoirs, *Sands Against the Wind*.

[45]Eugene Kinckle Jones, "Building a Larger Life," *Opportunity* vol. I (March 1923): 19-21.

Although early placements may have been few, by 1920 the Detroit League placed several women and a few men in social work positions within the city's expanding black welfare agencies and in white companies and service organizations. In 1919, for example, the League placed a black social worker in the American Car and Foundry Company at a salary of $1,800 per year. Dancy took particular interest in placing black social workers in the auto factories, and with the city's other major employers, as these placements provided professional opportunities for black social workers, and created a means by which to help black employees and their white employers constructively settle grievances.[46] Additionally, in 1920, the DUL's placement of three female social workers at the Detroit Recreation Commission, the Girl's Protective League, and the Public Welfare Commission, made news in the National Urban League News Letter.[47] By 1926 the Detroit League boasted the existence of eighteen professional black social workers in the city, fourteen of which were women.[48]

Engaging in professional social work may well have held different meaning to African Americans and to whites. African

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[46]Form letter from Dancy to a number of Detroit's major employers, October 26, 1918, DULP-MHC, Box 1; Letter to John Dancy from Ed Doane, Nov. 22, 1918, DULP-MHC, Box 1.

[47]Letter to Eugene Kinckle Jones, From John Dancy, Sept. 18, 1919, DULP-MHC, Box 1; "National Urban League News Letter" June 3, 1920, DULP-MHC, Box 1, File 10.

[48]There are numerous reports which make reference to the number of black social workers employed in Detroit at any one time. Unfortunately, names rarely accompany the lists.

American women took interest in both helping the less fortunate, and in entering the consumer economy of the 1920's. However, for many blacks, professional social work included participation in the "uplift" of the entire African American race. In 1928, Eugene Kinckle Jones insisted that in addition to the duties regularly associated with social work, "The Negro social worker . . . has an added responsibility in the task of bringing the whole Negro group as a separate social entity up to a higher level of social status." He added that "the most important force at work in the interest of the Negro today from the point of view of the social worker is the movement which is active in making communities feel that the Negro is part and parcel of society as a whole."[49]

Unlike the white worker, whose reality and home was often far removed from that of the client, the African American worker (who may or may not have been differentiated from their clients by class) often lived and interacted within the very community he or she worked. Racial discrimination significantly limited the places where all blacks could live and work. For example, because Beulah Whitby, a social worker employed by the YWCA in the mid-1920's, lived next door to the YWCA/Urban League building servicing Detroit's black community, she understood the plight of her clients, and in

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[49]Eugene Kinckle Jones, "Social Work Among Negroes," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* vol. CXL (November, 1928): 287-293.

many ways shared their experiences of life in an urban ghetto.[50]

African American social workers, in spite of their proximity and interconnection with their clients, at times held many of the same patronizing attitudes as did the white worker. In fact, the black social welfare leadership was often charged with engaging in a "middle class movement" which adhered to white classist values and endeavored to uplift the black community so that it would not drag down middle and upper middle class African Americans. Part of the middle-class mission was to transform "crude" southern black folk into proper citizens, in an effort to make them "a credit to the race." Black social workers, along with church workers and club women, instructed migrants on proper dress and behavior, in and outside of their homes. Men and women like Forrester Washington were particularly bothered by "displays of southern folkways" believing that such expressions hindered the League's efforts to overcome negative perceptions of African Americans in general.[51]

Many of the women who entered the profession came directly out of the expanding black middle class. Scholars of black women in social reform agree that the African American women who obtained higher education felt a "special

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[50]Whitby, Beulah, interview by Jim Keeney and Roberta McBride, 16 September 1969, Detroit, transcript, 2, ALHUA-WSU.

[51]Thomas, 55-7; and "The Negro Population of Detroit," 16.

responsibility to assist in the 'uplifting of the race.'" Social work, along with club work and the other service oriented "female" occupations such as education and nursing, provided the perfect opportunity to engage in both welfare and reform activities.[52] For example, Willie Belle Harper, educated at Howard University, stated in her resume that "I am especially interested in doing something for the social and general welfare of my group, and I am positive that a position as a social worker will grant that opportunity."[53]

Even more varied than the meaning of social work for blacks and whites, was their access to the profession itself. Although African Americans totaled only seven to eight percent of Detroit's population throughout the twenties and thirties, they comprised thirty percent of those on public relief. It seems logical, considering the vast need for welfare services in the black communities, that opportunities would be extended to African Americans interested in social service careers. Not so. Aspiring black social workers (almost ninety percent of which were women) confronted numerous obstacles.

The exclusion created by the "professionalization" of the field presented the most obvious obstacle for African

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[52]Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, *Afro-American Women of the South and the Advancement of the Race, 1895-1925* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 8, 66-7; Salem, 52-3, 66-7; Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Women in White: Racial Conflict and Cooperation in the Nursing Profession, 1890-1950* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), 11-16, 62.

[53]Willie Belle Harper's Application for Social Work employment in Detroit @1923-24, DULP-MHC, Box 21, File 1.

Americans. Even omitting the issue of racism, social workers faced a difficult challenge in obtaining the professional stamp. The AASW continuously tightened its organizational credentials by increasing the amount of education and training required for entry into the association. The primary barriers for African Americans centered on deficient funds for education, limited access into colleges and universities, and the reluctance of agencies to employ black workers or accept them for training. Agencies used membership in the AASW as a requisite for employment, and the AASW used education and field experience as requirements for membership in their organization. Although the AASW did not have blatantly racist membership qualifications (except in a few southern states), the association's membership requirements often resulted in exclusion for African Americans.[54]

Upon obtaining social work positions, African American workers still confronted the challenge of gaining the confidence of the black community. *The Negro in Detroit* reported in 1926 that "it was generally conceded that Negroes recently arrived from the South have been inclined to seek a white worker rather than a colored because they are not accustomed to members of their own race in professional capacities."[55]

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[54]Washington, "Negroes," 313-15.

[55]The Mayor's Inter-racial Committee, 43; Report, Aug. 3, 1926, DULP-MHC, Box 1, File, 18.

African American women were additionally burdened by the pervasive negative myths about black womanhood. In 1922, Dancy lamented the difficulty of finding employment for African American women in areas other than domestic work. It proved particularly difficult, he stated, for those women with specialized training, high school certificates, or colleges degrees.[56] In a 1925 article in *Survey*, the professional social work journal, Elise Johnson McDougald argued that this trend was related to the fact that black women were "singled out and advertised as having lower sex standards."[57] In order to discern why African American women in Detroit faced particular difficulty in securing employment, the Michigan Division of Negro Welfare and Statistics proposed a research project in 1926 to determine whether there existed "a moral laxity among colored women . . . contributing to the conditions."[58] In a profession such as social work, laden with moral overtones, negative myths and images about women's sexuality proved particularly problematic.[59] Dancy

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[56]Thomas, 65.

[57]Elise Johnson McDougald, "The Double Task: The Struggle of Negro Women for Sex and Race Emancipation," *Survey* LIII no. 2(March 1, 1925): 718.

[58]"Comments on the General Survey of the State Undertaken by the Division of the Negro Welfare and Statistics," 1926, DULP-MHC, Box 1, File 16.

