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Introduction

A whole generation of black social scientists has been lost. The first generation, represented by such scholars in sociology as E.F. Frazier, W.E.B. Du Bois, Carter G. Woodson, Charles S. Johnson, Allison Davis, Oliver C. Cox, St. Clair Drake, Horace Cayton, Ira de Reid, Mozell Hill, and Charles Gomillion, overshadowed those who came afterwards. These men worked to define and redefine the field of race relations. They were pioneers in the sense that they were not hesitant about placing their thought into the public domain to be discussed, even criticized, by those within and outside of black society. By studying in the mainstream universities, they emerged filled up with a desire to apply the knowledge gained to their own environments. They thought that change would follow in the wake of the accumulation of knowledge. For them knowledge would make them, and the rest of society, free. That was the driving religion of men like Charles S. Johnson, who were so devoted to the accumulation of facts with which there could be little argument.

A mythology grew up around these men and their work, taken collectively. Reference to them could easily become evidence that one had not completely ignored black scholarship. Once a ritual bowing had been made to them, their work was ignored and movement continued toward emphasis on the work of more current members of the mainstream. The conflict, for instance, between W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington, though continuing from around the 1890s through Washington's death in 1915, classic as it was, ignored that there were others involved in the issue of defining black social change.¹ Charles S. Johnson's work on plantations was no doubt relevant for the times but could not stand as a permanent statement of the black condition in later years. Nor could Allison Davis's work with John Dollard and the Gardners forever define and explain Southern black life and the psychology it generated. The life of the urban ghetto could no longer be accurately described by the work of St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton in their 1944 study

entitled *Black Metropolis*. Mainstream social science seemed intent on fixing, if not exclusively, then extensively, upon the work of these pioneers who deserved all the credit they justly received. Although they were referred to relatively often, they were not taken seriously to fit into any theoretical schemas to the extent that they were more than cursorily discussed. Almost no black women scholars were considered during this time. What few there were found it more expedient to work in the field of poetry, drama, and literature.²

But black society did not remain the same, as no society does. The teachings of these scholars must be seen within the context which then defined the discipline of sociology. As difficult as it was to break, as opprobrious as was the situation, the fact remained that America was badly divided racially. That fact was the principal generator of black sociological scholarship. Any social science presented for public reading had to take that reality into consideration. The very language used by mainstream sociology was supportive of that reality. The concept "caste" seems to have driven much of that sociology. Black scholars were bound to write within the constraints of that concept as well, with a few exceptions, such as O. C. Cox, although almost none of the early scholars showed evidence of internalizing that idea. Other members of the first generation had not been fortunate enough to get their work published and so were not given much credit for arguing against the caste concept. William Leo Hansberry, at Howard University, though not in sociology, was not awarded the Ph.D. degree at Harvard, allegedly for failure to adhere to mainstream thought that he showed to be flawed. Hansberry³ had claimed for long years, that Ethiopia deserved much larger recognition than it was receiving as a candidate for location of the origin of civilization. George G. M. James, of British Guyana, had been arguing since the early 1930s that the Egyptians, really Africans, who would now be thought of as Subsaharan, were the ones from whom the Greeks gained their knowledge of science and mathematics.⁴

These first generation scholars conducted their studies in

environments that were not conducive to the spread of critical black scholarship. The black schools in which most of them taught felt it dangerous politically to exhibit too high a degree of scholarship, especially that which did not support the status quo. They sensed the dangers in which they worked, but some of them persevered. Their main function, though, was to teach the next generation, and to prepare them to continue their work toward correction of the social system. For them teaching the next generation was absolutely essential if the struggle was to be continued.

The low visibility environments in which they worked proved to be advantageous and at the same time limiting. On the limiting side, they were denied well-deserved recognition in the discipline mainstream. In the advantage category must be the freedom they experienced to do practically whatever they wanted, to say whatever they pleased, so long as it was not published. They could literally indoctrinate the students with all they knew, even to a critical review and questioning of the social structure. The larger system would not know what they were doing and so no one would get hurt. Knowledge accumulated within the heads of the students, as it had been done in Africa and other colonial situations for hundreds of years.

Knowledge not published in no way suggests it did not exist. With a few exceptions, black scholars became something like griots, people to whom their people could turn for answers to their problems. The idea of the African American griot is not far fetched. In practically every community there are a few people who have more extensive knowledge of the history of the community than others. Oftentimes they are the oldest people.⁵ This knowledge was not generally shared with mainstream society. The knowledge that was being accumulated in these environments was critical to the continued operation of those communities. The adjustment that black communities made to the mainstream was due largely to the application of knowledge that flowed from the black centers of knowledge, represented largely by teachers at those schools. Those with knowledge led relatively insulated lives that, to the outside

appeared mysterious. It was not always the ingenuity of the black people that enabled their survival and relative prosperity during the days of separation. The skills had to be gained somewhere. It was in the schools that the knowledge base was acquired to practice medicine, even through midwifery), to repair vehicles, to establish newspapers, to draw house plans, and to carry out a thousand other activities within the community, activities that could not have been easily learned in the majority communities. Most of this knowledge was not formally organized, but it existed and was used.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of the black schools was their continuing preparation of black students for life in the mainstream. Their change from rough plantation and rural living toward that expected in the mainstream required much attention. This was a more important task than publishing books and papers that would earn one little recognition, if any, among mainstream scholars.

