



Social Sciences



HIGHER EDUCATION OF OKLAHOMA CITY NEGROES

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For some time the writer has been carrying on a rather limited study of educational conditions among Oklahoma City negroes, with special reference to facilities for securing higher education. The study has covered the cases of seventy adults, most of them professional or business men, and 383 college students and recent high school graduates.

Some of the information was gleaned through personal interviews; some of it from the records of Douglas High School, the secondary school maintained by the city for negroes. The educational histories of thirty-three teachers were investigated, and the same inquiries made concerning the training of twelve home makers, ten physicians and dentists, and fifteen men serving in other capacities, including that of the ministry.

Many of the data are of no interest to the average person living remote from the black-belt. This paper, however, deals with some of the larger aspects of the situation—aspects which concern those who wish to see Oklahoma profit from its colored citizens and those who are interested in negro progress.

The bulk of the Oklahoma City negro population is found east of Walnut and north of Grand Avenue. Dozens of city blocks are "shady," if not "black," and dozens of others have a goodly sprinkling of colored people. Professional and business men have their offices in this part of the city, the negro taxi lines center here, and from offices located in this district are issued the newspapers that dispense the news and gossip of the "negro-world." This section houses hundreds of black folk who go forth daily to carry on professions or trades or to work as household servants. Here are homes that are simple; homes that are more elaborate; some whose inmates would not make good neighbors; some of refinement and high moral character.

The city is doing much for the advancement of colored folk. In the last thirty years, some six hundred and eighty-two young negroes have completed the course at the Douglass High School. What has become of these graduates? Do they go to the Oklahoma cotton fields? Do any of them seek further training? Where must the young colored person go if he has a desire to proceed further with his schooling? Also, what has

been the source of the training received by men and women now serving as leaders of the city's negro population?

Of the four hundred fifty-three students and adults studied, all of whom had received some high school training, it was found that two hundred forty-six had attended schools that were classed as colleges. Thirty-four negroes of the adult group studied have secured normal certificates, twenty-eight have been granted bachelor's degrees, and twenty have been recipients of higher degrees, many of them honorary.

A critical appraisal of the courses of instruction, qualifications of teachers, and administration of the institutions attended would not indicate that all of them should be placed on a par with white schools in corresponding states, but the desire of the negro for further work after he has completed the high school course is very evident. And many of the colleges are of the first rank. Harvard, Columbia, Brown, Northwestern, and the University of Colorado have graduates among the educated negroes now at work in Oklahoma City, as have Chicago University, Howard, the University of Illinois, and the University of Kansas.

The favorite college of Oklahoma City negroes is Langston University, which is maintained by the State at Langston, Oklahoma. Over one-third of the number who have pursued courses in institutions of higher learning have attended one or more terms here. The second choice for the boys who graduate from Douglass high school is Wiley College at Marshall, Texas. The girls, more of whom aspire to be teachers, prefer to secure their training at the normal school at Pittsburg, Kansas. Professional men come largely from Fisk and Meharry medical school in Tennessee.

The investigation revealed that twenty-five states of the union have contributed to the higher education of Oklahoma City's negroes. A young man brought up in the city, if he is black, and if he possesses a desire to achieve success in a professional field other than teaching, is required to seek his training in some other state. From Massachusetts to Colorado, and from Wisconsin to Texas are located colleges which have helped to educate Oklahoma City black men and women.

Where can a young person living in Oklahoma City's negro colony find a large hospital open to colored physicians or nurses? Three Chicago hospitals and one each in New York, Washington, Kansas City, Memphis, and Nashville are among those which have helped to train those who look after the physical needs of the capital city's black belt.

The case of one Oklahoma City physician shows the level to which the desire for education and usefulness may lead the ambitious negro. In contrast to the primitive medicine-man type, this doctor has secured high school and college training, has pursued a four year medical school course, has been a college instructor, has taught histology and biology in a medical school, and has done post-graduate work for an aggregate of over two years. He has worked with white and colored surgeons in Chicago, Washington, and New York hospitals. He has a large Oklahoma City practice.

It will be recognized that this is not a typical case. Yet it illustrates the possibilities in negro education, and is indicative of the ardor with which some seek to secure the best schooling possible.

In addition to this summary of the training of one of the negro physicians, there are given below the records of one of the prominent educators and of certain other negro men whose training is perhaps more typical.

TEACHER

Howard University, Washington, D. C., five years.

Brown University, Providence, four years.

Degrees of A. B. and A. M. from Brown.

Degree of LL.D. from Wilberforce University, Wilberforce, O.

Degree of LL.D. from Howard.

TAILOR

Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee, Alabama, 4 years.

MINISTER

High school in Virginia.

Philander Smith College, Little Rock, Arkansas, four years

PHYSICIAN

High school, Paducah, Kentucky.

Simmons University, Louisville, Kentucky.

National Medical College, Louisville, Kentucky.

MINISTER

High school, Baton Rouge, four years.

Wilberforce University, four years.

Payne Theological School, Ohio, 3 years.

Extension work, Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill.

It has been pointed out that two hundred forty-six of the negroes listed in the study have each pursued one or more years of a college course. The membership of the nine classes graduating from Douglass High School in 1924-32 has aggregated three hundred sixty-eight. Of these, no less than 45 per cent have gone on to attend institutions of higher learning. And out of this group of one hundred sixty-seven Douglass High School graduates who have attended college, about 58 per cent have gone outside of the bounds of the state to find suitable schools.

UNSUPPLIED NEEDS

What are the implications for the city and for the state? Part of the answer comes in the fact that the colored high school located in Oklahoma City is accredited by the state but not by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.

Again, the school is under a management which, in its direct administrative and instructional contacts, is of necessity, in the hands of representatives of an undeveloped race. Some contact with white teachers, which many believe would be helpful to the negro boys and girls, is denied them.

Finally, as has been shown, the negro youth of Oklahoma's capital city must look elsewhere for any education or special training beyond high school, the majority going outside the confines of the state.

Oklahoma City has done much for its black population. It has gone all the way from giving negroes work to supporting their football games. But what can be done so that the city and the state can give adequate college training for its thousands of negro youth?

