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“To Struggle and Battle and Overcome”:
The Educational Thought of Nannie Helen Burroughs, 1875-1961
By

Shantina Shannell Jackson

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
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University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Daniel Perlstein, Chair
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Professor Ula Taylor

Summer 2015

“To Struggle and Battle and Overcome”:
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Shantina Shannell Jackson

Abstract

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Few twentieth century African American educators were as influential in their lifetime and as neglected by scholars in our day as Nannie Helen Burroughs. The founder of the National Training School for Women and Girls, she was admired by African American leaders ranging from Mary Church Terrell, Anna Julia Cooper, Carter G. Woodson, Ella Baker and Martin Luther King, Jr. Relying on Burroughs’ papers and other archival sources, this dissertation examines Burroughs’ educational thought and its relationship to her leadership of the Women’s Convention of the National Baptist Church, the International Council of Women of the Darker Races, the National Association of Wage Earners and other Black organizations. This dissertation argues that Burroughs both drew on the main currents of African American thought and developed a unique synthesis of practical education, prophetic Christian Pan Africanism and woman-centered leadership.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my uncle Fred Davis Jackson. I wish you were still here to read this study, but I take comfort in knowing that you are with me in spirit. Your scholarly example will remain with me always.

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A Note on Language

For the purposes of this dissertation, I use the words “Colored” and “Negro” when referring to terms used by Burroughs and her contemporaries when they refer to African Americans. When referring to contemporary ideas, my thought and analyses, I use the terms Black and African American interchangeably. Also, when referring to competing education philosophies of the twentieth century, I utilize the terms “vocational” and “industrial” education interchangeably and the terms “liberal arts” and “classical” education interchangeably.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABHMS	American Baptist Home Mission Society
ASNLH	Association for the Study of Negro Life and History
ICWDR	International Council of the Women of Darker Races
MID	Military Intelligence Division
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NACW	National Association of Colored Women
NAWE	National Association of Wage Earners
NBC	National Baptist Convention
NLRCW	National League of Republican Colored Women
NTPS	National Training and Professional School
NTSWG	National Training School for Women and Girls
WBA	World Baptist Association
WC	Women's Convention
WABHMS	Women's American Baptist Home Mission Society
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

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Chapter 1- Discovering Nannie Helen Burroughs

Nannie Helen Burroughs (1875-1961) was a renowned educator, orator, religious leader and activist. In 1901, she founded the Women's Convention, auxiliary to the National Baptist Convention. Eight years later in 1909, she founded the National Training School for Women and Girls in Washington, D.C. The school opened with humble beginnings, with nineteen students. By 1929, the school grew to 102 students, eight teachers, and eight buildings valued at over \$225,000. The National Training School provided both industrial and classical education and trained Black women from the US and abroad for careers as missionaries, teachers, domestic servants, dressmakers, business women, printers, social workers, and other various professions.¹

Burroughs went on to found or participate in several institutions throughout her lifetime including the National Association of Colored Women, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Association of Wage Earners, the International Council of Women of the Darker Races, and the Black Women's Republican Society. In addition to her club organizing, she was an incessant writer and orator. She was the editor of *The Christian Banner*, stenographer for the Foreign Missionary Board of the National Baptist Convention, and editor of *The Worker*, the official missionary publication for the National Baptists. She also wrote creatively penning several plays and at least two songs. Burroughs was well-known and respected by the brightest minds of the twentieth century including Booker T. Washington, Mary Church Terrell, Carter G. Woodson, Paul Robeson, Jeremiah Wright, and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. After viewing her play in 1929, W.E.B. Du Bois stated to her, "I was astonished and gratified to note the way it gripped and interested the audience. Your ability to hold the mass of our people is extraordinary. We have much to learn from you."² In 1956, Martin Luther King Jr., implored Burroughs to come to the aid of Montgomery Bus boycotters. "As the first leader of Negro women," he wrote her, "it is imperative that you come to give hope to the thousands of women who are paying the price of sacrifice in our struggle."³

Despite her lifelong commitment to Black women's education and being so highly regarded by some of the giants of African American intellectual life, I had only come to know Burroughs around 2006. My attraction to her was magnetic. Burroughs' fierce commitment to her Christian morals, her strong feminist theologizing, and love of music reminded me of my great grandmother, Armay, who had recently been diagnosed with dementia. As my great grandmother's dementia progressed, there was less and less she could remember. The vivid memories she collected over her lifetime as a mother, sister, Sunday School teacher, prayer warrior, housekeeper, church member, factory worker, and gospel music connoisseur had become more and more difficult to recall. Whenever I would visit my great grandmother, who I affectionately called my "Great Bigmomma," she would ask me the same the question over and over again. It became our predictable routine. I would come sit at her bedside, she would flash a quick smile and with an inquisitive glare lean into me and ask, "You still teaching, baby?"

¹ National Training School For Women and Girls Enrollment Term: 1909-1910 List of 1909 Registered Students, Box 165. Nannie Helen Burroughs Papers (hereafter Burroughs Papers), Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Sharon Harley, "'Nannie Burroughs: Black Goddess of Liberty,'" *Journal of Negro History* 81, no. 1 (Winter- Autumn 1993): 65.

² Letter from W. E. B. Du Bois to The National Training School for Women and Girls, May 17, 1929 (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

³ Letter from Martin Luther King, Jr. to Nannie Helen Burroughs, November 12, 1956, Box 16. Nannie Helen Burroughs Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

“Yes,” I would affirm. If she was feeling particularly strong on a given day, she would clench her fist, point it at me and excitedly proclaim, “Teaching! Now, that’s a GOOD job! You can change the world!” On her weaker days when her hands failed her, she could only nod slowly to emphasize these words. Great Bigmomma and I held this same conversation repeatedly, sometimes as frequently as once every ten minutes. Even as her death drew nearer and when vocalizing the simplest phrases required Herculean effort, my Great Bigmomma delivered the same report to me, that teaching was a GOOD job.

I indeed was a teacher and honestly at that time, I thought it was just a decent job. In 2009, I was teaching a small group of African American high school seniors in Oakland Unified School District, one of the poorest performing school districts in Northern California. The students had failed the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) twice and had one final chance to pass. If they failed a third and final time, they would not receive a high school diploma. I was called in to take over the class and perform a Hail Mary of sorts and cover two year’s worth of Algebra and Geometry test content in four short months. As if that wasn’t hard enough, I was also in the midst of my own internal struggle around the role of high stakes testing for Black children. Getting seniors who spent eleven years in severely under-resourced math classes to master the Pythagorean Theorem proved quite difficult. I was also a student working toward my Ph.D. in education at UC Berkeley, and was enrolled in a graduate seminar entitled The Progressive Tradition in American Education. Midway through the semester, I discovered an article about Nannie Burroughs and National Training School for Women and Girls. Though I had earned my Bachelor’s degree in African American Studies from a prestigious university, and been raised in the Black church, I had never heard of Nannie Burroughs or her school that trained Black girls to provide excellent domestic service at a time when domestic service was practically the only employment option for Black girls sans college educations.

Great Bigmomma never attended the National Training School for Women and Girls, but she certainly was the kind of girl Burroughs would have wanted as a student in her school – Black, female, bright, poor, industrious, Christian and no stranger to physical labor. I’d grown up hearing the stories of Mrs. Mills, the “nice white lady” that Great Bigmomma worked for. Great Bigmomma toiled day in and day out, scrubbing Mrs. Mills’ floorboards, countertops, and bathtub for barely a living wage. She continued in the domestic service field until the 1940s when World War II expanded and enlarged employment opportunities for Black women.

My intellectual curiosity for Nannie Burroughs intensified in 2009. That same year, my Great Bigmomma died. Her death left a huge void in the family, and those of us left behind faced the uncertain task of maintaining the family structure without our beloved matriarch. We found solace in recalling her words back to our remembrance. My Great Bigmomma’s proclamation, that teaching was a good job, never left me. How was it that my Great Bigmomma, a poor, uneducated Black woman born in the South and migrated West, shared similar beliefs about teaching with Anna Julia Cooper, Mary Church Terrell, and of course, Nannie Burroughs? Why did my Great Bigmomma, who was separated from these dynamic women by education, socioeconomics, social status, time and space, reach the same conclusion – that teaching was a vitally important work for Black women, for their growth as individuals, and for the race. And yes, it WAS a good job, too. For as long as I could remember, I yearned to teach. First, I started instructing my stuffed animals. Sammy the Seal, my favorite plush companion, was my first and best student. By middle school, I graduated to teaching humans and became a Children’s Church volunteer. In high school, I earned extra money tutoring struggling math students in the Black Student Union and while an undergraduate at UCLA I taught reading skills to incarcerated youth

for the Los Angeles Youth Authority. After five years of teaching math and science in public and private high schools, I eventually set my sights on earning a Masters and PhD in the field of education where I have embarked on the serious study of Black women educators.

As I continued my study of Black women educators and school builders in graduate school, I became more and more convinced that my own trajectory toward education was not set in motion by a collection of random life events. But rather that my zeal for teaching placed me within a tradition of Black women educators who had dedicated their lives to uplifting the race through teaching. I began to reflect on my own childhood, and I looked around at the women in my family. In addition to my aforementioned Great Bigmomma, there was her daughter, my grandmother, Ethel whom I affectionately call Bigmomma, my mother, Cassandra, and my father's youngest sister, Auntie Laney. All of these women were Bible teachers at one time or another at Independent Community Church where my family has worshipped for three generations. Of all these indomitable women, Ethel, my Bigmomma was far and away the most knowledgeable on all things about the Bible. She never attended a seminary and was primarily a self-taught Bible scholar. For years I watched my grandmother pour over daily devotionals, lectionaries, her favorite Scofield Study Bible and a worn concordance. She even had a separate study, an extra bedroom at back of her house that she retreated to daily after finishing her shift as payroll clerk and her seemingly unending household duties of a wife and mother of four.

The most endeared women in the world to me were teachers of God's word; yet, it was only occurring to me in my late twenties that their deep desire to teach had rubbed off on me. It seemed so obvious, how could I have missed it? I found a partial answer in studying the life of Nannie Burroughs. Just as I had overlooked my Bigmomma as a master teacher because she did not teach in public schools, Burroughs' educational thought had been overlooked because much of her educational activity occurred within the Black church. Scholars like Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham had taken notice of Burroughs as a religious leader within the Black Baptist Church, but had spent less time coming to know Burroughs in her "secular" work of education. Adding to Burroughs' obscurity, was the fact that the Black Baptist Church, the very institution in which she performed the bulk of her educational work, had a troubled relationship with Burroughs who presented a challenge to male leadership in the Black church.

Like Burroughs, my Bigmomma experienced her own set of struggles within the Black Church. She was a seasoned Bible teacher and missionary in a denomination that did not officially recognize women as Bible teachers, ordain women, nor bestow any specific leadership title on women. My Bigmomma was encouraged to "teach" throughout the week, but not encouraged to "preach" on Sunday mornings. When Bigmomma was allowed to speak, she only did so on "Women's Day," which was typically held on the last Sunday of the month. As a rule, female evangelists, missionaries and speakers like my Bigmomma were not allowed to address the congregation from the elevated pulpit. Rather, they delivered their message from a lectern on the floor; the justification being that only men could set foot in the pulpit, as God did not ordain women to "preach."

I grew up watching my Bigmomma negotiate the trickiness of belonging to a church that simultaneously encouraged and discouraged her teaching ability. More than twenty five years later, I am facing a similar set of circumstances. Today, as I write this introduction, I am the Director of Christian Education at my church. In this role, I am responsible for the curriculum planning, teacher training and the coordination of all sacred and secular activities. One of the most vital aspects of my role is to ensure that every new teacher is trained on our church bylaws. Under the heading "Women in Ministry" which deserves to be quoted at length, the bylaws state:

Exceptions not a rule: As a rule women should not exercise authority over men. However, the prime objective is that God's word must go forth. Therefore if men are not available, the natural order is that for women to continue the mission. This a theological truth understood in both the Old Testament and New Testament (Num. 27:1-8, Joshua 16:3-4, Luke. 19:37). Women are encouraged to teach in this church, but at this time qualified men are available for pulpit ministry.⁴

As a trainer of teachers, it is up to me to explain to my all-Black, all-female teaching staff what it means to "not exercise authority over men" in a classroom setting. I remember one professional development session a young teacher asked, "What if a male student is clearly flawed in his scriptural analysis, should I not correct him because I am a woman?" Before I could posit a response, another teacher added onto the question, "And at what if that man occupies a lower leadership position than I? Is it not acceptable to pull rank in that case?" Needless to say, our professional development session sparked a much needed conversation. After two hundred years in existence, the Black Church continues to wrestle with issues related to female leadership and gender equality.

To be sure, there are endless examples of how the Black church has done much to improve the lives of Black people. Historically, the Black Church is credited with sustaining and strengthening Black communities since the days of slavery, laying the foundational blueprints for various racial uplift programmes, and providing the leadership in the modern civil rights movement and beyond. It is no accident that some of Black America's most revered public intellectuals like Cornel West and Michael Eric Dyson heavily identify with Black religious thought and inject Christianity into their public utterances. At the same time, the Black Church is an institution that often fails to fully appreciate the intellectual, political, and educational contributions of Black women like my foremothers and myself, and the topic of this dissertation, Nannie Helen Burroughs.

The Black Church is not the only institution known to de-emphasize women's intellectual and educational contributions. The academy has also been slow to be recognize Nannie Burroughs as one of the most influential figures of African American educational thought. Thankfully, from the 1970s and beyond, a cohort of African American Studies, Women's Studies and Social Studies scholars have done much to move Burroughs away from the margins and closer to the center of Black educational thought. Existing scholarship on Burroughs can be roughly divided into two periods. Research published prior to 2000 is predominantly biographical, applies various theories to explain Nannie's educational, social and religious activism, and locates Burroughs within a turn of the century burgeoning middle class female-centered leadership class who believed Black women were the ideal saviors of the Black race. Scholarship after 2000 expands upon these themes, but importantly gives increased attention to the National Training School's course content and student experiences in light of larger trends in American education. The most recent scholarship in the post 2000 era centers specifically on the citizenship, social studies, and Black history curriculum offered at the NTS and its implications for schooling Black students in contemporary times. A brief review of the existing literature on Burroughs is now in order.

⁴ Tommie Bradford Jr., "What We Believe,"(Independent Community Church Inc., Local Church Bylaws, Richmond, CA, 1998), 11.

Literature Review

The Dream and the Dreamer: An Abbreviated Story of the Life of Dr. Nannie Helen Burroughs and the National Trade and Professional School of Women and Girls at Washington D.C. was the earliest full length biographical work on Burroughs. Written in 1956 and revised in 1972 by Earl Harrison, *The Dream and the Dreamer* is written for a general audience and is a glowing tribute to Nannie Burroughs and her lifetime of service to the Baptist church. Harrison's personal connection to and adoration of Burroughs is obvious.

I heard of Nannie Burroughs. I saw her picture on the wall with her face turned toward the sun. I longer to see her. In 1912, I had the first privilege to see and hear her speak, seven miles in the country. She was young, dashing, and spellbinding. I shall not forget that day, when the young woman from Washington, D.C. charmed the old and the young with her logic, wit and wisdom. She made us country folk proud.⁵

Harrison, a fellow Baptist, details Burroughs' activities connected directly with the Baptist organization. He recounts the founding of the Women's Convention, the National Training School, and Nannie's protracted struggle for power, ownership and self-determination within the Baptist organization. Harrison's text also doubles as a condensed history of the National Baptist Convention and its leaders from its origin in 1895 through the 1950s. Harrison's laser focus on Burroughs' religious activities leaves virtually no room for any exploration of the Burroughs' abundant secular activities and social activism. Still, as a first biographical work on Burroughs, Harrison's text is critically important for introducing Burroughs as an influential leader of the twentieth century.

Evelyn Brooks Barnett (Higginbotham) followed in 1978 with "Nannie Burroughs and the Education of Black Women" in Rosalyn Terborg-Penn and Sharon Harley's *The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images*. Barnett, one of the first scholars to rescue Burroughs from obscurity, argued that her purpose was to "highlight the important but overlooked contributions of Black women builders of schools by focusing on the work and the ideas of Nannie Burroughs."⁶ Barnett notes that Burroughs was a pioneer school builder who, unlike her more commonly known contemporaries, embodied a true self-help ethos by demanding the National Training School be funded by other Blacks as opposed to White philanthropists at the American Missionary Association, the American Baptist Home Missionary Society, The Phelps-Stokes, Slater and Rosenwald Funds. Barnett understands the school's focus on industrial training and domestic service primarily as a response to Black women's material conditions and the limited labor options for Black women in the early twentieth century. Importantly, Barnett links Nannie's educational work with other activities with the National Association of Wage Earners, the International Council of Women of Darker Races, the NAACP, the National Association of Colored Women and the Republican Party. Barnett concluded that Burroughs' overreliance on spirituality was consistent with the Victorian era inspired ethos of her time, but

⁵ Earl Harrison, *The Dream and the Dreamer: An Abbreviated Story of the Life of Dr. Nannie Helen Burroughs and the National Trade and Professional School of Women and Girls at Washington D.C.* (Washington D.C: Nannie H. Burroughs Literature Foundation, 1956), 79.

⁶ Evelyn Brooks Barnett, "Nannie Burroughs and the Education of Black Women," in Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, eds. *The Afro-American Woman: Struggles & Images* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1978), 98.

also that her outspokenness against racism and sexism predated civil rights struggles of the 1960s and 1970s.

Brooks (Higginbotham) continued her exploration of Burroughs in *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*. In this work, Higginbotham introduces Burroughs as an arbiter of the *politics of respectability*, a concept describing Black Baptist women's opposition to the social strictures and symbolic representations of white supremacy. Higginbotham argues further that the

politics of respectability emphasized reform of individual behavior and attitudes both as a goal in itself and as a strategy of reform of the entire structural system of American race relations... the politics of respectability assumed a fluid and shifting position along a continuum of African American resistance. Through the discourse of respectability, the Baptist women emphasized manners and morals while simultaneously asserting traditional forms of protest such as petitions, boycotts and verbal appeals to justice.⁷

Higginbotham goes beyond scholars' understanding of the National Training School as an institution that prepared Black women for various occupations, to a school that expressed the Women's Convention's commitment to the politics of respectability. Higginbotham reasoned that the Burroughs efforts in "professionalizing domestic servants epitomized the Black Baptist women's politics of respectability, since it constituted an effort to re-define and re-present black women's work identities as skilled workers rather than incompetent menials."⁸ Higginbotham's inclusion of the politics of respectability is paramount to more nuanced understanding of the multiple goals and purposes of the National Training School. Still, Higginbotham concentrates more on Burroughs' conservative spectrum of protest, paying less attention to the more radical facets of Burroughs' activism.

Opal Easter's *Nannie Helen Burroughs* is the next laudatory biographical length book that builds upon previous work. Importantly, Easter gives equal attention to Burroughs as a religious leader, educator, club woman and political activist. Easter provides a fuller picture of Burroughs' educational activities, and notably situates her school founding work within the larger historical context of African American education and African American women's education specifically. Easter places Burroughs' activism within a school founding tradition with women like Mary McLeod Bethune, Charlotte Hawkins Brown and Margret Murray Washington. Easter compares the National Training School's curriculum to Spelman and succeeds in providing a closer look at the curriculum which included Latin, sewing, English literature, ancient and general history, Black history, music, dressmaking, printing and teacher education. Finally, Easter gets scholars closer to Burroughs' unique voice and educational philosophy by including two of Burroughs' short essays, "Twelve Things the Negro Must Do For Himself" and "Twelve Things the White Man Must Stop Doing to the Negro."⁹

Historian Sharon Harley's *Nannie Helen Burroughs: Black Goddess of Liberty*, "is as much an examination of Burroughs' personal ideology as it is an analysis of the forces that have prevented her from figuring more prominently in stories and histories of African American

⁷ Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press: 1993), 187.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁹ Opal Easter, *Nannie Helen Burroughs* (New York: Routledge, 200).

intellectuals and leaders.”¹⁰ Harley finds the suppression of Burroughs’ contributions to African American life and history particularly ironic given that Burroughs’ views were an eclectic mix of Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey. Harley asserts Burroughs’ belief in the dignity of manual labor, her strong feminist stance, her “personal and ideological identification with the black working class” all prohibited her from being considered an intellectual in both past and present African American academic circles. Harley acknowledges Burroughs’ activism in multiple areas, but focuses her essay on three themes that seemingly reflect Burroughs’ life experiences and ideas – the dignity of women’s labor, Black feminist ideology and race pride. On labor, Harley maintains that the valorization of work, all work, was paramount to Burroughs’ active and intellectual life, and a vital part of her uplift strategy. Harley does not offer a specific definition of Black Feminism, choosing instead to utilize the term feminisms to account for Black women’s varied adoption of feminist ideologies. Harley claims that “Burroughs’ feminist ideology, which ranged from urging women to be trained and to support themselves to interrogating black manhood for not ‘glorifying’ black womanhood, began when she was very young.”¹¹ Finally, Harley attests that in terms for race pride, Burroughs preceded Garvey with her glorification of dark skin, African features, and denouncement of skin lightening. Harley concludes her essay with a hopeful tone, crediting feminist scholars and others for expanding the title of Black leader to include ‘everyday folk’ like Fannie Lou Hamer, and Nate Shaw and of course Nannie Burroughs.

In *‘Bible, Bath and Broom’: Nannie Helen Burroughs’s Training School and African American Uplift*, historian Victoria Wolcott explores student and parent motivations for sending students to the National Training School. By collecting correspondence from parents and students involved in the National Trade School, Wolcott provides the most emic perspective to date on what life was like inside of Burroughs’ school. Wolcott presents correspondence from mothers, aunts, and grandmothers desperate to enroll their daughters, nieces and granddaughters into Burroughs’ safe haven as one way to police their sexuality and maintain their purity. As one mother wrote, “my girl is fourteen years old, first year high...my husband is sick with his heart, and I will have try to go to work, and I would like to put her in a boarding school. She already thinks she wants to get married... I like very much to get her away.”¹² While parents and guardians sought out Burroughs’ school for its moral guidance, evidence suggests students leveraged their education at the National Training School to escape a life of domestic service. From 1918 to 1931, 51% of NTS students majored in sewing and 29% majored in business. Only 15% majored in Domestic Science. Wolcott interprets these enrollment figures to suggest that although domestic service was the most widely available job opportunity in the interwar years, students looked ahead to a brighter future when they could make a living outside of these limited areas. Wolcott’s analysis of student choice in coursework is helpful; however, specifics on what it means to “major” in a subject at the National Training School are left unexplored.

In 1997, historian Audrey McCluskey’s wrote, “‘We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible’: Black Women School Founders and Their Mission.” McCluskey borrowed the essay’s title from Burroughs who adopted the phrase as a motto for the National Training School. Like Wolcott, McCluskey uses personal correspondence to paint a rich picture of Nannie

¹⁰ Sharon Harley, “Nannie Burroughs: Black Goddess of Liberty,” *Journal of Negro History* 81, no. 1 (Winter-Autumn 1993): 63.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹² Victoria Wolcott, “‘Bible, Bath and Broom’: Nannie Helen Burroughs’s Training School and African American Uplift,” *Journal of Women’s History* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 102.

Burroughs, her school and her educational philosophy. According to McCluskey, the motto is an acknowledgement of the tremendously difficult task Black women school founders faced in their fight to end sexism and racism while maintaining financially solvent educational institutions. McCluskey analyzes several letters between Nannie Burroughs, Mary McLeod Bethune and Charlotte Hawkins Brown. McCluskey argues that these women, bound by strong religious conviction, race and sex, formed an unbreakable commitment to a “collective movement of black female leadership,” a movement much bigger than any one of their individual aspirations.¹³ McCluskey prefers the term womanist, as opposed to feminist, to describe Burroughs’ and the other school founders’ activism. Womanism, a term originated by Alice Walker, defines the intersectionality of the Black women’s experiences in which multiple identities- racial, cultural, class, etc. are simultaneously claimed. McCluskey asserts that the National Training School was a site where Burroughs linked race and gender work without prioritizing one oppression over another.

Karen Johnson’s *Uplifting the Women and the Race: The Educational and Social Activism of Anna Julia Cooper and Nannie Helen Burroughs* in 2000 departs from prior accounts of Burroughs’ life in two major ways. According to Johnson, her book “departs from Easter’s study and previous biographical accounts of both women by examining their lives, thoughts and works from a Black feminist and educational perspective. Moreover, [her] study is the first research that examines these women together,” a significant shift given that Burroughs is typically studied alongside Mary McLeod Bethune and Charlotte Hawkins Brown.¹⁴

Burroughs was often called the “Female Booker T. Washington.” On the other hand, Cooper, as Horace Mann Bond argued, “aligned herself with the Du Bois group and succeeded in keeping M Street’s curriculum that of the standard college preparatory school of the time.” Johnson moves Burroughs and Cooper beyond the narrow context of the debates between industrial and liberal arts education made most famous by W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington. Ultimately, Johnson concludes that Burroughs’ curriculum at the National Training School was more “practical” in nature and aligned her more closely with Booker T. Washington than with Du Bois. Johnson’s work also stands out because she compares Burroughs’ pedagogy to larger trends in American education. All across the country, as domestic science instruction adopted Taylorized notions of efficiency, students tested and implemented skills in training laboratories called “model houses” or “practical houses.” Burroughs received a small amount of these funds to upgrade the model cottage at her school.¹⁵

Like other scholars, Johnson applies a Black feminist framework to understand Burroughs’ woman centered activism. Furthermore, Johnson contends that Burroughs participated in the “ethics of caring,” a theoretical framework popularized by feminist theorists Nel Noddings and Carol Gilligan. Johnson posits that Burroughs evoked the metalanguage of caring while searching for potential instructors for her school. As the teaching profession became feminized throughout the twentieth century, popular images of teachers as flighty, uncommitted employees began to emerge. Burroughs was not at all interested in this type of teacher; instead

¹³ Audrey Thomas McCluskey, “We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible: Black Women School Founders and Their Mission,” *Signs* 22, no. 2 (Winter 1997): 403.

¹⁴ Karen Johnson, *Uplifting the Women and the Race: The Educational and Social Activism of Anna J. Cooper and Nannie Helen Burroughs* (New York: Routledge: 2000), xxiv.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 82.

she enlisted instructors with a “definite interest in the growth and development of the students, fitness of spirit, and excellence in social behavior.”¹⁶

Like Wolcott, Traki Taylor provides a richer context for engaging the NTS by providing insight into its day to day practices. In her 2002 essay, *Womanhood Glorified: Nannie Burroughs and the National Training School for Women and Girls, Inc., 1909-1961*, Taylor offers the most detailed research regarding the School’s application process. By doing this, she draws a clearer picture of what kind of girl applied to the School and which *kind* of girl Burroughs’ desired to educate. Burroughs solicited the best and brightest young women for her school. According to Taylor,

Academic achievement and excellence were required both before students entered the school and during their time there. Entrance examinations in English and math were required. These exams were taken the day before school started. Burroughs made it clear that “Girls who have UNSATISFACTORY records in deportment in other schools or in the community NEED NOT APPLY. This school is not for unpromising nor unruly girls. Only the best and most purposeful need apply.”¹⁷

Burroughs had several measures to determine the ‘best’ and ‘most purposeful’ girls. The application process was similar to that of a private school, requiring the potential applicant not only to provide basic information about herself, but prove herself to be in good standing within her wider community. Applications had to be signed off by a former or current teacher or principal, in addition to another “reputable” person such as a pastor or local physician. The application also solicited information about an applicant’s “chief strengths, any weaknesses or personality defects, school and church attendance, manners, initiative, leadership ability, moral and social attitude, and any ‘special’ aptitudes.”¹⁸ Burroughs purposely omitted the name “Baptist” from the Schools’ official title, as she wanted the School to be accessible to all girls from diverse religious backgrounds. However, despite the “non-denominational” status, applicants were specifically asked if they were of the Christian faith and discouraged from applying if they were “not interested in a strict religious environment.”¹⁹ Taylor’s research highlights that Burroughs selected women and girls who, at least on paper, already subscribed to Bible, Bath and Broom lifestyle. Ideal applicants were Christian women, morally righteous and intelligent, and in good physical health.

The work of Sarah Bair and Alanna Murray are perhaps the most useful for current educational practitioners or scholars interested in the examples of the kinds of lessons taught at the National Training School. In “The Struggle for Community and Respectability: Black Women School Founders and the Politics of Character Education in the Early Twentieth Century,” Bair, like Wolcott, examines Brown, Bethune and Burroughs together. Bair examines how these school founders used the language and practice of character education to help their female students confront racism, navigate a segregated society, gain respectability, economic

¹⁶ Ibid., 95.

¹⁷ Traki Taylor, *Womanhood Glorified: Nannie Burroughs and National Training School for Women and Girls, Inc. 1909-1961*, *The Journal of African American History* 87 (Autumn 2002): 396.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

security, and nurture spiritually vibrant Black communities while simultaneously promoting twentieth century notions of civic responsibility.²⁰

Bair's second essay in 2008, "Educating Black Girls in the Early 20th Century: The Pioneering Work of Nannie Helen Burroughs (1879-1961)", uses social education as a theoretical framework to discuss the social studies curriculum at Burroughs' school. Bair credits Burroughs as being one of the earliest supporters of Black History in a formal classroom setting and explores some of the assignments and lesson plans assigned to National Training School students. Bair argues that Burroughs encouraged her students to use their historical understanding as a tool to address contemporary problems in the Black community. She expected students to be active citizens despite the fact that issues of citizenship were complicated for Black women without the vote (prior to 1920) and without the same basic protections afforded to White citizens. Despite these challenges, Burroughs laid out a social studies curriculum that stressed community service, knowledge of current events, public speaking, and leadership.²¹

In 2012's *Countering the Master Narrative in US Social Studies: Nannie Helen Burroughs and New Narratives in History Education*, Alanna Murray explores the "unofficial" curriculum of the National Training School, focusing primarily on Burroughs' original play "When Truth Gets a Hearing." Murray argues that Burroughs' *Truth* is one example of how African American educators reinterpreted available historical material to recreate an alternative Black curriculum that challenged the dominant narrative institutionalized in all schools during the early twentieth century.²² Murray's and Bair's studies of the actual course content in Black history and citizenship classes at the National Training School demonstrate that Burroughs was committed to an education illuminating Black culture and life in ways that are not explained by the Washington – Du Bois binary.

Justification For This Study

Almost twenty years ago, historian Sharon Harley asked why Nannie Burroughs' life and work remains largely unknown in the academy. Harley concludes it was her strong feminist stance, her affiliation with Booker T. Washington and industrial education and her criticism of some college educated Blacks. I believe that Harley is only partially correct. Historians' failure to recognize the originality of Burroughs' thought has also contributed to the academy's sluggishness to fully embrace Burroughs as an "intellectual" worthy of serious study.

For example, some scholarship on Burroughs report her graduating from M Street High in 1896 majoring in Domestic Science.²³ However, the *Washington Bee* reports Burroughs graduating high school in 1894.²⁴ In 1894, there were only three possible majors at M Street, academic, scientific or business. Majoring in Domestic Science was simply not possible in the

²⁰ Sarah D. Bair, "The Struggle for Community and Respectability: Black Women School Founders and the Politics of Character Education in the Early Twentieth Century," *Theory and Research in Social Education* 37, Issue 4 (2009): 570-599.

²¹ Sarah D. Bair, "Educating Black Girls in the Early 20th Century: The Pioneering Work of Nannie Helen Burroughs (1879-1961)," *Theory and Research in Social Education* 36 no. 1 (Winter 2008): 9-35.

²² Alanna Murray, "Countering the Master Narrative in U.S. Social Studies: Nannie Helen Burroughs and New Narratives in History Education" in *Histories of Social Studies and Race, 1865-2000* ed. Christine Woysner and Chara Haeussler Bohan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 100.

²³ See for instance, Harrison, *The Dream and the Dreamer*, 9; "Nannie Helen Burroughs," in *African American Lives* eds. Henry Louis Gates and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 129.

²⁴ "Colored Pupils Pass," *Washington Post* (Washington D.C.) Jun. 17, 1894.

time span Nannie attended high school.²⁵ Furthermore, Burroughs herself wrote a letter to Booker T. Washington telling him she was a graduate of the scientific track.²⁶ This is important because it means Nannie was the recipient of a rigorous liberal arts curriculum that included foreign language, higher math and science, and more. Nannie possessed the intellectual fitness to thrive in this environment and knowing this should make it harder for some to dismiss Burroughs as an undereducated individual underserving of a rigorous academic study.

Another example of misinformation about Burroughs' concerns her college experience. Some scholars report that Burroughs did not attend college.²⁷ However, this is also incorrect. Burroughs attended Business College after high school in Washington D.C. for at least year, attended Eckstein-Norton Institute, an industrial education focused Baptist college near Louisville, Kentucky, and was a Theology professor at State University, a liberal arts Baptist college also in Louisville.²⁸ Burroughs' diverse educational experience, which included both liberal arts and industrial training leanings, place her in a unique position to speak to the merits of both. Further, the fact that she actually *experienced* both, more so than her male contemporaries W.E.B. Du Bois, and Booker T. Washington and female contemporaries Anna J. Cooper and Charlotte Hawkins Brown, make Burroughs a fascinating study for insights on Black Educational Thought.

In this dissertation, I argue that Burroughs was one of the most influential educational thinkers of the twentieth century who combined classical, industrial and religious education to meet the changing intellectual needs of Black women. As I make these claims, I will consolidate Burroughs' ideas into an four pronged schema that proves useful for educational historians, Black women's scholars, religious scholars, education practitioners and others. A fuller understanding of Burroughs and her educational vision illuminates enduring issues at the heart of African American education and life.

Towards a Burroughsian-Based Model of Black Education

This dissertation presents Burroughs' educational thought and synthesizes it into what I term a Burroughsian- based African American Education Model. This dissertation borrows heavily from educational historian Derrick Alridge's work on the W.E. B. Du Bois. In "Guiding Philosophical Principles for a Du Boisian – Based African American Education Model," Alridge formulates a useful model that both streamlines and contextualizes Du Bois' voluminous writings on education. Alridge asserts that while Du Bois failed to leave behind a single comprehensive collection of his educational thought, he certainly wrote enough on the subject over the duration of this life to identify key educational principles that were central to Du Bois' thinking on education. The same is true of Burroughs and I take up Alridge's challenge to "provide school practitioners and policy makers an African American based conceptual schema from which to address the social, economic and political realities via the educational process" by exploring major themes in Burroughs' thoughts on education.²⁹

²⁵ George. F. T. Cook, "Report of the Board of Trustees of Public Schools of the District of Columbia to the Commissioners of the District of Columbia 1893-1894 " (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1895), 174-176.

²⁶ Letter from Nannie Burroughs to Booker T. Washington, February 18, 1896, Booker T. Washington Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

²⁷ See for instance, Harley, *Nannie Helen Burroughs*, 63.

²⁸ Daphne Spain, *How Women Saved the City* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2001) 63-64.

²⁹ Derrick Alridge, "Guiding Philosophical Principles for a DuBoisian- Based African American Educational Model," *Journal of Negro Education* 68, no. 2 (Spring 1999): 183.

Alridge's framework highlights many of the central themes not only of Du Bois' writings but of African American history more broadly. Thus, it helps illuminate both how figures like Du Bois and Burroughs fit into Black History and what their unique contribution to it is. The framework is particularly useful for exploring the life and work of a complex educational figure like Burroughs. Like Du Bois, Burroughs lived a long life, and wrote numerous pieces on education and other topics spanning the years 1900-1963.