It was the charge of the first generation to pass this knowledge and orientation down to the second. It was well into the 1950s before it became safe enough in the institutions to conduct studies that were critical of the mainstream. By this time, the Civil Rights Movement was becoming extremely problematic. In Southern society, where the black colleges were located, there were greater recalcitrance and objection to change. The schools found themselves under threat of defunding. Scholarship of a critical nature slipped into the background and black scholars were shunted from one school to another, but seldom to mainstream ones. Men like Charles G. Gomillion,⁶ at Tuskegee, were expected to be quiet. At Howard, E.F. Frazier turned his frustration onto black society in a bitter criticism of it in his *Black Bourgeoisie* (1957). After his 1948 critique of capitalism, and exposure of the mistakes of Gunnar Myrdal, O.C. Cox⁷ left Tuskegee and headed for Lincoln University, where he could function better in the Border South-Midwestern state of Missouri where political and ethnic sensitivities were not as great as in the Deep South.

Some members of the second generation were not

sufficiently steeled in the problems of southern social science teaching that they were losing their reticence or hesitancy to write. For some time they continued to examine aspects of black society. Hylan Lewis published *Blackways of Kent* (1955). It adhered closely to the Chicago School tradition with an emphasis on the internal dynamics of black social status. Tilman C. Cothran, arguably one of the most promising of the second generation sociologists, decided to concentrate his attention for a few more years on the preparation of future black scholars who would be freer to take up the cudgels against the forces opposing social change.⁸ For the most part, second generation scholars continued to define their roles as Cothran had done and did not themselves produce impressive works, although their promise was great.

Many of those scholars are not noted in the footnotes to scholarly books and papers, and the assumption may be incorrectly drawn that they were not active in sociological work. Like many achievements, the works of these scholars were good for their time, but they were not preserved. The standards of academic work were changing, and had changed, while these persons were in mid-careers. When they began, academic work meant work with students, processing them toward citizenship, but not necessarily into a separate environment. When it became clear that a substantial number of these students, as adult citizens, would live outside the black community, the students were better prepared for the changes than their instructors, many of whom were not required to change. Where the standard was shifted to scholarly productivity, and they had not accepted that as their emphasis, it was difficult for them to be noted, except in the folklore of the students who had them as teachers. At nearly every black college, and probably at others in the country, there were personalities on the campus who were noted for their work, whether that work was scholarly or inspirational. Their lives merged with the ambience of their campuses; their satisfaction was in how well their students did, not how well they themselves did. They, like black public teachers, toiled in atmospheres yet defined by hostility toward the advancement of black people. There were few

other choices than the schools to provide for the movement of thousands of black youth into roles of respectability.

This work on Marguerite Rogers Howie, herself a second generation sociologist, is intended to inquire into the processes in which that generation worked, how they adjusted, and to estimate their influence upon their school environments. Gaps in history need to be filled. Understanding of social life needs to be advanced. Society is made up of individuals whose lives are mirrors of its operation for particular times. By studying the life and work of a scholar such as Marguerite Howie, insights may be gained into how society worked at the intersections of class, race, and gender.

If the name of Marguerite Rogers Howie is unknown to legions of scholars, there are reasons for its not being so. She toiled in virtual isolation from mainstream scholarship, a condition not uncommon for many scholars of minority status.

The author wishes to thank the Association of Social and Behavioral Scientists for its support of this effort in appreciation of Professor Howie's Work. It was hoped that it could stand as a volume of the *Journal of the Association of Social and Behavioral Sciences*. All the readers of this work who made valuable suggestions, particularly Delores Aldridge, Steven K. Worden, Talmadge Anderson and Frank Harold Wilson, are thanked generously. My assistant of the time Narraca Stubblefield is also to be thanked for interest in and deep devotion to the completion of this project. Izola Preston has continued to encourage me for many years and I thank her kindly for her consideration and help in both conceptualization and research relevant to this project. For all of its shortcomings the author alone is responsible.

It is more important than ever that we write the biographies of those people who struggled in the trenches, at the barricades, trying to bring about positive social change. The case of Marguerite Rogers Howie, born in 1919, is more illustrative than thought. The problem is that the people, even her friends, hailed her at the Association meetings, talked of her direct connection to W.E.B. Du Bois, but failed to discuss

the possibility of the publication of her biography as either a journal article or as an occasional paper by the Association.

It was very strange how these people threw Marguerite Howie to the wind, with no real recognition of her tireless work for the Association. It was probably not the members closest to Marguerite Howie's generation that rejected her, but those that were much younger and trying to use the Association journal to further their own professional advancement. Former officers monopolized issues of the journal and showed little interest in the work on Howie, despite the fact that by then she had two strokes and was unable to plead her case. She would inevitably drift further into the background.

