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Thelma Daggs - Recollections of a "Negro" Teacher at the Fort Totten Indian Boarding School: Pte Wa Uspewicakiyapi (Buffalo Teacher)

Patricia R. Maggard

THELMA DAGGS—RECOLLECTIONS OF A "NEGRO" TEACHER AT THE FORT TOTTEN INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOL: PTE WA USPEWICAKIYAPI (BUFFALO TEACHER)

by

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This dissertation, submitted by Patricia R. Maggard in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosphy from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

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This dissertation meets the standards for appearance, conforms to the style and format requirements of the Graduate School of the University of North Dakota, and is hereby approved.

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Signature Patricia K. Maggard

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The journey that brought me to this place in time has been both smooth and bumpy and I must first thank my Savior for allowing me to find my authentic self—to find something more.

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It is my sincere hope that this dissertation does justice to Thelma Daggs and the inspirational life she lived—her voice transcends mortal boundaries and continues to teach us all.

To Clarence Walker Braxton
Kenice Garlick
Solo

ABSTRACT

Black teachers' unique historical experiences are often completely overlooked or amalgamated with those of White teachers in states such as North Dakota, where the population is predominantly White and the study of African Americans is particularly sparse. This study examines the life experiences of Thelma Bertha Daggs (now deceased), an African American teacher at the Fort Totten Indian Boarding School, Devils Lake, North Dakota from 1949 – 1967. Emphasis was placed on describing and understanding past events and the particular life experiences of Thelma Daggs through collection, evaluation, analysis and interpretation of data, including a range of historical sources from her life and interviews with former students.

Thelma Daggs led a very private life, leaving me with gaps to fill. I use a combination of psychological and social analysis of Thelma Daggs' motivations to reconstruct her biography in the broader historical contexts of African American history. I have supplemented some of the gaps by adding subjective commentary and conjecture from my parallel experiences as an African American woman and teacher in North Dakota. To assist the reader in distinguishing my subjective interpretive voice from that of my direct analysis of Daggs' lived experiences, I have used a methodology of employing italics in the dissertation text itself to demarcate my own interpretive voice. This narrative technique allows me to differentiate between my traditional scholarly analysis of Daggs and the subjective interpretation that is informed by my own autobiography.

The results of this study found Thelma Daggs to be a cultural anomaly whose life experiences further illuminate the limited knowledge base on African American teachers in North Dakota. This study offers a new perspective on early African American feminist thought, paradigms, and epistemologies. My analysis offers insight on being an African American educator in a culturally different context (an Indian reservation) and exposes a life where strength was mustered to unravel and rise above the tangled web of race, class, and gender oppression.

PREFACE

This dissertation was inspired by the adoration and admiration several of my Native American friends have shown for the first Black teacher at the Fort Totten Indian Boarding School in Devils Lake, North Dakota—Thelma Bertha Daggs (1908-1996). The title, Thelma Daggs—Recollections of a "Negro" Teacher at the Fort Totten Indian Boarding School: PTE WA USPEWICAKIYAPI (Buffalo Teacher) grew from the respect tied to African American Buffalo Soldiers. The Indians called the African American cavalry they encountered 'Buffalo Soldiers' because of their prowess, bravery, tenaciousness, and the look of their hair (Diggs, 2004). I was motivated to refer to Thelma Daggs as "Buffalo Teacher (PTE WA USPEWICAKIYAPI) with much the same symbolism and respect that the Native American's felt for the Buffalo soldiers.

The role of the African American teacher in the southern United States has been a topic of literature, movies, and even music. Teachers in states struggling with the loss of slavery, fighting for scholastic inclusion and educational equality have shared the stage with gods and generals. There is an abundance of research surrounding the experience of southern Black teachers. However, research or writings on the role of the African American teacher in the Plains states could not be found. Thelma Daggs is one teacher who appears to have broken the societal molds set for Negro teachers circa 1949.

Black teachers have been a firm, unnoticed, unmovable root on education's family tree. Unfortunately, until the early 1970s Black people in America were denied

that history (Lerner, xvii). States such as North Dakota have fared far worse in developing its African American history: partly due to the small population of African Americans and the even smaller number of African American teachers. As an African American teacher in North Dakota, I believe the time has come to arouse the past, possibly enhance African American self-respect and provide another to the forerunners with whom Black teachers everywhere may opt to identify (Lerner, xvii).