Unlike Du Bois, Burroughs was never a scholar in the traditional sense of the word. She did not publish a dissertation nor any other major academic studies or papers. Rather, Burroughs' educational thought is dispersed throughout essays, plays, newspaper articles, pamphlets, religious magazines, speeches, and lesson plans. Utilizing Alridge's schema to understand Burroughs pushes scholars to examine Burroughs beyond her reputation as a mere practitioner or as the "Female Booker T. Washington."

Alridge identified six educational principles that exemplified Du Bois' educational thought. They are 1) African- American-centered education 2) communal education, 3) broad based education, 4) group leadership education, 5) Pan Africanist Education, and 6) global education. Taken together, Alridge argues these principles both offer a historical account of the African American experience, insight into the present conditions and problems in African American society and education, and offer a response to the problems of psychological oppression and identify ambiguity, community instability, skill deficiencies, class conflict, and oppression. Given that Burroughs and Du Bois were contemporaries moving and speaking out on education issues in the same time and space, similar themes first posed by Alridge on Du Bois' thought can be easily applied to Burroughs. Before pressing on with my analysis, a brief sketch of Alrdige's Du Boisian model is now in order.

Principle 1: African American - Centered Education

Du Bois advocated an educational programme grounded in Black history and culture, and discouraged African Americans from pursuing higher education without critically examining dominant Western culture. For Du Bois, this meant a curriculum that informed students of the historical significance of African countries and using African and African American history as a central framework for understanding their current situation in America. Upon receipt of an African American centered education, African American students would be able to critique America and encourage it to live up to its democratic ideals. They would emerge from school equipped to identify the structural racism omnipresent within the so called American meritocracy and devise interventions for its permanent eradication.

Principle 2: Communal Education

Du Bois' second principle, communal education, focused primarily on the economic and social destiny of African Americans. Over the course of his life, Du Bois challenged African Americans to use "intelligent [consumer economic] cooperation" to fortify the economic position of the African American community as whole. Rather than pursuing a system that solely benefitted the individual, Du Bois advocated an economic system that esteemed group economic strength as more important than individual gain. The concept of esteeming group needs over individual ones is a central strand of African thought and oppositional to a Western idea of rugged individualism.

Principle 3: Broad - Based Education

Though Du Bois is most famously remembered for advocating classical education, by the 1930s, he revised his position to advance a concept Alridge names broad-based education. Du Bois understood that neither classical education, nor industrial education were complete solutions to the problem of African American education, so he tried to combine them. Burroughs' educational ideas, like those of Carter G. Woodson, enable us to assess the nature of broad-based African American education that addresses the Washington - Du Bois binary and move beyond it.

Principle 4: Group Leadership Education

Du Bois' glorification of classical education in the early twentieth century was closely linked to his well-known concept of the Talented Tenth. For Du Bois, leadership of the African American race was safest in the hands a privileged few. In 1903, Du Bois writes, "The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men. The problem of education, then, among Negroes must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth; it is the problem of developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races." In Du Bois' view, the "best" of the race, would be educated not in industrial or trade schools, but in the nation's best universities like Harvard, Columbia, and Fisk.³⁰ Again, Burroughs offers a vision of leadership which extends beyond privileged men to include women and working class African Americans.

Principle 5: Pan Africanist Education

At its core, the goal of the Pan Africanist project was to organize, unite and empower peoples of African descent to withstand European imperialism and aggression. Du Bois reasoned that people of African descent dispersed throughout the globe shared a common experience of oppression, exploitation and colonization. His vision was that African people would find strength through these common bonds, and form an unbreakable chain of international power. In order to fully understand the potential of a Pan Africanist approach, Du Bois reasoned that first African Americans needed to be educated on Africa. The Pan Africanist theme overlaps with African American centered education theme, significantly the Pan Africanist model focuses particularly on political freedom struggles and the anti-colonial movements of peoples throughout the African diaspora.

Principle 6: Global Education

Like Pan Africanist Education, global education seeks to understand more about the Black freedom struggle in the United States by examining freedom struggles of other peoples around the globe. Global education is a wider construct than Pan Africanist education; the former

³⁰ W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Talented Tenth," in *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative Negroes of the Today*, contributions by Booker T. Washington, et. al. (New York: James Pott& Company, 1903), 33.

includes examining peoples not of African descent. Toward the last decades of his life as Du Bois grew increasingly disenchanted with America, he looked to places like China, India and Ireland for solutions to the global problem of White supremacy. Nannie's Pan Africanist and global commitments, like her notions of communal, broad-based and group leadership education, were always informed by her prophetic Christian vision and her commitment to African American women-centered action and analysis. Therefore, rather than adding an African religious education and gender to Alridge's list, questions of religion and gender inform all the analysis.

Challenges With This Study

Constructing a cumulative narrative of Nannie Burroughs' educational thought is fraught with complexities and challenges. The Nannie Helen Burroughs Papers at the Library of Congress are massive (over 200,000 items), but even a collection as large as this has its limitations. Most items in this collection are dated 1928 and after which leaves much of Nannie's early years unaccounted for. This is particularly true for matters of Nannie's personal life. Her diplomas from M Street and any other education institute she attended are not available. Gaps such as these are partially responsible for the confusion about Nannie's early education. The good news is that a new generation of National Training School alumnae and supporters are working to augment the collection. As recent as 2012, Nannie Burroughs was posthumously awarded her American Automobile Association membership that was denied her because of her race and sex in the 1930s.³¹

Typical of female activists in her day, Burroughs participated in conversation with multiple race leaders. As a result, correspondence to and from Burroughs is disseminated in many collections throughout the country; W.E.B. Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, Margaret Murray Washington, Mary Church Terrell, and Una Robert Lawrence are some of the most notable individuals that include information on Burroughs. Navigating these various collections proved challenging, but imperative if one truly wants to understand Burroughs' wide reaching influence among some of Black America's most revered educators and thinkers.

As for organizational affiliations, Burroughs was closely involved with the International Council for the Women of Darker Races and the National Association of Wage Earners. Both of these organizations were relatively short-lived, so there is less data to be analyzed from them than better known organizations like the National Association of Colored Women and the NAACP. At the same time, data from these shorter-lived, less well known organizations are actually the best sources for determining Nannie's unique educational thought, since she alone was responsible for crafting the organizations' missions, structures, charters and bylaws.

Another challenge is that Burroughs lived a long life so she was impacted by the shifting educational landscape for Blacks. The fluctuating course offerings of the National Training School point to Burroughs' own changing priorities. Due to these fluctuations, at times it is difficult to determine exactly what Nannie believed. For example, in 1931, Burroughs is quoted in a Michigan newspaper saying

The place for the Negro masses is in the open country, and not in congested urban centers. If the laboring class of Negroes cannot make it on the soil in this country, they certainly cannot make it on the pavement of the city. It does not take a sage as wise as

Booker T. Washington to see that the greatest need for the Negro today is a program of education that will fit him to hoe his own row and meet adequately the demand of skilled labor. The Negro masses should be urged to stay in the open country.³²

Burroughs' utterance is somewhat anachronistic given that many Blacks had disagreed with Washington's summons to "cast down your buckets" in the Deep South and had begun migrating to urban centers.³³ To boot, Burroughs' own school was located in Washington D.C., a bustling urban center and offered Social Work as a trade - an occupation that demands a sophisticated understanding of urban dwellings. Tracking Burroughs' seemingly contradictory statements is yet another reminder of how complex Burroughs is and deserving of increased attention to fully understand her educational vision for Black America.

Organization of Dissertation

Chapter 2 - From the Field to the Lectern: The Early Education of Nannie Helen Burroughs

This chapter explores Nannie's childhood and early education at M Street High and Nineteenth Street Baptist Church, and her path to becoming a local favorite in Washington D.C.'s illustrious lecture circuit.

Chapter 3 - Going to Prep School: Teaching, Learning and Experimenting in Louisville

Chapter three traces Nannie's meteoric rise in the Baptist community in Louisville, Kentucky and her beginnings as a highly acclaimed national and international speaker.

Chapter 4 - School's In: The Early Years of the Women's Convention and National Training School for Women and Girls.

This chapter explores Nannie's philosophy of broad-based education as expressed through the founding of the Women's Convention and the National Training School for Women and Girls.

Chapter 5 - Working Women in Training: Group Leadership Education for the Black Female Masses

Chapter five explores Nannie's ideas on group leadership education. While Du Bois boldly proclaimed that "the Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men,"³⁴ Nannie offered an alternative model that focused primarily on training working class Black women for race leadership.

³² Nannie H. Burroughs, "Nearly All of the Educated Negroes Are Looking for Ready Made Jobs And Thousands of Indolent Negroes Are Not Looking for Any Kind of Jobs," *Wyandotte Echo* (Wyandotte, MI), Aug. 14, 1931.

³³ Booker T. Washington, "Atlanta Compromise Speech," in *The Booker T. Washington Papers, Vol. 3*, ed., Louis R. Harlan, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), 583-587. "

³⁴ W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Talented Tenth," in *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative Negroes of the Today*, contributions by Booker T. Washington, et. al. (New York: James Pott & Company, 1903), 33.

Chapter 6 - Building an International Sisterhood: Pan African and Global Education for the World

This chapter focuses on Burroughs' Pan-Africanist and Global activism with the International Council of Women of the Darker Races, the Industrial and Vocational School for Women and Girls in Sierra Leone, and the Black Baptist mission schools in Liberia.

Chapter 7 - Saving Up and Calling Out: Communal Education During the Depression Era

Chapter eight examines Nannie's participation in the Black Rochdale cooperative education and economics movement, housing activism, and othermothering in the Black community in the 1930s.

Conclusion

The final chapter reviews the Burroughsian- Based model for Black education and its implications for future education policy and research.

Chapter 2 - From the Field to the Lectern: The Early Education of Nannie Helen Burroughs in Washington D.C.

The Early Days of Nannie Helen Burroughs

Nannie was born in 1875 to John and Jennie Burroughs in rural Orange County, Virginia. Her parents were both ex-slaves. Nannie described her mother Jennie as being “independent,” “proud” and “industrious.” Jennie was not formally educated, and earned a living as cook. Reminiscing about her father John, Nannie recalled him being “personable but irresponsible as a breadwinner.”³⁵ Unlike Jennie, John had received some formal education at the Richmond Institute, an all-male Baptist college founded by the American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABMHS) in 1867. The White leaders of the ABMHS founded the post- Civil War college to provide education to scores of recently freed slaves. They reasoned that educating men for the ministry was the “most direct, accessible and effective way of teaching the mass of colored people.”³⁶ John leveraged his education at the Richmond Institute and worked as an itinerant preacher. Scholars have yet to determine John’s exact course of study while attending the Richmond Institute but he was reportedly an intelligent man; So much so that his relatives thought him “too smart for regular work.” In addition to preaching, John also worked as a farmer. The family struggled financially and Nannie’s younger sister Maggie died at a young age.³⁷ John deserted the family sometime after 1880, leaving Jennie to raise young Nannie alone. Like many Post Civil War Black women, Jennie sought better educational and professional opportunities for herself and her family and relocated to Washington D.C. for a chance at a better life.³⁸

Like her mother, Nannie too strived for what she wanted despite setbacks and limitations. Young Nannie displayed resourcefulness and determination even as young child. One day while playing, Nannie got the notion to produce some doll clothes. The small child could not complete her task because all of the scissors were out of reach. Not one to give up easily, Nannie gathered her fabric and ventured out to the woodshed. Once there, she carefully laid out her material and began cutting out a miniature dress with an axe.³⁹ Truly, Jennie had a special child to raise and a new life in Washington D.C. would foster young Nannie’s inchoate mental powers.

Washington D.C. was an attractive settling place for the Burroughs family. Upon their arrival, Jennie and Nannie discovered a segregated but thriving Black community largely created by free Blacks who lived in the area since the 1790s. Washington differed from other Northern destinations in that it was the center of Black intellectual life. Washington was home to several schools for Blacks, some of which were exclusively dedicated to training Black girls. As early as 1851, the Normal School for Colored Girls trained Black females to become teachers. Howard University, established in 1867, attracted the most educated Blacks in the country to train Black students for the ministry and later in liberal arts. Jennie arrived in the same year Nannie was old

³⁵ Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 217.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

³⁷ Johnson, *Uplifting the Women*, 48.

³⁸ Harley, *Nannie Helen Burroughs*, 63.

³⁹ “Nannie Helen Burroughs,” in *From Our Christian Heritage: Hundreds of Ways to Add Christian History to Teaching, Preaching and Writing Indexed by Scripture, Topic and Subject*, ed. C. Douglas Weaver (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 1997), 291.

enough to enroll in school, suggesting that Jennie was attracted to Washington in part for its reputation of producing well-educated girls.⁴⁰

Life in Washington D.C. was an improvement over life in Orange County, Virginia. In D.C., Jennie could take advantage of an education system for her daughter and higher wages for herself. Yet, for many life in the District failed to materialize into the promised land that Jennie and scores of other unskilled Black women sought. Like a page extracted from Dante's *Inferno*, Washington D.C. represented a kind of purgatory; a place suspended somewhere between heaven and hell. The family's first concern was finding housing within the District's complex maze of main thoroughfares, side streets, and alleys. The Burroughs family moved in with Jennie's sister Cordelia into one of Washington's Black alley communities.⁴¹

Alley dwellings were meager. The alleyway houses were generally made of the cheapest lumber, covered in felt and tar. One health official described a typical alley block as being "lined on both sides with miserable dilapidated shanties, patched and filthy", with leaky roofs, broke and filthy ceilings and dilapidated floors that were "unfit for human habitation" yet owners were "mean enough to charge rent for them." Slightly better brick housing was constructed in the late 1880s around the time Nannie settled in Washington. These dwellings were sturdier and an improvement from the scraps of timber and cloth used to make shanties, but were still of low quality. A typical alley house was comparable to the size of a modest one car garage. Indoor plumbing was nonexistent. To draw water and use the bathroom, Nannie used a hydrant and an outhouse.⁴²

Staying healthy in alley houses was challenging. Alley streets had insufficient drainage systems that created a perfect environment for water borne diseases year-round. Typhoid fever ran rampant, and Nannie contracted the disease in early childhood. Victims experienced fevers in excess of 104 degrees, incessant vomiting and diarrhea. In the worst cases, sufferers experienced delirium and subsequent internal bleeding and infections. Fortunately, Nannie survived the potentially fatal disease, but not without a cost. It took young Nannie two years to fully recover from the disease.⁴³

Black alley communities were home to poor Black residents like Nannie, but alley communities were not always geographically isolated from Washington's wealthier Black and White inhabitants. For example, Roscoe C. Bruce, son of Black Senator and aristocrat Blanche K. Bruce, lived in a pristine seven bedroom, four bathroom brick home in an interracial neighborhood. Still, the Bruce home, located on 9th and M Streets NW, was only a stone's throw away from Bladgen Alley, home to the District's most destitute Blacks. While poor alley residents may have shared close proximity to wealthier residents, alley tenements remained hidden from plain sight due to the city's preponderance of blind alleys. Myth and lore pervaded about the crime and vices found in "Hidden Washington" alleys that Nannie called home.

Young Nannie lived in close proximity to some of DC's wealthiest Blacks, but socially speaking, alley inhabitants lived a world apart from the District's Black gentry. Throughout the 1880s, Washington D.C. was known as the "center of Negro bluebloods and aristocrats."⁴⁴ As

⁴⁰ Steven Mintz, "A Historical Ethnography of Black Washington DC, *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*," 52 (1989): 235-53.

⁴¹ Traki Taylor, Womanhood Glorified: Nannie Burroughs and National Training School for Women and Girls, Inc. 1909-1961, *The Journal of African American History* 87 (Autumn 2002): 391.

⁴² James Borchert, *Alley Life in Washington: Family, Community, Religion and Folklife in the City, 1850-1970* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press), 28.

⁴³ Johnson, *Uplifting the Women*, 51.

⁴⁴ William Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite 1880-1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,

one observer noted in 1887, “colored society has rules as strict as the laws of the Medes and Persians. It is full of circles and each succeeding circle proudly holds itself above the one just below it.”⁴⁵ Historian William Gatewood described Washington’s Black aristocracy as “small in number and light in complexion.”⁴⁶ Informally, Washington’s Black elite was known as the “Four Hundreds”, but in reality, they were composed of about one hundred families. Elite families took immense pride in free Black and European ancestry and adopted White standards of dress, taste in music and leisure activities in an attempt to differentiate themselves from the poor Black masses.⁴⁷ Black elites belonged to exclusive clubs and literary societies that kept them at bay from the Black working classes, but ultimately, Washington elites understood that their destinies were inextricably tied to that of their poorer, darker kinsmen.

The District’s system of Colored Schools was one of the few places where the elite and the masses intermingled. Black elites oversaw the education of all Black students in their roles as superintendents, principals and teachers. George T. Cook was the undisputed leader of the Black aristocracy and Superintendent of the Colored Schools. Cook, a Black Oberlin graduate, served as Superintendent of Colored Schools from 1868 to 1900 and oversaw Nannie’s education from elementary to high school. Black elites leveraged their positions as school leaders to influence Black masses. Cook managed Black grammar schools, a high school, and night schools. Typical of segregated systems, Black pupils received fewer resources than white pupils, however D.C. schools were undoubtedly better than Black schools in the Deep South.⁴⁸

Nannie Helen Burroughs’ School Years

Nannie left few personal records recalling her earliest days in school, but Cooks’ records are helpful to reconstruct the curriculum offered during her matriculation. Nannie spent most of her school day studying writing, spelling, history, and drawing. She listened to oral lessons in physiology and natural science. Most of Nannie’s class time was dedicated to reading, as illiteracy was high among Washington’s elementary student population. She also learned historical stories, hygiene, and penmanship. Both Black and White students in the District took courses in manual training. Manual training classes were segregated by sex - boys took woodshop and drawing while girls enrolled in cooking and sewing. The sewing curriculum gradually increased in difficulty year by year. Third and fourth grade girls mastered the fundamentals by learning to construct an apron. By sixth grade, girls learned to construct a bevy of complicated garments and household effects including aprons, handbags, infant dresses, handkerchiefs, nightgowns, men’s jackets, and neckties, shams and pillowcases.⁴⁹

1990), 38.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁷ For more on the Black elite in Washington DC, See Jacqueline Moore, *Leading the Race: The Transformation of the Black Elite in the Nation’s Capital, 1880-1920* (Charlottesville: University of Press of Virginia, 1999), Lawrence Otis Graham, *Our Kind of People: Inside America’s Black Upper Class* (New York: Harper Perennial Press, 1999) and Audrey Elisa Kerr, *The Paper Bag Principle: Class, Colorism, and Rumor and the Case of Black Washington, D.C.* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2006).

⁴⁸ Jacqueline M. Moore, *Leading the Race*, 86-87.

⁴⁹ George. F. T. Cook, “Report of the Board of Trustees of Public Schools of the District of Columbia to the Commissioners of the District of Columbia 1889-1890 ” (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1891), 161-171.

At a time when most Black students stopped attending school after the fourth grade, Nannie beat the odds and was accepted to M Street High School. Like most early schools serving Black students, M Street grew from humble beginnings. For the first few years, M Street's course offerings were more comparable to a grammar school than a high school. By the time Nannie arrived in 1890, M Street was bar none the finest high school for Blacks in the nation and considered the jewel in the "crown" of D.C.'s Black public school system.⁵⁰

Nannie and her M Street classmates were a studious and diverse bunch. According to economist Thomas Sowell, M Street students outperformed the District's White high school students on standardized tests from the turn of the century up through the 1950s.⁵¹ Since it was the District's only Black high school, students from all class backgrounds intermingled in its classrooms, hallways and extracurricular clubs. John Coburn Bruce, a member of the prominent of Bruce family, also attended M Street the same time as Nannie.⁵²

Most of M Street's students were working class. During Nannie's first year, 64% of M Street parents were laborers, while only one was a doctor.⁵³ Cook was concerned with poorer students like Nannie who struggled to afford the necessities of life. To accommodate students with financial need, Cook instituted a free textbook and shoe giveaway program for its students. As he stated in 1894, "nothing could be more beautiful than to see the teachers put forth efforts to give shoes to the shoeless, garments to the naked, and alleviate distress among the patrons of the various schools."⁵⁴

Teaching was the most popular occupation for Washington's Black unmarried female elite. Cook believed teachers could do much to transmit high culture to M Street's predominant working class student body. He screened Nannie's high school teachers carefully, arguing

so potential are the influence and action of the teacher upon the intellectual and moral life of the child, both with regard to the present and, in the bent given, to the future, that all avenues of approach to the teachership can not be too carefully guarded... since the efficiency of the schools depends so very largely upon the teachers, it is felt that too great care can not be exercised in their selection.⁵⁵

Miss Caroline M. Peake, a D.C. native, taught Algebra. Her pupils described her as "quiet, dignified, a very fine and thorough teacher," and a "neat, marvelous teacher." Nannie's passion for reading and writing was cultivated by Miss Harriet Riggs. Riggs headed both the English and History departments and was "cultured, refined and dignified." Riggs' high expectations of student achievement were widely known throughout the M Street

⁵⁰ Moore, *Leading the Race*, 89.

⁵¹ Thomas Sowell, "The Education of Minority Children," in *Education in the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Edward P. Lazear (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2002), 80.

⁵² Henry S. Robinson, "The M Street High School, 1891-1916." *Records of the Columbia Historical Society* 51, (1984),

Robinson, *The M Street High School 1891-1916*, 130.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ George. F. T. Cook, "Report of the Board of Trustees of Public Schools of the District of Columbia to the Commissioners of the District of Columbia 1893-1894" (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1895), 173.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 151

community. Riggs possessed not only a penchant for reading and writing, but was also a practicing physician. She was awarded an M.D. from Howard University in 1892.⁵⁶

Finally, there was the incomparable Anna J. Cooper. Cooper attended Oberlin and successfully petitioned to take the gentlemen's course, rather than the inferior ladies course. She earned her Bachelor's in 1884 and Masters in mathematics in 1887. Cooper taught math, science and Latin. Cooper is also noted as one of the first Black feminists. While teaching at M Street in 1902, Cooper published *A Voice From the South: By a Black Woman of the South*, a collection of essays in which she addressed a wide range of topics on race and gender. Francis Cardozo, M Street's principal, presided over the talented teaching staff from 1884-1896. Cardozo, educated at the University of Glasgow, was the former Secretary of State of South Carolina during Reconstruction.⁵⁷

Nannie's education at M Street provided her with a thorough foundation that would serve her as an innovator in African American education. The years Nannie attended, M Street's curriculum consisted of three tracks - academic, scientific, and business. The four year academic and scientific tracks were the most rigorous. Both tracks required four years of English, four years of foreign language, and one year of zoology, algebra, geometry, and chemistry. For electives, academic track students selected Greek, German, French, trigonometry or surveying, analytical geometry, advanced botany or physiology, geology, and advanced physics or political economy. Scientific track students took the same electives with the exception of Greek. The academic and scientific tracks were most popular with the M Street students which helped the school gained its reputation as the training ground for the next generation of the Talented Tenth. The two year business track was less rigorous, but still academically challenging. M Street's business course prepared "pupils for clerical work in the Departments or in private establishments."⁵⁸ The business track consisted of a two year course of study in English, bookkeeping, penmanship, commercial Law, and commercial geography.

Nannie selected the scientific track.⁵⁹ The scientific track was one the most advanced options and was designed to "give a general education and prepare pupils for the Normal School and college." In her freshman year English class, Nannie studied letter writing, common errors in English, punctuation, outlining and expression. She read Longfellow's *Tales of a Wayside Inn* and selections from Tennyson's *Idyls of the King*. Sophomore year, she studied Kellogg's *Rhetoric* and read Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, *Hamlet*, and one book of *Paradise Lost*. The penmanship Nannie studied in earlier grades served her well in English where she was "required to write essays frequently."⁶⁰ Scientific track pupils took four years of German, studied short stories, sentence writing and read two periods of German literature from Bernhardt's *Deutsche Litteraturgeschichte*.⁶¹ Nannie took a year of Algebra and studied five books of Wentworth's *New Plane and Solid Geometry*. In history class, Nannie read *Myer's History of the Eastern Nations and Greece* and *Allen's History of the Roman People*. These textbooks were assigned to Nannie and her classmates, Superintendent Cook explained, because they stimulated

⁵⁶ Henry S. Robinson, "The M Street High School, 1891-1916." *Records of the Columbia Historical Society* 51, (1984), 125-126.

⁵⁷ Johnson, *Uplifting the Women*, 45, 53.

⁵⁸ Cook, *Report of the Board of Trustees 1894*, 174.

⁵⁹ Letter from Nannie Burroughs to Booker T. Washington, Feb. 18, 1896, Booker T. Washington Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁶⁰ Cook, *Report of the Board of Trustees 1894*, 177.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 178.

“independent research and thought, and [were] calculated to inspire patriotism.”⁶² Manual training and music were encouraged, but optional for scientific track students. Drawing and physical education were required. In Nannie’s physical education course, “many of the girls discarded corsets and tight waists” to partake in Swedish movements, wands, clubs and dumbbells.⁶³

Outside of class, M Street students were encouraged to visit the school’s library “to create a taste for good reading matter, to remove obliquities and to emphasize moral tendencies of character, as well as to widen intellectual view.” The M Street library contained a diverse collection of fiction, history, biography and encyclopedias. The library was a great resource, but it was still insufficient for the needs of M Street’s entire student body. Superintendent Cook was particularly passionate about the library and argued for more money to be channeled there.⁶⁴

Nannie proved mastery of her subjects primarily through recitations. According to education historian Larry Cuban, recitation was a widespread practice in American schools. One turn of the century teacher described it as an exercise where:

the class must be prepared to give an outline of the part studied and show its connection with what has preceded: to discuss the characters as they appear [and] show how they affect other characters and the plot in general. . . the recitation should cover all oral and written reports, rapid questioning, informal discussion and the reading aloud of certain illustrative passages.⁶⁵

Nannie excelled in her extracurricular activities as well. While at M street, Nannie organized the Harriet Beecher Stowe Literary Society, reportedly the first girl’s literary society at M Street, to improve her “literary and oratorical expression.”⁶⁶

A Religious Education at Nineteenth Street Baptist Church

At age fifteen, Nannie’s life changed forever. That year, she experienced her conversion.⁶⁷ According to religious historian Albert Raboteau, conversion is “is an inward experiential realization of the doctrine of human depravity, divine sovereignty, unconditional election made visibly apparent by the imagination and the emotions.”⁶⁸ In other words, her conversion was Nannie’s personal realization that man is imperfect, that God is supreme and that she had been chosen for eternal salvation. In the Black Baptist church, the conversion is significant because it is *the* defining moment in a believer’s life that signals a new beginning of mind, heart and spirit and an everlasting commitment to God, the church, and importantly, spreading Christ’s teachings throughout the world.⁶⁹ The conversion experience was a serious

⁶² Ibid., 179.

⁶³ Ibid., 189.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 141.

⁶⁵ Larry Cuban, *How Teachers Taught: Constancy and Change in American Classrooms* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1990), 34.

⁶⁶ Johnson, *Uplifting the Women*, 54.

⁶⁷ Samuel William Bacote, *Who’s Who of Colored Baptists of the United States*, Volume 1 (Kansas City: Franklin Hudson Publishing Company, 1913), 239.

⁶⁸ Dale P. Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2002), 45.

⁶⁹ For more on the significance of conversion experience in the Black Baptist Church see Dale P. Andrews, *Practical Theology and African American Folk Religion* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2002), 44-47 and Melissa

undertaking not to be taken lightly. Nannie answered her spiritual call by becoming an active member of the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church.

Like M Street, Nineteenth Street Baptist Church was a place where Nannie came into close contact with Washington's elite. Most Black elites belonged to the Episcopal and Presbyterian congregations, but if they dared to join a Baptist church, Nineteenth Street was the only acceptable option. Nineteenth Street, located in the wealthier Northwest section of Black Washington, was deemed an appropriate place for elites to worship largely because of its leader. Reverend Walter Henry Brooks became pastor in 1882 and led it faithfully until his death in 1945. Brooks, an emancipated slave, studied at Wilberforce and earned a bachelor's degree at Lincoln University. While a student at Lincoln, Brooks served in a Presbyterian church alongside Archibald H. Grimké. Brooks eventually switched over to the Baptist denomination, but remained friendly and highly respected by elite Blacks in Presbyterian and other denominations. Over the years, Brooks quickly became one of Nannie's most cherished mentors. Nannie would later recall that "he had that intangible something that made me want to be like Jesus."⁷⁰

Nineteenth Street Baptist differed from the kind of church Nannie would have encountered had she remained in rural Orange County. Nineteenth Street was a progressive, elite Baptist church and as such, had a larger, more educated congregation than rural Baptist churches throughout the South. Nineteenth Street was also known as a "silk stocking house of worship."⁷¹ This meant that female congregants were expected to wear expensive dresses, pearls, gloves, and patent leather shoes, items that rural and working class Blacks struggled to afford. Theologically speaking, sermons in elite churches focused less on the other-worldly pleasures in heaven, and more on improving city and country through social and political activism. It was also a center of Black intellectual life.

Nineteenth Street's scholarly members demanded college educated, progressive minded ministers offering more than the "jeremiads and emotionalism" associated with itinerant rural preachers and the working-class Baptist congregations scattered throughout the city.⁷² To counter jeremiads and emotionalism, Brooks advocated more intellectual forms of worship and study. He was well known in Baptist education circles and wrote a widely read article arguing for the curriculum of Baptist colleges to look more like programs at Howard and Fisk. He also stressed the importance of education for women. At Nineteenth Street, Nannie learned the Bible through a "thoroughly graded" youth Bible study program established by Brooks.⁷³ Like many leading pastors in the 1880s and 1890s, Brooks advocated for separation from White Baptists of the American Baptist Home Mission Society when they refused to publish Sunday School materials written by Black theologians. Nannie benefitted from Brooks' progressive vision for Black women's education and was allowed to cut her teeth as a budding educator, speaker and activist. She served as a Sunday School teacher, secretary of the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor, and a librarian. Nannie would not have been allowed to preach, but she "begged to get on programs and speak pieces" whenever possible.⁷⁴

Walker, *All We Knew Was to Farm: Rural Women in the Up Country South 1919-1941* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2000) 60-62.

⁷⁰ Ann Michelle Mason, "Nannie H. Burroughs' Rhetoric Leadership During the Inter-War Period (PhD Dissertation, University of Maryland College Park, 2008), 46.

⁷¹ Kerr, *The Paper Bag Principle*, 105.

⁷² Moore, *Leading the Race*, 18.

⁷³ "Walter Henderson Brooks," *Journal of Negro History* 30, no. 4 (October 1945): 460.

⁷⁴ Mason, *Nannie Burroughs*, 45.

Nineteenth Street Baptist was well known for its sound Bible doctrine, social activism and racial uplift activities; it was also rumored to be a church that snubbed working class, dark-skinned, kinky haired members of the Black community. According to one Washington resident named Melvina, “it was commonly known that Nineteenth Street Baptist Church was the first to have a comb test.⁷⁵ A deacon would stand at the door, and if your hair was too nappy the deacons would actually ask you to worship elsewhere!”⁷⁶ Other Washingtonians reported that Nineteenth Street was widely known as a “blue vein prayer circle of city.”⁷⁷ Black folklorist Audrey Kerr argues the comb and vein tests were more likely the stuff of legend as opposed to real incidents, but even if Nineteenth Street did not rely on these methods the church did something to acquire a reputation for making poor, dark worshippers unwelcome. The ill-treatment of darker skinned Blacks in Washington D.C. by lighter skinned Blacks was not limited to church. “There is no denying it,” Burroughs observed. “Negroes have color-phobia. Whole Negro communities have it. Some Negro families have it. Some Negro churches have it. The fairer some Negroes are, the better they think themselves.”⁷⁸

Allegations of colorism and snobbery at Nineteenth Street Baptist did not bar Nannie from occupying visible youth leadership positions at church. But other working class Blacks, especially those lacking an M Street education, might have been discouraged from joining the church. In general, snobbery at Nineteenth Street was tempered by the fact that Black elites attending there were lower-ranked elite, not the “card carrying aristocrats” like the Bruces and the Cooks who attended Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church.⁷⁹

Post High School

Nannie lost her first major battle with the Black elites in 1894. After graduating with honors from M Street, Nannie was promised a position as a Domestic Science teacher’s assistant. Sadly, the job never materialized and another girl with lighter skin and with more political pull was ultimately selected for the position. Blanche K. Bruce, the father of Nannie’s M Street classmate John C. Bruce, sat on the Board of Trustees for Colored Schools. Blanche Bruce worked alongside Superintendent Cook to appoint teachers for the District public schools. Both were accused of using their influence to advance the careers of elites, and shunning darker skinned, poorer blacks.⁸⁰

Black non-elites were not amused by the discriminatory practices of the aristocracy. When one Black resident questioned why only certain light-skinned families received the most lucrative positions in public schools, Dr. John R. Francis, physician and Board of Education member, maintained that a teacher “who moves in the best society” was far preferable to one

⁷⁵ “Comb tests” were reportedly regularly performed in elite churches to limit the amount kinky haired members from joining the congregation. If the fine tooth combed that hung from a rope near the door could not be passed through the hair easily, access to the church was denied.

⁷⁶ Audrey Elisa Kerr, *The Paper Bag Principle: Class, Colorism and Rumor and the Case of Black Washington DC* (Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 2006), 106.

⁷⁷ “Blue vein” is a term used to refer to light skinned Black people whose skin is light enough to see the bluish undertones of veins beneath the skin. Blue skin societies existed.

⁷⁸ Kerr, *The Paper Bag Principle*, 59.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 107-108.

⁸⁰ Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color*, 245.

whose parents “live in alleys.” Francis made these statements in defense of his sister-in-law who had just been appointed to a teaching position.⁸¹

Publically however, the school officials denied allegations of colorism and maintained that teachers were recruited fairly. “The race” for school positions, Superintendent Cook maintained,

is equal to all. The outcome is simply “survival of the fittest,” in whom from the constant winnowing of years the school for the perpetuation of their teacherships receive, irrespective of any all incidental circumstances, the best in fitness and attainment. In this determining of the regular teacherships in these schools... under this system, by which equal chance and opportunity, so far as the schools are concerned, are afforded to every aspirant for the teachership, the successful are indeed ‘the architects of their own fortune.’⁸²

Other charges followed soon after. In 1896, a petition circulated to Congress alleging that only the daughters of the favored few were admitted to Colored Normal Schools. Historian Willard Gatewood argues that recorded instances from disgruntled non elites suggest that Black elites did practice favoritism. At best, Black elites viewed their selective appointments to teaching positions as harmless nepotism. At worst, Black elites worked to maintain their own privilege and prestige by actively blocking poorer Blacks from gaining positions of power.