I cannot make Marguerite Howie's name a household word in black sociological scholarship. I can only try to see that the same fate does not befall her as met other scholars who tried to make a difference. Perhaps the younger scholars, themselves very insecure in their quests for tenure, do not see memorializing ordinary people, even teachers at any level of teaching, as a good use of resources. Nor could the failure to endorse Howie for publication mean a great saving to the Association. The Association *Journal* is several years behind. Not enough material is coming forward to fill up those issues while printing prices are rising. The few issues that are coming out are usually combined and practically monopolized by a few individuals closely situated in positions of power in the Association.

I guess I could have made an issue over the Howie matter, but I did not. To do so would make no point other than to further strain the relationships between the youthful and more senior members of the Association. It is now clear that the only thing the young members want from the older ones is their money. Whatever they do for seniors seems more an attempt to get them to contribute money. They may lionize them for a few moments, but is it all phony? It seems to be. The Association membership stabilizes around a group that is itself unstable. Standing in the Association changes because, for some years, there has not been a forceful Executive Secretary. In the past, that official literally ran the

Association because the Executive Secretary knew more about the organization than anyone else, including the personalities in it. That officer kept up with those matters that affected the Association. He or she did not have all that much opposition and was expected to make the right decisions for the Association. Marguerite Howie served as Association Executive Secretary for several years. During that time she continued to exercise a positive influence.

When Howie retired from her school, her status, even in the Association changed, although it took several years for that change to be noted. She had no institutional role, or at least not one that was greatly respected. She found it difficult to carry the day in the Association. Many of the younger scholars did not know her and, more importantly, they were not very interested in what she was saying. During her last years in the Association, she had to become much more combative in order to be heard.

Background to the Project

During the annual meetings of the Association of Social and Behavioral Scientists at Tallahassee, Florida, March 8-12, 1995, there were occasions for meeting old friends who had not been seen for the last year and often for many years. Between sessions some repaired to rooms where visiting continued. James Conyers⁹ invited the author and Marguerite Howie¹⁰ to visit for a minute in his room. Their discussion turned to talk about past Association members and their work. The author told Conyers and Professor Howie about a book that was scheduled for release in 1995 about the late Tilman C. Cothran, a scholar who had a big influence on the production of black social scientists. Cothran had labored long at Arkansas Agricultural, Mechanical and Normal College (now the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff), later at Atlanta University, where he was joined in sociology by Conyers, and still later at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, where he served as associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.¹¹ Much discussion ensued about the work and

mannerisms of Professor Cothran and how various students and other constituents saw him.

The author took the position that, even though individuals had different faces, and carried out different duties, they generally had group development in mind and wanted to be remembered for those activities. Recognizing the contributions of these hardworking members has been too often overlooked. It was noted that perhaps younger scholars who have been touched by some of these figures would have the energy to bring attention to them through the writing of booklength manuscripts on them. A few of the more notable scholars have been written about because of their outstanding theoretical or disputational contributions to the discipline. Horace Cayton and St. Clair Drake are well known for their *Black Metropolis* (1944). Allison Davis wrote with Burleigh and Mary Gardner and occasionally with John Dollard in studies of the caste systems of the South. Charles S. Johnson's studies of sharecroppers gained some notoriety before the 1950s, as did the family and social class studies of E. Franklin Frazier. Many other scholars carried out studies which were quite highly recognized by social scientists. Mozell Hill became quite well known as an academic sociologist through his studies of small towns of the Border and Deep South states. John Hope Franklin's *From Slavery to Freedom* has gone through some seven editions to become practically the bible of black history. Du Bois has no doubt been a most interesting topic. More has been written about him, his work, and opinions, than any other black scholar. So overwhelming is the reputation of Du Bois that when black social scientists are mentioned, his name almost automatically comes to attention.

Although there was not much emphasis, relatively speaking, upon the contributions of black scholars, female scholars were very hard to find, although they were active. Adelaide M Cromwell¹² studied the class structure of black Boston and Carolyn Bond Day¹³ studied the social structures of mixed race people. Ida Rowland Bellegarde had been studying and writing since the late 1930s and found the best format for her work to be in the form of poems. Her *Lisping*

*Leaves*¹⁴ gained notable reviews. These studies were more likely to come to the attention of students but none of them reached a wide readership. Since most of these studies were during the period of rank separation of the races, they coincided with the period in which women had the fewest opportunities for gaining recognition in academe, even within the black schools.

Probably the best test of whether a black social scientist or other scholar or leader has had any influence on either students or a wider constituency is whether that person has had a book written on his or her life. Occasionally, the scholars pen their own biographies but these very seldom find their way into print for consumption by a wider audience. During the lifetimes of some individuals they are taken on over, lionized, but soon thereafter, they are forgotten and nobody remembers their names. Not all of the scholars have been noted for their academic contributions. Others have taken other tacks and have worked more closely with students in preparing them for continued study and achievement in their chosen fields.