Several obstacles stand in the way of presenting the lives of those individuals that never basked in the limelight: the passage of time, the passing of life, and the passing of humanity into an era where the death of a member of a marginalized group may be better left to rest. Black teachers unique historical experiences are either completely overlooked or amalgamated with those of White teachers. In those few instances where Black teachers are visible, their cultural representations are biased by society's overarching racism (Delpit, 1997, xlvi). Black teachers such as the one focused on in this study should be an addition to the history of African American women which is abundant with an emphasis on community, education as a priority, the importance of understanding individual self-worth, and triumph over obstacles (Hine & Thompson, 1998).

As a Black woman venturing into the world of qualitative analysis, I realize that I am a member of a marginalized group. However, in some very important epistemological ways, I have been preparing to write this dissertation all of my life, drawing on my life experiences of being African American, female and a teacher (Merchant & Willis, 2000). That is, I have known for a long time, to paraphrase Dionne Farris' (1994) song, *Human*

Before I am Black

Before I am woman

Before I am short

Before I am young

Before I am African

I am Human

I find the need to explore and understand the dilemmas created for Chicanas, African Americans, Native Americans and scholars from other disenfranchised groups vis-à-vis the majority culture (Villenas, 1996).

Furthermore I, as a researcher, need to understand the ways in which Black teachers traversed our multiple, fluid, clashing, and colonized identities and how our identities are manipulated and marginalized in the midst of exclusionary discourse (Villenas, 1996). Hine and Thompson (1998) summarized a very important rationale for including the lives and accomplishments of unheralded African American women, including our foremothers, who found ways to educate children—they are more than stories of oppression and struggle, theirs are the stories of hope (Hine & Thompson, 1998).

Memories of Thelma Daggs presented themselves to me as the past of someone who is historically relevant and the journey she took brought her to an intimate encounter with those she taught. "Every society has its members who watch the show of history from the sidelines" (Evans-Herring, 2003, p.1). Thelma Daggs is not one of those: she was one in the group of strong Black women who survived the trials she was faced with in a time when the dominant group was less forgiving of those not born into their cultural

supremacy and did what she could to move the drama of human history, ever so slowly forward (Evans-Herring, 2003). She stood apart from the crowd, taking responsibility for the world by taking seriously her individual contribution to it (Evans-Herring, 2003).

There is much that teacher educators can learn from the stories of teachers from the past like Thelma Daggs—African American teachers who invested in the education of the American future can only enhance the education of all involved (Delpit, 1997). Thelma Daggs' journey may promote and stimulate thought about the less than perfect route Black female educators took to get to their present destination.

The research on the life experiences of Thelma Daggs will serve to enlighten others on Black teachers: a complex task characterized by the intersection of race, gender and social class with language, history, and culture (Etter-Lewis, 1991). It is my hope that the resulting psychosocial, interpretive cultural portrait will provide more than the memories of a specialized audience; rather that the resulting story of an African American teacher will enrich the understanding of issues revolving around her contribution to the history of education.

I feel that, as an African American teacher in North Dakota, I have the ability to present a unique, parallel perspective of Thelma Daggs' journey that cannot be captured by others outside the realm of African American female experiences. The legitimacy of contextual settings, experiences, voices, and outcomes within an African American perspective that reflects our cultural, collective and personal histories can be better decoded and denoted by one who has walked in that shadow (Merchant & Willis, 2000).

The rationale for this research that overshadows all others is the hope that this attempt will provide a voice to a specific person (Thelma Daggs) of a historically

marginalized group: that in the process the capacity for understanding the experiences of Black teachers will be expanded and that contemporary and future historians and sociologist will come closer to a complete understanding of education, schooling, teaching and learning in the United States (Delpit, 1997).

Historical heroes can be either national or more on the local level; but what better way to explore the ebb and flow of history than to look, specifically, at the life experience of individuals who can be seen as a success in their own rights (Evans-Herring, 2003). "The definition of success that is less talked about, though, is the story of individuals who, rather than having little and gaining much, take what they have and do great things. Thus knowledge of the past through the lives of individuals can be freeing, even empowering, especially when that knowledge opens up new windows of interpretation and doors of opportunity" (Evans-Herring, 2003, p. 1).

I pulled out my birth certificate and it shows "colored" in the race block. I used to always joke when I was younger by saying "what color am I?" After reading books by women like Giddings and *hooks*, this is no longer seen as a joke. The time is now to dig up some of those roots and seek women who have made a difference—I will start with Thelma Daggs.

The text of this study will use the following definitions. The terms may be interchanged to allow for smooth flow and interaction with the thoughts.

African American – Used interchangeably with Negro and Black to indicate a Black American of Non-Hispanic heritage: used in accordance with language of the timeframe in discussion.