In either case, Nannie, a dark-skinned alley girl by birth, was at a disadvantage. Though her high school education prepared her for a future position in the Talented Tenth, her lack of social capital, wealth, and access to the city’s already established elite Black families prevented her from reaping the full benefits of her world-class M Street education. Nannie’s rejection by the upper crust of Black Washington was extremely painful, but that same rejection propelled her toward a new path that would define her life’s work and educational philosophy. Burroughs took it upon herself to fulfill a task that the District’s Talented Tenth refused to do - to build up viable educational and occupational opportunities for poor Black working women in the Nation’s capital. After being denied a place among Washington’s teaching elite, Burroughs reminisced how, “an idea struck out of the suffering of that disappointment that I would someday have a school here in Washington that school politics had nothing to do with, that would give all sorts of girls a fair chance, without political pull, to help them overcome whatever handicaps they might have.”⁸³

In addition to being shunned by Washington’s elite Blacks, Burroughs also had to contend with increasing racism, segregation and disenfranchisement that defined the 1890s. Public parks, restaurants, and theaters which had previously been open to Blacks in Washington were now closing their doors to Blacks. In 1893, the nation was entrenched in an economic depression. With unemployment up, and cotton prices down, stressed labor relations between Blacks and Whites spurred lynching throughout the South. By the 1890s, lynching had become carnival-like events drawing crowds in the tens of thousands. Also in that decade, poll taxes, literacy and property tests appeared in virtually every southern state to keep Blacks politically impotent. In short, being a young Black woman in the nadir battling discrimination inside and outside of the Black community was no easy task.

⁸¹ Ibid., 247.

⁸² Cook, “*Report of the Board of Trustees 1894*,” 152.

⁸³ Harrison, *The Dream and the Dreamer*, 10.

Burroughs shored up to prepare herself for the next chapter of her education. Believing that increased education could provide some shelter in the harsh anti-Black climate in the nadir, Nannie enrolled in business school in Washington D.C. and studied stenography there for one year. It didn't take long for Burroughs to put her new business skills to use. In the summer of the 1895, Nannie set out to open her first enterprise. Burroughs led a group of six high school graduates to open a Black owned dry goods store in Washington D.C.⁸⁴ Despite the city's increasing segregation, Nannie remained hopeful. "While the enterprise will be run by colored men and women," she exclaimed to Black and White Washingtonians, "believe us we earnestly solicit the patronage of both black and white. Trusting that you will ever remember that our doors shall be thrown open to both black and white, and that every man shall be treated as a man, regardless of the color of his skin."⁸⁵ The store never opened, and Nannie suffered a similar defeat when she unsuccessfully wrote Washington requesting a job at Tuskegee as a stenographer and bookkeeper.⁸⁶

Still, Nannie forged ahead. Once again, the Black Baptist church would provide an institutional foundation for Nannie to hone her skills and continue to make sense of competing ideas on Black education and other topics. Now just a few years out of high school, Nannie began building a solid reputation as one of Washington's most engaging speakers. She participated in the Second Baptist Lyceum, a nationally recognized organization that attracted an audience of approximately two thousand of "Washington's brightest and best people."⁸⁷ Lyceums were established for the purpose of improving the social, intellectual and moral development of Blacks. Lyceums sponsored lectures, performances and functioned as an important educational activity for Blacks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Lyceum sponsored events were open to the public but were the most popular among educated Blacks. Lyceum formats were popular because they provided an outlet for racial frustrations through non-confrontational or violent means, were a source of racial pride, and operated on an intellectual level familiar to educated Blacks concentrated in the District.

Nannie hit the lyceum circuit and read papers on various topics. In 1897, she read a paper illuminating the double standard that existed between men's and women's standards of morality saying "a man can be guilty of the worse crime, and only for a lapse of a few years, he can rise, and apparently, be as great as ever, but let a woman once fall, and she has fallen forever."⁸⁸ In 1898, Nannie delivered a paper in front of the Congressional Lyceum. The Congressional Lyceum, organized around 1897, was a new organization of "young and brainy men" who paid ten cents a month to take part in the literary group.⁸⁹ Burroughs presented a paper entitled "Should the Negro take part in the Spanish American Trouble?" Nannie encouraged Black soldiers to enlist in the war despite their status as second class citizens. She wrote "notwithstanding the fact that in certain sections of the country he was lynched and denied the

⁸⁴ See "A Good Move," *Washington Bee* (Washington, D.C.) Aug. 17, 1895.

⁸⁵ "For Colored People Only," *Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.) Aug. 14, 1895; Nannie Burroughs, "Not For Colored People Only," *Washington Post* (Washington, DC), Aug. 16, 1895.

⁸⁶ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "Religion, Politics and Gender: The Leadership of Nannie Helen Burroughs," in *This Far by Faith: Readings in African-American Women's Biography*, eds. Judith Weisenfeld and Richard Newman (New York: Routledge, 1996), 143.

⁸⁷ William Bishop Johnson, *The Scourging of A Race: And Other Sermons and Addresses* (Washington D.C.: Beresford Printer, 1902), iv.

⁸⁸ "The Week in Society," *Washington Bee* (Washington, D.C.) Mar. 6, 1897.

⁸⁹ "The Congressional Lyceum," *Washington Bee* (Washington, D.C.), Dec. 25, 1897.

exercise of the rights to which he is entitled, he could not justly sulk in his tent when his country called him to duty.”⁹⁰

Nannie’s diverse choice of lecture topics demonstrated her ability to speak intelligently on a wide range of subjects – even controversial ones. Nannie’s proclamation that Black men should risk their lives as soldiers in the Spanish American War was a hotly debated topic within the Black community. Some argued Black soldiers should not fight for a country that treated them as second class citizens, while others believed army enlistment to be an unmistakable show of loyalty which would eventually lead to the elimination of Jim Crow racism. A few short months after Nannie’s war speech, regiments of Black soldiers, now known as the Buffalo Soldiers, stormed San Juan Hill resulting in an American victory.

Burroughs’ speeches and essays were critiqued by members of the academic community. By special request in April 1899, Burroughs gave another essay entitled, “The Negro is Not a Factor in the American Body Politic.”⁹¹ She spoke in front of a “large, intelligent and representative audience.”⁹² Professor J.W. Cromwell from Banneker School in Missouri complimented Nannie’s rhetoric, but found her “severe in her strictures and conclusions especially when it was considered that the race had not emancipated more than a generation.”⁹³ He did however, praise Nannie for her accuracy in calling out the immorality of some religious leaders.

From 1875 to the 1890s, Nannie Burroughs traveled from Orange County, Virginia to Washington D.C. to acquire an education that would influence her thinking about the social, economic, and political problems of African Americans. At M Street High, she studied under Anna J. Cooper and other well educated Blacks that comprised Washington’s elite. Also at M Street, Nannie received a liberal arts education fit for the next generation of the Female Talented Tenth. Though she possessed the academic preparation, she was denied a teaching position and entrance into elite Black social circles due to her lack of wealth, family status and light skin. Moreover, her post- high school studies in the District’s business school equipped her with the skills to establish her own enterprise after not finding support from the Washington elite.

Nineteenth Street Baptist Church provided a welcome place for Nannie to continue to hone the reading, writing, and oratorical skills she first learned at M Street. The church also provided the chance to take on youth leadership roles with less interference from Black elites desiring to reserve positions of influence only for their own. At Nineteenth Street Baptist Church, Nannie developed herself as a burgeoning Bible scholar in her role as Sunday School teacher and student in the Bible Study program under the leadership of Pastor Walter H. Brooks.

Nannie’s participation in the Second Baptist and Congressional Lyceums cemented her position as an up and coming rhetorician in Washington D.C. Debating original ideas on race, gender, religion, politics and other pressing matters affecting African American life kept Nannie abreast on the most pressing issues facing Black America and prepared her to become a future race leader. Additionally, participating in lyceums afforded Nannie the opportunity to teach other Blacks about important community issues while simultaneously ratcheting up her own intellectual prowess.

The liberal arts and religious education Nannie received at M Street and Nineteenth Street respectively would greatly influence her educational thought. In D.C., she received a

⁹⁰ “The Week in Society,” *Washington Bee* (Washington D.C.), May 21, 1898.

⁹¹ “The Congressional Lyceum,” *Washington Bee* (Washington, D.C.), Apr. 15, 1899.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

primarily liberal arts education fit for race leadership, but her ascendancy to the top of the District's educational leadership were hampered due to intra-racism and elitism in the Nation's capital. She learned firsthand that a liberal arts education alone was not enough to solve the problems of the race. As the nineteenth century came to a close, Nannie had to seek novel ways to address Blacks' educational, social and political problems. As a dark skinned girl shut out of the most influential circles in Washington, Nannie would have to seek a new place to further her schooling, assert her leadership, and experiment with new ideas connected to her burgeoning educational thought.

Chapter 3 - Going to Prep School: Teaching, Learning and Experimenting in Louisville

Like Washington D.C., Louisville was an attractive location for migrating Blacks from the Deep South. “The races get along very nicely,” as one reporter wrote for the *Indianapolis Freeman* in 1891,

like water and oil- with Whites on the top and the Negroes at the bottom. It occurs to us what splendid opportunities are here and open to colored men for commercial and political recognition. With 50,000 colored people, what an excellent place for Negro merchants. Not a drug store, not a dry goods store, not a shoe store, not a tailor shop or clothing store not a colored policeman or fireman... And yet we have not met a brainier, finer set of men than we meet in Louisville.⁹⁴

Louisville, as the reporter aptly noted, was a place where Blacks encountered both opportunity and opposition. During the Civil War, Louisville’s wealthiest merchants sided with the Confederacy, while small business owners and common laborers tended to support the Union. Geographically, it was located on the border of the North and South and was a rare industrial center located in a primarily rural region. By the turn of the twentieth century, Louisville’s mix of Southern and Northern attitudes and allegiances morphed into perceptions of Louisville as a racially “progressive” Southern city. By 1890, Louisville emerged as the most important urban center for Black Kentuckians. It was home to 30,000 Blacks compared to 10,130 in Lexington and 5,814 in Paducah, and 3,316 in Frankfort.⁹⁵ The Black population would continue to increase at least 35% over the next two decades. When Nannie arrived in Louisville around 1900, she arrived to a city with sixty-six Black churches, sixty-seven fraternal clubs with over 7500 members, twelve Black women’s clubs, thirteen physicians, eight attorneys, fifty nine ministers, a Colored Old Folks Home, a YMCA and more than one hundred African American teachers.⁹⁶

When compared to the Deep South, Louisville was progressive in the area of Black education. Already in the 1830s, free Black Louisvillians had laid the groundwork for private Black schools. These early schools would be crucial in educating some of Louisville’s most influential African Americans. By 1890, Louisville boasted fifteen Black private schools serving over 1500 students. Berea College, a private institution founded by the American Missionary Association, was located about 100 miles from Louisville and was the only non-segregated, co-educational college in the South. Segregated public schools appeared in Louisville by the 1870s and were partly overseen by influential Black educators. Like most segregated school systems, schools serving Blacks were allocated less resources than those serving Whites. Despite this systemic unequal funding, Black children enrolled in Kentucky schools at impressive rates at the end of the 19th century.

In addition to attracting highly educated Blacks committed to improving Black education, Louisville was a magnet for Blacks interested in politics. Kentucky Blacks were able to resist the worst forms of voter disenfranchisement that characterized Post – Reconstruction

⁹⁴ Mervin Aubespin, Kenneth Clay and J. Blaine Hudson, *Two Centuries of Black Louisville: A Photographic History* (Louisville, Butler Books, 2001), 115.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 116.

America. Thus, Black Louisvillians were able to remain politically relevant and advocate for schools, churches, social clubs and other organizational infrastructures that made for a thriving Black urban center. Even more, they were able to take up questions of national importance for Black America. Prominent Black organizations often chose Louisville as the host city for national meetings to discuss racial politics. Under the leadership of Frederick Douglas, the National Convention of Colored Men met in Louisville in 1883. In 1887, two hundred Black journalists representing over one hundred newspapers convened in Louisville for the National Colored Press Association Conference.

In Louisville, Blacks could say publicly what elsewhere in the South they had to whisper privately. “If the Republican Party cannot stand a demand for justice and fair play,” Frederick Douglas told the Convention of Colored Men “it ought to go down.”⁹⁷ Similarly, Ida B. Wells urged the National Colored Press Association to lead the charge against lynching at a historic meeting in Louisville.⁹⁸

At times, Black Louisvillians’ political clout resulted in gaining influential White allies. In 1895, the Republican Party won in Kentucky for the first time. The Republican victory was due in part to Black voters coming out to the polls, despite attempts by the Louisville police to intimidate them. Black voters in Louisville helped elect William O’Connell Bradley, Kentucky’s first Republican governor in 1897. Bradley, a White man, took Douglas’ and Wells’ words to heart and advocated for state prosecution of White mobs that lynched Blacks in Kentucky.⁹⁹ Bradley also spoke out against segregated travel that existed in Louisville’s railroads and street cars and appealed to others in his party to do the same. Though lawmakers in Kentucky (and everywhere else) ultimately failed to pass anti-lynching legislation, Bradley’s election served as important reminder to the potential of Black suffrage.

Black Louisville Opportunities and Obstacles

Louisville was far from perfect and failed to be the Black urban utopia that many hoped for. As historian George Wright argues, Black Louisvillians endured “racism in polite form.”¹⁰⁰ Whites “generally supported a number of Black causes, but these Whites were very selective on what to support and in return demanded that Blacks be passive and remained in the place assigned them in Louisville society.”¹⁰¹

The color line was readily discernible in Louisville’s occupational structure. While Black women benefitted from Louisville’s booming economy, they still faced discrimination and were relegated to the lowest paid jobs. At the turn of the century, eighty-four percent of Louisville’s laundresses were Black women.¹⁰² By 1900, the city’s tobacco workers were almost exclusively Black women. Working in the tobacco industry may have offered less physically taxing work than laundressing, but it too came with its unique set of occupational hazards. Tobacco was dirty and sticky, and the factories were heavy with dust and interfered with proper

⁹⁷ Ibid., 124.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Lisa Materson, *For the Freedom of Her Race: Black Women and Electoral Politics in Illinois, 1877-1932* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 72.

¹⁰⁰ George C. Wright, *Life Behind A Veil: Blacks in Louisville, Kentucky 1865-1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 4.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 2.

¹⁰² Ibid., 124.

breathing. De-stemming, or the separating the stem from the leaves to prepare tobacco for cigarettes, was the worst work and had to be done by hand.¹⁰³

Louisville's Black men too were confined to low wage jobs. Black males worked mostly as laborers performing low paid, often time seasonal work that ranged the gamut from ditch digging to street cleaning, sewer work and other physically taxing jobs. Many worked in the service sector, as waiters, drivers, cooks and barbers or porters on the Louisville and Nashville (L and N) railroad. These jobs were in some ways better than unskilled physical labor, but Blacks in the service industry were not spared daily humiliations. Black porters spent hours serving food, fetching bags and catering to the whims of wealthy white travelers, many of whom believing that Blacks were deserving of a second class citizenship status. At L & N, Blacks were relegated to service occupations only and were barred from high wage positions as brakemen, locomotors and conductors. Some Black Louisvillians were able to successfully unionize, but only in the male dominated brick laying, and restaurant service professions.

Ironically, Louisville's combination of opportunities and obstacles made it the ideal environment for Nannie to craft an educational philosophy that addressed the most pressing social, political and economic issues for Blacks. For the next ten years, Louisville's racialized and gendered occupational structure would serve as the backdrop for Nannie's formulations on race, labor, and education of Black women.

Louisville's Most Notable Baptist Citizens

Nannie relocated to the bustling city of Louisville in 1897. That year, the *Christian Banner*, the Baptist newspaper she worked for, moved its offices to Louisville. The move coincided with the Foreign Mission Board of the NBC relocating from Richmond, Virginia. Reverend L.G. Jordan, Nannie's employer, also made the journey. Once in Louisville, Nannie joined a growing population of influential and educated Black Baptists charged with coordinating the activities of over two million Baptists throughout the United States.

William H. Steward, one of Louisville's most distinguished Baptists, was born free in 1847 in Brandenburg, Kentucky. He migrated to Louisville as young boy to attend a private school founded by Reverend Henry Adams, an influential Black Baptist educator and leader. A bright student, Steward would eventually become one of Louisville's most influential and well respected citizens. As a young man, Steward worked as a teacher, a purchaser for the Louisville and Nashville (L&N) Railroad and Louisville's first African American mail carrier. Save Booker T. Washington, Louisville Whites believed no Black man possessed greater insight on Black-White race relations than Steward. He served on the Board of Visitors for Black public schools and in the 1890s used his influence to secure teaching positions for friends and relatives in Louisville public schools.¹⁰⁴

Steward was the secretary of the General Association of Colored Baptists in Kentucky, the secretary of the Foreign Mission Board of the NBC, and a member at Fifth Street Baptist, Louisville's largest Black Baptist church. It enjoyed a reputation as a trailblazing institution of Black education. Fifth Street housed the first antebellum school for Blacks in Louisville. Steward

¹⁰³ Ibid., 85.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 80.

continued in this tradition, teaching Fifth Street's Sunday School class to record numbers of students.¹⁰⁵

Due to his fierce leadership in the NBC and his advocacy for establishing Baptist schools, Steward was considered a pioneer of colored Baptists in Kentucky. Steward purchased the *Baptist Herald*, the official newspaper of the General Association of Colored Baptists and became its editor. He changed the paper's name to the *American Baptist* and moved its headquarters from Paducah to Louisville in 1879. That same year, Steward leveraged his contacts with wealthy Whites and eventually procured funding for the Kentucky Normal and Theological Institute.¹⁰⁶

Reverend William J. Simmons worked alongside Steward to create a flourishing Black Baptist community in Louisville. Simmons was born a slave in South Carolina. He attended Madison and Rochester universities and eventually graduated from Howard in 1873. He took an interest in politics and worked in the Republican Party, and as the county clerk and commissioner in Ocala, Florida. As the Post-Reconstruction South became increasingly suffocating for Black people, Simmons relocated to Louisville to assume the pastorate of First Baptist Church in 1879. Simmons joined Steward as editor of the *American Baptist*. As one observer noted, Simmons "editorials are racy, versatile and logical. He contends for rights and cries down wrongs. He is extensively copied, and has the personal respect of every editor and prominent man in the country."¹⁰⁷

Simmons wrote extensively about the state of Black education in the South. After several years of pastoring the First Baptist Church, he vacated the position to become president of the Kentucky Normal and Theological Institute in 1880. Simmons grew the school's enrollment to 111 students by the end of the second session. To gather support for his school, he solicited support from the ABHMS and traveled throughout the South "preaching, lecturing and scattering pamphlets out everywhere."¹⁰⁸ In the late 1880s, Simmons wrote a widely read pamphlet titled "Industrial Education." He warned,

the industrial craze be not watched, our literary institutions will be turned into workshops and our scholars into servants and journeymen. Keep the literary and industrial apart. Let the former be stamped deeply so it will not be mistaken. We need scholars. All men are not workers in the trades, and never will be. If we cripple the schools established, by diverting them largely from their original plan, we shall have no lawyers, doctors, professors, authors, etc.¹⁰⁹

Simmons, a Howard graduate, had received a liberal arts education. Still, he saw great value in vocational education for some Blacks. Simmons left the presidency at State to found the Eckstein-Norton Institute in 1890. Simmons' vision for Eckstein was that its curriculum would provide normal, theological and liberal arts classes, but emphasize industrial arts. Simmons secured initial funds to build the school from Norton Eckstein, a wealthy railroad tycoon.

¹⁰⁵ Olivia Cloud, "William H. Steward," *Courier-Journal*, (Louisville, KY), June 27, 2007, <http://archive.courier-journal.com/article/200706280361/William-H-Steward> (accessed Aug. 1, 2015).

¹⁰⁶ Aubespain, Clay, Hudson, *Two Centuries of Black Louisville*, 79.

¹⁰⁷ William J. Simmons, *Men of Mark: Eminent, Progressive and Rising* (Cleveland: Geo M. Rewell & Co., 1887), 47.

¹⁰⁸ William J. Simmons, "Fifty-Sixth Annual Report of the Executive Board of the American Baptist Home Mission Association," *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly Journal* 10, no. 7 (1888): 169.

¹⁰⁹ Simmons, *Men of Mark*, 51.

Simmons named the school for Eckstein in his honor, and Eckstein built a railroad station specifically to carry students back and forth from campus. Simmons died the same year Eckstein opened. His protégé Charles H. Parrish succeeded him as Eckstein's president and would hold the office for more than twenty years.

Charles H. Parrish was President of the Foreign Mission Board and Chairman of the Board of the NBC. Parrish had been the top student at State University and earned his a Bachelor's degree in 1880. He was one of four State faculty members to follow Simmons to Eckstein. Once at Norton, Parrish worked as the school's Greek professor, bookkeeper, secretary, treasurer and eventually its president. Parrish also served as Pastor of the Calvary Baptist Church and was the President of the State Teacher's Association. Parrish was razor sharp theologian and published several texts outlining the theological tenets of the Baptist faith. His pamphlet, entitled "What We Believe" served as a guide for Baptist leaders throughout the nation. Parrish was also a banker, board member of several high profile organizations, and one of Louisville's most influential residents. One observer described him as "clear, comprehensive and convincing in the presentation of his views upon all subjects," adding that he displayed "beauty of language, grace of rhetoric, and forceful logic, which stamps him at once as extraordinary in his gifts and acquirements."¹¹⁰ Nannie enjoyed both a personal and professional relationship with Parrish. She worked closely with him in the NBC and was also a temporary boarder in his home.¹¹¹

Garnering Local Acclaim

Nannie wasted little time making a name for herself in her new city. Just as she had done in Washington, Nannie enveloped herself within the educational life of Louisville. Her varied educational experiences equipped her with the knowledge to identify the most pressing needs in Louisville. Drawing upon her liberal arts, business and religious educations, Nannie established her first educational institution of her very own. She founded the Women's Industrial Club in 1898 to address the universal needs of Black women in downtown Louisville. Though "club" was in its title, the Women's Industrial Club was actually a day school, night school, boarding hall, and business incubator for female-centered Black businesses in Louisville. Nannie taught Louisville's professional women how to improve their teaching, business and clerical skills. At one session, Burroughs taught Louisville public school teachers typing to help them prepare for their new roles on the faculty of Louisville's first business school for Blacks.¹¹² For the unskilled workers, Burroughs taught a course titled "Everyday Things Needed in the Home" which covered sanitation, hygiene, respectable dress, child care, cooking, sewing and laundry work. She also taught classes in bookkeeping, clerical work and millinery. The Industrial Club also provided charity to Louisville's neediest citizens. As Burroughs reported on Thanksgiving in the *American Baptist* in 1904, "The Industrial Club sent out a letter to a number of friends soliciting donations of provision with which to give a dinner to such poor children as could reach."¹¹³

Burroughs experimented with a few funding models for her club. Initially, she taught classes for free but eventually she began charging students ten cents per week to cover expenses. Nannie covered the rest of the club's costs through her own fundraising efforts. One favorite

¹¹⁰ G.F. Richings, *Evidences of Progress Among Colored People* (Philadelphia: George S. Ferguson Co., 1902), 224.

¹¹¹ Daphne Spain, *How Women Saved the City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 163.

¹¹² Earl Harrison, *The Dream and the Dreamer*, 32.

¹¹³ Nannie H. Burroughs, "110 Children," *American Baptist (Louisville, KY)*, Dec. 9, 1904.

fundraising method involved her cooking students. Students in this course prepared and sold meals to Black laborers in downtown Louisville. This activity proved fruitful in multiple ways; the preparation of food allowed students an opportunity to hone their craft, and the revenue earned by selling meals provided sorely needed funds for the school. The Industrial Club also served as a meeting place for some of Louisville's most notable guests. In 1904, Mamie Steward, wife of William Steward and the President of the Baptist Women's Education Convention of Kentucky, escorted a group of influential Baptists on a tour of the city and stopped at the Industrial Club for breakfast. Through her own fundraising efforts, the school grew rapidly, causing Nannie to hire other teachers. Once relieved of some of her teaching responsibilities, Nannie channeled more energy toward the administrative matters involved with operating a multi-purpose school.

The Louisville Industrial Club received positive reviews in the local Kentucky press. An editorialist in the *Courier-Journal* wrote:

probably no woman's club in Louisville, or for that matter, elsewhere is doing as much practical, far reaching good as the association of colored women who have the Industrial Home at 726 Walnut. It is doubtful if many of the white women of this city know of the existence of this band of workers, of their aims and ambitions but if they did the chorus of appreciation would be unanimous. This organization...was instituted by a remarkable young colored woman, Miss Nannie Burroughs, who has added to her natural abilities a very liberal education and who is fired with enthusiasm for the advancement of her race, - advancement too, along the most practical lines.¹¹⁴

Du Bois also endorsed Nannie's good work. In a report titled *Efforts for Social Betterment Among Negro Americans*, he wrote,

"the woman's industrial club of Louisville, Kentucky, is a business, charitable and industrial club quartered in a well-equipped, twenty-room building on one of the most popular thoroughfares of the city. Various industries are carried on under its roof, and it has given impetus to the business life of the city of Louisville. From the millinery department have gone out scores of young women who are doing high class work."¹¹⁵

As Du Bois mentioned, the Women's Industrial Club operated several businesses under its roof. Nannie taught "first class" typing, stenography and other business skills at the William J. Simmons Business Institute.¹¹⁶ She was also the founder and secretary of the Douglas Improvement Company, an enterprise that produced "vast numbers of the only Negro calendars in the world."¹¹⁷ Burroughs started the company to "counteract the false impressions given by Burlesque pictures of Negroes on calendars, post-cards and elsewhere."¹¹⁸ To support all the administrative needs of the club, Burroughs owned an onsite printing press she named the Dispatch Printing Company. In addition to her work in Louisville, Burroughs biographer Earl

¹¹⁴ Harrison, *The Dream and the Dreamer*, 12.

¹¹⁵ W.E.B. Du Bois, *Efforts for Social Betterment Among Negro Americans* (Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1909), 62.

¹¹⁶ "William J. Simmons Business Institute," *American Baptist* (Louisville, KY.) Nov. 13, 1903.

¹¹⁷ Bacote, *Who's Who Among Colored Baptists*, 240.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Harrison credits her with organizing seven other schools in multiple cities for the National Association of Colored Women of Colored Women.¹¹⁹

Rise to National Prominence

Burroughs knew Jordan, Parrish, and Steward well through her work with the NBC. But she remained virtually unknown on the national circuit until September 1900. Then, she travelled to Richmond, Virginia to deliver a speech at the National Baptist Convention entitled “How the Sisters are Hindered from Helping.” Nannie addressed thousands of the most distinguished Baptist leaders and lay members from throughout the United States. She came to declare that the time had come for a separate Baptist women’s organization. Knowing that the idea of an independent women’s organization would be controversial to many, she proclaimed,

We come not to usurp thrones nor to sow discord, but to so organize and systematize the work that each church may help through a Woman's Missionary Society and not be made the poorer thereby. It is for the utilization of talent and the stimulation to Christian activity in our Baptist churches that prompt us to service. We realize that to allow these gems to lie unpolished longer means a loss to the denomination. For a number of years there has been a righteous discontent, a burning zeal to go forward in his name among the Baptist women of our churches and it will be the dynamic force in the religious campaign at the opening of the 20th century. It will be the spark that shall light the altar fire in heathen lands. We realize, too, that the work is too great and the laborers too few for us to stand idly by while like Trojans the brethren at the head of the work under the convention toil unceasingly. We come now to their rescue. We unfurl our banner upon which is inscribed this motto, "The world for Christ. Woman, arise, He calleth for thee!"¹²⁰

It was uncommon for a woman, particularly one who was not a minister’s wife, to address the convention. Moreover, an independent women’s organization was not a popular idea to all. Simmons died a decade before Nannie’s debut speech, but he was still a major influence on leaders in the NBC. Throughout the 1890s, Simmons had blocked women’s prior attempts to organize and independent women’s organization.¹²¹

NBC President Elias Morris shared Simmons’ hesitance to sanction an independent women’s organization. Morris was pleased the women wanted to organize, but he wanted them to operate as a “Board” not a “Convention”. As a Board, the women would be subject to the control of the NBC and unable to control their own finances, agendas, and activities. As a convention, the women would be have the independence to set their priorities as they saw fit.

Still some NBC leaders were pleased with Nannie’s clarion call to Baptist women to organize. Fortunately, Reverend Jordan was Nannie’s boss and one of her biggest supporters. Given his position in the NBC, his buy-in was crucial to the incipient women’s organization. “It can be said of her [Burroughs] as of Ruth of old” recalled one convention attendee, “‘God hath sent you to the kingdom for such an hour as this.’ It was at the time when Negro Baptist women

¹¹⁹ Earl Harrison, *The Dream and the Dreamer*, 30.

¹²⁰ “Minutes,” *Journal of the Twentieth Annual Session of the National Baptist Convention* (Nashville: National Baptist Publishing Board, 1900), 196.

¹²¹ Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 157.

were unorganized, lethargical [sic], that Dr. L. G. Jordan the Secretary of the Foreign Mission Board had urged them to form a national body.”¹²²

The NBC remained officially silent neither affirming nor denying the women’s aspirations for independence for several years. Still, the women pressed on. At a 1901 organizing meeting, Philadelphia’s Sarah Layten argued that “the low ebb at which woman’s work throughout the country was found is due to the fact that they had no general organization around which to gain strength.” And, she added, no successful convention could be formed without “the opening of a Women’s Training School.”¹²³

The meeting elected a set of capable officers. Sarah Layten was elected President, Sylvia C.J. Bryant of Atlanta, the vice president at large, Virginia Broughton of Nashville, recording secretary, and Susie C. Foster of Montgomery as treasurer. Nannie was elected corresponding secretary and headquartered the new organization in Louisville. The women also appointed a field missionary for Christian development of women and children and organized a committee to start initial plans for the school. Nannie was paid a salary of \$40.00 per month for traveling expenses to tour the country and speak on behalf of a yet to be approved school. She began designing its goals, structure and curriculum. As recorded in her first annual report of the WC, Burroughs declared “the object of the school shall be to train women for mission work in this and other lands. Second, to prepare women as teachers of the word of God in our Sunday Schools. Third, to train them to give better domestic service.”¹²⁴ In her first year with the Women’s Convention, Burroughs worked 365 days, travelled 22,215 miles, delivered 215 speeches, organized 12 societies, wrote 9,235 letters and received 4,820 letters.¹²⁵

Nannie’s proposed school would serve as the training ground for the nation’s Black Baptist women. By 1902, Nannie had expanded her ideas on the school’s purpose and expressed “we believe that an industrial and classical education can be simultaneously attained, and it is our duty to get both.”¹²⁶ The idea that an institution offering both industrial and classical education could be supported predominantly by Blacks was unheard of before Nannie.

For Nannie, building support for the Women’s Convention and building support for her school were mutually inclusive tasks. Black Baptist women were the future funders, missionaries, students, instructors and allies for her school and thus needed to be cultivated, mobilized and empowered. Burroughs corresponded with Baptist women across the country in the Women’s Page of the *Mission Herald*, the official organ of the National Baptist Convention. She published pictures of the officers of state societies, reported out on funds raised at state-level conventions, upcoming conferences and other denominational news. Burroughs encouraged state vice presidents to write and inform her of state and local fundraising efforts and religious activities. Since Baptist women often supervised youth organizations within the local church, Burroughs incorporated a “Children’s Corner” section into the Women’s page. She also featured excerpts from letters sent into the *Herald* in the “Lines of the Secretary’s Mailbag” section. One letter reads, “Dear Ms. Burroughs. We are very small. Though we are young, we are trying to help Christ. I am very young myself, I am just ten years old. My name is Mary Hortense Lee. From the fourth and fifth grades. 62 cents in stamps.”¹²⁷ Within the WC’s first two years, the

¹²² “A Worthy Young Woman,” *National Baptist Union* (Nashville, TN), Mar. 5, 1904.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 20

¹²⁴ Harrison, *The Dream and the Dreamer*, 17.

¹²⁵ Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 158.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹²⁷ Nannie Burroughs, “Children’s Corner,” *Afro-American Mission Herald*, Jan. 1, 1901.

Women's Convention raised funds to send to money, food, and supplies to missionaries in Africa. Their contributions built a brick house for missionary Emma Delaney and a school where over one hundred African girls were educated.

Even though she was the secretary, not the president, Burroughs played a major role in shaping the national identity of the newly formed women's organization. To foster the best practices to maintain local and state societies, she published the handbook *What To Do and How to Do It*. In it, Burroughs supplied millions of Baptist women with templates and advice on how to keep records, raise funds, facilitate meetings, recruit new members, voting procedures and the like. Burroughs also used the booklet to provide spiritual advice. Given that women were not allowed to "preach" in the traditional sense, they often theologized in self-published tracts like *What to Do*. Thousands of women across the nation wrote Burroughs requesting pictures, buttons, leaflets and postcards. By 1903, Nannie reported the Women's Convention had a membership of one million Black Baptist women.¹²⁸

Student Life at Norton Eckstein Institute

Nannie attended Eckstein Norton Institute in 1904.¹²⁹ In addition to being a student, Nannie is listed as a member of Eckstein's all-female "Ladies' Board of Care."¹³⁰ School officials proclaimed that their curriculum was "designed to give here a Christian education, a trade and college advantages to those who show any special fitness for the highest training." For more advanced students like Burroughs, Eckstein offered "literary training" beginning with "the primary and ends with the college."¹³¹ In a rare acknowledgment of the intra-racism, classism and colorism that plagued Black educated communities, the *Courier-Journal* noted Eckstein "teaches manliness and race pride; that skill tells regardless of skin or parentage."¹³²

The campus, located approximately thirty miles from Louisville in Cane Springs, was accessible by railroad. Most of Eckstein's students were Kentucky residents and accessed the school via a special stop on the L and N railroad built especially for Eckstein students. Eckstein's 75-acre rural campus environment allowed student a refuge "free from seductions and allurements of city life."¹³³ Eckstein's main brick building housed twenty-five classrooms. The campus also included five other buildings used as assembly halls, student dormitories, a blacksmithing shop, a laundry and a printing office and a chapel.

Few details exist on Nannie's actual course load at Eckstein. However, school records indicate that in 1902, Nannie had her choice of courses in either the Business or Industrial Departments. Students in the business department studied shorthand, bookkeeping and typewriting. Students in the industrial department studied carpentry, blacksmithing, farming, plain-sewing, dressmaking, shoemaking, and printing. Eckstein also trained teachers. As noted by one observer in 1902, "many of the graduates who have gone out from this institution are successfully teaching in the various districts of their counties, and some are assistants in the

¹²⁸ Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 161.

¹²⁹ Spain, *How Women Saved The City*, 163.

¹³⁰ Linda R. Buchanan and Philo A. Hutcheson, "Reconsidering the Washington-Du Bois Debate: Two Black Colleges in 1910-1911 in *Essays in Twentieth Century Southern Education: Exceptionalism and Its Limits*, ed. Wayne Urban (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2003), 88.

¹³¹ "Eckstein Norton Institute," *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), May 18, 1902.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Buchanan and Hutcheson, *Southern Exceptionalism*, 88.

schools of their towns.”¹³⁴ Given Nannie’s liberal arts high school education, it is plausible that Nannie was identified by her instructors as a student with a “fitness” for higher training and took college level courses at Eckstein.

Bible study figured prominently into Eckstein student’s lives both in and out of class. Students ranged in age from nine to adult and all ages were required to study the Bible. Most of Eckstein’s extracurricular activities revolved around Baptist activities and included clubs like the Simmons Literary, Advanced Literary, Young People’s Christian Endeavors, King’s Daughters, Y.M.C.A., Y.M.C.A. junior, and YMCA Athletics.

Eckstein’s flexible course scheduling further complicates pinpointing Nannie’s exact attendance dates. At Eckstein, “classes and studies [were]so arranged that students may study what is most desirable, leave off at any stage, recruit their health or finances, and return to complete the course at any future time.”¹³⁵ Such malleable course scheduling is frustrating to present day scholars looking to establish a timeline for Burroughs. Yet, Eckstein’s adaptable schedule made it easier for Burroughs to attend classes while simultaneously managing her industrial club and working for the national Baptists.