[59]This phenomena was not particular to social work. African American women in other female professions such as nursing were also especially susceptible to such negative stereotyping. Please see, Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Women in White*.

repeatedly stressed the good reputations and strong family backgrounds of the African American women he recommended to both black and white agencies. For example, when writing a reference letter for Virginia Mae Houston, a woman educated at the City College of Detroit, Dancy stated, "Besides coming from one of Detroit's best known families, this young woman can stand on her own feet," and stressed that "she bares an exemplary reputation."[60]

The under utilization of the housing facilities in the segregated Lucy Thurman Branch of the YWCA illustrates the grim state of job opportunities for African American women in Detroit in the 1920's and 30's. While the branch's housing facilities were available to 376 *employed* black women and girls per night in 1934, the average occupancy totaled only forty-two percent. The Y's administrators viewed the occupancy rate as an "improvement" on the part of the "Negro girls," and stated that "because opportunities for employment amon[g] the Negroes are so limited 'except in domestic service' it has not been possible to have a waiting list for these rooms."[61]

Notwithstanding, some resourceful and fortunate African American women did secure social work positions throughout the

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[60]Letter to William Conners, Cleveland Urban League, from John Dancy, Jan. 7, 1928, DULP-MHC, Box 1, File 22.

[61]Memo on YWCA Residences for Women's Mobilization, February 1935, United Community Services Central File, ALHUA-WSU, Box 69, File 11.

twenties and thirties. Many continued to look for employment within black organizations like the Urban League, YWCA Lucy Thurman Branch, and Phyllis Wheatley Settlement Home. For example, in 1919 the Urban League hired Miss Elizabeth Gulley, a graduate of Dennison University, to visit the homes of "every colored new-comer" in the city. During each visit she encouraged vaccination against smallpox, and gave careful instructions regarding proper clothing and diet.[62]

A few women, such as Madeline Fowler and Beulah Whitby, obtained positions with the YWCA Lucy Thurman Branch. Whitby, a sociology graduate from Oberlin College, came to Detroit in 1924 to work for the YWCA. She linked her desire for a career in social work to her father. Educated at Yale Divinity School, her father had established an Institutional Church in Virginia. The church focused on a "program of work with deprived people on a day by day basis" rather than simply emphasizing Sunday worship. While growing up, Whitby went on home visits with her father and had the opportunity to contemplate and discuss the problems faced by African Americans. At the YWCA, Whitby worked as part of a program coordinated by the Travellers Aid Society. Participating relief agencies sent out support teams to meet all trains incoming from the south. Whitby greeted newcomers at the Michigan Central Rail Road. She helped new migrants orient

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[62]"Board of Health and Urban League Co-operate to Improve Heath Conditions," @1919, DULP-MHC, Box 1, File 10.

themselves, often directing them to the Y where they obtained short-term housing on the gymnasium floors.[63]

According to Whitby, the segregated Lucy Thurman Branch of the YWCA was "a very active organization" in the 1920's and 30's. In 1934 alone, it provided services to over 134,000 people. The branch proudly stated that it was the only African American YWCA in the state with a suitable building and equipment, and more importantly, added, "Ours is the only one that has a Colored staff." This suggests that even segregated services did not guarantee professional opportunities for African American social workers.[64]

The YWCA did promote professional standards amongst African American women employed as social workers. Madeline Fowler, director of the segregated Lucy Thurman Branch, was anxious to increase her "scientific" knowledge. In 1930 she attended a summer school college camp held by the YWCA in Wisconsin. She found courses in group psychology and in the application of "modern methods" particularly useful. In an enthusiastic letter to Dancy, Fowler asserted that if he noticed any change in her social service work, it was due to her experience at the camp.[65]

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[63]Whitby, 1-3.

[64]Ibid, 1; "Case Work, Protective Service;" and Report on YWCA Lucy Thurman Branch, July 25, 1935, United Community Services Central File, ALHUA-WSU, Box 122, File 18.

[65]Letter to Dancy, from Madeline Fowler (YWCA), undated @1930, DULP-MHC, Box 1, File 30.

Numerous African American women seeking social work positions in the 1920's and 30's looked to public institutions such as the Women's Division of the Detroit Police Department, the Department of Health, and the Juvenile Court to obtain employment previously reserved for whites.[66] Especially after the onset of the Great Depression, Dancy expended considerable energy making connections with government offices. He knew that the public agencies, like the Welfare Department, had a considerably larger budget than the city's smaller private agencies and, therefore, maintained sizable staff, and offered greater employment opportunities to African Americans.

The League quickly discovered that the placement of one African American worker in a traditionally white public or private agency led to additional positions within the same organization. A survey sent to several (white) agencies in 1926 confirmed that agencies with at least one African American in their employ found considerable benefits in having black workers handle black case loads, and expressed interest in hiring additional workers. The Visiting Housekeepers Association commented that the African Americans on their staff handled all of their black cases because of the "better

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[66]Letter to John Dancy, from Miss Florence G. Anderson, Secretary, Women's Division Detroit Police Dept, Dec. 10, 1923, DULP-MHC, Box 1, File 13; "Social Work," March 11, 1930, DULP-MHC, Box 2, File 1.

response given to the Negro worker."[67] By 1927, the Detroit League listed forty-six African Americans with "jobs worth commenting about" in white organizations, all of which were social work related positions.[68]

The philosophy that African American workers were somehow better equipped to address the needs of black clients even helped open supervisory positions to a number of black women. In the mid-1920's, for example, Sophia Cole advanced to a supervisory position with the Department of Public Welfare. Bernice Jones accomplished the same feat at the private Children's Aid Society in the mid-thirties. In a 1935 *Compass Needle* article reporting Jone's promotion, Dora Morton, a fellow Children's Aid Society caseworker, explained that "Executives who employ Colored workers find that in most instances the Negro deals very satisfactorily with his own people. His racial intuition gives him a sympathetic insight into the problems of his own kind. The colored worker is able to understand the ecstacies and enthusiasms underlying Negro life."[69] It is ironic that racism, or at least racialist thinking, played a part in creating opportunities for black workers.

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[67]The Mayor's Inter-racial Committee, 33-43.

[68]Letter to Arnold T. Hill (NUL), from John Dancy, Sept. 13, 1927, DULP-MHC, Box 1, File 21.

[69]Letter to Forrester B. Washington, Atlanta School of Social Work, from John Dancy, May 19, 1927, Box 1, File 20; Dora Morton, "The First Negro Supervisor in Michigan," *The Compass Needle* vol. 2(October, 1935): 21.

Many African American social work leaders also followed this type of racialist thinking, but for different reasons. For example, in 1920 Dancy stated that "The Colored worker knows and understands the psychology of the migrant" and insisted that black workers have "a warm sympathy that cannot and does not carry with one of another race."[70] Although many white social workers claimed to be free of racial prejudice, they often carried with them underlying assumptions that African Americans were "non-moral" or "unimprovable" as human beings.[71] The racial uplift or self-help theory that guided much of the African American social services work in this time period was based on the opposite premise. In order for black self-help or racial uplift to be effective, then, African Americans (presumably middle-class and educated) needed to work with (or assist) other African Americans to redirect the path of the black community.

Not until well into the 1940's would a significant number of African Americans begin to carry mixed caseloads in Detroit.[72] Even after the onset of the Great Depression, when large numbers of people found themselves in need of

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[70]DULP-MHC, Box 11 and quoted in Weiss, 74.