Black – Used interchangeably with Negro and African American to indicate a Black American of Non-Hispanic heritage: used in accordance with language of the timeframe discussion.

Euro-American – Used to indicate a United States citizen or resident of European descent: used interchangeably with White (American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2000).

Indian – used to indicate having origin in the original peoples of North America: used interchangeably with Native American.

Interpretive Biography – Creating literary narrative accounts and representations of lived experiences, telling and inscribing stories (Denzin, 1989).

Native American – used to indicate having origin in the original peoples of North America: used interchangeably with Indian.

Negro – used interchangeably with African American and Black to indicate a Black American of Non-Hispanic heritage: used in accordance with language of the timeframe in discussion.

White – used interchangeably with Euro-American to indicate belonging to a racial group having light skin coloration, especially one of European origin (American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2000).

It is impossible to understand the life of one who is deceased and cannot provide answers to the questions about the experiences that define their lives. It is similar to making assumption about what an artist was thinking or trying to denote in one of their paintings; unless the artist is asked or chooses to share her inspiration, the canvas is conceptually blank but the painting is meaningful just the same. Italicized thoughts,

impressions and assertions will indicate where I have taken the liberty to provide supplements to the story based on my experience as an African American who grew up fifty years later than Thelma Daggs but in a South not much improved for the passing of time. Several of my thoughts were gleaned from family and friends who lived through the same storm as Thelma Daggs.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION - 1908 -1943

I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than
the flow of human blood in human veins.
My soul has grown deep like the rivers.
I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went
Down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy bosom turn all
golden in the sunset.
I've known rivers.
My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

(Hughes, 1926/1954)

Suppose you were a Negro woman born in a time when your sex and coloring were major determinants of the life circumstances you were provided to create your personal reality? Would you have chosen to accept your lot in life or would you have chosen to muster the psychological and physical strength to go against the tide? We would all like to think that we would have chosen the latter, but would we have? Despite our optimistic viewpoint, most of us would have fallen into the former more typical

range. Welcome to Thelma Bertha Daggs' life, that individual who chose to be more than "typical" in her time.

"The situations in which you live and function determine the roles available to you" (Zimbardo, 1992, p. 578). Social psychologists try to understand behavior within its social context—the vibrant canvas on which we paint the movement, strengths and vulnerabilities of the social animal (Zimbardo, 1992). Research has been conducted over the past 50 years which implicates the existence of an innate power within social situations that controls human behavior—how we consider the significant impact of social context on how we act, how we find meaning in them (Zimbardo, 1992). Thelma Daggs lived during a time where social interaction and its desired outcomes were determined by the majority or those in power by rules, behavioral guidelines for certain settings, (Zimbardo, 1992) i.e. No Negroes, Colored Only, White Only.

The typical response to all these rules was to oblige, both with your outward and inward responses. Those few that were more than typical, like Thelma Daggs chose to ignore normative pressures to meet other needs such as the need for cognitive clarity about their world (Zimbardo, 1992). To develop an understanding of Thelma Daggs it becomes necessary to look beyond her experiences: to incorporate historical context—sprinkled with the creative imagination of one who has walked a mile in her moccasins.

Given the power of the majority to control resources and reinforcements, the extent of conformity that existed at all levels of the Negro society was not surprising, but how did this counter-normative woman develop (Zimbardo, 1992)? Thelma Daggs chose to break from her minority membership and visualize new options and creative alternatives to dealing with her injected status—her status as a Black woman growing up

in the Jim Crow south, serving in a segregated fighting force, obtaining higher education in a primarily Euro-American setting and teaching in an assimilation based school (Zimbardo, 1992). Thelma Daggs took her dissident minority perspective and negotiated through the entrenched majority view to become one of the essential component innovators that lead to the positive social change seen in African American teachers and women today (Zimbardo, 1992).