At Eckstein, Nannie trained under some of the country’s most educated African American women. Ms. Mary Cook received her Bachelor’s Degree at State University. After graduation, she joined its faculty as the Professor of Latin and Mathematics and the permanent teacher and principal of the Normal Department. One observer noted that Cook had

a wonderful influence over her pupils, who love her with the love that casteth out fear. And she not only influences them, but all who come in contact with her are wonderfully impressed. Miss Cook is an intelligent little woman, a deep thinker; keeps abreast of the times and holds no mean place in the galaxy of distinguished color women.¹³⁶

Cook was an indefatigable advocate for Black women’s education. She delivered speeches frequently throughout New England as a member of the Baptist Women’s Home Mission Society.¹³⁷

Miss Hattie Gibbs, Eckstein’s musical conservatory director, was the first Black woman to receive a B.A. in Music from Oberlin. A more than qualified music teacher, Gibbs studied piano, organ, voice, and violin and she rounded out her studies with Latin, Greek, and Mathematics. Gibbs first came to Eckstein in 1892 as a musician with the Norton Eckstein Music Company. She joined the teaching staff a year later. Gibbs’ extraordinary musical ability was critical in fundraising for Eckstein. She traveled extensively giving concerts with her students to raise much needed funds for the school. Gibbs would eventually settle in Washington D.C. and become a major figure in the District’s Black arts society. Other notable faculty included P.T. Fraizer, A.B. Dean of College, Eva B. Fraizier, A.B. Instructor in English Branches and Elocution and Alice P. Kelly, A.B., A.M., Principal of the Training School.

These legendary women were some of Nannie’s teachers while at Eckstein. They were not only educators, but trailblazing race women whose ideas would remain with Nannie

¹³⁴ Richings, *Evidences of Progress*, 221.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Richings, *Evidences of Progress*, 226.

¹³⁷ For a more detailed discussion on African American women and the American Baptist Home Mission Society, see Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 19-46.

throughout her life. After leaving Eckstein Nannie received an honorary Master's Degree from the Baptist institution in 1907.¹³⁸

Speechmaking Across the Nation

While at Eckstein, Nannie became one of the most popular speakers in Louisville's education community. In October 1904, Nannie gave "a very instructive address" to the Louisville's Central High Evening School.¹³⁹ That same year she traveled to Memphis for a speaking engagement and had to stand "like a statue for several minutes" until the thunderous applause subsided before uttering a single word of one of her most well-known speeches titled, "Up From the Depths." "I was in the city of Philadelphia some time ago at the white women's convention and was invited to answer in a lecture this question," she orated.

I was in the city of Philadelphia some time ago at the white women's convention and was invited to answer in a lecture this question 'What does the black race of America want? The conclusion of my address was as follows: 'We don't want your teachers, we have our teachers; we don't want your furniture nor your clothes- we have plenty of clothes (laughter and applause); we don't want your doctors, nor your preachers; we have our doctors and our preachers; we don't want what you have earned, all we ask of you is a man's chance (Applause). What we ask is fair play and to be let alone.'" "Talk about dividing the fund for education; that white men are paying for our education, our education was paid for in advance by our mothers and fathers, our great- grandmothers and our great grandfathers (tremendous applause)... beneath the Black skin of the Negro is as much intelligence and morality as there is beneath the white skin of the blue-eyed and flaxen headed Anglo-Saxon. There is no field of labor, science or literature in which the Negro has not held its own.¹⁴⁰

A reporter from the *Colored American Newspaper* agreed with the crowd and lauded Nannie's speech stating it was

impossible in an article like this to give even a faint idea of the greatness of this lecture and the grandeur of this speaker's diction and the oratorical flights which were as easy and natural as water running from a babbling brook... At the close of her speech, babies kissed her, women almost pulled her from the stand, and men threw coins at her feet and bade her the heartiest God Speed ever tendered a speaker in the city of Memphis. Such demonstrations have never been witnessed in the city of Memphis and perhaps never will again until Miss Burroughs returns.¹⁴¹

"Up From the Depths" reveal several themes from Nannie's burgeoning educational thought. First, she is unflinching in her assessment that Blacks could be educated in Black owned and operated institutions without the major aid from Whites. Using the Women's Industrial Club

¹³⁸ Johnson, *Uplifting the Women*, xxvii.

¹³⁹ "School Notes," *American Baptist* (Louisville, KY), Oct. 21, 1904.

¹⁴⁰ Brom Bones, "A Revival in Education and General Progress," *The Colored American* (New York, NY), Feb. 13, 1904.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

as a prototype, Burroughs proved that Black women possessed the wherewithal to support the education of other Black women. Nannie envisioned a school not funded by the Rockefellers and Carnegies but instead by regular Black mothers and grandmothers. Second, Blacks not only possessed the financial means to support a school, but also the intelligence and expertise to be excellent teachers and administrators. Finally, Nannie criticized the Jim Crow practice of disproportionate funding of Black schools. Despite the first-rate education Nannie received in the District's colored public schools, it was still an education that handicapped Black students in terms of funding and other resources.

International Speech at the World Baptist Alliance in London

By 1904, Nannie's reputation as a rousing national speaker had stretched across the Atlantic. That year, Southern Theological Seminary Professor A.T. Robertson suggested that "Baptists of the world send some of its mission and education leaders for a conference on World Baptist problems."¹⁴² Soon after, organizers begin planning for the World Baptist Alliance (WBA), an international conference of the world's most influential Baptist leaders. Membership to the WBA was open to any general Union, Convention or Association of Baptist Churches. The alliance would meet every five years in various locations around the world. The inaugural conference was scheduled for July 11th-18th at Exeter Hall in London in 1905. Louisville-based White Baptist newspaper editor John Newton Prestige helped organize the American conferees. When he called for delegates, Nannie and thirty-four other members from the NBC responded to the call. That summer, Nannie set out for her first and only trip outside of the United States.¹⁴³

The World Baptist Alliance's commitment to Christian values was tested on its first day. When the thirty-five Black delegates arrived in London, the WBA conference organizers received a crash course in American race relations. The WBA knew Nannie and her colleagues were African American, but were completely unaware that Black Baptists belonged to a separate organization than White Baptists. Apparently word of the color line in the Baptist church in America had failed to reach England but the conference organizers responded quickly and adjusted the names and titles in program to reflect the NBC's distinct status from other White Baptists organizations in attendance.

London Baptists were further surprised by the sheer numbers of Black Baptists. As reported by NBC President Elias Camp Morris to a London newspaper, "there are ten millions [sic] of Negroes in the United States and of these the Baptists number 2,110,000. We have 17,000 organized Baptist churches, and 16,000 ordained ministers. Our churches are grouped into 564 associations. Some of our individual churches number 4,000 or 5,000 members... In two states the colored Baptists have more members than the whole united kingdom [sic]." In response to Morris' statement, a reporter from the Baptist Times and Freeman replied "I was prepared for large figures, but I am free to confess his statement surprised me."¹⁴⁴

Nannie delivered two speeches, one during a plenary session and a second in an open air rally in Hyde Park. Nannie electrified her audience of more than 10,000 from over 21 countries

¹⁴² Glen Jonas "Baptists and Global Unity and the Turn Toward the Baptist World Alliance" in *Turning Points in Baptist History: A Festschrift in Honor of Harry Leon McBeth* eds. Michael Edward Williams and Walter B. Shurden, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2008), 223.

¹⁴³ N.H. Pius, *An Outline of Baptist History, A Splendid Reference Work for Busy Workers: A Record of the Struggles and Triumphs of Baptist Pioneers*. (Nashville: National Baptist Publishing Board, 1911), 92.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

“Women’s Work” and “The Triumph of Truth.” A reporter from the *Baptist Times and Freeman*, a London-based newspaper, reported the following:

As a practical exemplification of the value of missionary work, we next had the glowing speech of Miss Nannie H. Burroughs, a colored lady of Louisville, Kentucky, who simply enthused her audience by her knowledge and zeal for the missionary cause. Her speech was refined, with just a soupcon of twang, and a delightful touch of humor. One especially eloquent passage concerning women's missionary work may here be quoted: "In the galaxy with Livingston, Crowther, Morrison, Hudson, Taylor, McAll, the two Careys, white and black, David George and Judson, I will place the names of Ann Hazeltine Judson, Harriett Attwood Howell, Eliza Agnew and Hannah Catherine Mullens, that matchless, ingenious little soul, who opened the zenanas of India at the point of an embroidery needle, and thus opened a gate to the millions of women who had never seen the faintest ray of the light of God's Gospel. (Much applause.)¹⁴⁵

A close reading of Nannie’s speech to the World Baptist Alliance speaks volumes to her ideas about the role of women in foreign mission work. First, she pays reverence to Englishman David Livingstone, and Nigerian Samuel Crowther, both noted missionaries in Africa. Robert Morrison and James Hudson Taylor were both famed missionaries to China. William Carey preformed his work in India and Lott Carey, the African American missionary, founded the colony of Liberia. These men not only spread Christianity, but they also brought literacy and other education to their respective sites. Next, Burroughs illuminates lesser known American female missionaries. Judson, Howell and Mullen served in India and Agnew in Sri Lanka. In her speech, Burroughs establishes these women and elevates them to the same plane as the male pillars. This idea that women too should be thoroughly educated, equipped and dispatched to foreign missionary fields around the globe would remain with Burroughs throughout her life. As a Black woman uttering these words, Nannie boldly asserts the need for Black women to take their rightful place in the global mission field, particularly in the mission fields of Africa.

London Baptists were genuinely impressed with Nannie and her intimate knowledge of Baptist missionary history. Her speech was well received by the London press not only because of her unmatched skill as a powerful rhetorician, but also because of her advocacy for women’s missionary work around the globe.¹⁴⁶ Nannie’s clarion call for more female missionaries aligned perfectly with the WBA’s agenda of generating viable solutions to the current problem of too few laborers in the mission field. In general, London Baptists were more progressive than Americans on the subject of women’s church leadership and their participation in global mission work. Of the sixty-five member British WBA organizing committee, eight were women. As a point of comparison, the American organizing committee had none. Nannie would later recall how this international experience gave her a sense of worth and possibility and a confidence that she was denied in America.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 95-96.

¹⁴⁶ For more on the women’s participation in the World Baptist Alliance see Richard Pierard, “The Affirmation of Women in the Baptist World Alliance,” <http://www.centerforbaptiststudies.org/bulletin/2005/march.htm#BWA> (accessed June 1, 2015).

¹⁴⁷ Catharine Allan, “Baptist Neighbors Often Meet on the World Stage,” http://baptiststoday.squarespace.com/storage/archives/2005_06.pdf (accessed April 29, 2015).

Nannie's early years in Louisville were tremendously important for her evolving educational thought. The former "alley girl" previously shunned by the Washington D.C.'s elite had accomplished much in a short time. Her move to Louisville, the nerve center of Baptist national activity, allowed her access to the city's most influential citizens in ways not afforded her in Washington. By 1898, she launched the Women's Industrial Club in Louisville and seven other women's educational organizations across the nation. In 1900, she launched the Women's Convention of the National Baptist Convention, the first independent women's organization boasting over one million members. She rose to national and international acclaim as a master speaker and ultimate supporter of women's involvement in foreign missions and other vital leadership roles in both the sacred and secular worlds. Finally, she sought to continue her education and enrolled at Eckstein Norton College, a co-educational Baptist college with an industrial focus.

In the same years Du Bois and Washington argued for schools that offered either a liberal arts or industrial curriculum, Nannie sagely concluded that Black women needed both. Nannie's founding of the Women's Industrial Club served as her first encounter with devising a single-sex educational institution with a mixed curriculum. The club also reveals Nannie's idealized vision that Black educational institutions should strive to meet multiple needs of diverse Black populations. By her design, the Women's Industrial Club educated professional and working class newly arrived migrant workers. The club also housed several Black-owned businesses and added to a burgeoning entrepreneurial spirit and economic cooperation amongst Louisville residents. Over the next few years in Louisville, Burroughs would continue to refine her ideas on education and become more attuned to the social, educational and political needs of working class women.

Chapter 4 - School's In: The Broad Based Curriculum of the Women's Convention and the National Training School for Women and Girls

By 1906, Nannie had accomplished much. She expertly parlayed her position as Secretary of the Foreign Mission Board to yield numerous successes, including the establishment of the Women's Industrial Club, the Women's Convention and her election to the role of Corresponding Secretary for the newly formed organization. To further prepare herself for leadership, she elected to further her postsecondary education by attending the Norton Eckstein Institute. These were all admirable successes. Still, Nannie's life dream of establishing a school with broad-based educational goals that combined industrial and liberal arts schooling remained unfulfilled.

Burroughs had solid support for the future school from Baptist women since 1901, but the male leadership of the NBC was harder to convince. From 1900-1905, the men remained silent not only on Nannie's idea for the school, but also on the matter of the women's right to form their own organization.¹⁴⁸ Black women composed the majority of the Baptist denomination and their separate organizing carried the potential for their decreased fundraising for the national organization. When Nannie made her plea for her school, the NBC was only six years old and still coming into its own as a national unified body of believers.

Male leaders may have balked on Nannie's idea for a women's school for several reasons. They may have believed that a women's school was not needed since the Black Baptists already operated several small colleges.¹⁴⁹ Or, perhaps they were vexed by the hypothetical financial drain Nannie's ambitious effort would cause. It also must be duly noted that some turn of the century Black Baptist men still possessed chauvinistic attitudes regarding women's leadership roles and would have been unsettled by a missionary training school owned and operated by women and focused on dispatching those of the "weaker sex" as representatives of the Baptist faith around the globe.

Adding to all of this, problems that had little to do with Burroughs herself were looming within the denomination. In 1905, controversy arose about who owned the Baptist publishing facilities in Nashville. Up to that point, the publishing house was the most financially lucrative and successful Black Baptist venture. It produced Sunday School and other educative materials written by Black theologians. The publishing house was the life blood of the Convention, and a very necessary institution because it was one of the few places Black Baptists could access anti-racist Baptist literature. The publishing house controversy consumed the male leadership's time and energy for more than a decade leaving them little time to muse about the women's activities.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Harrison, *Dream and the Dreamer*, 33.

¹⁴⁹ Among the most prominent Negro Baptist universities, colleges and seminaries were Selma University, Selma, Ala., founded 1878; Arkansas Baptist College Little Rock, Ark., founded 1884; Cadiz Normal and Theological College, Cadiz, Kentucky, founded 1884; Central City College, Macon, Ga., founded 1889; State University, Louisville, Ky., founded 1879; Eckstein Norton University, Cane Springs, Ky., founded 1890; Guadalupe College, Seguin, Texas, founded 1885; Houston Baptist College, Houston, Tex., founded 1885; Virginia Theological Seminary and College, Lynchburg, Virginia, founded 1884; Western College, Macon, Mo., founded 1890; Friendship College, Rock Hill, S. C., founded 1891; Conroe College, Conroe, Texas, founded soon after Gaudelupe College; Central Texas College, Waco, Texas, founded 1901. In connection with these higher institutions, Negro Baptists also operated about 40 normal schools and academies (Pius, *An Outline of Baptist History*, 84-85).

¹⁵⁰ Harrison, *Dream and the Dreamer*, 33.

In 1906, Nannie finally got some momentum. That year, at the Annual Session of the Women's Convention in Memphis, a special committee was organized to choose a location for the school. The committee included four males, the Reverends L.G. Jordan, A. R. Griggs, E. C. Morris, and J. Franklin Walker and S. Willie Layten, Julia M. Layten and Nannie from the Women's Convention. The group chose Washington D.C. for the school site. It is of little surprise that D.C. was chosen. Nannie had a dream of opening a school there ever since she was rejected by Washington's elite as a young woman. The committee instructed Nannie to travel to Washington and find a suitable location for the school.¹⁵¹

Return to Washington D.C.

After almost a ten-year hiatus, Nannie returned to Washington. She secured a horse and buggy and scoured the city for the perfect locale. Nannie thought to herself, "the school must be on a hill," and God confirmed these thoughts in Nannie's private prayer time.¹⁵² She found her hill in the Lincoln Heights area of Washington. Unlike the alleyways Nannie inhabited as a child, Lincoln Heights was still a rural area in the 1900's. It was secluded enough to protect Black women from the vices of city life and to cultivate high morals in an idyllic country setting. At the same time, it was not completely isolated from the greater Washington community. A railroad at the bottom of the hill connected the school to rest of the city. The choice of a site that both protected young women from the city and connected them to it reflected Burroughs' vision.¹⁵³

At the top of the eight-acre property sat a dilapidated eight-room house. Seeing the potential of the land, Nannie thought, "I can repair this old house, I can fill in those gulleys, and I can replace that wasted soil." The cost of the property was \$6,000 of which \$1000 had to be paid within a month. Nannie returned to Louisville, raised the money from her "own people" and bought the land.¹⁵⁴

In 1907, Nannie called the committee together to meet at her childhood church, Nineteenth Street Baptist, to finalize the sale. Not all the committee was present and the title was vested with the present members, L. G. Jordan, Julia M. Layten and Nannie Burroughs. The property was purchased in July 1907 and dedicated in September at the National Baptist Convention Annual Session also held in Washington.¹⁵⁵

Nannie first felt the pangs of the NBC's unresolved issues concerning ownership and control the same year she purchased the property. According to Higginbotham, "women's state and local missionary societies constituted the financial backbone of the national convention."¹⁵⁶ During President Morris' annual address, he publically confirmed the rumors about some men's fears that women would abandon the national body, saying,

Some opposition has been developed among the brethren to the movement to establish a Training School for women of our race but it is my opinion we should seek to encourage the enterprise, and at the same time seek to regulate its management, so that the foreign

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 35.

¹⁵² Ibid., 36.

¹⁵³ R.R.S. Stewart, "Designing a Campus for African American Females" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Minnesota, 2006), 13.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 37.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 161.

mission and other feature of our work will not suffer as a consequence of this new venture.¹⁵⁷

Clearly, President Morris understood that Burroughs was a master fundraiser and that she enlisted millions of Baptist women to do the same. Nannie's weekly communications in the *Mission Herald*, her pamphlets, guides, and leaflets all worked together to unite and motivate women's financial giving in ways that would be sorely missed if they were to suddenly stop. She could even attract high profile African American donors. Maggie Lena Walker, noted as the first Black woman to own a bank, gave Nannie \$500 towards the property for the training school. It did not take long for the male NBC leaders to realize that all of Nannie's fund raising activities, albeit directly or indirectly, affected the Baptist's national purse. Ultimately, the men needed the women's financial support.¹⁵⁸

Burroughs was truly a gifted and creative fundraiser. She partnered with the Colored American Novelty Company and sold pictures of herself. Readers of the *Nashville Globe* learned they could purchase a "magnificent engraving" of Burroughs "made in colors – resembling an oil painting and ... suitable for the home, Sunday School or chapels" for only fifty cents.¹⁵⁹ In 1908, she instituted Women's Day. On the same Sunday each month, Baptist congregations hosted a program dedicated to women's issues and called attention to the plight of women in the foreign mission field. Women's Day also functioned as an important day that allowed women to exercise their public speaking gifts, since the Baptists did not ordain female pastors. Burroughs encouraged local churches to send a portion of the proceeds of the Women's Convention to support foreign mission work.¹⁶⁰

Burroughs' fundraising was all the more groundbreaking given the existing philanthropic avenues of the time. In the early twentieth century, three major groups gave liberally to fund Black education- Black missionary philanthropists, White missionary philanthropists, and industrial philanthropists. Black missionary groups were composed of two major denominations, the African Methodist Episcopalian (AME) and the Colored Methodist Episcopalian (CME) groups. The Methodists funded Morris Brown College in Atlanta and others. The major White missionary groups were the American Missionary Association (AMA) and the American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS). The former founded Fisk, Hampton and Tuskegee and the latter founded Morehouse and Spelman. The AMA and ABHMS donated funds to schools that ranged from liberal arts to vocational. The Baptists too had founded and controlled schools, but not without large contributions from White missionaries or industrialists. Nannie's fundraising was not only successful, but groundbreaking because she created an entirely new network of Black financiers of Black education.¹⁶¹

At the same time, Nannie was not opposed to partnering with Whites in fundraising ventures. She was public about this, as a newspaper reported Nannie was known for "preceding on the theory that it is better to demonstrate what the race can do for its own uplift before seeking outside aid."¹⁶² She asked Booker T. Washington to reach out to philanthropist Julius

¹⁵⁷ Harrison, *The Dream and the Dreamer*, 39.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁵⁹ "A Magnificent Engraving Of," *The Nashville Globe (Nashville, TN)*, Jun. 14, 1907.

¹⁶⁰ Delores C. Carpenter, *A Time for Honor: A Portrait of African American Clergy Women* (St. Louis, Chalice Press: 2001), 9.

¹⁶¹ For a more detailed discussion of Black schools funded by White missionary organizations, see Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 19-46.

¹⁶² "Select School for Females," *The Broad Ax (Chicago, IL)*, Nov. 12, 1910.

Rosenwald on her behalf. Burroughs was not interested in a handout, but rather, she wanted him to match the dollar amount needed to build to expand the industrial hall on campus. As historian Karen Johnson argues, Washington thought that a school like Nannie's that included heavy doses of industrial and moral training could only be successful in the Deep South.¹⁶³ He refused to broker the deal. Nannie was a fiercely independent lady, but Washington's lack of support must have hurt her, especially after she had supported him so faithfully.¹⁶⁴

Nannie wrote directly to John D. Rockefeller saying if he gave her a small donation, she would apply her business skills to grow the money significantly. He sent her back one dollar and asked how she would invest it. Nannie took the dollar, and bought some peanuts. She shelled, roasted, and boxed them up and sent them back to Rockefeller asking that he sign each one. She would sell each peanut for one dollar. Rockefeller, impressed her with her business acumen, responded with another donation.¹⁶⁵

Burroughs advertised the broad-based educational goals of the school to drum up donations from a wide range of donors. In 1901, Nannie posed four purposes of the school that focused on training missionaries and domestics. In a 1908 fundraising communication to religious women, Burroughs had expanded her vision to include five goals with more diverse career paths for Black women:

First- it will develop their spiritual, moral and intellectual powers, and prepare them to do missionary work at home and abroad. Second- it will train them as homemakers by developing their authentic tastes and strengthening their moral fiber. So as to enable them to join hands in the making the home life of the race purer and nobler. Third- it will dignify labor and encourage habits of industry by fitting women to give professional service, and lift themselves from the common drudgery incident to ignorance. Fourth- it will prepare women to go into the business and professional world as nurses, clerks and musicians. Fifth- much stress will be placed upon the development of strong moral character, the Bible will be the standard classic, and no student will be permitted to take training in any department who will not, in connection with such training, take the Christian Culture Course. Don't you think that it is worthy of your help and prayers?¹⁶⁶

Even when as here Nannie used the language that echoes Booker T. Washington she highlighted far more than he did when speaking about the missionary education and vocation of black girls.

Teaching at State University

State University in 1909 provided Nannie the opportunity to envelop herself in a liberal arts college model with a heavy emphasis on religious education. Nannie joined the theological faculty at State University around 1909.¹⁶⁷ Like Eckstein, State University offered both an industrial and liberal arts education. However, unlike Eckstein, State was best known for its liberal arts curriculum. The Bachelor of Arts degree program consisted of three years of Latin and Greek classes, one and a half years of math, one year of French language and literature, one

¹⁶³ Pickens, William, "Nannie Burroughs and the School of the Three B's," in *A Dream in 1907 Comes True in 1956* (Washington, D.C.: n.p, 1956), 6.

¹⁶⁴ Harrison, *The Dream and the Dreamer*, 27.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹⁶⁶ "Baptist Training School Needed," May 3, 1908, Untitled News clipping, Box 315, Burroughs Papers.

¹⁶⁷ Spain, *How Women Saved the City*, 164.

year of German language and literature, and one year of science and philosophy. Additional courses were given in Constitutional Law, Political Economy, and Evidences of Christianity. State's Theological studies program took two years to complete and terminated in a bachelor of divinity degree. The school also featured industrial and commercial departments.¹⁶⁸

State was also noteworthy because it was the only place in Kentucky where African Americans could receive higher education after the Day Law was passed in 1904. The Day Law banned integrated classrooms, causing the once integrated Berea College to oust its Black students. Some of the best educated religious scholars in the country sat as Presidents of State University. Simmons began this tradition 1879. He vacated the position in 1890 to found Eckstein. James H. Garnett succeeded Simmons. He had earned Bachelors and Masters degrees from Oberlin and divinity degrees from the University of Chicago and the Baptist Theological Seminary at Morgan Park.¹⁶⁹ In 1894, Charles S. Purce replaced Garnett. Purce was a graduate of Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina. The first bachelor of divinity degree was conferred under his leadership in 1897. Purce died in 1905 and was replaced by William Steward. James Robert Diggs took over the presidency in 1908. He was the first State University President to have earned a Ph.D. Like Purce, Diggs had taught at Richmond Theological Seminary. Diggs was a member of the Niagara Movement, aligning him politically as well as educationally with Du Bois. He started the practice of reserving permanent teaching positions only for instructors who had done graduate work. In 1908, Gibbs boasted, all but one instructors at State were graduates of Northern colleges.¹⁷⁰

Gibbs was probably referring to Burroughs as the one faculty member without a Northern college degree. Though she didn't possess a theological degree from a Northern college, she did have an honorary masters from Eckstein. Reverend Charles Parrish was the President of Eckstein when Nannie's honorary masters was conferred. Parrish authored several books on Baptist religious doctrine. He would not have been likely to award her a degree had he not deemed her deserving.

As a female faculty member, Nannie was responsible for cultivating a wholesome student life for State students. State was co-educational and owned by the Baptists, thus a stern code of discipline, piety and sexual purity was built into the school's culture. School rules governing fraternization between males and females were strict. "The writing of letters or notes is strictly forbidden. No communication of any nature unless permission is obtained from the proper authority."¹⁷¹ Another rule stated that "the association of the sexes is not allowed, and there must be no communication without permission."¹⁷² Rules for females were harsher and more numerous than those for males. Female students were subjected to stricter guidelines in regard to dress and decorum. Most notably female students would "not be allowed to visit in the city unless accompanied by parents or teachers, except in rare cases," nor were "girls... allowed to room in the city."¹⁷³

¹⁶⁸ Lawrence H. Williams, *Black Higher Education in Kentucky: The History of Simmons University* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1987), 80.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁷¹ Buchanan and Hutcheson, Wayne Urban, *Essays in Twentieth Century Southern Education: Exceptionalism and Its Limits* (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2003), 89 Urban, *Essays in Twentieth Century Southern Education*, 89.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

A woman on a theological faculty in the 1900s was remarkable anywhere. Seminaries rarely bestowed divinity degrees on women, nor did the Baptists train women for the ministry. Women were trained to become missionaries or Bible teachers who could “teach” from the floor, but not as pastors or professors who could “preach” from the sacred pulpit. Nonetheless, Nannie had placed herself under the tutelage of State’s talented Bible instructors and was influenced by their advocacy of teaching sound Biblical doctrine.¹⁷⁴ Nannie’s lack of a college degree made her ineligible for a long term teaching position at State, but that was of small consequence for Nannie because she was more interested in founding her own school than remaining on State’s faculty.

Just as she had in Washington, Nannie remained at the center of the educational community in Louisville. She was well versed in the education debates of the day and contributed education focused articles to the Black press often. When Whites claimed that 1909 plans to open a liberal arts school serving blacks in a Louisville suburb would attract a “black plague” and too many “buxom Negro wenches,” Burroughs fired back in the press with a scathing critique.¹⁷⁵ She refuted the scientific racism inherent in the protestors’ arguments. She argued that there was no innate lack of intelligence in Blacks.

Scholars have never yet found any psychological difference between the races,” Burroughs wrote, “We have not had the time. You have been using these assets in [shuck]ing corn, picking cotton, and serving you without price for two hundred and fifty years... we have but forty years, and during that time we have had barriers placed in our way but we are marching on. Your race is in the lime-light just now, but that does not argue inherent superiority...fortunate circumstances have helped you, but this relative superiority is only a transient phase of human development. “Like your race, we need the colleges and we need the industrial schools.”

Burroughs challenged her opponents to provide data rather than irrational and exaggerated assertions of Black depravity. “You state in your article that the next census will show that there are single rooms in this city housing twenty-seven negroes,” she noted. “Will you kindly give the addresses of these [sic] housing showing this overcrowded conditions? Twenty-seven people living, sleeping and eating in one room of the size usually rented to Negroes seems to us a physical impossibility.”¹⁷⁶

Burroughs ended her editorial with an appeal for broad-based education. “Like your race we need colleges and we need industrial schools.” Nannie enclosed several pamphlets to give the racist editor an idea of her ideological “position on several questions” which of course included a brochure for the National Training School due to open in just a few short months.¹⁷⁷

By August 1909, Nannie’s days in Louisville were numbered. In just a few short months, Nannie would leave the city behind and return to Washington D.C. to open the National Training School for Women and Girls. The citizens of Black Louisville were disappointed to see her go. They lamented losing such a dynamo who had educated and organized for almost ten years. To

¹⁷⁴ Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, *If It Wasn't For the Women: Black Women's Experience and Womanist Culture in Church and Community* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001), 107.

¹⁷⁵ “Educated Negro Women Are Assailed,” *Washington Bee* (Washington D.C.), Apr. 19, 1909.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

persuade her to stay, a few Louisvillans offered her space for her school within the city limits.¹⁷⁸ Burroughs was flattered, but refused. She knew she had a greater work ahead of her in the Nation's capital. Burroughs had her mind set on departing Louisville, but not without causing a stir first.

When Booker T. Washington's National Negro Business League held its annual conference in Louisville the summer of 1909, Nannie was there. She attended a session featuring J.E. Bush, Receiver of the United States Land Office. Bush was presenting a paper called the "Servant Girl Problem." Bush surveyed 50 mayors of Southern cities asking them to rate the performance of the Black servant girls in their respective cities. To his surprise and satisfaction, he found that an overwhelming majority (75%) of Southern whites were satisfied with the service even in Southern cities that were known to be "hotbeds of Negro hatred." Another (15%) were indifferent, and a small number (10%) were extremely dissatisfied. The extremely dissatisfied responses came from Southern cities experiencing recent trends of White Northern transplants. Bush concluded that Northern White housewives, new to the South were unfamiliar with the manners and cultural ways of the Negro. Relatedly, Blacks servant girls were ignorant of the ways of the Yankee. The main problem, as Bush saw it, was one of misunderstanding on both sides, and yet another example of Northern Whites' failure to understand the true nature of the Black labor.¹⁷⁹

A lively debate ensued. Kelly Miller, the sociologist and Dean of Howard University weighed in. Nannie was on her feet. She argued passionately that there was also an issue of resources. Burroughs argued persuasively that White employers must supply "bathtubs and other necessities for the servant" if they expected satisfactory service from domestic servants. Burroughs concluded saying she was grateful the men were taking up this problem, and she was "not going to solve it with talking and whining, but by building a school at Washington D.C. for training of servants."¹⁸⁰

The next day, it was time for Nannie to present her paper. Burroughs was slated to discuss her work on the "Negro Calendar" and the Douglass Improvement Company, but something else happened. The conferees were still riveted from the session the day before. A special request was made for Nannie to address the servant girl topic again. "What we want is only to be gained by excellent service," she explained to the conference. "Those slipshod, clothes-slipping off shoes run down girls can't expect to go into white people's kitchens and give satisfaction. What we have got to do is to train our girls to give the best service. When we do that, they will become close to their white mistresses. They will become so trusted that the question of wages will be of slight consequence between the two and the servant will receive what she more than she earns."¹⁸¹

It is important to examine Burroughs' comments together over the course of the session to comprehend her position. In the first session, Burroughs clearly calls for White mistresses to provide the basic requirements for their workers. In Burroughs' view, a denial of such basics was both morally and economically reprehensible act committed by Whites onto Blacks. Burroughs understood that basics like adequate time off were crucial to the physical and psychological well-

¹⁷⁸ Harrison, *The Dream and the Dreamer*, 46.

¹⁷⁹ "Whites' Advance Due Mainly to the Negro Nurse of the South", *Courier-Journal Louisville* (Louisville, KY), Aug. 20, 1909.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ "Banquet Closes Session Tenth Annual Session of the Negro League", *Courier-Journal Louisville* (Louisville, KY), Aug. 21, 1909.

being of Black women who performed domestic labor. At the same time, Black female domestic servants had a responsibility to present themselves professionally to employers, using the highest standards of dress and bring with them a keen understanding of the latest technical expertise in washing, cooking, serving and the like in order to retain the business of White employers. Burroughs, a student of business, contracts and business law, understood the concept of equal wages constituted an exchange between employer and employee. Both had to happen in order for all parties to be satisfied. Burroughs would further refine her ideas on the Black women's domestic work as she worked closely with the Women's Convention to fund her own school. Ultimately, Burroughs envisioned a world where the Black servant and White mistress, encountered one another in a gendered setting of domestic intimacy. Unlike the White superior encountering the Washingtonian man, the White mistress was able to perceive the fundamental dignity and equality of her servant. Thus, for Burroughs, a training school for girls could simultaneously reflect the autonomy of Black women in its funding and organization and interracial cooperation in its ideals.

Organizing a “School of Methods” at the Women’s Convention Annual Session

In a circular for the National Training School, Burroughs wrote, “The founding of this school was not inspired by the opportunity to secure educational aid through a beneficent outside gift, but came after seven years of intensive study of the conditions and needs of the colored women throughout this country.”¹⁸² It is no coincidence that seven years before founding the school, Nannie also founded the Women's Convention. For Nannie, the Women's Convention was not just the institutional organizing base for over one and a half million Black Baptist women. Rather, the Women's Convention constituted an educational movement that mirrored Nannie's ideas for her training school.

Of all the Women's Convention activities, the Annual Session was the most important opportunity for Burroughs to contemplate and extrapolate ideas with other like-minded Black religious leaders, educators and activists. Once a year, Black Baptists from across the nation would converge at the convention session to attend a “school of methods.”¹⁸³ In the Annual Convention minutes, Nannie described how “women come up here, get new ideas, new material, new spirit, and go home to and infuse their sisters.”¹⁸⁴

Lasting almost a week, the 1909 Annual Session manifested the ways in which Black Baptist women grappled with a broad range of topics on race, religion, education, sex and society. The Session met in Cleveland from September 15th to September 21st. Annual Sessions met in conjunction with annual meetings of the National Baptist Convention. The women spent Wednesday morning in the main NBC session. By 2:30 pm, the separate Women's Convention meeting officially began. The women spent the first few hours extending official greetings, appointing committees and enrolling delegates. After musical selections, offering and announcements the women adjourned for a short break. They rejoined the men for the evening session to hear the annual sermon delivered by Reverend Parrish.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² R.R.S. Stewart, *Designing a Campus for African American Females*, 62.

¹⁸³ Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 178.

¹⁸⁴ Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 176.

¹⁸⁵ Music and Official Programme Twenty-Ninth Annual Session National Baptist Convention, Tenth Annual Session Woman's Convention, Auxiliary to the National Baptist Convention, Columbus, Ohio, September 15-21, 1909. Bailey and Thurman Family Papers, Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library, W. Woodruff Library, Emory University.

Thursday morning, the women rose at 5:30 am for Sunrise prayer meeting led by Missionaries Lula M. Jackson and Rosella Robinson. At 10:00 am they gathered to hear President Layten's annual address, followed by announcements and musical offerings. In the afternoon session, Nannie gave her annual corresponding secretary's report.