[71]Robert C. Dexter, "The Negro in Social Work," *Survey*, Vol. XLVI (June 25, 1921): 439-40; Haynes, "Negroes," 289.

[72]Tessica Kimball "The Problem of Negroes Carrying Mixed Caseloads in the Metropolitan Area of Detroit," Term Paper Written for Social Work Course at Wayne State University, November 29, 1944. United Community Services Central File, ALHUA-WSU, Part II (unprocessed).

relief services, the Detroit Department of Public Welfare continued to handle all case work on a segregated basis. In 1931 Beulah Whitby obtained employment at the Welfare Department as a social caseworker for the predominately black Alfred District of Detroit. She recalled that "If a white family lived on a street, then I couldn't visit that family. There would be two workers on the same district which was very wasteful--administratively expensive."[73]

Whitby believed that the events which led to her promotion to administrative supervisor of the Alfred District in 1941, helped chip away at the established pattern of segregated social work in the city. In the late 1930's, Whitby supervised the field work of students from the University of Michigan's School of Social Work, then located in the city of Detroit. As a result of the Great Depression, there was a desperate need for trained social workers, and, therefore, a significant demand for field work supervisors. Eleanor Cranefield, a University of Michigan social work instructor, "deliberately" broke the pattern of segregation by sending white students to Whitby.[74] Whitby held that her

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[73]Whitby, 6, 11-12.

[74]By 1938, Whitby had earned her M.S.W. from the University of Michigan. Interestingly, Eleanor Cranefield, who served as Whitby's master's advisor, asked Dancy to sit on Whitby's thesis committee. Whitby wrote her master's thesis on the "Hospital Facilities Available to Negroes." Letter to Dancy, from Eleanor Cranefield, Assistant Professor of Case Work, University of Michigan, June 2, 1938, DULP-MHC, Box 4, File 18.

success in supervising white students demonstrated to the (white) Department of Welfare administrative staff that African Americans possessed the skills required to oversee black and white social workers. Many "liberal people" in the social work structure "fell unconsciously into the pattern of segregation because it was what was done." After the Department of Welfare observed Whitby's interaction with the U of M students, she, along with Mrs. Snow F. Grisby, a women educated at Fisk and Case Western Reserve, advanced to administrative supervisory posts. Whitby and Grisby became the highest ranking African American women in city's white social work structure.[75]

Like Whitby, Dancy and the Detroit Urban League Staff supervised the training experience of at least a few University of Michigan social work students. Mildred Valentine, Field Work Supervisor of the U of M's Sociology Department, brought a number of students to the League in 1931 for a day of field work experience.[76] Impressed by what she saw, Carrol Rumsey, an African American social work student, requested to do her training internship at the League in the fall of 1931.[77] In a January 1932 letter assessing Rumsey's

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[75]Ibid, 12-13; "Negro Instructors at Wayne," *Michigan Chronicle*, 27 February 1954; and "Graduates in Detroit" [1933], DULP-MHC, Box 2, File 24.

[76]Letter to Dancy from Mildred A. Valentine (U of M), April 8, 1931, DULP-MHC, Box 2, File 11.

[77]Letter to Dancy, from Mildred Valentine, October 8, 1931, DULP-MHC, Box 2, File 15.

internship experience, Valentine wrote to Dancy and stated that, "Miss Rumsey has grown immensely as a result of the broader contacts which she has had during the semester . . . She wishes to continue with you next semester if that is satisfactory with you." Valentine went on to stress, "I want you to know that Miss Rumsey's placement with you was one of the most successful placements that we have made."[78] In 1936, another African American University of Michigan student, Mrs. Elizabeth M. Cooper, carried out similar field work with the League.[79] Both the League's and Whitby's experience as field work supervisors suggests that the U of M was interested in establishing better race relations in social work. In fact, in 1936, Robert Kelso, Director of the Institute of Health and Social Sciences at the U of M (the formal name of the newly accredited social work program) directly stated that he wanted to establish a "closer friendly understanding between the new institute" and the Detroit Urban League.[80]

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[78]Letter to Dancy, from Valentine, January 23, 1932 and Letter to Valentine, from Dancy, January 30, 1932, DULP-MHC, Box 2, File 17.

[79]Letter to Dancy, from Robert W. Kelso (U of M), March 5, 1936, DULP-MHC, Box 3, File 23.

[80]Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

ALTERNATIVE ROADS OF PROFESSIONALIZATION

EDUCATION AND ASSOCIATIONS ON THE LOCAL AND NATIONAL LEVEL

The emerging black social service leadership continuously worked on the local and national level to overcome the professional and racial barriers of the field. These men and women knew that African Americans needed access to education, training, and organizational support. In the mid-1920's, Dancy worked with a number of black social workers, including Whitby, Grisby, and Fowler, to establish the Detroit Council of Social Workers.[81] The organization endeavored to foster interracial cooperation among social workers and served as both a community service organization and an alternative professional association for African Americans. Membership was open to "anyone engaged or interested in social work."[82] The Council's official task was to act as a "clearing-house on subjects of general and special social work" and to promote "good-fellowship and the encouragement of worthy efforts and

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[81]"Constitution and By-Laws of the Detroit Council of Social Workers" [1926?], DULP-MHC, Box 1, File 16.

[82]Letter to DCSW Members, September 23, 1938, DULP-MHC, Box 8.

enterprises."[83] Each year the Council invited local and national figures to speak "before an interracial group" on a range of social work related topics. For example, National Urban League President, Eugene Kinckle Jones; local social service leader, Fred Butzel; *Opportunity* editor, Elmer Carter; and Dr. W.G. Bergman of the Department of Education, were amongst the distinguished individuals who spoke before the organization.[84] Additionally, the association held monthly meetings to discuss relevant issues. On one occasion in 1934, members contemplated the question "Does D-E-S-E-G-R-E-G-A-T-I-O-N Spell Opportunity for the Negro in Social Work Organizations?"[85]

The work of the Council benefitted many throughout Detroit's African American communities. It provided African Americans employed at agencies ranging from the YWCA to the Probation Division of the Recorder's Court with a forum for support and discussion that many were excluded from in the AASW. Additionally, Council workers volunteered their time and energy to support Green Acres, a summer camp for the

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[83]"Constitution and By-laws of the Detroit Council of Social Work" [1926?], DULP-MHC, Box 1 File 16.

[84]Letter to Detroit Council of Social Workers, May 11, 1932 DULP-MHC, Box 8; Letter to DCSW, from Dancy, October 21, 1926, DULP-MHC, Box 1 File 18; Letter DCSW, from Dancy, October 20, 1938, DULP-MHC, Box 1 File 25; Letter to Dr. W.G. Bergam, from Dancy, March 18, 1931, DULP-MHC, Box 2, File 10; and Letter to Dancy, from Elmer Carter, May 8, 1931, Box 2, File 12.

[85]Letter to Dancy from Mary Raines, March 1934, DULP-MHC, Box 8.

cities less advantaged black children.[86] In 1938, Council president Whitby, who by then had also become a part-time faculty member at Wayne University, declared that "several members of our group and other leaders in the community have expressed themselves as feeling that this organization is necessary and that it can play a vital role in our group and professional life at this time."[87]

In an effort to secure employment for qualified black social workers in and outside of the League, Dancy networked with League executives around the country, exchanging resumes and recommendation letters.[88] By 1930 the DUL listed seventy-two black social workers employed by the various public and private agencies in the city (see table 1).[89] Dancy was ambivalent. He believed that although this was "not

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[86]Minutes of Meeting, September 27, 1928, DULP-MHC, Box 8.