"Black women's voices are finally being heard, but it is still difficult to listen to them amid the clang of racism and sexism" (Benjamin, 1997, p. 211). The history of Black women is the history of their strife—the longing to attain self-conscious womanhood, to merge her double self into a better and truer self (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1994). From the birth of the first Black slave-child in the United States to the birth of Black feminism, it has been the little known Black woman who bore the brunt of the labor pains. How then did Thelma Daggs deal with a world that yielded her no true self-consciousness, but merely let her see herself through the revelation of the other world—double consciousness, a state of always looking at herself through the eyes of others, of measuring her soul by the tape of a world that looked on in amused contempt and pity (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1994)? *I, as an African American in a time that is more forgiving do not venture to guess this answer, but I do know that whatever the driving force to obtain her true self-consciousness was overwhelming enough to take her on a journey worthy of recount.*

Thelma Daggs spent almost two decades of her life contributing to the humanization of our country. Her story is filled with tenacity. It speaks to the notion that everybody ought to have a dream of what they want to be and even if they can't be it

when they want, it is still possible—no does not mean never, no means not now; no not right now, but it doesn't mean no, not tomorrow…it's very possible (Fassinger & Richie, 1994). Thelma Daggs moved fluidly through the periods of lynching, women's rights, civil rights, and on through the modern women's movement. Though men have been seen as winning most of the major battles of this United States, Thelma Daggs represents the warriors who truly engaged in the fight and emerged from the blasts; she was a woman, strong, Black and uncelebrated. It is my charter to pump up the volume of the unheard song of this unsung hero.

Convinced that Black women's ontological and epistemological assumptions should balance the present-day academy's emphasis on individualism and its reductionistic Western thinking (Benjamin, 1997), *I weave a story of windows of opportunity and the woes and wounds of Thelma Daggs as she makes her sojourn outside the sequestered southern life-system through time* (Benjamin, 1997). *I will critique the ways of thinking and knowing of the Eurocentric patriarchal paradigm while instilling a new voice which may offer insights into Black women's communal values and their more spiritual and intuitive ways of viewing the world* (Benjamin, 1997).

> "…throughout the entire span of her existence on American soil, the Negro woman has been alone and unprotected, not only socially but psychologically as well. She has had to fend for herself as if she were a man; being Black even, even more so. I am not implying that the Negro woman has become frigid or 'masculine.' In fact, she is potentially if not already, the most sexual animal on this planet. It is not frigidity that I am describing. It is rigidity. And it has been this quality of austerity in the

Negro woman which has enabled her to survive what few other women have ever lived through…

(Hernton, 1992, p.1)

As Carol Christ (1986) reminds us, "the simple act of telling a woman's story from a woman's point of view is a revolutionary act (Christ, 1986, p. 27)." This study is concerned with placing Thelma Daggs within a broader historical context, historical data regarding the communities, society, and the time period in which she taught were collected (Munro, 2000). *In collecting information on Thelma Daggs, I find myself situated in a paradoxical position; I know that I cannot collect her life...what I can do is present neat, chronological accounts of her life and attend to the silences as well as what is found—I must attend to how the story is portrayed as well as to what is presented and what not. I must also attend to the tensions and contradictions rather than succumb to the temptation to gloss over these in my desire to present the story* (Munro, 2000). Because this is a reconstruction, original purity of experience can never be achieved (Munro, 2000). *I did what Hane Marcus (1984) refers to as "invisible mending."*

It is important that researchers aid in increasing the library volumes of life stories and biographies of less noted but highly successful Black women from a unique insight on history: "not the kind of history that…sets such an impossibly high standard of correct behavior that only a living saint could be expected to come close in a lifetime" (Bell-Scott, 1999, p. 115). The literature reviewed for this work left something to be desired in the area of knowledge on African American women and African American teachers in the north, particularly the Plains states—there must be more out there that has not been uncovered and awaiting exposure. In the words of W.E.B. DuBois "We have

the record of kings and gentlemen ad nauseam and in stupid detail, but of the common run of human being...the world has saved all too little of authentic record and tried to forget or ignore even the little saved" (Lerner, 1973, p. xxii). In *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness and the politics of empowerment,* Patricia Hill Collins (1995) implies that such digging up of this knowledge is problematic because more powerful groups are more vested in its suppression.

Thelma Daggs' story provides a voice to one of a historically marginalized group; that in the process the capacity for understanding the experiences of Black women (in particular Black teachers) will be expanded and that contemporary and future historians and sociologists will come closer to a complete understanding of education, schooling, teaching and learning in the United States (Delpit, 1997).

On a more personal note, there is a more deep-seated reason for researching the lives of ones who have preceded us into glory:

> Down, down, down into the darkness of the grave
> Gently they go, the beautiful, the tender, the kind;
> Quietly they go, the intelligent, the witty, the brave.
> I know. But I do not approve. And I am not resigned.
>
> (Millay, n.d.)

Theoretical Framework

I agree with hooks (1981) that Black women speak with an "authority of experience" constituted and shaped by a history which has profound somatic and psychological implications for the "lived body" of Black women (Yancy, 2000). Understanding Thelma Daggs' experiences will require the use of social memory—

defined as the relationship of her experiences to history in its more formalized and institutionalized senses (Carter, 1998). The past will be made more meaningful in reference to her experiences but in a much broader, more varied and possibly more curious sense than formal history (Carter, 1998).