Nannie continued her leadership of the meeting into the night. She dedicated the entire evening's agenda to the National Training School which was due to open in one month. Nannie made the most of her opportunity to rally national denominational support for her school. She gave a report on her progress to date and introduced a group of mostly male speakers on topics directly related to the purpose, mission and curriculum of the school. New York's Reverend M.W. Gilbert gave an address titled "The Duty of the Denomination to Make a Specialty of Preparing its Own Workers, followed by Iowa's Reverend T. L. Griffith's, "The Need of Trained Christian Women in the Church and in the Community. Finally, Burroughs introduced Professor Byrd Hillerman, one of the most respected Black education experts, who co-presented a paper on "What Trained Workers Can Do for the Masses."¹⁸⁶

Friday morning marked the beginning of the "Foreign Mission Period". Women delivered short addresses on "the Best Missionary Literature and How to Use it" and a "Review of the Mission Fields." A question and answer session followed the addresses. The women switched gears to the "Social Reform Period" on Friday afternoon. Nannie planned the agenda to reflect the problems of Black urban life. Presenters spoke on the subjects, "The Jim Crow Negro and How To Improve His Conduct", "What Effect Have the Skating Rink, Nickelodeon and Other Amusements on Society?" and "The Status and Condition of the Negro Girl in the North-The Servant Girl, the Laborer."¹⁸⁷

Nannie and the other seasoned officers of the Women's Convention yielded their control of the convention to aspiring young female Baptist leaders during the "Young Girls' Evening" portion. Miss Mary Buchanan of Middledrift, South Africa presented a paper "What the Needle Can Do for Africa". Miss Delia Rudolph of Capetown, South Africa spoke on "A Vision of Africa's Future." Miss Willa Spaulding spoke on "The Necessity of Educating Girls in Christian Schools." Allowing young women to present papers, Burroughs believed, was crucial to the development of the next generation of female leadership. Burroughs would continue to develop Miss Delia Rudolph would eventually enroll in Nannie's school. The missionary commitment of Nannie and other Baptist women shaped both the convention and the training school as educational projects intended to foster the leadership capacity of black women.

On Saturday morning, the women gave financial reports, elected officers, and heard special topics on the theme "The Christ Estimate of the Child," followed by "an open parliament in which workers among children will give practical talk on how they made their work a success." Saturday afternoon, the women joined back up with the men for the National Baptist Session. Nannie entertained the conferees Saturday evening with a performance of her original play, *The Slabtown Convention*. Burroughs wrote *Slabtown*, a one-act satire, as a fundraiser for the Women's Convention; but the play's main objective was to use humor to discourage tardiness, gum chewing, garish attire and other undignified behaviors Burroughs discouraged among women.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ For a more detailed summary of "Slabtown" and other plays written by Burroughs. Bernard L. Peterson, *Early Black American Playwrights and Dramatic Writers: A Biographical Directory and Catalog of Plays, Films and Broadcasting Scripts* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1990), 46-47.

On Sunday, the final day, conferees attended Sunday School and listened to Adam Clayton Powell's closing sermon. The week's festivities closed on a hopeful note with Mrs. J.S. Morton's final address, "The Triumphs of Christianity in the World." Reverend Jernagin installed new officers and officially dismissed both conventions late Sunday evening.¹⁸⁹

National Training School for Women and Girls Opens

After years of intense study, prototyping, research, teaching and learning Nannie was finally ready to open her school. The NTS opened in October 1909. As reported by one paper in the school's earliest days, "Every idea put into practice at the institution is the expression of the purpose of Nannie Burroughs... she determines that her ideas shall have a complete try-out and that failure should not depend upon improper or inadequate test and application."¹⁹⁰ The opening exercises were well attended by some of Washington's most notable citizens. L.G. Jordan, C.H. Parrish, and other prominent Baptists attended. Henry Brown MacFarland, the White Commissioner of the District of Columbia also came. Kelly Miller, Nannie's good friend and dean of Howard University also joined the opening exercises to wish Nannie well in her new endeavor.¹⁹¹

As president, Nannie hired faculty to teach dressmaking and tailoring, music, language, history, domestic science, poultry raising and missionary training. To provide administrative and other support, she also hired a secretary and librarian, a matron and two department heads.¹⁹² Of the 19 students enrolled, most came from the South, but a few hailed from Africa and Haiti.¹⁹³ There were no graduates that first year, but there were several "advanced" students in the missionary, industrial and literary departments.¹⁹⁴

The early days of the school were not for the faint of heart. The female teachers and the students performed much of the physical labor to transform a "wilderness of briars and weeds" into what would be the school's scenic campus. The NTS community cultivated gardens, canned fruit, planted trees, and laid concrete walkways and filled in gullies. Students dedicated two thirds of their class time to mastering their trade, and the remainder of their time to the study of English. The emphasis on work coincided with Nannie's emphasis on the valorization of labor and service in the Black community.¹⁹⁵

NTS was open and thriving but still needed to keep pace with its fundraising needs for the growing institution. To celebrate Lincoln's birthday, a committee of fifty women from the Women's Convention sold Lincoln pins with all proceeds going to the school. At the 1910 Annual Convention, the women raised an impressive \$15,000 for new campus buildings to accommodate more students.¹⁹⁶ Nannie added new rooms to the original building and

¹⁸⁹ Music and Official Programme Twenty-Ninth Annual Session National Baptist Convention, Tenth Annual Session Woman's Convention, Auxiliary to the National Baptist Convention, Columbus, Ohio, September 15-21, 1909. Bailey and Thurman Family Papers, Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library, W. Woodruff Library, Emory University.

¹⁹⁰ "Equips Domestics," *Evening Star*, (Washington, D.C.), Apr. 30, 1911.

¹⁹¹ "The Baptist School," *Washington Bee* (Washington, D.C.), Oct. 23, 1909.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ According to Harrison, thirty-one students were enrolled in the first class of NTS. However only 19 students are listed on the first year enrollment list. See National Training School For Women and Girls Enrollment Term: 1909-1910 List of 1909 Registered Students, Box 165. Burroughs Papers.

¹⁹⁴ "The National Training School Closing Exercises and Trustee Meeting," *Washington Bee*, Jun. 4, 1910.

¹⁹⁵ Harrison, *The Dream and the Dreamer*, 47.

¹⁹⁶ "Sale of Lincoln Tags," *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), Feb. 11, 1910.

constructed a new building with a chapel and dormitories to house “approximately twelve people” and made plans for a third structure.¹⁹⁷ By 1911, there were eight departments, the Domestic Science Department, the Business Department, the Missionary Department, the Sunday School Teachers Department, Dress Making and Millinery Department, Housekeeping Department, Music Department and the Laundry Department.

That same year, *The Washington Bee* reported on NTS’ broad-based course offerings and testified to the good work occurring on the campus. The popular newspaper reported how schooling offered there was “broad and practical” and that “it [was] not an industrial school in the ordinary sense of the word; it is a vocational training school that insists that each student along with her life work, take a thorough training in English.”¹⁹⁸

New liberal arts focused courses and instructors appeared in 1911. Mary M. Kimball taught Mathematics and Maggie Wall added “primary and current events and Negro Authors” to her teaching responsibilities. Miss J.P. Hurndon taught German and Latin, Georgia C. Moore, English and history, and Rosalie Hanna, who was also a student in the normal department taught shorthand and typewriting. Laura Austin taught manicuring and hairdressing and Alexina M. Cobb and Julia Foster took over as the new sewing instructors respectively.¹⁹⁹

Most NTS teachers were college educated Black women, but there were a few teachers who did not fit this profile. Miss Peck, Missionary Training Department dean was a White woman from the ABHMS. The ABMHS provided her salary, but Burroughs ultimately had the last say over the missionary department’s curriculum and staff. Most religious courses were taught by Black men. Burroughs hired her pastor, friend and Bible scholar Walter H. Brooks to teach a course on “The Life of Christ” and W. Bishop Johnson taught “Biblical Theology.” Reverend J. M. Waldron taught two courses, the “Person and Work of the Holy Spirit” and “Old and New Testament Interpretation.” Dr. Willis Jones taught hygiene and physiology.²⁰⁰

The first National Training School students graduated in June of 1911. The commencement was well attended by “prominent clergy and distinguished citizens in general.”²⁰¹ Rosalie Hanna of Atlanta, Georgia and Florence Brown of Springfield, Massachusetts graduated from the Normal Department. Frankie Turner, Hazel Brown, Elanora Robinson, Edna Anderson and Nettie Washington graduates in hairdressing and manicuring.

As an educator, Nannie believed that summers were important learning times for her students. Nannie spent July through September scouring the country searching for potential students and new sources of funding. On these summer speaking tours, Nannie would bring her students in tow. In 1911, Nannie traveled to Philadelphia with her students Delia Rudolph, Marion Dozier, Geneva Cowells, Ophelia Porter and recent graduate Frankie Turner for the second World Baptist Alliance meeting. Nannie presented an address to the international audience titled “Practical Ways to Solve the Race Problem” and then presented her students to sing before the crowd where “men and women were moved to tears and to shouts of praise.”²⁰²

Burroughs later reminisced on the momentous occasion and said, “I am sure that for the first time in the history of the world that a company of Negro girls have had the opportunity of singing to the world assembled in one great meeting.”²⁰³ Whether that was the first time Black

¹⁹⁷ R.R.S. Stewart, *Designing a Campus for African American Females*, 62.

¹⁹⁸ “Woman’s Work,” *Washington Bee* (Washington, D.C.), Nov. 18, 1911.

¹⁹⁹ “Equips Domestics,” *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), Apr. 30, 1911.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ “Commencement of Training School,” *Afro-American* (Baltimore, MD), Jul. 1, 1911.

²⁰² “A Great Meeting,” *Washington Bee* (Washington, D.C.), Jul. 8, 1911.

²⁰³ Ibid.

girls sang before an international audience or not, the World Baptist meeting was surely a significant event. Most of Burroughs' students were poor young women from the Deep South and would have had little opportunity to attend such an occasion. At the meeting, NTS students listened to inspiring reports from the mission fields in China, India, and Africa spoken by the globe's most learned theologians, and got to interact with other Christian women "some of which could not speak a word of English, but their interpreters were with them."²⁰⁴

Burroughs believed that the social sciences had much to offer in the eradication of the race problem. Throughout the 1910s, Nannie advocated the "larger sociological direction" of the Women's Convention and the National Training School. As a reflection of this new spirit, the Women's Convention opened "The Centre", a social settlement house in a poverty stricken area of Washington. The Centre was a joint effort between the Women's Convention, Nineteenth Street Baptist Church, Howard University, the Associated Charities, and the Juvenile Court of Washington D.C. Under the direction of social worker M. Helen Adams, the Centre provided a medical clinic and classes for adults and children. The Centre also provided legal representation for juveniles in court and sponsored a basketball team.²⁰⁵

Like many Progressive Era women reformers, Nannie saw social reform as an extension of scientific and efficient domestic work. Indeed, many women referred to their efforts as municipal housekeeping.²⁰⁶ Burroughs subscribed to the philosophy that female-only schools prepared women to be better social scientists and reformers. As an NTS advertisement circa 1915 claimed, "careful investigation shows that the women who are rendering the most effective service in slum, social settlement, reformatory and mission work were trained in separate schools."²⁰⁷ Burroughs' belief in the redemptive power of single sex schools spurred her on in her mission to create diverse educational opportunities for Black women.

Burroughs' advocacy of a broad-based educational program that trained domestics, social scientists, businesswomen and missionaries was not without its problems. Domestic service was the most readily available employment for Black women in the early twentieth century, so graduates of the Domestic Science Department, in theory, could easily find job in the service sector. However, graduates of other departments still faced discrimination in the business world and beyond. In 1913, Nannie received word that the Printing and Engraving Department of the federal government was indeed practicing racial segregation. Nannie learned that three Black women, two of whom had been employed in the department for over eleven years, the third for over nine years, had eaten in the company lunchroom for years with no issue. When one White woman suddenly complained and demanded they leave the lunchroom the Black women refused and referred the angry White woman to their boss. When the press reached out for a comment, the director of the department admitted that he "gave no formal order to segregate" but that he did make a "kindly suggestion" to the colored "girls" that it would be best if they occupied tables with "girls of their own race" and ate only at the tables "assigned to the colored assistants." A

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form 10-900a (8-86) *National Training School*. <http://focus.nps.gov/pdfhost/docs/NHLS/Text/91002049.pdf> (Accessed Jun. 5, 2015)

²⁰⁶ The term "municipal housekeeping" was used throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries to describe women's responsibilities for keeping private homes and other redemptive public spaces (schools, parks, settlement houses, etc.) clean. For more detailed discussion on Burroughs' and other Black women's municipal housekeeping, see Spain, *How the Women Saved the City*, 81-86.

²⁰⁷ "National Training School for Women and Girls, Washington, D.C.," *Washington Herald* (Washington, D.C.), Aug. 15, 1928.

day after one of the Black women gave an approved interview to the press about the scenario, she was dismissed for “disrespectful behavior and insubordination.”²⁰⁸

Burroughs’ support of broad-based education for Black women in the early twentieth century was in and of itself a visionary act. In many ways, Burroughs was preparing her Black female students for a professional world that did not yet exist. As historian Jacqueline Jones argues, “despite the significant shift in white working women's options, the paid labor of black women exhibited striking continuity across space-urban areas in the North and South-and time-from the nineteenth to the early twentieth century.”²⁰⁹ In other words, as White women branched out into new careers in factories and office work, Black women’s work options remained frozen in the domestic service industries. Between 1890 and 1920, while White female servants decreased, Black female servants increased, such that by 1920, Forty percent of all domestic servants were Black women.²¹⁰

From 1906-1915, Burroughs continued to refine her ideas on broad-based education. After years of teaching, learning and experimenting with a mixed curriculum in Louisville’s State University, and drawing upon the “school of methods” at the Annual Session of the Women’s Convention, Burroughs’ life-long dream of opening a single sex school for girls was realized. By her design, the National Training School taught Black women to master English, Latin, Negro Authors, Missionary Work, Music, Domestic Science, as well as vocational courses in housekeeping and laundering. Due to her masterful fundraising, the National Training School was the only Black educational institution launched with virtually no financial assistance from Whites. Thus, Burroughs’ school stood alone as a shining example of what a truly self-help educational enterprise could do for Black women and girls. Being unaccountable to White funders imbued Nannie with an administrative and pedagogical freedom that few Black educators experienced in the Jim Crow era. As the twentieth century progressed, Nannie would rely on this curricular freedom to devise novel ways to educate scores of Black women and girls for race leadership.

²⁰⁸ Nancy C. Unger, “When Women Condemn the Whole Race” in *Women in Print: Print Culture History in Modern America*, eds. by James P. Danky and Wayne A. Weigand (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 288.

²⁰⁹ Jones, *Labor of Love*, 155.

²¹⁰ Jacqueline Grant, “Servanthood Revisited, Womanist Explorations of Servanthood Theology” in *Black Faith and Public Talk: Critical Essays on James H. Cone’s Black Theology and Black Power*: ed. Dwight N. Hopkins. (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 128.

Chapter 5 - Working Women in Training: Group Leadership Education for the Black Female Masses

In 1903, W.E.B. Du Bois boldly proclaimed that “the Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men. The problem of education, then, among Negroes must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth; it is the problem of developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races.”²¹¹ For Du Bois, the “best” of the race were those like him; Blacks who were graduates of selective liberal arts colleges, purveyors of the middle class values and male. To his credit, Du Bois was more progressive in his gender thinking than most of his male contemporaries. He cared enough about Black women to pen essays and poems specifically about their plight and supported suffrage for women. Still, Du Bois, stopped short in recognizing women as his full intellectual equals and as chief liberators of the Black race.²¹²

Burroughs was clearly of a different mind. In her view, the “best” of the race were Christian, female and working class. Specifically, the best women to facilitate racial uplift were not the college educated Blacks as Du Bois suggested, but female domestic servants that composed the majority of Black working women. As early as 1900, Burroughs claimed that “teachers, preachers and leaders cannot solve the problem of the race alone, the race needs an army of skilled workers and the Negro woman is the most essential factor.”²¹³ The idea that educating Black female domestics was equally important as training academics was quite contrary to Du Bois, Washington, and other Black male religious leaders of her time.

Training Female Domestic Servants For Race Leadership

Burroughs’ educational philosophy included special attention toward the training of domestic servants. In Burroughs’ view, this training was crucial to female development and was woefully ignored at other schools. Burroughs often lamented the Washington D.C. schools paying too little attention to vocational training. While it is true that schools like Hampton and Spelman offered courses in domestic science, instructors at those school did not hold the same expectations for race leadership as Burroughs.

Vocational education was often used as a tool reproduce the social order. As education historian James Anderson argues, White leaders of Black schools funded industrial education believing it to be the best way to keep Blacks restricted to low wage work rendering them economically and politically impotent.²¹⁴ Lucy Tapley, president of Spelman College from 1911-1927, was known for her approval of Jim Crow and her expansion of vocational educational for Spelman students. Tapley’s expansion of the industrial education differed from the liberal arts focus established by Sophia Packard and Elizabeth Giles, Spelman’s original

²¹¹ W.E.B. Du Bois, “The Talented Tenth”, in the Negro Problem, ed. Booker T. Washington et. al. (New York: James Pott and Company, 1903), 33.

²¹² For further discussion on Du Bois and Black female intellectuals, see Joy James, *Transcending the Talented Tenth: Black Leaders and American Intellectuals* (New York: Routledge, 1997) 35-59.

²¹³ Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 213.

²¹⁴ For more on the diverse motives of White philanthropists and Black education, see James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1865-1930*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 33-109 and Marybeth Gasman, “Swept Under the Rug: A Historiography of Gender and Black Colleges,” *American Education Research Journal* 44, no. 4 (December 2007): 760-805.

founders. Packard and Giles saw industrial education as important, but their main goal of advocating liberal arts education was to create a corps of Christian teachers and missionaries. Tapley, on the other hand, saw industrial education as a tool to ensure Black women remained in a second class citizen status. Neither Packard, Giles nor Tapley believed a thorough training in domestic service could be deployed to dismantle Jim Crow, but Nannie did. For Burroughs, her idea was to deploy women in the domestic sciences to uplift, as opposed to constrain her people.²¹⁵

Because she believed Black domestics had tremendous influence with Whites, Nannie took the education of domestics seriously. She laid out her educational vision for Black female domestics in an essay titled, “The Colored Woman and Her Relation to the Domestic Problem.” The problem, as Burroughs saw it was threefold. First, Black women labored in a “peculiar condition” and lacked the “true scientific methods” needed that would empower them to give the most efficient service. Second, Black women showed “indifference” toward their work, but this was only because Black domestics lacked access to best practices of domestic science. Finally, Black women did not receive “compensation commensurate” for their labor. To remedy these problems, Burroughs’ solution was to “dignify”, professionalize, and make Black women’s labor “indispensable.”²¹⁶

Burroughs believed the resolution of the domestic problem was key to the salvation of the race. If not remedied immediately, the domestic problem would bring about a domino effect of deleterious outcomes for the race; First, White mistresses would replace Black domestics with better trained newly immigrated Irish or Eastern European help. Next, Black women, now shut out of the domestic work, would lose their opportunity to role model respectability and gain White allies. Presenting a respectable Black womanhood was vital for Nannie’s grooming of a female-centered leadership cadre. “One reason for the prejudice against Afro-Americans,” Nannie said, “is the ignorance of the whites concerning the race. The average Caucasian has no idea of the Afro-Americans except what is gained through their intercourse at home with their servants or with their relations with black harlots and criminals whom they meet in saloons and dives.”²¹⁷ The “900,000 women, who cook the food, keep the houses, wash the clothes, nurse the children and make the garments for at least 10,000,000 people of another race,” she concluded, “can exert tremendous influence.” Burroughs depended on the “close contact and relationship” that servants had with Whites. Indeed, she believed, those interactions were so “vital that the attitude of the whole American people toward the Negro can be changed by the servant class of the race.”²¹⁸

Poorly trained Black domestics, Burroughs believed, would result in a loss of economic power for the Black masses. If Black females lost their jobs to newly immigrated Europeans, few jobs would be left for them. Domestic service was one of the few job markets dominated by Blacks. Burroughs feared that if significant attention was not paid to keeping these jobs, the entire race would lose its economic base ensuring a bleak future for generations to come. Moreover, without jobs, women would “sink beneath the undermining influences of insidious sloth” and be “helpless as babes and dependent as the beggar.”²¹⁹

²¹⁵ Yarbrah T. Peeples, “Philanthropy and the Curriculum: The Role of Philanthropy and the Development of Curriculum at Spelman College,” *International Journal of Educational Advancement* 10, no. 3 (2010): 249-251.

²¹⁶ “Nannie Burroughs Talks of the Domestic Problem,” *Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, GA), Aug. 10, 1902.

²¹⁷ “Southern Christianity,” *Appeal* (Saint Paul, MN), Mar. 17, 1906.

²¹⁸ “The Negro Woman’s Opportunity,” *Washington Bee* (Washington, D.C.), May 9, 1915.

²¹⁹ “Nannie Burroughs Talks of the Domestic Problem,” *Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, GA), Aug. 10, 1902.

Indeed, the stakes were high for training of Black domestics. This prompted Nannie to take their education and training seriously, and not treat domestic science as a “side issue” like Washington’s public schools. Burroughs approached her work with a passion, touting the mastery of Domestic Science as the new intellectual-professional domain of working class Black women. Burroughs relentlessly advocated that “men who want to practice medicine, study medicine, men who want to practice dentistry, study dentistry and the hour is now when a woman wants to cook, must study domestic science.”²²⁰

Burroughs was quick to remind others that turn of the century Domestic Science was not just an non-intellectual repackaging of lessons on cooking and cleaning, but rather, the important and rigorous study of chemistry, bacteriology, physiology and sanitation necessary to perform domestic service effectively. Burroughs believed Black women were badly in need of such training. As one poor domestic servant from the South described in 1912,

We do not cook according to scientific principles because we do not know anything about scientific principles. Most of our cooking is done by guesswork or by memory. We cook well when our ‘hand’ is in, as we say, and when anything about the dinner goes wrong, we simply say, ‘I lost my hand today!’ We don’t know anything about scientific food for babies, nor anything about what science says must be done for infants at certain periods of their growth or when certain symptoms of disease appear... But the point is, we do not go to cooking-schools nor to nurse-training schools and so it can not be expected that we should make as efficient servants without such training as we should make were such training provided.²²¹

‘Losing a hand’ in the kitchen, Burroughs believed, was one of the reasons Black communities suffered higher rates of tuberculosis, typhoid fever and infant mortality when compared to their White counterparts. Burroughs’ brush with death as a young girl stricken with typhoid fever in the Washington slums undoubtedly made her particularly aware of the importance of food safety and sanitation for the race. Domestic Science students could not pass the course without demonstrating a scientific understanding of how vinegar was converted in the body, about harmful germs found in dust and other carriers, the behavior of germs in the home, and the food value of fruit.²²² For Burroughs, losing a hand could literally equate to losing a life- a result that was just too costly for the race.

In addition to a thorough training in food preparation, Burroughs also believed women had to learn proper care for the home. To aid in this training, Burroughs erected the Burdette Model Home in 1911. The structure was donated to the National Training School by the Women’s American Mission and Home Baptist Society. It had four bedrooms, a dining room, pantry kitchen, fireplace and a wide verandah. The students would role play multiple scenarios

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ "More Slavery at the South," by a Negro Nurse, *Independent* (New York, NY), Jan. 25 1912. Historians have widely confirmed Burroughs’ observation that Black domestic workers were exposed to sexual violence. See Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, *Living In, Living Out: African American Domestics in Washington, D.C. 1910-1940* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute, 1994, 2010). This danger was no less present in the North as the South. Husbands, sons and brothers of New York City households employing Black women, as Ella Baker and Marvel Cooke reported in the *Crisis*, regularly took advantage of black women “under subterfuge work.” Ella Baker and Marvel Cooke, “The Slave Market,” *Crisis*, 1935.

²²² Curricula and Teaching Procedures, Examination Questions 1920-1922, Box 311, Nannie Helen Burroughs Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

and learn to meet the service needs of families of multiple sizes. The home also functioned as an “object-lesson” in “teaching girls how to plan, build, furnish and take care of a home of their own.”²²³ Lessons about thrift were also injected into their lessons on domestic science. They were taught to avoid going into debt by purchasing “cheap rugs and tawdry furniture such as the vast majority of negroes buy from installment plan stores.”²²⁴

Black Women’s Suffrage

Burroughs also understood that in order for working class women to lead, they needed to be protected. Throughout the mid-1910s, Nannie spearheaded causes that specifically sought to make the United States a safer place for Black women. Creating a professionally trained working class was important, but Burroughs also understood that it was all for naught if Black women lacked political agency.

Burroughs was astutely aware that Black female domestics were particularly vulnerable to sexual assault. As one Black domestic reported:

I lost my place because I refused to let the madam’s husband kiss me. He must have been accustomed to undue familiarity with his servants, or else he took it as a matter of course, because without any love-making at all, soon after I was installed as cook, he walked up to me, threw his arms around me, and was in the act of kissing me, when I demanded to know what he meant, and shoved him away. I was young then, and newly married, and didn’t know then what has been a burden to my mind and heart ever since: that a colored woman’s virtue in this part of the country has no protection. I at once went home, and told my husband about it. When my husband went to the man who had insulted me, the man cursed him, and slapped him, and—had him arrested! The police judge fined my husband \$25. I was present at the hearing, and testified on oath to the insult offered me. The white man, of course, denied the charge. The old judge looked up and said “This court will never take the word of a nigger against the word of a white man.”²²⁵

Obtaining the vote would also work to protect Nannie’s incipient female leadership class from rape and other crime. The ballot, wisely used, said Nannie, “will bring her the respect and protection that she needs. It is her weapon of moral defense. Under present conditions when she appears in court in defense of her virtue she is looked upon with amused contempt. She needs the ballot to reckon with men who place no value upon her virtue, and to mold healthy public sentiment in favor of her own protection.”²²⁶

At the same time as Black women’s suffrage would constrain White men, Burroughs argued, it would also undo the damage that some Black man had caused by their misuse of the vote. “Although the Black man does not know the value of the ballot and had bartered and sold his most valuable possession,” she maintained, “there is no evidence that the Negro woman would do the same.”²²⁷ Burroughs wrote these words at a time when no woman, Black or White, had

²²³ “A Woman’s Work,” *Washington Bee* (Washington D.C.), Nov. 18, 1911.

²²⁴ Frederic Haskin, “Is Lifting Negro Girls,” *El Paso Herald* (El Paso, TX), Jul. 15, 1913.

²²⁵ “More Slavery at the South,” *Independent*, (New York, NY) Jan. 25, 1902.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ Burroughs, “Black Women and Reform,” 187.

the right to vote. Thus, she used this essay as an opportunity to argue for Black women's superior moral grounding when compared to that of Black men. Burroughs' critique of Black men who bartered their ballots to reap financial gains or political appointment exemplified what she believed were failures of men to fully protect Black women, further strengthening her position that women were better equipped for the task of uplifting the race.

In 1915, Nannie wrote an essay in the *Crisis* advocating for women's suffrage titled "Black Women and Reform." "When the ballot is put into the hands of the American woman," she wrote, "the world is going to get a correct estimate of the Negro woman. It will find her a tower of strength of which poets have never sung, orators have never spoken, or scholars have never written."²²⁸ For Burroughs, the act of casting votes was much more than a simple exercise in the democratic process. Rather, it was a powerful tool that would guarantee Black women's citizenship and independence. Having the vote would allow Black women to voice their unique political interests, interests that at times ran counter Black men and White women.

Black Women and World War I

America's entry into World War I offered Burroughs a unique opportunity to further her ideas on the synthesis of agency, respectability and protection. Despite their gross mistreatment of Blacks in all things political, the federal government expected Blacks to exhibit nothing less than the highest levels of loyalty to the nation in times of war. Upon entering World War I, the federal government became increasingly fearful of "anti-American attitude on the part of the isolated parts among the Negro population."²²⁹ In many respects, the federal government was correct in its apprehension. They certainly had done much to provoke Blacks to wrath during the nadir years and earlier. Reflecting his antiwar sentiment, one Mississippi educator appealed to other Blacks in a flyer wrote, "Young Negro men and boys what have we to fight for in this country? Nothing... if we fight in this war time we fight for nothing. Rather than fight I would rather commit self-death... [W]e will only be a breastwork or shield for the white race. After war, we get nothing."²³⁰

Still most Black leaders saw the war as an opportunity for Blacks to prove their loyalty and fitness for citizenship. Du Bois prompted Blacks to temporarily suspend their demands for racial justice and "close ranks" with Whites while the nation was at war.²³¹ Many Black men agreed with Du Bois and opted to prove their loyalty to the nation by enlisting in the military.²³²

Black women could not enlist in the military, but showed their support for the war in other ways. Black club women like Burroughs toured the lecture circuit to advocate for Black participation in the Red Cross, the Salvation Army and other wartime service oriented agencies.

Burroughs delivered pro-war speeches in various locations with enthusiasm. Still, she understood that Black domestics needed a unique space to exercise their emergent leadership skills during the war years. President Herbert Hoover urged women across the nation to conserve

²²⁸ Nannie Burroughs, "Black Women and Reform," *Crisis* 10, no. 4 (August 1915): 187.

²²⁹ Theodore Kornweibel Jr., *Investigate Everything: Federal Efforts to Compel Black Loyalty During World War I* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 226.

²³⁰ Kornweibel, *Investigate Everything*, 81.

²³¹ W.E.B. Du Bois, "Close Ranks," *Crisis* 16, no. (July 1918): 111.

²³² Nearly 2 million Blacks enlisted for the draft. Of them, only 2.75 million were actually inducted, Kornweibel, 76.

food and eliminate waste. In the textbook, *Food and War*, the President implored women “to pursue those studies which deal with food, and to train yourselves for real leadership.”²³³ Burroughs immediately assigned this task to her incipient corps of Black female domestic scientists, and rallied to popularize this new vanguard of Black female working class leadership. “We must not lose sight of the fact that the colored woman is a most valuable ally, said Burroughs to the Black press. “Her power and influence reach from the kitchen to the castle-from desk to ditch. She handles the food for 10,000,000 of her own race, as well as millions of tons for other Americans.”²³⁴ As chairman of the District of Columbia branch of the National Council of Food Conservation and Economies in Household Management, Burroughs led Black women’s efforts in canning fruits and vegetables, as well as reconfiguring menus to including more local foods, leaving foods that needed to be shipped available to starving civilian allies in war torn Europe.²³⁵

With many White workers off to war, the wartime steel and aluminum industries needed employees. Black Southerners relocated to Northern and Midwest urban centers in record numbers only to be met by resentful Whites. Racial tensions escalated in East Saint Louis, Illinois when Blacks arrived in droves to fill jobs in the city’s Aluminum Ore Company and American Steel Company. Rioting erupted in May 1917 when three thousand White men gathered downtown and began attacking Blacks reportedly for taking away jobs and fraternizing with White women at labor meetings. By the end of the melee, approximately 100 Blacks were dead and over 6,000 had their homes destroyed.²³⁶

In her role as the superintendent of the Department for the Suppression of Lynching and Mob Violence, a department under The National Association of Colored Women, Burroughs spoke out against White violence and reminded White America of its own democratic duty to protect Black citizens. Armed with over seven thousand signed petitions, Burroughs testified before Congress at the request of Leonidas C. Dyer, member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Burroughs called for a federal investigation into the East Saint Louis riot saying, “if these outrages go unpunished, it is going to simply embolden the lawlessness of the country, and if we can allow these things to go on in our country without drawing attention to the great moral evil, we are going to feel it in more ways than one.”²³⁷

Nannie was not alone in her testimony before Congress. Hallie Queen, a professor at Howard University, testified to witnessing acts of atrocity on women during the riots. One riot survivor reported to Queen that “women were far more vile... and far more inventive of cruelty.”²³⁸ White women, mostly teenaged prostitutes, “kill[ed] their victims with hatpins, sometimes picking out their eyes before they were quite dead.”²³⁹

²³³ Herbert Hoover, “United States Food Administration: To the Women of the Universities and Colleges,” in *United States Food Administration, Food and the War* (Cambridge, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1918).

²³⁴ Nikki Brown, *Private Politics and Public Voices: Black Women’s Activism From World War I to the New Deal* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2006), 16.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ida B. Wells, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*, ed. Alfreda M. Duster (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 383-396.

²³⁷ Riot at East St. Louis, Illinois: Hearings Before the Committee on Rules, House of Representatives, Sixty-fifth Congress, First Session, on H.J. Res. 118, August 3, 1917 (Washington D.C.: Washington Government Printing, Office, 1917).

²³⁸ Charles L. Lumpkins, *The American Pogrom: The East Saint Louis Race Riot and Black Politics* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008), 116.

²³⁹ Ibid. 117.

Even the White press could not ignore the violence. Carlos Hurd of the East St. Louis Dispatch reported “I saw Negro women begging for mercy and pleading that they had harmed no one, set upon by white women of the baser sort, who laughed and answered the course sallies of men as they beat the Negresses' faces and breasts with fists, stones and sticks. I saw one of these furies fling herself at a militiaman who was trying to protect a Negress, and wrestle with him for his bayoneted gun, while other women attacked the refugee.”²⁴⁰ As a result of Burroughs’ and others’ powerful testimony, the House Rules Committee called for a congressional investigation of the riots by a committee of five senators and five representatives.

Burroughs continued her anti lynching work with NACW and with Dyer throughout the World War I years. Though Dyer’s anti lynching bill failed to pass, Burroughs’ anti-lynching work was yet another example her strivings to make the world a safer place for a burgeoning female leadership class.

By 1917, Burroughs’ female centered activism caught the attention of the federal government. During World War I, the federal government became increasingly fearful of what they perceived to be “radical”, “subversive” and Anti-American activities within the Black community. In order to emerge victoriously from World War I, it was imperative for America to maintain its image as a nation that lived up to the highest ideals of democracy, and as such, was the proper bestower of democracy to Germany and other places around the globe. In 1917, Woodrow Wilson stood before Congress and boldly declared that America’s involvement in World War I would make “the world must be made safe for democracy.” The Black press was quick to point out America’s failure to extend the democratic ideal to its Black citizens. As one Black writer penned in the *Baltimore Afro-American*, “Let us have a real democracy for the United States and then we can advise a house cleaning on the other side of the water.”²⁴¹

Soon after her East Saint Louis testimony, Burroughs was targeted by the Military Intelligence Division (MID), an arm of the War Department. The MID was the primary government entity utilized to locate and investigate alleged acts of “Negro Subversion.” Burroughs, F.W. Scheik reported to Captain H.A. Taylor, was “considered exceptionally intelligent and probably most influential woman in America.”

Major Loving, an M Street graduate and a Black agent of the MID, was charged with surveilling Burroughs. He kept close tabs on her spoken and written word. On Sept 2, 1917, Loving reported

Miss Nannie Burroughs, colored, superintendent of the National Training School for girls in this city, left here this morning at eight o’clock over the Baltimore and Ohio railroad and is due to arrive in Muskogee tomorrow night at eleven forty. Miss Burroughs has been circulating a number of cards which are calculated to arouse race prejudice. We have been watching her very closely here for the past week or ten days. It is thought she has gone to Muskogee to attend some sort of an educational or religious convention. While there, she will make her headquarters at E. Arlington Wilson’s church. Will you please arrange to have some one [sic] cover this convention generally, and particularly

²⁴⁰ Carlos Hurd, *St. Louis Dispatch* (Saint Louis, IL), Jul. 3, 1917.