[87]Beulah Whitby appears to have been Wayne State's first black faculty member (based on my own research and that of Wayne's University archivist), however, I cannot actually prove this for certain. Whitby served as a part time instructor for the Social Work department beginning in 1938. "Negro Instructors at Wayne;" and Letter to Members of the Detroit Council of Social Workers, from Whitby, January 13, 1938, DULP-MHC, Box 8.

[88]Letter to Eugene Kinckle Jones, From John Dancy, May 19, 1926; Letter to John Dancy, from Gerald E. Allen, Canton Urban League, September 17, 1929, DULP-MHC, Box 1; A string of recommendation letters are sent out, and received by Dancy during the late 20's and into the early 30's, DULP-MHC, Box 1, Files 21-8.

[89]Although it is difficult to determine precisely how many white social workers were employed in the city in 1930, the results of a 1936 survey indicate that at least 720 whites were working as "professional" social workers. Whalen, 2.

as representative as it should be, it [was] none the less encouraging to note the trend of affairs." While the Depression would alter the city's entire social work structure, Dancy remained optimistic that within the coming years a greater number of black workers would find employment in social work and related fields.[90]

Dancy contended throughout the twenties and early thirties that many social service positions remained unfilled due to the absence of accredited professional education and training available to aspiring social workers in the Detroit area. Actually, most black women placed by the League did have sound educational backgrounds in sociology, psychology, and education, having obtained their degrees from a wide range of schools. Some attended local institutions such as the City College of Detroit (later Wayne State University) or the University of Michigan; many more went to historically black colleges and universities like Talledega, Fisk, and Morehouse.[91] Increasingly, African Americans earned their degrees from schools with social work programs or even specialty schools such as the New York and Atlanta Schools of Social Work. After 1930, Dancy focused his placement efforts

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[90]"Social Work in Detroit," March 11, 1930, DULP-MHC, Box 2, File 1.

[91]Wayne State University's name changed several times during the first half the of the twentieth century. Over the years it has been named all of the following: Detroit Junior College, College of the City of Detroit, Colleges of the City of Detroit, Wayne University, and Wayne State University.

on those with higher education and advised others that "now days . . . there are so many worthwhile Social Work Schools that the employer makes use of them rather than to accept the inexperienced worker."[92]

For years the emerging black social work leadership attempted to make social work education accessible to African Americans interested in social service careers. Most white institutions of higher learning adhered to the color line and consequently provided only limited opportunities to African Americans. Leaders such as Haynes contended that educating young people at historically black colleges might "furnish the key" to solving problems plaguing blacks in urban areas.[93] Haynes, the earliest African American to obtain professional training in research and social work (from Columbia University and the New York School of Philanthropy), established the first "worthwhile" social work training program catering to African Americans. The program Haynes instituted at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee in the early 1920's became the model for similar programs at other colleges and universities such as Morehouse, Talledega and Howard.[94] The

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[92]Recommendation and Application Files, Box 32; Letter to Miss Pearl Cowan, From Dancy, Sept. 22, 1931, DULP-MHC, Box 32, File 4.

[93]George E. Haynes, "Cooperation with Colleges in Securing and Training Negro Social Workers for Urban Centers," *Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Correction*, Boston, 1911, (Fort Wayne, Indiana: Fort Wayne Printing Co., 1911), 384-387, reprinted in Ross, 236.

[94]Ross, 423; Weiss, 76-77.

National Urban League played an essential role in getting these programs started by furnishing trained leadership and financial support.

The Atlanta School of Social Work, organized in conjunction with the Neighborhood Union and Morehouse College in 1920, became the most distinguished social work program located within a black college or university. Some of the nation's best known African American leaders such as John Hope, Lugenia Burns Hope, Jesse O. Thomas, and later, E. Franklin Frazier and Forrester B. Washington, increased the program's esteem and reputation. In 1928, long before many social work programs at prestigious (white) universities were officially approved, the Atlanta School received AASSW accreditation. Forrester Washington (former director of the Detroit Urban League) became the program's dean in 1927.[95] Following the school's directive, which stressed the importance of scientific method, training, and research, Washington strove to graduate students prepared to "handle the complex problems of social work in Negro Communities."[96] Additionally, Washington worked tirelessly to place the school's graduates in social service positions around the country. Although the National League asserted in 1927 that "Already the field of social service among colored people is

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[95]Ross, 432-3 and 444-5.

[96]*Bulletin*, Atlanta School of Social Work, 1929-30, DULP-MHC, Box 1.

demanding so many trained social workers that we are unable to meet the demand," in reality, League leaders and program directors continuously labored to open and maintain networks for the placement of educated African American social workers.[97]

Dancy spoke highly of the Atlanta School program, and in 1928 delivered a series of lectures at the school on "Social Work Amongst Negroes in Detroit."[98] The lectures became part of a course designed to introduce students to case work methods utilizing "the actual experiences of social agencies in certain Negro communities in different parts of the country." Washington wanted Dancy to address the Atlanta School students as he believed Detroit to be "one of the most important industrial centers in the country." Additionally, by 1928 Detroit had developed one of the largest African American city populations in the United States.[99]

Prior to 1929, the Atlanta School had placed no graduates in Detroit. Washington regularly wrote letters to Dancy in an effort to "sell" his students.[100] In a 1929 letter he pointed out that, unlike most black social workers in Detroit,

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[97]New Years Letter to the Detroit Urban League, from the National Urban League, January 8, 1927, DULP-MHC, Box 1, File 19.

[98]Letter to Dancy, from Washington, November 12, 1928, DULP-MHC, Box 1, File 25.

[99]Washington quoted in Thomas, 85.

[100]"Information concerning the Atlanta School of Social Work," July, 1928, DULP-MHC, Box 1 File 22.

who upon completing their education had a degree but no practical experience, the Atlanta School graduate had "two years training in a school of social work, one half of which has been spent in actual work in the field."[101] Although it is unclear how many Atlanta School graduates secured employment in Detroit, it appears that at least a few of the city's workers spent time in the program.[102] For example, in 1933 Dancy wrote a letter of recommendation for AASW membership for Mayme Cole, an Atlanta School graduate employed at the YWCA.[103] Some time prior to 1934, Robert Johnson, Vocational Director for the St. Antoine Branch of the YMCA, attended the Atlanta School as a guest student.[104] Carrol Rumsey, the social work student who trained at the Detroit Urban League in 1931, completed her graduate work at the Atlanta School in 1938. Rumsey wanted to return to Detroit in order to pursue a career "in either case work or group

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[101]Letter to Dancy from Washington, August 9, 1929, DULP-MHC, Box 1 File 28.

[102]I have records which list numerous African American's in Detroit as A.B.s from "Atlanta." I cannot be sure whether this refers to Atlanta University or the Atlanta School of Social Work. Later the two programs merged, however, in the late twenties and early thirties, they were separate institutions.

[103]Letter to Mable Ussell, From Dancy, May 22, 1933, DULP-MHC, Box 32, File 2.