²⁴¹ “Democratic Government,” *Baltimore Afro- American*, Apr. 28, 1917.

the speech or speeches made by Miss Burroughs. She will likely remain in Oklahoma until about September tenth. Have this done as confidentially as possible. ²⁴²

Loving also scoured Black newspapers for Burroughs' editorials and essays. He often included excerpts of Nannie's writings on political subjects to further determine her loyalty to the United States.

Again, we find Miss Nannie Burroughs of the National Training School, Washington D.C. writing to the Afro-American, urging that unless the two great parties-- Republican and Democratic-- declare themselves on the Suffrage, Labor and Lynching questions, the Negro should go to the Socialist Party that has already declared itself exactly for equality of opportunity for all, regardless of race, whether you know it or not, or rather whether you believe it or not, the Negro is either going to divide his vote among three parties or he is going to do the desperate thing -- throw his entire strength to the Socialist Party..."
"A campaign of Education is going to be launched and Negro men and women will be advised to do just as I have intimated. We have three things in mind during the next campaign; to square with the Democrats for the way in which they have treated negroes on both sides of the ocean during the past four years, to settle with the Republicans for their sins of omission, to kill woman suffrage because it is willing to throw us overboard in order to get white women into the ship..."²⁴³

The MID collected lists of hundreds of names and organizations with whom Burroughs corresponded. The MID did not open her mail, but they did keep a running tab of individuals and organizations with whom she wrote: the Bank of Commerce and Savings in Washington D.C., the Southern Sociological Society, The American Baptist Publishing Society, Nu-Life Beauty College of Hair and Beauty Culture, NAACP, the National Baptist Publishing Board, Pittsburg Courier Publishing Company, The National Urban League on the Conditions of Urban Negroes.

Loving was faithful in his surveillance and readily reported Nannie's comings and goings to a federal government that regarded her with suspicion. His actions could be interpreted as an act of race betrayal. But Loving was not only interested in branding Burroughs as public enemy number one. He earnestly believed in Black loyalty toward the war effort and was hopeful that Burroughs could help him complete his assignment of "seeking and preaching the loyalty of Negroes across all sections of the country."²⁴⁴

Loving devised a novel means of stimulating and maintaining patriotic sentiments in the Black community. He would gather prominent Blacks to embark upon a speaking tour making pro-war speeches throughout the Black community. At the same time, he hoped to create a "chain of information" that would yield "quick and wonderful results" in usable intelligence and foster pro-war sentiments. Loving needed a captivating speaker to headline his tour. ²⁴⁵His speaker needed to be articulate and powerful with the ability to capture the hearts and minds of Black audiences. They also had to withstand the scrutiny of federal investigation. Burroughs

²⁴² Communication to J.C. Findlay, Esq., September 2, 1917, Investigative Reports of the Bureau of Investigation 1908-1920, Old German Files 1909-1921, (Hereafter Old German Files), Case Number 51311, Alleged Activity Among Negroes, Nannie Burroughs, 20, The National Archives, Washington D.C.).

²⁴³ Ibid.,

²⁴⁴ Mark Ellis, *Race, War and Surveillance: African Americans and the United States Government and World War I* (Bloomington: Indiana Press, 2001), 61.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

certainly fit the mold, and he pursued her both to determine if she participated in any acts of subversion, and as a candidate for the leading orator on his speaking tour.

After months of surveillance, Loving determined Burroughs to be “a woman of blameless character and exceptional executive ability, and thorough in her educational work. She is without doubt the most influential Negro woman in the city of Washington, if not in America.” Now convinced that Nannie was loyal to the war effort, he approached her to spearhead his speaking tour. It is unclear whether or not Burroughs was aware of the surveillance, but she was aware of Loving’s speaking tour plans. Burroughs had a two hour conversation with Loving. He suggested the military provide Burroughs “some form of propaganda.” Burroughs, Loving reported to his superiors, agreed to “go anywhere or do anything” and meet with other influential Blacks handpicked to head the tour.²⁴⁶ A week after their conversation, Loving met Roscoe Conkling Simmons and decided to hire him instead of Nannie for the tour.

The Moens Scandal

Though Nannie’s plans for a national tour fizzled, she continued to be an advocate and protector of Washington’s next generation of Black female worker-leaders. She was a major figure in the Moens trial, a scandal that rocked the District’s public schools system in the interwar period. Herman B. Moens, a white anthropologist from the Netherlands, was introduced to the Black community by Du Bois, Kelly Miller, and Roscoe C. Bruce, the Superintendent of the District Schools.

Moens claimed to be researcher interested in disproving the racist pseudoscientific theory that Blacks descended from primates. To prove his hypothesis, Moens needed to run a series of experiments, including taking photographs of Black female research subjects. Moens requested and was granted access to several pupils in Ms. Jane E. Hunter’s class at Dunbar High School, the institution formerly known as M Street. He was also granted access to students attending Howard University.

Whilst performing his research, Moens was targeted by the federal government and accused of engaging in anti- American activities and working as a German spy. A search of Moen’s home resulted in the discovery of several photos of half-dressed female M Street students. Later investigations revealed that Moens was indeed having sex with several of his female subjects.

A scandal soon erupted, and Nannie was front and center leading a delegation of Dunbar High parents calling for the immediate resignation of Superintendent Bruce and Miss Hunter. On April 19, 1919, Nannie arrived at her alma mater with protesters bearing signs that read “Protect the Innocent By Dismissing the Guilty,” “Make Dunbar a Safe Place for Our Children,” “We Want Clean Teachers in Our Schools,” “Teach By Example,” and “Put Her Out, She Betrayed our Trust.”²⁴⁷

Burroughs informed the Washington school officials that her 10,000 supporters were prepared to “picket Dunbar High School as long as Ms. Hunter was retained as a teacher, flood school authorities with letters demanding the dismissal of Ms. Hunter, and to boycott Ms. Hunter’s classes.” The pressure worked. Bruce and Hunter resigned and Moens was convicted.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Public School System of the District of Columbia, Select Committee to Investigate the Public School System, the of United States Senate Hearings Before the United States George F.T. Cook, "Report of Board of Trustees of Public Schools" (Washington D.C.: The Washington Government Printing Office, 1920), 612.

The scandal received national press and with the *New York Age* commenting on the “disgraceful incident.”²⁴⁸

Burroughs was critical of the leaders that allowed such an event to occur. Burroughs’ friend and colleague Kelly Miller later regretted his association with Moens and wrote “personally, I share some level of responsibility for the introduction of Prof. Moens to the leading colored men of Washington. He came to me with a letter from Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois, editor of the *Crisis*, setting forth that he was a foreign scientist sympathetically interested in the study of the race problem.”²⁴⁹ It is not surprising that Du Bois would offer his approval. Du Bois, a Harvard trained social scientist, believed earnestly in the promise of social science to inform solutions to the “Negro Problem”. Following his arrest, Moens was exposed as a complete fraud.

For Burroughs, the Moens Case represented yet another failure of Black men to protect Black womanhood. Her protests also represented her view that Washington schools could not provide the wholesome educative environment that future Black female race leaders needed.

The National Association of Wage Earners

After more than a decade of preparing NTS students for careers for race leadership, Nannie turned her attention to Black domestics outside the four walls of her school. In 1921, Burroughs founded the National Association of Wage Earners (NAWE). Its goal was to organize and educate, train and organize the nation’s three million Black domestic workers.

Burroughs devised the NAWE’s nine-point agenda to develop and encourage efficient workers; assist women in finding the kind of work for which they seem best qualified; elevate the migrant classes of workers and incorporate them permanently in service of some kind; standardize living conditions; secure a wage that will enable women to live decently; assemble the multitude of grievances of employers and employees into a set of common demands and strive, mutually to adjust them; enlighten women as to the value of organization; make and supply appropriate uniforms for working women and influence just legislation affecting women wage earners.

Burroughs launched a vigorous membership drive to secure leadership and lay members. Mary McCleod Bethune, educator and prominent Black club woman served as the organization’s Vice President. In a membership questionnaire targeted at potential directors and organizers, Burroughs asked applicants to list their organizational affiliations. One unidentified woman belonged to the Salem Lyceum, the New York Political Club, the A.M.E. Zion Church of New York, the N.A.A.C.P. and more. The applicant also noted that she had done public speaking for the “cause of Negro Uplift.”²⁵⁰

One of Burroughs’ first acts was to organize a national conference. She proposed a three day conference to be hosted at the YMCA and at the John Wesley AMEZ church in November. She set out to gain 10,000 members by January 1922. She even introduced a profit sharing membership plan, allowing women to keep a twenty five percent “commission” for every one dollar membership sold. Proceeds gained from new members went towards a building and a

²⁴⁸ “Moens Convicted of Exhibiting Obscene Pictures,” *New York Age* (New York, NY), Apr. 19, 1919.

²⁴⁹ “Kelly Miller Cites Incidents Leading to Fights Against Bruce,” *Dallas Express* (Dallas, TX) July 7, 1919.

²⁵⁰ Questionnaire for Directors and Organizers, The National Association of Wage Earners, n.d. Box 308, Burroughs Papers.

factory owned by all members of the organization.²⁵¹ Burroughs envisioned the factory as a place to provide jobs for working women to make dresses, aprons and caps to sell by mail order. She also purchased a domestic service practice house to train women to master the fundamentals of Domestic Science.

The NAWE failed to meet most of goals, but Nannie did experience some small scale success in lobbying for higher minimum wage laws and in cultivating better working conditions for live in maids. The organization dissolved around 1926. Though the organization did not achieve long term success, the National Association of Wage Earners was an important step in Nannie's thinking on group leadership training particularly for women outside of the NTS.

Throughout the 1910s and 1920s Nannie Burroughs fully understood that the work of Black women domestics was not exclusively about cleaning, cooking and ironing. For her, Black women domestics were the linchpin of race leadership and for securing all of the elements of citizenship. Whether discussing the importance of Black women's ability to vote for their own protection, or Black women's patriotic food conservation and domestic work, time and time again, Black women instinctively understood that they had to be prepared to protect themselves given Nannie's assessment of a lack of protection from Black men. In essence, Nannie argued that this historical moment was crucial for both the survival and advancement of race and that Black female domestics were central to the project of racial uplift.

²⁵¹ The Way To Make Money, General Letter, Box 308, Burroughs Papers.

Chapter 6 - Building an International Sisterhood: Pan Africanist and Global Education for the World

While the Du Bois- led Pan African Congresses were just hitting their stride in the 1919, Burroughs' commitment to Pan Africanism preceded Du Bois' organizing activities by more than twenty years. In this chapter, I argue that Nannie Burroughs led Black Baptist women in a particular kind of Pan Africanism, a concept I call *Womanist Christian Pan Africanism*. When compared to traditional or secular Pan Africanism, Womanist Christian Pan Africanism is a more complicated project because the latter seeks the dual purpose of saving the woman and the soul. This dual purpose of saving the woman and the soul made for a complex constellation of African focused activities championed by Nannie and her Black Baptist female allies from the turn of the century through the 1930s.

Womanist Christian Pan Africanism Defined

Womanist Christian Pan Africanism is defined as *a Christian focused intellectual and educational movement to end imperialism, colonialism, oppression and sexism throughout the African Diaspora and the globe.*²⁵² Womanist Christian Pan Africanism departs from secular Pan Africanism in two important ways. First, secular Pan Africanists advocated the African's right to pursue his own religion and social customs, but Burroughs did not. Burroughs believed it was her duty to stamp out indigenous African religions and replace them with Christianity. Second, secular Pan Africanism failed to bring adequate attention to the plight of women and girls of the African diaspora. Burroughs' concept of Womanist Christian Pan Africanism attended to this gap and required an active engagement, primarily through religious education and missionary work, with the liberation of girls and women across the African Diaspora.

Nannie looked to the Bible to guide all of her spiritual and secular endeavors; this was no less true for her womanist Pan Africanist activism. Biblical justification for her educational missionary work in Africa was not had to find. First, there was the oft quoted sacred scripture Matthew 28:19-20, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto end the world."²⁵³ These two well known Bible scriptures, commonly known among Christians as the Great Commission, is one of the most important directives given by Jesus to his apostles shortly before ascending to

²⁵² The term *Womanist Christian Pan Africanism* is an original concept developed by the author. However, the term *womanist* is not mine. The term womanist was popularized by Alice Walker in her 1988 essay "Coming Apart by Way of Introduction to Lorde, Teish and Gardner," in the anthology *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down*. Walker argued that the term womanist informed Black women's scholarship in ways that Black Studies and Feminist Studies ignored. Womanist theology, and outgrowth of womanism, links the understanding of Christianity to the experiences of women of the African Diaspora. Though womanist theology grew out of the liberation theology movement of the late 1960s, Black women like Burroughs laid the foundation for such scholarship with their early protests for women's increased participation in the church. Womanist theology has its origins in Christianity, but scholars are increasingly applying womanism to practices in Islam and other religions. Though some scholars might interpret my use of the terms "womanist" and "Christian" as redundant, I keep the term "Christian" to highlight Burroughs' and other Baptist missionaries' laser focus on converting Africans to Christianity and their discouragement of other African religions.

²⁵³ Matt. 28:19 King James Version.

heaven.²⁵⁴ Alongside the Great Commission, Black Baptists actively pursued mission work in Africa because of the Theory of Providential Design. According to this theory, God allowed Africans to become enslaved in the Americas in order to become more enlightened, civilized and Christianized. In turn for God's provision in America, Americanized Africans were tasked with returning once more to their ancestral homeland to extricate their African kin from European subjugation and oppression.

Black Baptists regarded certain Old and New Testament scriptures as Biblical evidence of the Providential Design thesis. They called attention to Psalms 68:31 which read, "Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." African American Baptist leaders understood this Biblical passage as a two part prophecy with implications for Africa and its descendants. First, the "princes" that the Bible spoke of referred to emerging political leaders of soon to be sovereign African nations. These African princes would soon regain political control of the continent and restore it to its former glory. The second part of the prophecy meant that Africans would eventually forsake Islam and all other religions and become Christian. Consequently, African American Baptist missionaries viewed evangelizing Africa as both spiritual and political work.

Providential Design Theory adherents emphasized Acts 8:26-40 which tells the story of Phillip the apostle baptizing the Queen of Ethiopia's servant. The servant, a eunuch, departed from Phillip, denounced paganism, and founded the first Christian church in Ethiopia. African American missionaries understood their work in Africa as complementary to the eunuch's Christian evangelism. The Ethiopian eunuch's story is doubly important because of Ethiopia's relevance to Pan Africanist rhetoric. Ethiopia was a thriving African empire that was never colonized by European powers. It served as a powerful example of African sovereignty and independence. Because it served as such an inspiring ideal, African Americans regularly used Ethiopia as a synecdoche to represent the entire African continent.

Nannie Helen Burroughs' Vision for Womanist Christian Pan Africanism

Nannie's articulation of Womanist Christian Pan Africanism can be found as early as 1896. As Dr. Jordan's, secretary, Burroughs was deeply involved in the production of the bi-monthly *Mission Herald* Newspaper. The *Mission Herald*, the NBC's official organ, was read widely by millions of Black Baptists. The paper featured letters from NBC mission stations in Africa and the Caribbean and served as an important educational forum whereby African Americans could engage in international politics.

Equally significant, the *Mission Herald* served as a dialogical space where African Americans could expand their worldview, exchange ideas and make crucial connections between African and African American liberation. Early content in the *Herald* revolved around three important themes. First, *Herald* editors highlighted correspondence and editorials that underscored the importance of forming legitimate partnerships with like-minded African Christians. Baptists considered these partnerships an important part of strengthening African Americans' theorizing on nation, race and empire in the United States. Malawi-born John Chilembwe was one such partner. The NBC financed Chilembwe's education at the Virginia Theological Seminary and then appointed him head of the Providence Industrial Mission in

²⁵⁴ Other scriptures associated with the Great Commission are Matthew 28:18, Matthew 28:20, Mark 16: 15-16, Luke 24:45-48, John 20:21 and Acts 1:8.

present day Malawi. Second, the *Herald* featured editorials that illuminated the disenfranchisement and forced labor of native Africans. Baptist writers hoped their readers would recognize the similarities between the African and African American struggle and consequently be more supportive of a Pan Africanist international agenda. Third, Burroughs contributed stories to the *Herald's* Women's Page that focused on the plight of women and girls. Burroughs used her column as a call to action to support Emma Delaney, the first woman missionary commissioned by the NBC to embark on the Christian Womanist Pan Africanist agenda at Malawi's Providence Mission in 1901.

Historian Brandi Hughes argued that the Providence Industrial Mission "provided African Americans a model of Pan African alliance."²⁵⁵ Upon arriving to the mission station, Delaney quickly learned that Africans living under colonial rule had much in common with Blacks in the United States. In a letter to her Spelman peers, Delaney wrote, "there is as much prejudice here in Africa as there was in America."²⁵⁶ Delaney's story resonated with thousands of Black Baptist women and they responded by providing financial support for a number of years.

NBC leaders paired missionary correspondence in the *Mission Herald* with educational materials offering its millions of Baptist readers a Pan Africanist Christianity. The NBC's four hundred page 1908 Sunday school commentary, in the words of the *Nashville Globe*, depicted the story of the eunuch as a "real Ethiopian, with dark skin."²⁵⁷ The issue that year was "easily the superior of any of its predecessors" and was widely touted because "teachers and advanced scholars need[ed] complete suggestive illustrative and comprehensive commentary" that aided "in the preparation of their sermons by the facts and the Biblical research to be found within it."²⁵⁸

A few years later in 1912, John Chilembwe's wife, Ida, wrote *Herald* readers with an appeal for finances earmarked for the women and children of the Providence Industrial Mission. The NBC created a set of map making lesson plans and a lecture outline titled "Is the Cause of Missions Worthwhile?" to accompany her request.²⁵⁹

Foremothers of Womanist Theology

Burroughs' attention to the religious education and destiny of African females required a particular Biblical analysis of women's roles in society. Though activist women like Burroughs outnumbered men in the Black Baptist church since its beginning, women's leadership on the foreign mission field remained controversial. As late as 1894, Black Baptist men wrote in the *Virginia Baptist* newspaper that they possessed a divine right to deny women's rights to teach,

²⁵⁵ Brandi Hughes, "Reconstruction's Revival: The Foreign Mission Board of the National Baptist Convention and the Roots of Black Populist Diplomacy" in *African Americans in U.S. Foreign Policy, From the Era of Frederick Douglas to the Era of Obama*, ed. Linda Heywood, Allison Blakely, and Joshua C. Yesnowitz (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 120.

²⁵⁶ Sandy D. Martin, "Spelman's Emma B. Delaney and the African Mission" in *This Far by Faith: Readings in African American Women's Religious Biography* ed. by Judith Weisenfel, Richard Newman (New York: Routledge, 1996), 227.

²⁵⁷ "Bigger Than Ever," *Nashville Globe*, Dec. 25, 1908.

²⁵⁸ "A Sunday School Commentary That Is Worthy of Note," *The Nashville Globe*, Dec. 2, 1908.

²⁵⁹ Hughes, *Reconstruction's Revival*, 121.

preach and vote.²⁶⁰ The Women's Convention, founded only six short years after the article circulated amongst the press, faced an uphill battle of wills with men who disagreed with women's liberation. Burroughs encountered sexist attitudes from her male Baptist brethren throughout the twentieth century.

Male theologians justified women's restricted roles in church for a litany of reasons. Some posited theories about women's inferiority in general either by God's design or because woman was a corrupt temptress and thereby cursed.²⁶¹ Others pointed to literal interpretations of Biblical scripture, citing I Corinthians 14:34-35 which reads "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."²⁶²

Josephine Ruffin, the co-founder of the National Association of Colored Women, countered the chauvinistic *Virginia Baptist* article with a cogent argument that challenged Black male theologians to practice better exegesis, saying

Such men tell us that common sense must be used in the interpretation of the Scriptures in a passage like the above. They acknowledge that changed conditions of living necessitate a liberal translation, and yet are so narrow as not to see that while the women of the year A. D. 32 were probably not prepared by training or opportunity to either teach or preach, that it is no argument that the woman of A. D. 1900, after years of culture and study may not be able to interpret the scriptures...²⁶³

Ruffin was not alone in her advocacy of Black women's rights. Mary V. Cook, Nannie's mentor and colleague, called the Bible an "iconoclastic weapon" that would rehabilitate woman's image in the world.²⁶⁴

The letters, speeches and writings of Ruffin, Cook and later Burroughs were all precursors of Womanist Theology. Womanist theology – a religious conceptual framework which reconsiders and revises the practices, traditions, scriptures, and Biblical interpretation using a unique lens to empower and liberate Black women - was central to Burroughs' Womanist Christian Pan Africanism activities.

An anchoring concept of Womanist Theology is that men and women are created equal in the eyes of God and – ipso facto – should be treated without prejudice in the church and in larger

²⁶⁰ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "Feminist Theology, 1880-1900" in *Liberating Voices: Religious Voices for Justice Peace and Ecological Wisdom*, ed. Roger S. Gottlieb, (Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2003), 55.

²⁶¹ For a more detailed discussion on arguments against Black women preachers, see Arthur D. Griffin *By Your Traditions, but Not by God's Word: A Theological Perspective against Arguments and Actions Opposing and Hindering Women in the Gospel Ministry* (Chicago: Black Light Fellowship, 1993) and

Kimberly Williams-Gegner, Sharon Gramby-Sobukwe and Faith Wambura Ngunjiri, *Unsung Heroines: The Status of Biblical Equality in the African-American Church*. Unpublished Manuscript prepared for Evangelicals for Social Action (New York: The SisterFund, 2010).

²⁶² I Corinthians 14:34-35 (King James Version).

²⁶³ Josephine Ruffin, "Woman's Place" *Women's Era* 1, no. 6 (1894), par. 5, http://womenwriters.library.emory.edu/advocacy/content.php?level=div&id=era1_06.14.01&document=era1 (accessed July 10, 2015).

²⁶⁴ Mary V. Cook, "Woman's Work in the Denomination", in *Woman's Work: An Anthology of African American Women's Historical Writings from the Antebellum America to the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp and Kathryn Lofton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 73.

society. To support their claims for equality of the sexes, womanist theologians invoked a familiar Bible passage. They reminded their Christian brothers that Galatians 3:28 proclaimed that “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”²⁶⁵ Black race men constantly cited the scripture’s first two clauses as Bible based arguments for the eradication of segregation and slavery, but they stopped short in engaging the third clause which clearly dealt with equality of the sexes. Black women theologians challenged Black males to abandon this practice of omitting scriptural bases for women’s liberation. Using verses like Galatians 3:28, womanist theologians argued that women’s rightful place was in the pulpit, on the foreign and domestic mission field, in the settlement houses, and anywhere else where Baptists were active.

Womanist theologians downplayed traditional Biblical narratives that portrayed women as exclusively subordinate to men. Instead, they highlighted Old and New Testament women that showed resistance to oppression and maintained positions of power.²⁶⁶ They preached sermons on Queen Esther, who saved the lives of the Jews of the Persian Empire by encouraging them to take up arms in defense of themselves. Baptist women drew compelling lessons in sisterhood and female agency from the book of Ruth, the only Biblical text prominently featuring two female heroines.

Womanist theologians brought to light female protagonists that displayed strength, independence, military power and prowess, all characteristics typically associated with men. At the same time, they appropriated moralistic rhetoric of the early twentieth century and appealed to women’s supposed heightened sense of ethics when compared to men. They celebrated Biblical women that exhibited supreme acts of love, sacrifice and loyalty during Jesus’ last days. Women theologians revealed how Mary Magdalene, a former prostitute, washed Jesus’ feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. They reiterated that unlike Judas and Peter, women never betrayed Jesus in exchange for protection or financial gain. They touted the Virgin Mary not just for chastity and maternal instincts, but because of her guiding moral influence on Christ throughout his life.

Womanist Christian Pan Africanism at the National Training School

The National Training School accepted a steady stream of international students from its beginning. Miss Delia Wilhelmina, Maggie B. Brownbill, and Miss Jennie Somtuzi, all from Africa, attended the National Training School from 1912 to 1915. Miss Clara Walker from Liberia studied dressmaking and missionary training and Miss Audrey Louise Brown graduated from the Normal School in 1923.²⁶⁷ Alice Pierre Alexis from Haiti studied missionary work in 1922. Burroughs pronounced that “education of foreign girls in American schools is part of our [Women’s Convention] definite work.”²⁶⁸

A survey of the course content at the National Training School reveals that Nannie injected Womanist Christian Theology into religion classes. Students explored female Bible

²⁶⁵ Galatians 3:28 (King James Version).

²⁶⁶ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Feminist Theology*, 56.

²⁶⁷ Student Lists, Box 147, Folder 13, Nannie Helen Burroughs Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

Curricula and Teaching Procedures, Examination Questions 1920-1922, Box 311, Nannie Helen Burroughs Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

²⁶⁸ Nannie Burroughs, Report of the Work of Baptist Women, in *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*, 2nd ed., ed. Milton Sernett (Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 1999), 384.

characters in depth and were trained to explicate the significance of their actions throughout human history. Burroughs placed these kinds of questions on the final exam, suggesting that the study of agentive Biblical women was of the utmost importance pedagogical goals, objectives and outcomes. Students in 1920 were posed the questions “What is the greatest testimony of Dorcas?” and “Who was Hagar? Sarah? Laban?”²⁶⁹

Students were also encouraged to reimagine Biblical women as more than one-dimensional tricksters and jezebels. The exam question, “Why did sin enter the Garden of Eden when Adam partook of the fruit instead of Eve?” required students to challenge an anti-female hermeneutical lens that supposed Eve’s disobedience (as opposed to Adam’s) was the principal cause humankind’s descent into sin.²⁷⁰ The multi-part final exam question, “How was Rahab rewarded for the treatment of the spies?” “and “Who was responsible for the defeat at Ai?” encouraged students to reconsider Rahab as a quick thinking hero who facilitated an important military victory for the Hebrews, as opposed to traditional depictions of her being simply a reviled prostitute.

Women in the NTS missionary training course received a rigorous religious education. The missionary course took three years to complete and included courses in Old and New Testament Interpretation, Exegesis of the Epistles, Christian Evidences, Methods of Bible Study and Comparative Religions and Missions. Burroughs placed the most emphasis on the study of the Prophetic Books of the Old and New Testaments; this was the only course that required two years of study as instead of one.

The International Council of Women of the Darker Races

By the 1920s, Du Bois had become a leading figure in the Pan African movement. Burroughs respected Du Bois, however, she believed he was not the best candidate for leading the Black masses. In 1921, James Weldon Johnson wrote Burroughs requesting funds to support Du Bois’ first Pan-African Congress. In response, she revealed her feelings that Du Bois was “too egotistical.”²⁷¹ Nonetheless, Burroughs was generally supportive of the Pan Africanist manifesto produced at the second congress which stated,

The Negro race through its thinking intelligentsia is demanding: 1. The recognition of civilized men as civilized despite their race or color 2. Local self-government for backward groups, deliberately rising as experience and knowledge grow to complete self-government under the limitations of a self-governed world 3. Education in self-knowledge, in scientific truth and in industrial technique, undivorced from the art of beauty 4. Freedom in their own religion and social customs, and with the right to be different and non-conformist 5. Co-operation with the rest of the world in government, industry, and art on the basis of Justice, Freedom, and Peace. 6. The ancient common ownership of the land and its natural fruits and defense against the unrestrained greed of invested capital. 7. The establishment under the League of Nations of an international institution for the study of Negro problems 8. The establishment of an international

²⁶⁹ Curricula and Teaching Procedures, Examination Questions 1920-1922, Box 311, Nannie Helen Burroughs Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Nannie Helen Burroughs, Letter to James Weldon Johnson, July 21, 1921, Records of the NAACP, Box C-158, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

section in the Labor Bureau of the League of Nations, charged with the protection of native labor.²⁷²

Nannie was in accord with Black protest against racism, colonialism and imperialism, and called for the unity, autonomy, and liberation of all peoples of the African Diaspora. However, the manifesto made no mention of women and encouraged Africans to pursue freedom in their own customs and religions.

Nannie pursued her interest in a female-centric, Christian, Pan African organization as a member of the International Council of Women of the Darker Races (ICWDR). Founded in 1922, the ICWDR is credited as the first autonomous international organization among African American women.²⁷³ The group was the brainchild of Margaret Murray Washington, Booker T. Washington's third wife. From its inception, Washington imagined the ICWDR not as a large national organization, but instead as a small collection of women "banded close together."²⁷⁴ The women strategically identified themselves as women of the "darker races" a term used to denote groups who were phenotypically dark and subject to imperial and colonial oppression and abuses. The ICWDR's linguistic and ideological association with the anti-imperialist and colonialist agenda undergirded their stated mission to demand "justice and fair play for every woman of every land."²⁷⁵

Some of the most influential African American women in the country were members of the ICWDR. At the first meeting, officers were elected. Margaret Murray Washington was elected as President, Mary Church Terrell as First Vice President, Addie Hunton, as Second Vice President, Elizabeth Carter as Recording Secretary and Charlotte Hawkins Brown as Corresponding Secretary. Other officers included Mary S. Josenburger, Treasurer, Lugenia Burns Hope, Social Chair, Addie Dickerson, Foreign Relations Committee Chair, Emily Williams, Education Chair. Adelaide Casely-Hayford, wife of African writer and politician Joseph E. Casely-Hayford, served as the group's Vice President for Africa. Nannie coordinated much of the group's activity by mail and served as the Executive Chair for the budding organization. In addition to these notable Black women, the ICWDR reportedly included fifty international members worldwide.²⁷⁶

The group held its second meeting at the NTS. They coined the slogan "better homes, better schools, better churches, and a better country" to define their work.²⁷⁷ Margaret Murray Washington explained to the other women her expansive vision of the ICWDR's work. "The first thing we're going to do," Washington urged the other women is "get ... Negro Literature and History... into every [Black] school, private, common, or otherwise."²⁷⁸

²⁷² Peter Abrahams, *Colonial and Coloured Unity: A Programme of Action: History of the Pan-African Congress* ed. George Padmore (London: Hammersmith Bookshop, 1947). <https://www.marxists.org/archive/padmore/1947/pan-african-congress/ch05.htm> (accessed 11 Jul. 2015), paragraph 46.

²⁷³ Michelle Rief, "'Banded Close Together': An Afrocentric Study of African American Women's International Activism, 1850-1940, and the International Council of Women of the Darker Races," PhD. Diss, Temple University, 2003, 165-168.

²⁷⁴ Margaret Murray Washington, Press Release, November 10 1924, Mary Church Terrell Papers, Box 102-12, Folder 238, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

²⁷⁵ "Colored Women's International Council," *The Southern Workman* 52, January 1923 (Hampton Institute).

²⁷⁶ Ann D. Gordon, et al, *African American Women and the Vote 1837-1965* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 130.

²⁷⁷ "Colored Women's International Council," *The Southern Workman* 52.

²⁷⁸ Letter from Margaret Murray Washington to Mary Church Terrell, September 20, 1922, Mary Church Terrell Papers, Reel 5, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The group's work was not limited to the United States. Washington reminded them "we have a mission for our women the world over."²⁷⁹ As a group of college educated women, the leaders of the ICWDR believed in the academic study of world problems. In its inaugural year, the ICWDR immersed themselves in investigating the status of women and children in U.S. occupied Haiti. Emily Williams traveled to the island and presented her findings to the NACW in 1922. Two years later, the group met for a third time in Chicago and agreed to support Hayford's plan to open the first school in Sierra Leone founded by an African woman.

Nannie Helen Burroughs and Adelaide Caseley Hayford: Two School Founders on a Mission

Hayford and Burroughs' connection ran deep. The two women had much in common. They both dreamed of building their own private boarding school for girls based on Christian values, both were middle aged Black women who cared passionately for the development of women throughout the African Diaspora, and both were lone wolves of sorts facing significant resistance from numerous naysayers. In many ways, Hayford represented the quintessential example of what an African- African American alliance could be. Hayford was an African- born Christian who embraced Western educational ideas while simultaneously advancing an anti-colonial, anti-imperialist agenda for African women. Assembling a phalanx of women like Hayford to dispatch as teachers, schoolfounders and missionaries throughout the globe was Burroughs' ultimate goal.

Hayford was similarly attracted to Burroughs. Hayford called Nannie "the Greatest Negro woman of the day" and reminisced how she "thoroughly enjoyed" her weeklong visit to the National Training School and the surrounding Lincoln Heights area, the White House, Union Station and the Capitol Building. Hayford was impressed with the curriculum of the National Training School and asked Burroughs to serve on her school's American Advisory Board.²⁸⁰ Hayford was also impressed with Nannie's speaking and fundraising capabilities. After one of Nannie's well attended talks, Nannie suggested the two visit an onsite photographer to get postcards made that would sell like "hot loaves."²⁸¹ They did. By the end of her trip, Hayford raised an impressive amount from ordinary Baptist "cooks, scavengers, porters and stokers" for her future Sierran school.

Burroughs also accompanied Hayford across state lines. Burroughs escorted Hayford to Alabama on a visit to the Tuskegee Institute. Burroughs was accustomed to the daily humiliation of Jim Crow travel, but the experience was unfamiliar for Hayford. En route to the Deep South, Hayford and her niece Kathleen experienced firsthand how American racism affected Burroughs' daily life. Hayford wrote "we travelled in a Jim Crow car, which, of course, could have been easily avoided, had we only proclaimed our nationality to the railway officials, as only American Negroes were barred from the other carriages."²⁸² The experience spoke not only to the daily humiliations Nannie faced when travelling on speaking tours throughout the South, but also illuminated the complex truth that the fate of women across the African diaspora were bound up together. Hayford could have protested her placement in the Jim Crow car but such a

²⁷⁹ Michelle Rief, "Thinking Locally, Acting Globally: The International Agenda of African American Club Women, 1880- 1940. *Journal of African American History* 89, no. 3 (2004): 215.

²⁸⁰ Adelaide M. Cromwell, *An African Victorian Feminist* (London: Frank Cass & Co. LTD: 1986), 106.

²⁸¹ Adelaide M. Cromwell, *An African Victorian Feminist*, 108.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 111.

gesture would have been detrimental to international sisterhood and Pan African unity. Hayford later recounted in her memoir that abandoning Burroughs in the Jim Crow car “was entirely out of the question, because we could not possibly wound the feelings of all the kind, generous, coloured folk who had opened their homes and hearts to us.”²⁸³

Hayford’s activities during her two-year American visit also spoke to the necessity of the Womanist Christian Pan Africanist agenda. In the 1920s, even the most educated American Blacks held antiquated and racist notions about Africa. Save Carter G. Woodson and a few others, African Americans in general knew very little about Africa, let alone knew an actual African. Hayford created a frenzy during her travels being mistaken for an African princess on more than one occasion. Hayford addressed a large Baptist church and noted that the Sunday morning congregation, “having expected to see two semi-civilized, illiterate uncouth women, the Negroes were overwhelmed with enthusiasm... they had listened to an address portraying the good points of our downtrodden race, instead of the usual barbaric practices, and devil worshipping rites to which they were accustomed.”²⁸⁴ Hayford was a vital member of the ICWDR but she also served as tangible exemplar of African womanhood for millions of Black Baptist women.

The Girls’ Vocational and Industrial School in Sierra Leone

The ICWDR and Baptist women rallied behind Hayford to found the Girls’ Vocational and Industrial School in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Once established, the school would be revolutionary. It was the only school in Freetown led by an African woman offering a private, secondary education for girls that imbued its students with a positive African identity. Importantly, and in line with the ICWDR’s anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist stance, the Girls’ Vocational school would be led by a native African woman, not the colonial power.