[104]"Prospective Applicants for Work on Federal C.W.A. Project Number 292," January 11, 1934, DULP-MHC, Box 3, File 1.

work."[105] Undoubtedly, the absence of more Atlanta School graduates in Detroit reflects the preference Dancy gave to social workers already located in the city, especially after the onset of the Depression. When employment opportunities diminished, even for social workers, Dancy protected local African Americans.[106]

To assist young African Americans aspiring to social service careers, the National Urban League annually granted competitive scholarships to provide material aid and tuition waver for social work education.[107] The Urban League Fellows attended one of a number of designated schools such as the New York School of Philanthropy, Fisk University, and the Atlanta School of Social Work. Upon completing their education and training, the League required all Fellows to engage in at least one year of applied social work. Many of those within the League's top leadership, including Forrester B. Washington, were past Fellows.[108] Although women comprised almost ninety percent of African American social workers, the

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[105]Letter to Dancy, from Carrol Rumsy, May 14, 1938, DULP-MHC, Box 4, File 16.

[106]A June 11, 1931 letter to Miss A.H. Williams of Atlanta, Georgia, from John Dancy, is but one example of a string of rejection letters in which Dancy made it clear that preference would be given to local blacks for any existing social work positions open to African Americans, DULP-MHC, Box 32.

[107]The National Urban League began granting these scholarships in 1912.

[108]Weiss, 77-9.

National Urban League usually awarded more than half of the fellowships to men.[109] This should not come as a surprise. Just as in white agencies, men obtained most of the high ranking administrative posts in organizations like the Urban League. Notwithstanding, Dancy did recommend numerous female social workers for fellowship consideration.[110] In 1935, four Detroit area social workers made application for the grants.[111] In a biographical sketch accompanying the fellowship application, Helen Wright, a University of Michigan graduate, expressed the pressures placed upon African American social work students attending white institutions. She wrote "I was first a Negro, then Helen Wright. Whatever I did or failed to do, it reflected upon my group, hence it has kept me consciously putting my best foot forward."[112] Arnold Hill, of the National Urban League, expressed interest in Wright and at least two other Detroit applicants. However, it does not appear any of them were awarded the fellowship.[113]

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[109]Eugene Kinckle Jones, "A Dream, A Quarter Century, A Reality! How the Urban League Has Served," *Opportunity* vol. 13 (November 1935): 329; "Training Negro Social Workers: The Story of the Urban League Fellowships," *Opportunity* vol. 13 (November 1935): 333-4.

[110]There is a string of letters located in DULP-MHC, Box 1, Files 25-28; and Box 3, Files 8, 10, and 12.

[111]Letter to Dancy, from Arnold T. Hill (NUL), July 11, 1935, DULP-MHC, Box 9, File 20.

[112]Helen Wright, "Biographical Material for the National Urban League Fellowship Competition," DULP-MHC, Box 9, File 20.

[113]Jones, "Training Negro Social Workers," 333.

Dancy attempted to establish three social work scholarships (intended to become part of the National Urban League Fellowship program) for African American graduate students attending the University of Michigan. Dancy made a scholarship proposal to the Horace A. Rackham Fund in 1935 stating that "the League feels that greater stress should be put upon the training for those of the race who will eventually occupy positions of leadership in the field of social service."[114] He argued that many black students who completed undergraduate degrees in sociology could not pursue graduate education due to inadequate finances. Dancy noted that the League had "found a scarcity of competent people to fill the jobs that frequently are referred to it" because of the lack of educational opportunity open to African Americans.[115]

The Rackham Fund board deliberated over the 1935 proposal and concluded that the "request was vague." One member

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[114]The Urban League was one of many organizations eliciting Rackham Fund grants in the mid-1930's. Horace Rackham, the Ford multi-millionaire, died in 1933, at which time the Rackham Fund was established. *Detroit Free Press*, 9 July 1933, DULP-MHC, Box 25.

[115]Letter to Dancy, from Arnold Hill, May 13, 1935, DULP-MHC, Box 3, File 17; letter to the Fund, from Dancy, July 17, 1935, United Community Service Central File, ALHUA-WSU, Box 122, File 18; letter to Mark Knapp, from Dancy, July 17, 1935, DULP-MHC Box 3, File 18; letter to Dancy, from the Rackham Fund, August 1, 1935, United Community Service Central File, ALHUA-WSU, Box 122, File 18; letter to Mr. Parker and Miss Whiting, from P. Dodge, August 2, 1935; and, letter to the Board of Trustees, Rackham Fund, from P. Dodge, August 2, 1935, United Community Service Central File, ALHUA-WSU, Box 34, File 20

questioned the validity of donating money without consideration for "poor white" social workers. Although the board recognized the need for "better trained colored social workers in the field," and the difficulty African Americans faced in obtaining education, they delayed granting fellowship funds. The Board contended that "a well financed school of social work could be of greater use to the Urban League than merely three scholarships."[116] Clearly, however, these two matters need not have been mutually exclusive.

The absence of a well funded, accredited social work program in the Detroit vicinity prior to 1935 had created considerable concern throughout the city's social work establishment for two primary reasons. First, the tremendous need generated by the Great Depression necessitated that a vast number of workers be trained to address increasingly complex social welfare problems. Second, the city's social work establishment was well aware that even junior membership in the AASW required professional course work. Hence, the Detroit Chapter of the AASW and Detroit Community Union worked in conjunction to provide supplemental courses between 1930 and 1935.[117] Instructors taught the first courses on a

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[116]Memos, Detroit Urban League Papers and Rackham Fund Papers, 1935, United Community Service Central File, ALHUA-WSU.

[117]The Detroit Chapter of the AASW had its first meeting on January 25, 1929. Its membership requirements were identical to those of the National AASW. United Community Service Central File, ALHUA-WSU, Box 1, Files 23 and 15.

voluntary basis and students did not receive university credit for the work. However, by 1932 students obtained interim credit towards AASW junior membership for taking the classes.[118]

Although it is impossible to know exactly how many African American women enrolled in these special courses, evidence suggests that a number of black women in Detroit were able to seize the opportunity to obtain education and improve their resumes. For example, in 1930 Miss Mildred McLeod, already a graduate of Talledega College in Alabama, enhanced her education by taking courses offered in social case work, youth behavior, and the family.[119] Detroit's social work leaders taught many of these courses which provided black women with a unique opportunity to make important contacts. For some African American women, contact with the city's social work leaders translated into letters of recommendation and even job opportunities. For example, early in 1930, McLeod took a course offered by Leon Frost, Director of the Children's Aid Society; later that year she secured employment

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[118]Celcilia Barns, Alan Clinton-Cirocco, Sari Finkelstein, and Jim McCarthy, "Fifty Years of Social Work Education at Wayne State University: An Historical Sketch" (M.A. Thesis, Wayne State University, 1981), 10-11.

[119]Letter to Dancy, From Detroit Community Union, Dec., 10, 1930, DULP-MHC Box 2, File 7; "Professional Courses for Social Workers, 1931-2," DULP-MHC, Box 2, File 8; Letter to Miss Mary C. Kenny, Department of Public Welfare, From John Dancy, March 12, 1930, DULP-MHC, Box 32, File 2.

with the Society.[120] In 1931, Miss Ernestine Singleton received a glowing letter of recommendation from Frost after completing his course. It is interesting, however, to note some of the language used by Frost. He states that "it would not be a *waste of time* to give [Miss Singleton] intelligent encouragement" believing that women like her should be "drawn into the field of Negro workers."[121]

In October of 1934, the AASW Detroit Chapter bulletin announced that professional courses for university credit in social work would be offered at the University of Detroit, the University of Michigan, Mary Grove College, and Wayne University, although none of these schools had as of yet received AASSW accreditation.[122] However, with financial assistance from the Rackham and McGregor Funds, the University of Michigan program reorganized its curriculum by 1935 to satisfy the accreditation standards.[123] Michigan joined the ranks of thirty-three universities fulfilling the AASSW 1932 standard which required accredited schools to offer at least

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[120]Letter to Madeline Fowler, Secretary DCSW, From Dancy, Oct. 7, 1930, DULP-MHC, Box 2, File 5.

[121]Letter to John Dancy, from Leon Frost, March 19, 1931, DULP-MHC, Box 32, File 2.

[122]Bulletin of the American Association of Social Workers, Detroit Chapter, October 1934, DULP-MHC, Box 6, File 28.

[123]"Historical Sketch of University of Michigan School of Social Work," Finders Aid, School of Social Work Papers, Michigan Historical collections, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan; Phyllis I. Vroom, "An Institutional History of Wayne State University School of Social Work" M.A. Thesis, Wayne State University, 1983); Whalen, 18.

one year of graduate-level course work.[124] Although not officially accredited until the 1941-42 academic year, Wayne did reorganize and establish a graduate social work program in the mid-30's. Wayne awarded its first three M.A. degrees in social work in 1936, a number which remained fairly constant until the close of the decade.[125] It is not possible to know for certain how many African American students completed the social work programs at Wayne or the University of Michigan (as the universities did not record the break down of students by race); however, it is not likely that many African Americans had significant access to these programs. For example, in 1934, blacks comprised just over one percent of Wayne's total student body.[126]

The establishment of special courses and social work programs at the area universities may have helped some black women obtain the education needed for AASW membership, however, the professional stamp continued to elude others. Using his influence both as Urban League director and AASW Detroit Chapter committee chairman, Dancy persistently wrote recommendation letters for black women seeking Association

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[124]Leighninger, 36-7.

[125]Patricia Bartkowski, "School of Social Work 1930-1952;" and, Enrollment Report, Wayne State University Archives, Wayne State University.

[126]Report, 1934, DULP-MHC, Box 8, File 16; Enrollments 1914-1947, Wayne State University Archives, Wayne State University.

membership.[127] Although the association had accepted a number of African Americans by the mid-1930's, Dancy complained in 1936 that admission standards made it difficult for many to gain access into the professional organization.[128]

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[127]Letter to Dancy, from AASW Detroit Chapter, March 14, 1930, Box 2 File 1; letter to Mrs. Mable Ussell, from Dancy, May 22, 1933, Box 32, File 2; letter to AASW, from Dancy, February 22, 1936, Box 2, File 28, DULP-MHC.

[128]Minutes of Meeting, AASW Detroit Chapter, Jan. 10, 1936, DULP-MHC, Box 6, File 28; and, Survey [November 1936], DULP-MHC, Box 3, File 29.

CHAPTER 4

SOCIAL WORK IN DETROIT

THE DEPRESSION ERA

The onset of the Great Depression created opportunities for African American social workers despite the AASW's exclusionary requirements. Tremendous economic displacement created a relief load well beyond the capacities of the existing public and private agencies. As the Federal government for the first time channeled large sums of money into public relief, there was a demand for an "army of workers, federal, state, and local." In fact, Dr. Robert W. Kelso, a prominent leader in Detroit's social work establishment, contended that the overall expansion prompted by the Depression gave the field "its first chance to become a forthright and thoroughgoing profession with opportunity to render service to the public comparable to the professions of law, medicine and engineering."[129] To the chagrin of the AASW, the Detroit Department of Public Welfare, like that in many other cities, was forced to lower its educational qualifications for an emergency classification of family

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[129]Dr. Robert W. Kelso, "The Permanent Effects of the Depression Upon Social Work Structure," (April 29, 1939), United Community Services Central File, ALHUA-WSU.

investigators.[130] In fact, eighty-five percent of the public agency's staff in 1936, was added after 1930.[131]

Aware that the city's Welfare Department intended to expand, Dancy contacted African American social workers (both those in need of employment and those seeking advancement in the field) and encouraged them to apply for positions. In a 1933 letter to Mrs. Dallas Dutton Wells, a woman educated at the University of Michigan and trained at the Children's Aid Society, Dancy wrote, "I note that thirty new workers are to be taken on by the Department of Public Welfare . . . It seems to me that you ought to make application for one of these places . . . I think there will be but few whose credentials will surpass yours." Dancy stressed that she "Look after this matter immediately in case you are interested."[132] A number of African Americans benefitted from the department's expansion. Between 1929 and 1936 alone, at least twenty-five

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[130]This action was contrary to the wishes of the AASW who had long pushed the public agencies to comply with the minimum educational hiring standards constituted by the association. By lowering the education requirements for employment, the country's Welfare Departments were more or less mounting a direct challenge to the social work leadership, who, even in a time of desperate need for expanded services, were still asking how exclusive they could be. The social work leadership feared that lowering standards would damage the overall professional status of social work. Please see, Leighninger, Chapter 3.

[131]Whalen, 10.

[132]Letter to Dancy, from Mrs. Dallas D. Wells, February 28, 1933, DULP-MHC, Box 32, file 6; and, letter to Mrs. Dallas Dutton Wells, from Dancy, March 9, 1933, DULP-MHC, Box 2, File 27.

blacks worked as investigators in the Department, with an additional woman (Sophia Cole) obtaining a supervisory post.[133] By 1938, approximately thirty-five African Americans held stable social work positions at the Department.[134]

The problems generated by the Great Depression only exacerbated the already troubling social and economic circumstances found in much of urban black America. In 1931 Dancy reported to the Detroit Community Union that "the whole adult Negro population of Detroit has at some time or other made use of [the League's] services."[135] When other segments of the nation began to perceive at least signs of recovery, many in urban black communities failed to experience any measure of relief. In 1933, the Department of Public Welfare reported that seventy-six percent of welfare dependent families in Detroit's "blighted areas" were black. Additionally, the percentage of African American case loads increased almost ten percent between 1933 and 1934 alone.[136]

The city's social work structure had no choice but to acknowledge and address the unique and troubling situation

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[133]Survey [Nov. 1936], DULP-MHC, Box 3, File 29.

[134]Letter to Mr. Claude A. Barnett, Director of the Associated Negro Press, from Dancy, March 3, 1938, DULP-MHC, Box 4, File 12.

[135]Letter to Mr. Dodge, From John Dancy, June 24, 1931, United Community Service Central File, ALHUA-WSU, Box 34, File, 19

[136]"Public Welfare," DULP-MHC, BOX? FILE?

faced by Detroit's black communities. In February of 1934, Cecile Whalen, from the Department of Public Welfare, requested that Dancy come and speak before staff members "on some phases of recent social problems as they particularly affect the Negro."[137] In May of that same year, the Council of Social Agencies of Metropolitan Detroit wrote to Dancy expressing concern about the education and training needs of the African Americans interested in social work careers.[138] In the early thirties, the state of Michigan had become one of only five states in the country to establish a department to research and study the conditions affecting African Americans throughout the state.[139] Similarly, in 1935, the Detroit Department of Public Welfare took steps towards instituting a "colored" division.[140]

As government and private welfare funds diminished under the tremendous demand created by the Depression, the social work structure itself began to crumble under financial pressure. Although the Great Depression initially provided a boost to African American social workers, the unrelenting nature of the economic crisis soon undermined their efforts. Increasingly in the 1930's, Dancy replied to social work

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[137]Letter to Dancy, from Cecile Whalen, February 14, 1934, DULP-MHC, Box 3, File 2.