Hayford submitted a prospectus for her school that resembled Nannie’s school. She wrote “we are specializing in Home Making and Vocational Training. There will be classes in Domestic Science including laundry, cooking, housekeeping, hygiene, sanitation, child welfare.”²⁸⁵ Hayford categorized the curriculum as “literary and vocational and above all and underneath all, will the principles of character building as laid down by the Great Master Builder, Jesus Christ himself.”²⁸⁶ Vocal and Instrumental music, and a Teacher’s Training course.

The proposed school would be divided into three departments, Kindergarten, Junior and Senior. The Kindergarten department was open to both sexes from ages from four to seven and aimed to develop children mentally, morally and physically using the “most up to date apparatus” and teaching methods.²⁸⁷ Kindergartners would work with brushes and plastics, play games, receive moral training as well as learning of their numbers, reading, writing and colors. The Junior Department included special training in Geography, Literature, Drawing and Practical Hygiene. The Senior curriculum prepared graduates to pass the Cambridge Junior Examination that assessed students in Writing and Dictation, Latin, Greek, French, Experimental Science, Chemistry, Biology, and Bookkeeping. As for trades, basketweaving, handicrafts, spinning,

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.,107.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.,137.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.,137.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 140.

dressmaking and home management were taught. To round out the curriculum and instill a spirit of loyalty and patriotism, Hayford instituted a quarterly Africa Day, a day when students wear native dress, and all curriculum that day would center on African history, culture, song, games, dance and folklore. The school opened in Freetown, Sierra Leone in October 1923.

The similarities between the Girls' Training School in Sierra Leone and the NTS were abundant. Both the Girls' Training School and the NTS offered a combination of liberal arts and vocational curriculum, stressed racial pride alongside heavy doses on moral training and utilized Black authors in classroom.²⁸⁸ Both schools created a curriculum around the specific needs of Black women as they saw fit, and both school founders believed that "a country cannot rise above the level of its womanhood".²⁸⁹ Finally, both women encouraged a Pan Africanist worldview and offered an education that colonial powers.

Even with the success of Hayford's school, the women of the ICWDR realized that building a transnational, interracial, womanist identity at home and across the globe was not without with problems. Though Burroughs and Hayford were connected by their experience with racial oppression, sexism, colonialism and the like, Burroughs and Hayford experienced the aforementioned phenomenon very differently. Legally, Hayford, an African, was not subject to the Jim Crow restrictions and could have protested riding in the segregated car. In her native country of Sierra Leone, she was accustomed to better treatment than the average woman because of her lighter skin and Creole-European ancestry.

Complicating matters all the more, the ICWDR women desired connections with women who were not of African descent even when those groups harbored anti-Black sentiments. Writing in the early 1920s, Washington wrote, "you probably already know the attitude of both Japan and China and Hindoos too, with reference to the American Negro, but to me this makes little or no difference."²⁹⁰ Still, the ICWDR pressed on in their mission to form a solid international sisterhood despite all its complications of intersectionality.

After supporting the launch of Hayford's school abroad, the women of the ICWDR continued to educate themselves and others about the conditions of women across the globe. Margaret Murray Washington urged the ICWDR to form study groups called "Committees of Seven." The purpose of the committee would be "to study any question or all questions in a systematic way, relative to the darker races."²⁹¹ ... pertaining to any person of color anywhere in the world... [or] to the darker races. Banker Maggie L. Walker, one of Burroughs' earliest supporters, joined the ICWDR in 1924 and formed a study club. The women studied historical facts, government, religion, customs, education, and foreign and international relations. When possible, groups sponsored lectures from foreign women. In 1924, Janie Porter Barrett, superintendent of the Virginia Industrial School for Colored Girls in Peak's Turnout, Virginia sponsored a Haitian woman to address her committee of six teachers. In addition to study clubs, Nannie urged that study materials be sent to Black students studying in White institutions across

²⁸⁸ Hayford's students read traditional African Nancie stories. Nancie, or sometimes called Ananse stories are a type of African folktale featuring Ananse is a wise spider. Most West African folk tales refer to prehistoric times when animals lived amongst humans in a shared community. In Ananse tales, the actors are animals but speak, think and act like humans in an animal environment, or speak, think and act like animals in a human environment. The stories are almost always told by women and are used to impart valuable lessons of communal living into the lives of men, other women and children.

²⁸⁹ Adelaide M. Cromwell, *An African Victorian Feminist*, 192.

²⁹⁰ Letter from Margaret Murray Washington to Mary Church Terrell, September 20, 1922, Mary Church Terrell Papers, Reel 5, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

²⁹¹ Rief, "Think Locally, Act Globally," 216.

the country. She also suggested the group “get out of the United States” and suggested holding their next annual meeting in Paris or Brazil.²⁹² Washington died suddenly in 1925 before she had a chance to move on Nannie’s proposal.

Addie Hunton took over the presidency and led the ICWDR for three years. The most notable accomplishment of the ICWDR under her presidency appears to be the organization’s second investigational trip to Haiti in 1927. Hunton traveled to the island to protest the United States’ occupation of the island. Hunton published her findings in a book titled *Occupied Haiti*. In it she wrote, “Haitians are like the colored people in the United States in having an African inheritance with an intermixture, with greater or less volume, of white blood and Western Civilization.”²⁹³ Hunton argued that it was possible for the U.S. to aid Haiti without occupying the island. She included some interim recommendations on how the American military could complete such a strategy in timely fashion. In the report’s conclusion, Hunton called for the immediate halt of U.S. occupation, saying “the authors of this report believe that the occupation should be ended for the sake of Haiti, for the sake the United States, and especially for the sake of good relations among all American republics, and finally because it is in itself an unjustified use of power.”²⁹⁴ Hunton continued her foreign relations activism throughout late 1920s in partnership with the interracial Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and the NACW’s Peace and Foreign Relations Department. When traveling on fact finding missions with other groups, Hunton often identified herself and acted on behalf of the ICWDR.

Addie Dickerson succeeded Hunton as president in 1928. Dickerson and Burroughs collaborated to refocus the organization, clarify its goals, and increase its visibility. In one of her first acts as president, Dickerson wrote Burroughs asking for her assistance in completing a pamphlet to draw new members to the ICWDR. According to scholar Jennifer Tomás, no such pamphlet materialized.²⁹⁵ However, the women did produce a leaflet with a seven point plan that reiterated their original focus on education and presented a new emphasis on partnering with national and international peace organizations, protesting discriminatory legislation, and “denouncing the inconsistencies of ideas and acts of governments and religions.”²⁹⁶ The women also planned to sponsor one study dealing with a vital problem affecting the interests of the darker races, hold a conference in New York City, and send one representative to Geneva. Of all of these plans, it seems that only the last came to fruition.

The women made other important changes. They slashed annual membership dues in half, reducing them from twenty to ten dollars a year, they channeled more money into advertising and cast a wider net when seeking new members.

Burroughs continued her study of African women throughout the mid-late 1920s. She researched documents from the Liberian government to learn more customs related to marriage and divorce of women. She investigated government claims that women leaving their husbands

²⁹² Letter from Nannie Burroughs to Margaret Murray Washington, n.d., Mary Church Terrell Papers, Folder 240, Moorland Spingarn Research Center.

²⁹³ Kristen E. Gwinn, ““Peace is Too Small a Word”” The Life and Ideas of Emily Greene Balch (PhD diss., George Washington University, 2008). ProQuest/UMI. (Publication No. AAT 3315398), 274.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 275.

²⁹⁵ Tomás, Jennifer "Better Homes, Better Schools, Better Churches, and a Better Country": The International Council of Women of the Darker Races, Piedmont Virginia Community College, http://wasi.alexanderstreet.com/help/view/better_homes_better_schools_better_churches_and_a_better_country_the_international_council_of_women_of_the_darker_races (accessed Jul.6, 2015), paragraph 20.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, paragraph 21.

were “doing serious damage” to Liberian towns in the Interior.²⁹⁷ She educated herself on Liberian dowry exchange between parents, husbands, or the “original owners” of young women.²⁹⁸

In 1929, Du Bois contacted Burroughs personally to attend the 5th Pan African conference. This was not Burroughs’ first interaction with the Pan African Congress. Nannie wrote to Hunton six years prior to approve plans for NACW representation at the Third Pan African Congress in London. In the letter, Burroughs admitted not knowing much about the inner workings of the membership process, but suggested that “we should seek membership in the conference, and a place for her [Margaret Murray Washington] as a vice-president or member of the executive council.”²⁹⁹ Though Burroughs yearned to travel outside of the country under the auspices of the ICWDR, her demanding schedule would not allow her to make the trip. She respectfully declined Du Bois’ invitation, but not before challenging him to adopt more democratic and inclusive scheduling practices that took women’s work schedules into account for the imminent meeting. She wrote,

“Dear Dr. Bois... I wish you might try to interest twenty-five or thirty of our women in making the trip in 1931. It does not seem to me that December is a good time to get a representative group because the women who are interested would be employed and cannot take that much time mid-year.”³⁰⁰

In the end, no delegates male or female made the trip in 1931. The meeting was postponed multiple times and finally rescheduled for 1945. Burroughs did not attend.

Less is known about the ICWDR’s activities in the early 1930s, but it is clear that the organization drew closer to the mostly White WILPF at this time. Burroughs joined Du Bois and other WILPF leaders to advise Secretary of State William Phillips on U.S. intervention into Liberia. Firestone Rubber and Tire Company requested U.S. invasion to force Liberia to pay on overdue loans to the company since establishing a rubber plantation there in 1926. Investigations into the matter revealed that the loan almost guaranteed Liberia’s dependence on American capital, turning the once independent African nation into a de facto American protectorate. The situation caused a domino effect of negative consequences for African laborers. Investigations into the matter revealed that Firestone engaged in labor practices “hardly distinguishable for organized slave trade ... and in the enforcement of this system the services... and influences of certain high Government officials are constantly and systematically used.”³⁰¹ After much sustained protest from Black and White activists, Firestone improved their labor practices.

The same year as the Liberia Firestone debacle, WILPF leaders asked the ICWDR to send a representative to their September conference in Zurich. The ICWDR declined to send a conferee and suggested that Mildred Scott Olmstead, a White woman, represent them instead. It’s not clear why the women declined, but it might have something to do with WILPF’s

²⁹⁷ Extracts from Departmental Regulations, Ministry of Liberia, Republic of Liberia, n.d. Box 318, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Letter from Nannie H. Burroughs to Addie. W. Hunton, October 20, 1923. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

³⁰⁰ Letter from Nannie H. Burroughs to W. E. B. Du Bois, March 1, 1929, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

³⁰¹ Carrie A. Foster, *The Women and the Warriors: The U.S. Section of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, 1915-1946* (Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1995), 172.

clumsiness in dealing with racism within their organization. Of all the women of the ICWDR, Hunton was the most involved with the WILPF, and she resigned prematurely due to the White pacifists slowness to integrate Black women into leadership roles in the WILPF. The last known meeting of the ICWDR occurred in 1938.

Womanist Christian Pan Africanist Consciousness and the Alumnae of the National Training School for Women and Girls

Burroughs herself never traveled to Africa but she impacted the continent in a vicarious and representative capacity through her NTS alumnae. Clarice Gooding was one of Burroughs' most notable students and a glowing example of a Womanist Christian Pan Africanist. Gooding graduated with a diploma in Missionary Training in 1914. Soon after graduation, Clarice embarked on sixteen year-long career as a missionary in Africa. Gooding settled at the NBC operated Suehn Mission in Liberia. In 1933, Gooding wrote to Burroughs saying,

I am kept busy planning a duplicate Training School out here in Africa, where it is sorely needed. My station is known as the "three B station" our girls are singing the Training School song and have adopted its colors... Our work, though humble, has a vast influence out here. Revival services opened today. Your humble servant delivered the message "Prepare to Meet Thy God." Thank God, seventeen souls have accepted Him. Tobacco seemed to have such an influence on our boys that we had to organize a Y.C.A.T. (Young Crusaders Against Tobacco). Since our organization, we have not had much trouble. The girls' B.O. (Bad Odor) Club is still going. We are striving not only to save souls for heaven, but to prepare healthy minds and bodies. I have a little boy whose father said to me when he brought him to the Mission: "Miss Gooding this is my son. He must become President of Liberia, so I bring him to you for you to give him the first start. Take him and train him to be president" thus you may see we are not concerned about souls only, but the development of Liberia's future leaders... Perhaps you would be glad to know that the Training School has four sheep on campus. We bought one out the money you sent last year for \$17.00 and now we have an increase of three. We are hoping to not only produce breadstuff, but our meat also... After all, self-help is the only permanent help and that is our aim- to help boys and girls to help themselves.³⁰²

Another alumna, Clara Walker, moved to Liberia to become a teacher of Liberian women. Walker taught for a number of years at Liberian college, and then took another position at a lower school with 175 students. Walker raved about the lower schools' teacher and student body and how she desired to "put them all in a packing case and ship them over to the Training School."³⁰³ Clara wrote Burroughs requesting songs, music and pennants from the National Training School for use among her Liberian student body. Walker closed her letter saying "God will forever bless you for allowing us- we heathens- to bask for a few years in the cultured sunlight of Lincoln Heights."³⁰⁴

The writings of NTS alumnae reveal important facets of Burroughs' interpretation of Womanist Christian Pan Africanism. As missionaries in the foreign mission field, Black women

³⁰² *The Worker, A Missionary Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (October – December 1933): 38.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 39.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

were afforded the ability to take the lead in saving souls, a task typically only reserved for male ministers. With male ministers in scarce supply, Black women missionaries took on these functions, as well as much of the physical labor involved in prepping and serving on the mission field. Gooding took on multiple roles on the mission field. Gooding utilized her domestic science training at NTS to hasten much needed scientific and medical advances in Africa. After years of experimentation on the mission field, Gooding developed a novel procedure for curing insect proof rice as well and discovering a banana flour that doubled as a cure for rickets. American newspapers lauded her efforts. “To Americans, these things sound unimportant, but to the Africans they spell the difference between life or death.”³⁰⁵ Gooding continued to espouse the values of Womanist Christian Pan Africanism well into her adulthood. Upon returning from the sixteen years on the mission field, she toured the United States directing a seven-act pageant titled “And This is Africa.”³⁰⁶ Gooding dedicated pageant proceeds to Burroughs and to the NTS.³⁰⁷ Having spent a significant portion of her life living in Africa, Gooding became an authoritative voice on African history, society and culture. When asked to comment on rumors of improved treatment of African workers on the Firestone plant in Liberia, Gooding remained “not very enthusiastic” about the company’s purported acts of good will. Gooding felt it her duty to set the record straight and recounted to the press how the African workers still only received less than eighteen cents a day for their wages.³⁰⁸

Clearly, NTS alumnae embraced some negative feelings concerning the Africans they were sent to save. Black Baptist missionary’s communications are replete with examples of missionary’s attempts to elevate African natives from “heathen thralldom” by introducing Western ideals of order, cleanliness, and enlightenment.³⁰⁹ The rhetoric of Black Baptist missionaries at times could be mistaken for that of Whites who also positioned Africans as backward and uncivilized. Still, NTS alumnae’s political motives in Africa were always aligned with the host nation’s aspirations for liberation and self-determination.

Burroughs’ Womanist Christian Pan Africanist activities at the NTS, ICWDR and WC in the 1920s and 1930s contributed to the education of African women and children. Black women missionaries were, like White missionaries, concerned with delivering peoples of the African Diaspora from “heathen thralldom,” but unlike their White counterparts, Black Baptist missionaries believed in the prophetic emancipation of all Africans from colonial rule. NBC and NTS missionaries were concerned with teaching western concepts of Christianity, cleanliness, and middle class morality, but they were equally concerned with providing an education that would prepare African children for imminent self-rule. Thus, Black Baptist women’s focus on setting the stage for an anti – colonialist anti- imperialist African future distinguished them from White and Black missionaries that functioned to maintain White control.

As they taught African children, Black Baptist women missionaries embodied a womanist critique of traditional gender roles in the Black Baptist Church by rejecting the notion that only men could “preach” God’s word in mission schools. Equally significant, Burroughs’ efforts highlight how Black women who were committed to Christian principles understood that their intellectual worth was not tarnished by their gender. Certainly in the United States they

³⁰⁵ “Woman Hears Radio after 16 Years in Africa,” *The Afro American* (Baltimore, MD), Dec. 19, 1936.

³⁰⁶ “Clarice Gooding Flew Here to Direct Pageant,” *The California Eagle* (Los Angeles, CA), Sept. 30, 1937.

³⁰⁷ “Flying Missionary Returns from Coast,” *The Afro American* (Baltimore, MD), Oct. 9, 1937.

³⁰⁸ “Woman Hears Radio after 16 Years in Africa,” *The Afro American* (Baltimore, MD), Dec. 19, 1936.

³⁰⁹ Hughes, *Reconstruction’s Revival*, 119.

were not allowed to save souls, but in Africa they were able to demonstrate this ability and perform other religious acts that were denied at home.

Chapter 7 - Saving Up and Calling Out: Communal Education During the Depression Era

African Americans During the Great Depression

The Great Depression wreaked havoc in Black communities. The financial disaster exacerbated the already existing high unemployment rates for Blacks. Government relief programs provided some economic relief to Whites, but these same reforms trickled more slowly into Black communities where fiscal suffering was the worst. Southern rural Blacks, 56% of the Black population in 1930, fared particularly badly due to plummeting cotton prices and the decimation of the sharecropping system.³¹⁰ Urban Blacks suffered too. Blacks in cities nationwide experienced unemployment rates 30 to 60 percent higher than that of Whites.³¹¹

Making matters worse, Whites who previously shunned low wage domestic work and unskilled labor now pursued jobs usually held by Blacks. Burroughs spoke directly to these Whites urging “the White labor world, feeling the effect of the common depression, to lay aside their customary intolerance against their Negro laborers and fellow-workers.”³¹² Burroughs entreated Whites to “evince a willingness to share with him the limited opportunities, rather than strive to exclude him.”³¹³

Unfortunately, most Whites ignored Burroughs’ call for fair play. Throughout the Depression, Black women domestics experienced what labor historian Jacqueline Jones calls “speed ups”- the act of performing more labor for the same or lesser wages.³¹⁴ White women employing Black live-in domestics took advantage of their precarious position by extending their hours and paying them lower wages. Some White women charged extra for room and board while others stop payment all together and offered only lunch, clothing and car fare as payment.

In Nannie’s opinion, the only thing worse than the Depression itself, was the severe lapse of African American leadership during the turbulent times. Writing in 1930, Burroughs vented

What on earth is the matter with our organizations – church, fraternal, educational – national and state- that they are so impotent in the present economic crisis and industrial depression? The people are out of work; They are hungry; They are indulging in all kinds of vice; they are like sheep without a shepherd. Where are the leaders? What are they thinking and what are they doing? Are they hibernating until the next convention season? Are they going to sit around all winter and depend on charity to feed the people and then come out in the summer time all regaled to lead the people?³¹⁵

Burroughs went on to prod all Black organizations to pool their resources and use them for the collective benefit of the Black community. One way to do this, she offered, was to construct a

³¹⁰ Alridge, *The Educational Thought of Du Bois*, 75.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Summary of the Non- Partisan Negro Conference, Nannie Helen Burroughs Papers, Box 47, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Jones, *Labor of Love*, 165.

³¹⁵ Nannie Helen Burroughs, “Leaders Mark Time with Many Idle, Says Nannie Burroughs,” *Afro-American* (Baltimore, MD), Dec. 6, 1930.

factory to produce clothes and uniforms for Black workers. Burroughs conceived this idea because domestic servants often wore uniforms, but were forced to purchase them from non-Black vendors. Burroughs imagined a factory where Black working class women sewed and sold uniforms to one another and lead each other out of the Depression relying on their expertise and industriousness in the domestic arts.

While the women converged on the factory to work, Burroughs offered an unorthodox option for the men. She proposed they embrace the “task of cleaning up the homes, yards, and communities. It would give the men the necessary exercise to keep them from getting too lazy to work and would also transform neglected yards—front and back—make a new name for residents and create a wholesome and clean atmosphere in which children can live.”³¹⁶

Burroughs’ vision for an all-Black factory led by a female army of breadwinners was ambitious to say the least. The supposition that Black women could sew their way out of a national and global economic Depression was unlikely without broad range support from numerous actors. Unfortunately, conversations about how to strategize around such a herculean task quickly became derailed by controversy. Several prominent male ministers took offense at Nannie’s denunciation of “groundhog leaders who tuck themselves away comfortably all the winter and peep out in February to see if the winter is over. No the winter will not be over”, she stated, “until something definite constructive and permanent is done about unemployment.”³¹⁷ She argued that the time was up for “wordy resolutions” and what was needed was on the ground action and “clear, dispassionate, challenging, courage appeals for economic justice.”³¹⁸

Burroughs’ spirited challenge to shake Black leaders out of their impotence offended some, but inspired many. Adam Clayton Powell Sr., the touted civil rights leader and pastor of Harlem’s Abyssinian Baptist Church, responded immediately to her call with a passionate plea of his own. Powell, who was already operating a relief center donating food and clothing to the needy, amplified his activism as a result of Nannie’s call. Powell threw down the gauntlet and asked the estimated 30,000 Black Baptist pastors to forgo their salaries and donate them to the poor. He also personally vowed to refuse all “handshake money”, an informal but widespread practice of Black pastors receiving small sums of money for speaking engagements.³¹⁹ The press clamored at the controversial remarks that followed Burroughs’ call. Her words sparked a lively debate within Black churches and the wider Black community. The press framed the debate as a war between Nannie and male ministers, but she insisted that she and Powell were the “best of friends” and her words would not have been so negatively received if she were a man.³²⁰ Relying on her Black womanist Christian rhetoric, Burroughs compared herself to a Biblical Eve, claiming she was being scapegoated and blamed unfairly for a bad situation that she did not herself create.

The brouhaha created by Nannie and Reverend Powell’s so called feud was yet another reminder of the animosity Nannie often faced from Black male church leaders. The attack compelled her to defend herself saying, “I am used to knocks. Every time I get a sure enough one, I read the third verse of the sixth chapter of Nehemiah.”³²¹ The book of Nehemiah,

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ “Powell Flings Challenge to Pulpit: Abyssinian Minister Pastor Says Ministers Should Give Jobless Aid, or Quit,” *New York Amsterdam News* (New York, NY), Dec. 17, 1930.

³²⁰ Nannie Helen Burroughs, “Dr. Powell Better at Publicity Than Barnum & Bailey, says Nannie Burroughs,” *The Afro-American* (Baltimore, MD), Jan. 17, 1931.

³²¹ Ibid.

recounts the story of the king's cupbearer tasked with rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Nehemiah was threatened and ridiculed by many as built the wall but responded with "...I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?"³²² Despite derision from several male ministers, Nannie powered and continued her efforts to alleviate the economic suffering of the poor in Black communities.

The President's Conference on Home Building

By 1932, Burroughs had attracted presidential attention. As the Depression worsened and millions of Americans lost their jobs, people also lost their homes. Homelessness in rural and urban sectors skyrocketed, prompting President Herbert Hoover to embark on a federal study of economic factors affecting housing across the nation. Hoover selected Nannie to lead some of the nation's most notable African American scholars, educators, and researchers in the federal report. The president selected Burroughs because he wanted a nationally known person who had shown personal initiative and constructive ability as a practical and successful leader. The President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership sponsored the study and featured research from Tuskegee's Robert S. Morton, Woodson's protégé Lorenzo Greene, Fisk Sociology Chair Charles S. Johnson, club woman Fannie Barrier Williams and others. The researchers quickly pointed out that a study of Negro housing was too often the study of the Negro slum. Burroughs and the committee argued that Blacks were severely handicapped due to the caste-like occupational structure in the United States that forced Blacks to eke out a perpetual existence as "small wage earners."³²³

Connectedly, Burroughs called attention to the negative chain of events caused by government sanctioned high rents for inadequate housing. First she established that Blacks paid higher rents than their White counterparts for the same housing. These exorbitant rents forced Blacks to spend higher percentages of their earnings on housing, leaving them little money to purchase other necessities of life. To offset high rent costs, Blacks took in new boarders. The influx of more occupants into already overcrowded and unsanitary residences accelerated the deterioration of Negro neighborhoods. The viscous cycle, Burroughs argued, could be easily halted if White government officials overhauled the ways in which Black communities were built in the first place. Worthy of quoting at length, Burroughs and the committee summarized:

What is the solution? It is not an attempt to do something with Negro housing alone. It is not to supply homes to Negroes through private or public charity. It is to reorganize our practices in the planning and production of all housing. We must begin with the theory. The realization of community responsibility for housing must take the place of our present concept of individual responsibility... When cities are planned in neighborhood units there will be no homes backed up against stockyards or railroad tracks. When proper zoning regulations are enforced, it will be impossible to crowd houses on land and to crowd people in houses. When minimum standards for housing are established and enforced in all our cities, and housing meeting those standards is made available to all people in the low-income groups- by reduction in the cost of construction and home financing, by cooperation of private initiative and government in slum clearance and

³²² Nehemiah 6:3 (King James Version).

³²³ Nannie Burroughs, "Negro Housing, Report of the Committee on Negro Housing," eds. John M. Gries and James Ford, (Washington, D.C.: National Capital Press Inc., 1932), viii.

rebuilding, by extensive reconditioning and remodeling of current dwellings...when these things are accomplished the insanitary crowding typical of Negro quarters will be a thing of the past.³²⁴

Burroughs' appeal to Whites in the federal, state and local government to rebuild and maintain Black neighborhoods is important because it shows her belief that Whites have responsibility in improving Black communities. Burroughs is best known for self-help, bootstrapping rhetoric, but she was equally committed to calling upon Whites to correct their unjust and discriminatory behavior when it came to housing. Poorly constructed alley dwellings, neglect from city officials and unchecked rent racketeering by White property owners, she believed, were the most pressing problems. Ever the defender of Black respectability, Nannie taught the Black masses lessons on house cleaning and yard beautification. She initiated a program of community education teaching "the Negro to seek and maintain higher standards of housing." Still, Burroughs was convinced that "the provision of good housing will do more to consolidate such education," and her housing activism constituted an educational campaign to help blacks develop their capacity to demand it.³²⁵

On the surface, it might seem that Nannie's advocacy for improved housing for poor Blacks across the nation was unrelated to education. However, Nannie understood that having a stable home life, one that was free from disease, disorder, and decay was essential for the moral education and character building of Black children. The National Training School, Burroughs believed, was a model for the Black community of what a healthy home life for young Black women could be. Also, Burroughs believed that a wholesome living environment, like the one offered at the National Training School was the best place for young Black students to learn valuable life lessons and could focus on solving the most immediate social, political and economic problems of the Black community.

Communal Education at the National Training School

While Nannie battled for housing improvement in the Black community, her most beloved community, the National Training School for Women and Girls, faced adversity. The cash strapped times of the Depression forced Burroughs to make changes at her school. Burroughs exemplified the sacrificial ethos that defined communal education framework when she wrote, "I have sacrificed, slaved, and suffered in silence- willingly- but a crisis like this calls into play all the faith, courage, hope and will that we have."³²⁶ In 1933, Burroughs was faced with some tough decisions. Of the 300 student applicants under review, two-thirds were requesting full or partial scholarships. Individual and church donations were down by 75% and food and fuel costs were up 50%. Burroughs projected receiving only half of the \$20,000 operating budget needed to keep the school afloat. She also received letters from NTS alumnae who were struggling to find employment. Faced with all of these dilemmas, Burroughs made the decision to close the school for the winter quarter. Burroughs busied herself in the winter quarter by launching *The Worker*, a missionary magazine for the Black Baptist women that was also read

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Nannie Burroughs, "Nannie Burroughs Adopts New Idea to Meet School Crisis," *Pittsburg Courier* (Pittsburg, PA), Oct. 14, 1933.

by Southern White women. The abbreviated school year would cut the expenses by half and allowed for longer term sustainability.

Despite the shortened school year, there was some good news. As a direct response to the needs in the Black community, Burroughs added a Children's Department and for the first time, accepted girls aged eight to twelve years old. Nannie called her plan "A New Deal to Conserve Girlhood of the Race". Nannie's new deal filled an authentic, "crying need" of employed Black mothers who needed childcare for their young girls while away at work. In the job scarce climate of the 1930s, Burroughs understood that Black women could not perform excellent domestic service if they were worried about their children's well-being. The situation was so vexing, Burroughs argued, that she'd received a letter from a working Black mother describing how she worked every day with "'my heart in my mouth.'"³²⁷

By taking on supervisory role for young children, Burroughs and the teaching staff became "othermothers" for the race. Othermothers - women who provide childcare for children that are not biologically their own- embodied the ethos of communal education. The act of othermothering has been used to sustain Black communities since slavery and is also reflective of the group-centered ethos of the communal education. Burroughs advocated a program of communal education ultimately to support Black mothers by highlighting the systemic conditions that defined their struggle. However, the logic of othermothering requires that the biological mother is unable to care properly for the child. In order for the new Children's Department to thrive, Burroughs had to position Black mothers as lacking in some key maternal areas. Burroughs praised poor Black mothers for "bearing the economic burden of the race almost alone" and touted the fact that the Black mother "works the longest hours and gets the lowest pay." However, in the same breath, Burroughs said, "... her home is either neglected because of her enforced absence or it is crowded with relatives and roomers because of financial conditions." She continued saying "children are living in social and moral surroundings that make it impossible for them to have a ghost of a chance to grow up decently...give us the child before it goes wrong and we will give you character and culture glorified."³²⁸

Burroughs also had to establish that the public schools were equally inadequate to address the educational needs of the race. As demonstrated by her spirited protest over the Moens scandal, Burroughs was quick to point out the failings of the D.C. public schools to protect young Black womanhood. Burroughs wrote, "The public school can only turn in the kids in at nine and turn them out at three. Thousands of children are left to shift for themselves from that time on and they are shifting from bad to worse."³²⁹ After school hours, Burroughs believed, were crucial learning times for the young people. Without constructive, adult supervised activities, Black youth would indulge in all kinds of vice that the public school leaders were powerless to stop. Burroughs understood her other mothering as a mitigating factor to reduce loitering, gambling and other crimes associated with juvenile delinquency in the Washington community.

The female students in the newly established Children's Department also had a role to play in sustaining the school. Burroughs gave the girls free music lessons and organized the eight to twelve year olds into an ensemble called the National Training School Pageant Players. Using their newly acquired performance skills, the Players were dispatched to "tour the country and

³²⁷ Nannie Burroughs, "Miss Burroughs Plans a 'New Deal' To Conserve Girlhood of the Race," *Pittsburg Courier*, August 23, 1933.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid.

re-sell the training school and its ideals as a challenge to all who are interested in Negro girls.”³³⁰

Nannie dedicated much of her life to education young women, but the opening of the Children’s Department represented her specific interest in the necessity of educating younger girls. Black girls, Burroughs understood, were the future leaders of the Black community, and as such, required a special training that would prepare them for this role. As Black working mothers became increasingly burdened by longer work hours and dwindling financial returns, they were less able to provide the kinds of enriching and educational experiences found at the National Training School. Thus, Burroughs’ othermothering as expressed through her founding of the Children’s Department at the National Training School both offered a service to Black mothers and provided an intellectual intervention for Washington’s Black girls.

Federal Response to Black America in the Depression Era

As the 1930s progressed, Whites received some forms of financial relief, but Blacks still suffered. Blacks found themselves left out of the most important sweeping changes initiated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal. For example, the Federal Housing Association created programs that provided guaranteed government backed home loans for Whites, but these loans were practically impossible for Blacks to obtain. The Social Security Act of 1935 was created to provide benefits to workers, but the new legislation excluded domestic servants and agricultural workers- the majority of whom were African American - from coverage.

Blacks fared better in New Deal programs like the Temporary Emergency Relief Administration (TERA), the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), the Civil Works Administration (CWA), the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civil Conservation Corps (CCC). These short-term interventions allowed some Black males the opportunity to find work building parks, roadways and performing construction, but they were short-term solutions to a much bigger problem of Black joblessness.

Of all the New Deal reforms, the WPA provided the most jobs to women. Unsurprisingly, White women reaped the highest rewards the program had to offer. The majority of women employed with the WPA performed sex stereotyped work such as sewing, canning, clerical, cooking, nutrition, recreation and other forms of gendered labor. Since the WPA, and by extension the federal government, did not consider women to be a vital part of the work force, they were only allotted jobs after men exited relief rolls. In 1935, 25% of Black women were on relief, and two-fifths of them were household heads. These statistics should have qualified Black women for WPA jobs, but the persistent racism of the era resulted in low numbers of Black female placement in WPA jobs.³³¹

Cooperative Industries and Rochdale Cooperation

By the mid-1930s, it was clear to Burroughs that the federal government would provide only limited financial help to Black communities. Burroughs joined other Black leaders in their embrace of communal or cooperative economics. Cooperatives businesses or “co-ops” as they were most commonly called, were popular solutions to promote economic stability in Black

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Mimi Abramovitz, *Regulating the Lives of Women: Social Welfare Policies from Colonial Times to the Present*, (Cambridge: South End Press, 1996), 283.

communities. Burroughs focused her cooperative business efforts in Washington DC, while Du Bois, George Schuyler, Franklin Fraizer and Ella Baker focused on other areas of the country.³³²

Black leaders were influenced by the Rochdale Cooperative Movement, an economic movement started by twenty-six textile workers in Rochdale, England in 1844. These workers, suffering from the financial hardship and famine that plagued Europe in the 1840s, pooled their resources to buy weaving supplies and other life sustaining essentials. Eventually, the Rochdale Pioneers founded a cooperative store and gained many members. The Rochdale weavers' efforts were primarily financial in nature, but their efforts were part of a larger vision for a more cooperative and communal way of life during a time when the Industrial Revolution alienated consumers from producers and owners from workers.

Black leaders endorsed co-ops because of their overwhelming beliefs that capitalism had failed Blacks miserably. Burroughs was specifically troubled by the ways in which greedy capitalists damaged Black communities. To drive this point home, she reprinted an article in the *Worker* that said:

As the situation now stands in nearly any given large district in which we [Blacks] reside, a half million dollars a day is spent among individuals whose only interest in the community is what they can get out of it. They have no concerns as to the health, morals and civic pride of the community. They are merely business parasites who come to take away and leave nothing.”

Burroughs argued that Rochdale- inspired cooperatives offered Black communities a viable alternative. She believed the Rochdale movement represented an “economic renaissance for the masses” and that adopting its principles will “free them [the Black masses] if they ever wake up to its possibilities.” Through cooperatives, she claimed, “communities in which we live can be improved through the money spent by those who live in them, because the profits made on those investments would remain in the control of the people of the locality.”³³³ Politically speaking, conservative Black leaders like Burroughs could also identify with the Rochdale movement because it offered a middle-of-the-road alternative to more radical communist inspired strategies advocated by Harry Haywood and others.

Nannie never forgot her a dream of operating a self-help communal Black factory. Just as the Industrial Club in Louisville served as a prototype for the NTS, Nannie started a new business to serve as an archetype for a self-supporting Black factory. With the aid another Black woman, Sadie Morse Bethel, Nannie co-founded Cooperative Industries of Washington DC, in 1936. Cooperative Industries was a self- help, agricultural and consumer cooperative serving African American residents in the District of Columbia. Burroughs acted as the cooperative's president, and set up the cooperative's headquarters at the National Training School.