[138]Letter to Dancy, from Earl N. Parker, May 11, 1934, Box 3, File 6.

[139]Washington, "Negroes," 316.

[140]Haynes, "Negroes," 292.

employment inquiries by writing "I know of no opening for colored women or white women for that matter, for Detroit is in the throes of a serious industrial depression." He was particularly discouraging to people seeking employment from outside Detroit, believing that all opportunities should be reserved for African Americans from within the city. In a 1933 letter to one Boston woman, Dancy wrote "at the present time there is absolutely no chance for employment in any of our Community Centers, or Settlements. Most of the Settlement Houses and Community Centers are on the verge of closing because of financial depression."[141]

In 1933, when even the Detroit Urban League cut its staff from nine members to five, and the Community Fund declared a fiscal emergency for Detroit's entire social service structure, many African Americans continued to work in the capacity of federal relief workers or volunteers.[142] As existing positions increasingly became part of the Federal Government's Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the 1930's, Dancy was quick to recommend and secure posts for well educated and trained African American social workers.[143] In January of 1934, Dancy recommended a number of African

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[141]Letter to Mrs. Dorothy Fassitt, from Dancy, May 22, 1933, DULP-MHC, Box 2, File 29.

[142]Letter to "Contributor", from Percival Dodge, May 27, 1933, DULP-MHC, Box 2, File 29; and, [1933], DULP-MHC, Box 2, File 24.

[143]Letter To George W. Cathcart, from Dancy, February 4, 1936, DULP-MHC, Box 3, File 22.

American social workers for a slum clearance project, stating that "in choosing these people I have tried to make use of college trained individuals belonging in Detroit and in need of work."[144] Those Dancy recommended included thirty-one individuals with education and training along the lines of the following:

Thelma Garvin
University of Illinois - A.B., 1930
Courses at University of Chicago - Sociology
2 years Teaching in Atlanta, GA
Provident Hospital Social Services Case-work

Marguerite Stephens
City College - A.B.
Seven years Group work - Franklin Street Settlement
Three months Case work Detroit urban League
Four years Counselor - Y.W.C.A CAMP

Ruth Anderson
Wilberforce - A.B.
Graduate work at University of Michigan and University of Cincinnati
Seven years teaching experience
Volunteer Social work at Children's Aid Society (Investigation and Case Work)[145]

Other well educated and trained African Americans remained unemployed but continued to work as social service providers in the capacity of volunteers. The City-wide Recreation Council recruited and placed trained and untrained people alike to engage in voluntary service. The Council even

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[144]Letter to John Dallenger, from John Dancy, January 17, 1934, DULP-MHC, Box 3, File 1.

[145]Prospective Applicants for work on Federal C.W.A. Project Number 292, January 11, 1934, DULP-MHC, Box 3, File 1.

offered to provide the Detroit Urban League with volunteers. One of the biggest problems all cities faced as a result of the Great Depression was a way to keep the "unemployed occupied in a useful manner."[146]

Aware of the limited opportunities available to African Americans during the Depression era, some social workers attempted to ensure that upon retirement or advancement, other African Americans replaced them. For instance, Lilian Bowles Brooks, a social worker for Goodwill Services, informed Dancy in 1936 of her pending retirement. She encouraged him to try to place another African American woman worker, as she feared without prodding a white woman would receive her post.[147]

Although it is difficult to make sense of the mixed impact that the Depression had on social work in Detroit, it is possible to get a sense of the distribution, social standing, and racial make up of the city's public and private agencies in the 1930's. In 1936 the Detroit Chapter of the AASW distributed a survey to the city's public and private agencies. The Association wanted to obtain data on the education, training, experience, duties, salaries, gender and racial make up of Detroit's social work professionals. From the estimated 765 professional social workers in the city in 1936, they received 516 responses, representing forty-four

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[146]Letter to Dancy, from Anne Sprague, May 12, 1933 and, May 17, 1933, DULP-MHC, Box 2, File 29.

[147]Letter to Dancy, from Lilian Bowles Brooks, December 4, 1936, DULP-MHC, Box 3, File 30.

agencies. Analysis of the information became part of a published government report in 1938. With the exception of one reference stating that six percent of Detroit's social workers were black, the report included no discussion of African Americans in the profession. According to a table contained in the report, however, seven of the forty-four responding agencies stated that they employed African American social workers (see table 2). The Department of Public Welfare and the Children's Aid Society had the largest number of African Americans in their employ.[148]

The report's data on salaries makes a considerable statement about the professional status of social work by the mid-1930's, as well as the position of the African American worker within the Detroit structure. The 1923 Federal Classification Act set "an entrance salary of at least $2,000 per year" as a standard requirement for a position to be considered "professional." Thirteen years later, the median salary for the social workers responding to the survey was $1,573, "less than the minimum adequate budget for a wage earner's family as computed by the Visiting Housekeepers Association." Without question, the Depression reduced salaries in all professions. However, as pointed out by historian Daniel Walkowitz, even in the late 1920's, prior to the onset of the Depression, the average social work income proved insufficient to fulfill middle-class aspirations. In

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[148]Whalen, 2-3.

fact, many single women found it difficult to as much as support themselves on their social work salary.[149]

The vast majority of African American social workers employed in the Detroit structure worked in the two lowest paying sectors of the public and private agencies. In fact, the private children's agency's median income was a mere $1,418, the lowest of all categories for social work employment. The Children's Aid Society, the private agency in which many African American women had found employment over the years, fell into this category.[150]

Detroit's African American social work leaders, such as Dancy and Whitby, remained optimistic about the position of African Americans in the city's social work structure. The number of professional black social workers in the city had increased almost steadily between 1915 and 1940. By 1938, Dancy reported 100 African Americans employed as social workers.[151] By contrast, in most other areas of employment, African Americans confronted seriously depressed job prospects in the late 1930's. For example, after a brief hiring boom in 1937, black auto workers experienced another bottoming out in

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[149]Walkowitz, 1063.

[150]Whalen, 11, 37, 51, 54.

[151]Letter to John A. Johnson, from Dancy, May 5, 1938, DULP-MHC, Box 10, File 16.

1938.[152] All and all, the number of employed African Americans in Detroit decreased from twenty-eight thousand prior to the Depression to only ten thousand by 1938.

Dancy did not take the professional successes of black social workers for granted. In December of 1938, he reflected on what he believed to be the responsibility of African Americans in the social work profession. He wrote that

> the day of glamour in social work . . . is over and things are now measured by scientific rules. These tools should be known and used so that our results will not be found lacking. No longer can we expect employers to give jobs unless they believe we have something to offer. It is our duty to sell them the idea of our usefulness and ability to do the job. In seeking job opportunities we must make use of that dormant pioneering approach and go out and seek. Don't wait for someone else to lay the ground work and when the 'band wagon' is passing, think there is room for us - for it will be filled long before it reaches us.[153]

Perhaps Dancy was underestimating the barriers that African Americans would continue to confront into the 1940's. Detroit's black social workers persisted in their efforts to address problems of unemployment, housing, and health as new waves of southern migrants moved north. While the United States recovered from the economic depression of the 1930's, new tensions developed as a result of the urban race riots and the imminent war. These issues would capture the time and

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[152]Letter to Mr. L. F. Coles, from Dancy, March 9, 1938; and Letter to E.K. Jones, from Dancy, March 10, 1938, DULP-MHC, Box 4, File 12.

[153]John Dancy, [Dec. 1938?], DULP-MHC, Box 4, File 25.

energy of Detroit's black and white social workers. In 1940, however, African Americans were celebrating as Detroit hosted the international exhibition, "75 Years of Progress of the Negro." National black leaders such as Eugene Kinckle Jones and Mary McLeod Bethune served as international advisors for the event. Detroit's black social workers invested considerable energy preparing for the occasion. Grisby served as the exhibition's "Co-ordinator of Exhibits and Organizations," and Dancy worked as a local committee person.[154] The exhibition celebrated social, political, and economic advancement; however, as Detroit's African American social workers' struggle to provide for themselves and their community demonstrates, new obstacles accompanied every victory.

In these turbulent times, African American social workers clearly established a permanent professional base in Detroit. Although not represented in proportion to the needs of their communities, or even their numbers as an African American population, these social workers broke through both racial and professional barriers between 1916 and 1940. Using the resources and networks which developed on the local and national levels amongst African Americans, and using their own stamina to obtain education and opportunity usually denied to blacks during this era, these individuals carved out their own

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[154]"75 Years of Progress of the Negro Shown in International Exposition, May--June, 1940, Detroit Michigan," DULP-MHC, Box 4, File 28.

careers while also providing desperately needed services to the city's various black communities. In the thirties and forties, black workers who had made their way into the profession continued to seize opportunities and move into different, more challenging, and increasingly prestigious posts.

CONCLUSION

Although this is not the final word on African American social workers in Detroit, this research demonstrates that blacks in Detroit successfully wielded the collective resources of African Americans locally and nationally to construct a base for social work in the city. My research also reveals that many sources and questions remain which could contribute to our understanding of social work and social service provided by, and for, African Americans in Detroit during the Great Migration and Great Depression eras. If time permitted for additional research, I would begin by examining more closely the social work provided by Detroit's black churches. I know that Bethel African Methodist Episcopal has extensive papers which might uncover information about the black social workers who carried out services in their relief department. I would ask questions about the relationship between the League and church relief providers and examine the degree of "professionalism" found among the church workers.

Next, I would attempt to track down some of the men and women who worked as professional social service providers. I know their voices are largely absent from this thesis. I attempted to trace the whereabouts of a number of women;

however, I had little success. I am confident that conversations with these women would help me to better evaluate the gender dimension of the emergence of black social work in Detroit. I have largely drawn from the words of the African American (male) social work leadership and organizational records. In some respects I believe I have fallen into the source trap, in which the voices of women are left unheard.

Notwithstanding, I have learned a great deal about the unfolding of professional social work for African Americans locally and nationally. I believe I could expand this thesis into a doctoral dissertation by developing a number of themes I have only touched on here. Looking at the larger question of "African American Women and Relief in Detroit, 1900-1950" I would continue to examine female migration, women's neighborhood, club and church work, the role of women in the Detroit Urban League and NAACP, and the professional development of women in social work, medicine, and even education.

APPENDIX

TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN SOCIAL WORKERS IN DETROIT

MARCH 11, 1930

Women's Division Police Department	3
Probation Department Municipal Court	3
Juvenile Court Probation Department	1
Department of Public Welfare	5
Visiting Nurses Association	12
Children's Aid Society	5
Girls Protective League	2
Visiting Housekeepers	2
Detroit Urban League	7
YMCA	5
YWCA	4
Baptist Christian Center	3
Recreation Commission	12
Detroit Community Fund	1
Board of Health Nurses	4
Sophie Wright Settlement	1
Episcopal Church Eight Mile Rd	1
Department of Health	1

Source: DULP-MHC, Box 2, File 1

TABLE 2

Workers in Agencies by Sex and Color

Statistics - 1936 survey
Detroit Bureau of Gov. Research, 1938

Agency	Total			White			Negro		
	Tot.	M.	F.	Tot.	M.	F.	Tot.	M.	F.
TOTALS	516	65	451	486	62	434	30	3	27
1. Big Brothers	1	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
2. Boy Scouts	4	4	-	4	4	-	-	-	-
3. Brightmoor Comm.	4	2	2	4	2	2	-	-	-
4. Camp Fire Girls	3	-	3	3	-	3	-	-	-
5. Children's Aid	38	3	35	31	2	29	7	1	6
6. Children's Center	11	1	10	11	1	10	-	-	-
7. Consultation Bureau	6	-	6	6	-	6	-	-	-
8. Council of Soc Agen	5	-	5	5	-	5	-	-	-
9. Detroit Orth. Cnt	7	-	7	7	-	7	-	-	-
10. Brd of Education	12	-	12	12	-	12	-	-	-
11. Council of Churches	2	1	1	2	1	1	-	-	-
12. Detroit Public Welf.	223	32	191	208	30	178	15	2	13
13. Evan Deaconess Hosp	1	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	-
14. Florence Crittenton	5	-	5	5	-	5	-	-	-
15. Franklin St. Settle.	2	1	1	2	1	1	-	-	-
16. Girl Scouts	3	-	3	3	-	3	-	-	-
17. Girls Prot. League	7	-	7	6	-	6	1	-	1
18. Grace Hospital	4	-	4	4	-	4	-	-	-
19. Harper Hospital	5	-	5	5	-	5	-	-	-
20. Jewish Child Plcmt.	4	1	3	4	1	3	-	-	-
21. Jewish Comm Center	7	4	3	7	4	3	-	-	-
22. Jewish Soc. Services	9	2	7	9	2	7	-	-	-
23. League of Handicap.	3	1	2	3	1	2	-	-	-
24. League of Cath. Wom.	12	1	11	12	1	11	-	-	-
25. Luella Hannan Mem	1	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	-
26. Mich. Soc. Crip. Cld	2	1	1	2	1	1	-	-	-
27. Mich. Children's Aid	5	-	5	5	-	5	-	-	-
28. North End Clinic	4	-	4	4	-	4	-	-	-
29. Polish Aid Society	1	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	-
30. Providence Hospital	4	-	4	4	-	4	-	-	-
31. St. Francis Home	1	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	-
32. St. Joseph Mercy Hsp	1	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	-
33. St. Vincent dePaul	13	1	12	13	1	12	-	-	-
34. Servicemen's Bureau	8	6	2	8	6	2	-	-	-
35. Sophie Wright Settle	6	1	5	6	1	4	1	-	1
36. Tau Beta Comm. House	2	1	1	2	1	1	-	-	-
37. Traveler's Aid	5	-	5	5	-	5	-	-	-
38. Visiting Housekprs	4	-	4	4	-	4	-	-	-
39. Wayne University	1	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	-
40. Woman's Hospital	4	-	4	4	-	4	-	-	-
41. YWCA	21	-	21	19	-	19	2	-	2
42. Women's Div.- Police	42	-	42	39	-	39	3	-	3
43. Eloise Parole Clinic	11	-	11	10	-	10	1	-	1
44. Ford Republic	2	1	1	2	1	1	-	-	-

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