³³² Historian John Hope II examined five cooperative businesses (besides Nannie's Cooperative Industries) across the nation. Hope gives brief sketches of the National Federation of Colored Farmers, Incorporated in Howard, Mississippi, the People's Consumer Cooperative Inc., in Chicago, Illinois, the Consumer Cooperative Association in Kansas City, Missouri, Consumer Cooperative's Trading Company in Gary, Indiana. For an abbreviated discussion on cooperative economics in Black communities see John Hope II, *Rochdale Cooperation Among Negroes*, *Phylon* 1, no. 1 (1940): 39-52. For a lengthier discussion on Black cooperative economics see Jessica Gordon Nembhard, *Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2014).

³³³ Nannie Burroughs, “What Do You Know About the Cooperative Movement?”, *The Worker* IV, no. 14 (April-June 1937): 5.

While Black intellectuals and activists were familiar with the language of the communal economics, Burroughs embarked on an education campaign to explain the cooperative movement to the masses. In the *Worker*, she explained “In simple language, a Cooperative is a business owned and directed by the customers, with the profits going to themselves as owners. That is it in a nutshell”. “Building one”, she continued, “requires little capital, careful planning, hard work, honest dealing, correct knowledge as to the underlying philosophy of the human race and a deep sense of human values.”³³⁴

Nannie did not own a factory, so she used the school as the production and manufacturing plant for the cooperative’s activities. Nannie assigned four classrooms for sewing and another for a clinic. She used the kitchen and dining room for canning. For the first few years, the co-op produced brooms and mattresses. Records indicate that Burroughs took broom orders from Baltimore and other major cities.³³⁵ At the end of its sixth month, the cooperative claimed more than fifty members.

Burroughs’ expanded the business by purchasing a farm in Maryland with grant money from FERA. The purchase made her the owner of a federally subsidized agricultural producer cooperative for the benefit the District’s impoverished and unemployed. Burroughs hired out of work D.C. residents to work the country farm and sell fresh produce to Black neighborhoods in the city. With the farm up and running, Burroughs channeled her attention toward soliciting new member- buyers. As she solicited members, she never missed an opportunity to educate. In 1936 she wrote

It occurred to me that you might like to have perfectly fresh eggs. They come directly from our Cooperative Farm every day. They sell at the same price at which “guaranteed” eggs are sold at the chain stores. If you can help us get at least a half a dozen people in your block or neighborhood, we would be very glad to deliver yours and theirs on the same day. You might ask- what is the Cooperative Farm? It is simply an honest to goodness effort and determination on the part of some of us to help our own people out in their own present economic plight. A cooperative enterprise, as you know, is owned and directed by customers with the profit going to themselves as owners. It is a means of giving employment to a number of persons. Your patronage will be a practical way of helping the race to solve its trying economic problems.³³⁶

Burroughs sent thousands of these letters out to network and many responded.

Nannie Helen Burroughs’ Vision of the Seven Rochdale Cooperative Principles

Once members joined the co-op, Burroughs educated the members on into the deeper principles behind the cooperative movement. Nannie modeled Cooperative Industries after the Rochdale principles, however she did not automatically assume that practices inherited from White Englishmen one hundred years ago would map neatly onto a twentieth century Black experience. Nannie both gained inspiration from and augmented the Rochdale principles to fit

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Jessica Gordon Nembhard, interview by Ajowa Nzinga Ifateyo, March 14, 2014, <http://www.geo.coop/story/black-co-ops-were-method-economic-survival> (accessed May 2, 2015).

³³⁶ Summary of the Non- Partisan Negro Conference, Nannie Helen Burroughs Papers, Box 47, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

the needs of women in the Black community. I now turn to a brief discussion of the Rochdale principles, paying particular attention to how Nannie kept most of the principles in tact, while augmenting others to better fit economic needs of Black women in the community.

1) Open and Voluntary Membership

This first Rochdale principle is Open and Voluntary membership. The Rochdale Pioneers advocated “an open door to admission of every fit and proper person who applied.”³³⁷ In essence, this principle discouraged racist and sexist discrimination in the cooperative but it is worth noting that Rochdale pioneer membership remained white and male throughout its entire existence.³³⁸ This first Rochdale principle was designed to encourage cooperators to recruit members from wide audiences.

Open membership was a fine ideal, however, Burroughs’ own philosophical ideas about who should lead the race greatly affected how she recruited participants into cooperative economic activities. For Burroughs, Black working class women were the vanguard of the race and thus should be the primary leaders and members of economic uplift. Evidence suggests that unemployed women were the primary membership base of the co-op, but at least one male activist, D.H. Williams, was on the Board of Directors.

Burroughs vetted members for her “patriotic self-help cooperation” by having women fill out lengthy questionnaires and membership blanks. Thirty-two year old Pearl R. Franklin joined the cooperative around 1937. Franklin was married with two children and lived in Northeast Washington. She was a seamstress by trade, but was also skilled in office work and cooking. Before joining the cooperative, Franklin worked for the U.S. Census Bureau and the Capitol Dress Shop. Franklin graduated high school and attended Hampton for three and half years, but still struggled to find work. Franklin was not yet on government relief but was struggling financially and reported “working with social service who is helping me to adjust my living.”³³⁹

The communal nature of Cooperative Industries meant that Burroughs cared for the well being of her workers and their families too. On the membership blank, Burroughs asked, “Would members of your family desire employment?” and “What recreation would you like for yourself and your family?”³⁴⁰ Franklin was married, but listed no other family members as needing employment. This suggests that her husband was either already gainfully employed, or that men were not eligible for membership to the cooperative. Franklin did however list her desire that her sons attend camp.

Members of the cooperative paid small membership fees which were used to buy items for group use. In the summer of 1937, Burroughs encouraged the women to pay their membership fees on time so she could purchase a “cooperative pig [that] will pay five times the actual cost in actual hog at killing time.”³⁴¹ Typically Rochdale inspired cooperatives only sold items like the pig only to members, but Hope suggests Burroughs may have sold certain items

³³⁷ David Thompson, “Cooperative Principles Then and Now,” *Cooperative Grocer Magazine* no. 53 (1994).

³³⁸ Beatrice Potter Webb, “The Co-operative Movement in Great Britain,” (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1899), 59-62.

³³⁹ Pearl R. Franklin, A Patriotic Self-Help Cooperative Membership Form, Box 47, Nannie Helen Burroughs Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

to non- members too.³⁴²

2) Democratic Control

The second principle is Democratic Control. This principle, commonly referred to as the “one man, one vote” rule, was implemented by the original Rochdale Pioneers to ensure that leaders of the cooperative were elected using a fair democratic process. The one man, one vote rule allowed for all members, despite their social or economic status, to participate actively and equally decision making in all matters related to the business.

Burroughs was no stranger to the democratic process. She was well versed in politics, Robert’s Rules of Order, and other formal voting procedures due to her numerous club affiliations. Details on how and when voting occurred in Cooperative Industries is difficult to ascertain, but study materials written by Burroughs suggest the Cooperative’s leading officers were elected at the first meeting.

3) Distribution of the Surplus to the Members in Proportion to Their Transaction

The third Rochdale principle states that savings are accrued by members in proportion to their patronage. Simply put, those who buy more from the cooperative enterprise, receive a larger share of the profits than those who purchased less. Unlike the democratic principle, in which all members are treated equally, the distribution of the surplus principle differentiates members from one another and encourages loyalty by rewarding members who utilize the cooperative enterprise the most. This principle also creates a systems that pays the majority of the profits back to the consumer members.

In its first year, Cooperative Industries’ total volume of sales amounted to \$11,380.00, or \$28.45 per capita, an impressive figure considering that many cooperative members were unemployed workers and homemakers whose yearly income rarely exceeded more than \$1000.³⁴³ In its second year, sales totaled \$10,280.83 resulting in a higher per capita payout of \$118.17. The higher payout in the second year occurred due to greatly reduced membership. The cooperative started in 1937 with four hundred members, but only claimed 87 members by 1938.

Despite the reduction in membership, Hope argued that the remaining cooperators were able to make better use of the cooperative’s resources. By 1938, members earned approximately \$120. During the first year, the cooperative was able to “break out even”, but had sustained a \$3,780 deficit in later years due to a cholera outbreak among the 152 hogs on the farm. Cooperative Industries made about half of its sales to non-members.³⁴⁴

4) Limited Interest on Capital

The fourth Rochdale principle is limited interest on capital. This principle sets a fixed and limited interest rate on the capital borrowed to finance the cooperative enterprise. Setting limits on the interest rate also protects the cooperators from falling victim to usurious money lenders of the day. Adherence to this principle was essentially a non-issue because Burroughs did not borrow any money to purchase the cooperative farm. Since she used federal

³⁴² Hope, *Rochdale Cooperation*, 101.

³⁴³ Hope, *Rochdale Cooperation*, 150.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

grant money that did not need to be repaid, Burroughs nor the rest of the cooperative members had to worry about high interest rates. Hope argued that Burroughs' use of federal start up funds set her apart from other cooperative activists of her day and that her model should be duplicated across the nation.

5) Political and Religious Neutrality

Pioneers incorporated the political and religious neutrality principle because some many of the cooperators held controversial views. Owen, a self-identified atheist, was loathed by many of England's Christian leaders. Owen's nonexistent belief in God raised opposition to cooperative movement and led some to conclude the movement was merely a refuge for English society's persona non grata and other controversial figures. The Rochdale Pioneers believed that despite an individuals' personal beliefs the cooperative would remain a neutral space for political and religious issues that had nothing to do with the cooperative.

Like the National Training School, Cooperative Industries had no official religious affiliation. Burroughs screened potential cooperative members for age, education, marital status and other personal information, but she did not ask cooperators to disclose any information related to church attendance or their political party affiliation. The omission of religion items on membership forms suggests that theoretically, Burroughs upheld the ideal of religious and political neutrality when selecting membership of Cooperative Industries.

In reality, religious neutrality was impossible for Burroughs. She was too well known as a devout Baptist for any of her life work not be influenced by her unwavering in Christianity and the Bible. As the editor of the *Worker*, she leveraged her captive audience of faithful Baptist women readers to recruit members to the cooperative movement. "Go to any meeting held in your community to discuss the cooperative movement. Burroughs admonished. "Get the ABCs of it. It is the only way out of the economic plight of the American Negro."³⁴⁵ Occasionally, Burroughs used religious rhetoric to describe the cooperative enterprise. She wrote that the Black masses were "slow to take the initiative for their own deliverance" but they would "soon see the light." Whenever possible, Burroughs reiterated that the cooperative values were similar to Christian ones. She endorsed the ideas of Japanese cooperative leader Toyohiko Kagawa, and reported that "American Christians sat at his feet to learn the 'brotherly' way in business."³⁴⁶

6) Cash Trading

Trading only in cash was the sixth Rochdale Principle. The Pioneers developed this principle after a few failed business attempts of extending credit to its customers. It is not clear if Cooperative Industries offered credit to its members, but students in Burroughs' Study Circle certainly explored the issue. Members considered for employment were asked, "How much time a week would you work for SCRIP?"³⁴⁷ Scrip, a local form of substitute currency used during the Depression era, functioned somewhat like credit in 1930s when physical currency was not

³⁴⁵ Nannie Burroughs, "What Do You Know About the Cooperative Movement?", *The Worker* IV, no. 14 (April-June 1937): 5.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁷ Pearl R. Franklin, A Patriotic Self-Help Cooperative Membership Form, Box 47, Nannie Helen Burroughs Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

available. Mrs. M.M W. Arter, a Black mother on relief seeking work at Cooperative Industries either in sewing, canning, or dry cleaning was paid in scrip.³⁴⁸

7) Promotion of Education

The last Rochdale principle is promotion of education. Originally, the Rochdale pioneers understood the only sure way to continue a steady stream of cooperators was to enlist new members through a serious study of the cooperative principles. Ever the educator, Burroughs was committed to teaching others about the cooperative movement both inside and outside of the National Training School. Like many of Burroughs' activities, she used her school as the organizational base for her educational and political endeavors. The school functioned as the Cooperative Industries' headquarters giving NTS students firsthand experience and knowledge about the daily operations of the cooperative movement. NTS students worked on the farm to grow fruits, vegetables, and tend to livestock. Like Schuyler and Baker, Burroughs believed young people had a vital role to play in agricultural producer cooperatives. Burroughs encouraged readers of the *Worker* "to encourage school children to plant and care for one or more apple trees. There is no reason we should not have one apple tree in every backyard. It is just as essential to children how to cultivate fruit as it is to teach them to be kind to cats."³⁴⁹

Burroughs disseminated her ideas to Black communities by creating formalized study circles at schools, churches and other institutions. Burroughs composed her own study circle curriculum entitled "Guide for Discussions: Cooperative Study Circle Class Plan." and implemented it into her newly created junior college level courses. She renamed the school the National Trade and Professional School (NTPS), and created a course titled Cooperatives: The New Program for Economic Security.³⁵⁰ In self-created and other materials, Burroughs laid out a plan to introduce her students to the basics of the cooperative movement. Burroughs broke down the subject matter into digestible suggested topics including: What is a Consumer's Society? Cooperative Principles, Cooperative Price Policy, and How Has Cooperation Grown Strong? Burroughs was also well known in White cooperative circles. She received letters from the Cooperative League of the USA requesting she come speak to Whites on issues related to cooperation.³⁵¹

Burroughs' lesson plans suggest that the course was primarily discussion based, and facilitated by a knowledgeable appointed group discussion leader. The group leader's responsibilities included, calling the group together, answering study questions, and keeping discussions germane to the subject matter. Students submitted individual written answers in class, and later formed collective responses submitted to the class secretary. The course secretary then submitted the collective answer to the Secretariat at KF Publishing, who would assess the answer for accuracy. Burroughs' relationship to KF Publishing is unclear but the act of sending course material to an outside organization for assessment suggests NTPS students may have been seeking some type of outside certification for their studies.

³⁴⁸ Mrs. M.M.W. Arter, Enrollment Blank for Persons on Relief, Box 47, Nannie Helen Burroughs Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

³⁴⁹ Nannie Burroughs, "It Is Up to the Negro," *The Worker* 3, no. 9 (Jan-Mar 1936): 3

³⁵⁰ Nannie Burroughs, Guide for Discussions: Cooperative Study Circle Class Plan. Box 47, Nannie Helen Burroughs Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

³⁵¹ Jessica Gordon Nembhard, interview by Ajowa Nzinga Ifateyo, March 14, 2014, <http://www.geo.coop/story/black-co-ops-were-method-economic-survival> (accessed May 2, 2015).

Burroughs kept herself and her students abreast of the cooperation movement through a multitude of publications and periodicals. She subscribed to *Consumers Cooperation*, a magazine containing history of the cooperative movement as well as monthly columns and advice from some of the most successful cooperatives around the globe. The April 1937 issue included an editorial from Robert Murray, editor of the Scottish Cooperator and the director of the \$100 million dollar Scottish Cooperative Wholesales Society. That same edition included an article, entitled, "Labor's Pocketbook: The Dilemma That Faces Organized Labor" by Wade Crawford Farelay, the President of the Evanston Consumers Cooperative.

Nannie's students were expected to read prior to coming to class and be prepared to discuss the readings in a group setting. Students purchased their own textbook, a periodical titled *We Will* published by KF Publishing. *We Will*, a monthly magazine intended for cooperative study groups, guilds, and Boards of Directors of cooperative enterprises, contained reports of group work, notices, contests, explanatory articles, proposals for progress for the group, and subjects for group discussion. Burroughs' students also referred to *Kooperation*, the official organ of the Consumer's Cooperation Movement of the USA, containing information on economic and cooperative events on the local, national and international front.

Like most cooperatives at the time, Cooperative Industries was short lived. Burroughs had lofty goals for the Cooperative Industries. In addition to her original dream of opening a uniform factory, Burroughs imagined the cooperative containing a laundry, a health clinic, shoe repair service, thrift and handicraft service, cannery, library, laundry and a co-op school. In Cooperative Industries' approximate four year lifespan, it appears that the cooperative farm, the broom making, laundry and community store were the most successful ventures. Despite its abbreviated existence, Cooperative Industries served over 6,000 people needy Blacks in Northeast Washington, DC.

The Great Depression presented multiple crises and Nannie did her best her to prioritize where others failed. While she was careful not to place a clear hierarchy on suffering, what was most pressing to her was meeting the needs of the working and mothers in the Black community. Through her educational activities with Cooperative Industries, Children's Department and the *Worker*, Burroughs created a safety net for Black women and children that had fallen off the radar of the federal government, and middle class Black preachers and leaders. At the same time, Burroughs' vision of communal education

At the same time, Burroughs' broad experiences in global communities gave her a unique ability to ponder how "outsiders" could support the Black masses' demands for economic justice and fair play. Burroughs challenged Whites in the federal government to channel more funds toward housing and Black women's work relief efforts. She prodded unemployed Black men to support their working wives by taking up domestic more duties and to behave more responsibly with the few dollars Black breadwinners brought home. She urged middle class college educated Blacks and Southern White women to support working class women's cooperative ventures. As the 1940s approached, Nannie would continue her fight for Black communities both in the United States and abroad.

Epilogue: The Final Years of Nannie Burroughs' Life and Work

Nannie dedicated her entire life to the Women's Convention and to the National Training School. Both organizations survived the Great Depression, but Nannie's battle was not over. In 1938, disagreements over ownership of the NTS resurfaced and this time, the male leadership of the National Baptist Convention withdrew their support for Nannie's school. The men tried to oust Burroughs altogether from her position in the WC, but Nannie survived and won the vote to remain. When ousting her from her leadership role failed, the men did the next best thing; they suspended all funds to Nannie's school and voted to channel all future money toward a new Baptist training school in Nashville.³⁵²

Never one to be held down by adverse circumstances, Nannie found new streams of income and continued her fight against racism and sexism both in and outside of the school. In 1940, she was appointed to the Advisory Panel of Listeners for the National Broadcasting Company. During World War II, she delivered a radio address titled "US Fighting Men," where she challenged the U.S. government to give Blacks their full civil rights. The broadcast was heard domestically and abroad. No longer able to rely on the Women's Convention for financial support, Nannie was forced to tap new funding streams.³⁵³ She also received an honorary doctorate from Shaw in 1948.

After more than forty years of faithful service as the Corresponding Secretary of the WC, Burroughs was elected president in 1947. The following year, the male leadership reconciled with the Women's Convention and restored funds back to Nannie's school. In the 1950s, the school focused increasingly on training missionaries.

Due to their support of the NAACP and other civil rights causes, many Black teachers were threatened with job loss in the 1950s. Burroughs wrote Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1956 hoping he knew of two high school teachers and one junior college teacher in need of work. She wrote,

They must be Christian women of unimpeachable character. They must be personally clean and an example of simple dress...there must be nothing slipshod about them or their work. Do you know of any such capable women who want to work in a Christian institution in which they can help to develop fine womanhood for leadership?³⁵⁴

Burroughs lived to see the dedication of a new dormitory building in 1956 and served the school as its president faithfully until her death in 1961. In 1967, the school transitioned to a Christian preschool that eventually grew into a private K-6 academy serving Black children. The school closed suddenly in 2013 due to lack of funds.

³⁵² Harrison, *The Dream and the Dreamer*, 92.

³⁵³ Easter, *Nannie Helen Burroughs*, 85.

³⁵⁴ Letter from Nannie Burroughs to Martin Luther King Jr., August 26, 1956,

Conclusion

This dissertation has argued that Nannie Helen Burroughs was one of the most influential educational thinkers of the twentieth century. As I conclude, first I summarize Nannie's philosophy of education, a framework I term a Burroughsian-based model of Black education. Next, I offer brief vignettes of educators who carry Burroughs' work forward. Finally, I briefly consider the relevance of Nannie's educational philosophy to today's educational policy and practice.

While certain aspects of Nannie Burroughs' life and work have been explored by a small number of history, education, and religious studies scholars, none have attempted to synthesize Burroughs' numerous educational activities into a useful framework that highlights the major themes of her educational thought. This framework, a term I call a Burroughsian-based model for Black education, examines Burroughs' activism across four major themes - broad based education, group leadership education, Pan Africanist education, and communal education. By presenting this Burroughsian-based model, I have attempted to provide school practitioners and policy makers with a unique conceptual schema from which to address the social, economic and political realities of Black educational life.

In Chapter One, I reviewed the previous research on Burroughs and laid out the major education themes that would guide this dissertation. Using a Burroughsian-based framework highlights central themes not only in Burroughs' writings but of African American history more broadly. Thus, it helps illuminate both how an educational figure like Burroughs fits into Black educational history and what her unique contribution to it is. Moreover, using a Burroughsian-based framework to understand Burroughs pushes scholars to examine Burroughs beyond her reputation as a mere practitioner, religious clubwoman, or as the "Female Booker T. Washington".

Chapter Two explored Burroughs' childhood and early education in Washington D.C. public schools and the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church. At M Street, Burroughs received a stellar liberal arts education that placed her among some of the best educated women in the country. After high school, Burroughs attended business school and continued to develop her intellectual prowess by participating in Washington's illustrative lyceum community. By presenting original essays and speeches on race, gender, and politics, Nannie educated the wider DC audience on the most pressing issues facing Black America. Her participation in the vibrant Washington intellectual community prepared her to become a future race leader who struggled against racism, sexism and discrimination both at home and abroad.

In Chapter Three, Burroughs relocated to Louisville and continued to develop her educational thought. In Louisville, Burroughs began her distinguished career as an educational practitioner and institution builder. She experimented with a single-sex model of education and founded the Louisville Industrial Club to teach business and domestic science to professional and working class women, enrolled in courses at the industrial education- focused Eckstein Norton Institute, and mobilized more than a million Baptist women in the Women's Convention. Through her speeches and activism and organization of the Annual Session's "school of

methods,” Burroughs garnered national and international acclaim for her advocacy of women’s missionary and educational work in the United States and abroad.

Chapter Four detailed Burroughs’ application of broad-based education. Burroughs preceded Washington and Du Bois in their realization that both purely liberal arts and vocational models missed the mark and that Black educational institutions should strive to combine both. As she stated to racist Whites attempting to block a liberal arts college in Louisville, “Like your race, we need the colleges and we need the industrial schools.” Drawing upon her M Street liberal arts experiences in Washington, her mixed curricula of the Women’s Industrial club, the Annual Session, and religious teaching at the liberal arts State University, Burroughs founded the National Training School for Women and Girls in Washington D.C. In the early years of the school, Nannie implemented a curriculum that included English, Latin, Negro Authors, Missionary Work and Music, alongside courses in Domestic Science, housekeeping, and laundering. With the founding of the National Training School (NTS), in 1909 Burroughs led a true self-help institution, one that did not depend on financial gifts from Whites.

Chapter Five explored Nannie’s commitment to group leadership education and her belief that Black working class women were the best equipped members of the community to lead the entire race on its quest for racial, social and economic justice. Burroughs’ application of group education guided her efforts to “professionalize” and “dignify” the domestic service industry. Inside the school, she engaged NTS students in a serious study of domestic science and encouraged them to utilize their positions as caretakers in White women’s domestic settings to engender positive relationships with Whites. Outside of the school, Burroughs worked to improve working conditions, increase wages, and influence labor legislation that protected Black workers through her founding of the National Association of Wage Earners (NAWE). Burroughs understood that Black working class women could not lead the race without wise use of the vote throughout the 1920s. She continued her appeals for justice and represented the National Association of Colored Women with her anti-lynching testimony before Congress. Burroughs’ outspokenness against state sanctioned racialized and gendered violence made her a target of government surveillance during the World War I era.

In Chapter Six, I argued that Nannie Burroughs led Black Baptist women in a particular kind of Pan Africanist and global education, a concept I termed *Womanist Christian Pan Africanism*. Womanist Christian Pan Africanism is defined as *a Christian focused intellectual and educational movement to end imperialism, colonialism, oppression and sexism throughout the African Diaspora and the globe*. Undergirded by her Baptist belief in the Providential Design Theory, Burroughs trained NTS alumnae and other female Black Baptist missionaries for numerous missionary education projects throughout the African continent. Driven by their belief in the Biblical prophecy that the African would struggle, battle and eventually overcome, the missionaries made it their duty to Christianize and educate the future leaders of Africa. As they commenced with their God- sanctioned work, Black women missionaries also exhibited a womanist consciousness as they performed religious ceremonies typically off limits to them in the patriarchal Baptist congregations in the United States. Through her secular work with the International Council of Women of the Darker Races (ICWDR), Burroughs engaged other women in the intellectual study of the Diaspora and forged international bonds of sisterhood with other female freedom fighters.

In Chapter Seven, I investigated Burroughs’ implementation of communal education in the 1930s. Burroughs’ responded to the devastating effects of the Great Depression by calling for community-centered economic solutions designed to keep Black dollars in Black

communities. She chaired the President's Committee on Housing and made several recommendations for the improvement of housing in Black communities. To aid Black working mothers who lacked child care, Burroughs engaged in the Black communal practice of "othermothering" by establishing a Children's Department at her school. Finally, Burroughs joined other Black leaders in their advocacy of Rochdale cooperative economics. Burroughs established study circles in and outside of the school to educate the Black masses about the cooperative movement. To combat unemployment, and promote self-help in the cooperative, Burroughs partnered with the Federal Emergency Relief Agency to provide jobs for unemployed Black women at her federal subsidized farm. Finally, through the establishment of the Women's Convention missionary and educational quarterly magazine *The Worker*, Burroughs entreated middle class Black women and Baptist white women to support poor Black women's cooperative economic activities.

Living Out Burroughs' Legacy: Three Educators Influenced by Burroughs

Throughout her long life, Nannie Burroughs touched the lives of many educators of Black children. Thus, her influence went beyond just the institutions and organizations that she built. Her legacy lives on in those who carry her work forward. It is appropriate for this conclusion to highlight a few of those who have carried on Burroughs' legacy.

Colonel James Wyatt (Retired)

Colonel James Wyatt is carrying on Nannie's legacy today. Wyatt, a native Virginian, graduated Booker T. Washington High School in the top 1% of his class. He later attended Florida A and M College (FAMC), earned a BS in Chemistry in 1953 and is a prominent member of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity. Wyatt enjoyed a successful military career and retired in the Maryland area. In early 2008, Wyatt noticed a street in Washington D.C. named for Nannie Helen Burroughs. He had never heard the name before, so he decided to learn more the unknown woman. Eventually he traveled to the Library of Congress to study Burroughs. Wyatt became engrossed in Burroughs' life and work and believed that Burroughs has a message for all Blacks. He embarked on an "educational campaign" to answer the observation of a National Association of Colored Women chapter president who said, "We've heard about her [Burroughs], but we don't know about her."³⁵⁵

Wyatt is working tirelessly to ensure that Nannie's memory is not forgotten. He founded the Nannie Helen Burroughs Project in 2010. The motto, "not a business, just a passion", accurately describes his selfless commitment to the five-year old Maryland-based non profit organization. Wyatt, now 70 years of age and grounded by his belief that "Nannie Burroughs' message should be available to our children 365-24-7," tours the country teaching Black churches, schools, civic and community organizations about Burroughs. To date, he has presented his traveling educational display complete with life size pictures and writings from Burroughs, to large audiences in Louisiana, Florida, North Carolina, Virginia, DC, Pennsylvania and Colorado.³⁵⁶

In addition to his education activism, Wyatt continues to wage battles for racial justice on Nannie's behalf. In 2012, he challenged the American Automobile Association (AAA) to right a historical wrong. In 1915, several of Nannie's "friends" purchased her a car.³⁵⁷ In 1930, Nannie applied for membership with the AAA. The AAA responded back saying "I regret very much to advise that your application for membership in the D.C. Division of the A.A.A. was not passed on favorably by the Eligibility Committee."³⁵⁸ The AAA, an organization known for discrimination against Blacks in the Jim Crow era, agreed to posthumously award Nannie her

³⁵⁵ "African-American History Education Based in Annapolis, Maryland," Nannie Helen Burroughs Project, accessed August 11, 2015, <http://nburroughsinfo.org/>.

³⁵⁶ "Project Activity," Nannie Helen Burroughs Project, <http://nburroughsinfo.org>

"About Our Founder and Project," Nannie Helen Burroughs Project, accessed August 11, 2015. http://nburroughsinfo.org/African-American_History_About_Annapolis_MD.html.

³⁵⁷ "Social Uplift," *The Crisis*, December 1915, 61.

³⁵⁸ Letter from American Automobile Association to Nannie Helen Burroughs, November 26, 1930, Box 1, Burroughs papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

membership card. Historian Traki Taylor accepted the membership card on Nannie's behalf. As a direct result of Wyatt's crusade, the AAA agreed to fund Omega Psi Phi scholarships and grants for African American students in the Maryland area.

Patricia Williams

Patricia Williams attended the National Trade and Professional School in 1968. Miss Annie 'Cenovia' Shelton, Nannie's former corresponding secretary and Williams' mentor paid the summer tuition. Williams was the youngest in her group of women attending the summer institute that year. Williams was joined by eleven other young women from her home church in New York City. At the summer institute, Williams studied African American history, public speaking, sewing, cosmetology, typing, transcribing, accounting, etiquette, personal home care and printing press operation and missionary studies.³⁵⁹ The missionary training Williams received supported her future field work in Haiti and Puerto Rico.

In a recent post on the Nannie Helen Burroughs Project Facebook page, Williams wrote, "I had no idea that this training was preparing for my future- to provide over twenty years of service for 'teenage mothers' and to become the founder and administrator of Cenovia's House for Teenage Mothers... I can truly say that my many skills, positive attitude to serve others and to be [sic] a role model for countless young people is because of Miss Nannie Helen Burroughs..."³⁶⁰ Williams also acknowledged her mother for sharing Nannie's dream of maintaining a school for "women such as myself to become self-sufficient."³⁶¹ Williams currently teaches computers skills in the Wilson County Schools in North Carolina.

Mary Alice Dorsett

Mary Alice Dorsett first heard of Nannie Burroughs when her high school teacher assigned her a speech entitled "The Negro and the Constitution." Nannie's name was mentioned in the speech and Dorsett curiously asked who Nannie was. Dorsett asked a few adults, but got very little information on who Nannie's identity. Years later in the late 1940s, Reverend A. Leon Lowry, the Dean of Morehouse College and one of Martin Luther King Jr.'s teachers desired to send a young woman from his congregation to be trained for missionary work in Africa. Lowry recommended Dorsett to attend the National Trade and Professional School because "Miss Nannie Burroughs was the best qualified of anyone that he knew to train a young woman." Dorsett attended the NTPS school from 1947-1951 and soon became Nannie's mentee. "You must write a book and share my teachings," Burroughs said to Dorsett. "God has given everybody something to do. He gave me solutions to problems and the ability to write them down. He gave you the ability to go into the streets any place where there are people to share my teachings and help them. You MUST do this! God requires you to bring about a better understanding among all the peoples of the world."³⁶²

Dorsett did write that book. She is also is one of Tampa's most distinguished living citizens and entrepreneurs. In 1954, she became the first Black woman to open a bail bonds

³⁵⁹ Nannie Helen Burroughs Project's *Facebook Page*, accessed August 11, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Nannie-Helen-Burroughs-Project/254243744786280?fref=ts>

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Mary Alice Dorsett, *Wings* (Tampa: Self-published, 1990), 9.

business in Tampa. Four years later, she became the first Black person to open up an employment agency. In 1965, she was the first Black woman to run for the House of Representatives. Dorsett lost the election, but she continued to fight for civil rights. In the 1980s, Dorsett was active in the wrote, “When I read and hear about the high percentage of black students being suspended and expelled from school, the unfair dispositions of interracial disputes, students graduating who cannot read, reports that state Black students have the worst lowest I.Q. (Intelligence Quotient), see our small children catching busses too early in the morning. . . it is my firm opinion that integration is not working.”³⁶³ Dorsett, now retired and in her eighties, continues to fight for racial justice in Tampa.

Wyatt, Williams and Dorsett represent the forward thinking nature of Nannie’s work and the endurance of her legacy. Scholars would do well to explore the full impacts and contemporary outgrowths of Nannie’s life and work. At a time such as this, when we as a nation are still struggling to adequately educate Black children, an educator like Burroughs can offer important insight into an alternate possibility.

Research and Policy Implications

As I conclude, I want to raise three key points about why Nannie Burroughs’ work is important to the field of educational research. In many ways, the challenges Nannie wrestled with and had developed strategies to overcome are the very same challenges that Black educators and Black communities are struggling with today. In a world where racism and patriarchy deeply impact the lives of Black women and girls, we cannot deny the way in which gender and racial disparities frame the Black educational experience. Nannie designed educational spaces and an educational philosophy that combatted and mediated the negative effect of racism and patriarchy on Black girls and women. This involved a concerted effort to provide educational access to empower women to enter spaces that were predominantly all-male and transform them into spaces where women’s contributions and perspectives were valued. She did this by creating nurturing cultural and political organizations and institutions where women had the opportunity to see themselves as intellectuals, leaders and thinkers in new ways.

Another example of the relevance of her work to today’s educational challenges is the connection between Burroughs’ communal-centered model and the contemporary trend of community schools. For instance, the lauded Harlem Children Zone takes as a premise that schools can be a beacon of transformation for the neighborhood and can function as a community resource that provides a range of family services. However the successes of the Harlem Children’s Zone, which are funded heavily by philanthropic donations, have not been easy to replicate in other urban districts. Despite a proclaimed commitment to community schools, districts have fallen short in creating deep connections between communities and school sites. Nannie’s work helps us understand the importance of a shared mission and vision for Black children. Her work also highlights the importance of developing leadership from within; creating opportunities for the training of educators and educational leaders that hold the welfare of the whole child at the center.

³⁶³ Dorsett, *Wings*, 42.

Finally, Nannie drew on multiple educational model and resisted pressures to limit herself to either a liberal arts or vocational model. This approach deepened her connection to the community in that she developed educational programs that met the needs of a diverse community, tailoring the educational experience to what she knew about Black people's needs and values. In doing so, she responded to the current economic and realities that the community faced, preparing students for the world that existed. At the same time, she prepared students (and specifically Black women students) for a world that did not yet exist and instilled in them a hope and a passion for creating the change that the world needed. This imagined future included a world where Black people could be free and self-determined.

Directions for Future Research

Like any piece of research, this exploration of Burroughs' life and work raises questions for future study. To date, little is known about the students who matriculated through the National Training School. What life trajectories did the alumnae take and to what extent are they embracing Nannie's lessons on broad-based, group leadership, Pan African and communal education? What is happening in the wake of the historic school's closing and how is the community responding? A fuller understanding of the ways in which students experienced the curriculum at the National Training School can provide keen insights to current education researchers and practitioners seeking to understand how curriculums designed specifically for Black students impact the academic achievement, college attendance, career choice, and other educational outcomes for Black youth.

A Cautionary Note

Finally, I want to close this dissertation on a hopeful but cautionary note. In a 1934 speech entitled, "What Must the Negro Do To Be Saved?" Nannie Burroughs proclaimed that Blacks are set upon this earth to "Battle and Struggle and Overcome."³⁶⁴ As heroic as her proclamation is, it is worth noting that much of Burroughs' struggle was financial in nature. To be sure, Nannie's constant fundraising was the most important factor in keeping the National Training School open. Since Nannie's death, securing financial support to sustain the school has proved challenging, and ultimately resulted in the school's closure in 2013. The untimely end of such a historic educational institution is not only a loss to the students of the Washington Heights community, but a loss to the Black community in general. As HBCUs and other historic sites of Black education continue to decline because of insufficient funding, I can't help but wonder where future generations of Black students will go to find nurturing and safe educational environments. Hopefully, this generation of education researchers and practitioners will continue Nannie's important work of educating self-sufficient, intelligent, globally conscious Black women and girls.

³⁶⁴ Allan Dwight Callahan, *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible* (Devon:Duke and Company, 2006), 133.

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