The premise of the theoretical framework of this study is built on focusing the writing on hidden, but discoverable data in humanity's deep symbolic past (Mcintosh, Tainter, & Mcintosh, 2000). Until now Thelma Daggs' existence was in danger of being lost in the deep, historical approaches normally taken by research. *Taking all the information available, I access the diversity of the information in a way that it will deal with various past issues, making them usable to enhance the dealing with present day issues.* Because the past is part of the present, the lens of history should bear historical figures in the varied likenesses of the people who compromise a society: to do less would be to deny less than famous individuals a sense of their place in the realm of historical events and social development (Evans-Herring, 2003).

Although Black women's experiences are varied, it is my contention that they have all suffered the slings and arrows of outrageous dominance along a continuum of exposure (Yancy, 2000). Unfortunately, when people think of strength and Black women in the same thought "they ignore the reality that to be strong in the face of oppression is not the same as overcoming oppression, that endurance is not to be confused with transformation" (hooks, 1981, p. 5). Black women's socio-historical, and existential trajectory differs from the experiences of others; this is not to say that Black women's experiences constitute the most historically important stand-point (Yancy, 2000).

In social context (Euro-American), being a teacher takes on the opposite contradiction of being a woman; you have authroity, knowledge and power (Munro, 1998). In essence, you are a fictional character—attempts to understand how women negotiate within this fictitious world are either absent or find the hero represented as the objects of knowledge, rarely its subjects (Munro, 1998). The concept of positionality will be used to bring Thelma Daggs from within this fictitional premise. Positionality involves the understanding of the world and of ourselves as being socially constructed; devoting special attention to the differing ways individuals from diverse social backgrounds construct knowledge and make meaning (Kincheloe, 1993).

Methodology

Historical interpretivism involves the studied use and collection of personal-life documents, stories and historically correct accounts to describe turning point moments of those being studied (Denzin, 1989). This study focuses on describing and understanding past events and experiences through collection, evaluation, analysis and interpretation of data—methodically and strategically-reconstructing reality formed by the intentions and behaviors of Thelma Daggs in historical context.

There are limitations in a numerical presentation in the complexity of human behavior often investigated in educational research. Humanness is created by the predetermined nature of humankind; constructed and produced by experiences and contradictions of everyday life (Generett, 2003). Qualitative collaborations offer alternative ways of gathering and processing this information as well as a way of understanding human interactions (Generett, 2003).

This study is entrenched in the life experiences of an African American teacher; untouchable by traditional quantitative examination. Thelma Daggs' story requires a research methodology that goes beyond the scientifically derived knowledge of quantitative methodology to an understanding that is both artistic and intuitive: a knowledge that is equally appropriate (Janesick, 1998). Thus, qualitative methodology in general as a psychosocial interpretive portrait was chosen as a means of reporting Thelma Daggs' social development; to create from that sharing a larger and wider understanding of the world (Lincoln, 1990).

The perspective chosen was used to portray a teacher's world in which reality was socially constructed, complex and ever changing (Glesne, 1998). It is my hope that the openness of interpretivism will allow an honorable approach to the inherent complexity of Thelma Daggs' social interaction (Glesne, 1998). My desire is to do meaningful, significant, and valuable work: a desire to produce interesting, innovative, and evocative text that seeks to nurture the imagination (Denzin, 1994).

The use of the psychosocial interpretive approach allows for considerations of the theory that race and gender imposed unique constraints in the way her life evolved, such that her persona, developed and should be interpreted in light of the vulnerabilities and struggles associated with the multiple realities and meaning and experience of Black womanhood in her day (Evans-Herring, 2003).

Thelma Daggs' story takes on the basic makings of a biography, though interpretive in nature. Biographies are three-dimensional in character: chronology of events in a person's life, the context of those events, e.g. what else is going on during the time they lived, and the internal life of the subject, all the while touching the lives of

others as they live their own (Qualitative Research, 1998). To understand Thelma Daggs' three-dimensional existence, the following research questions were raised and answered:

1. What important events were taking place during 1908 to 1996?
2. What important people were living during this time that may have possibly influenced this person's life?
3. What was the general attitude or character of the people living during this time?

The most unobtrusive approach was taken to review personal documents and artifacts consisting of an objective set of experiences from her life connected to life course stages (childhood, adulthood, etc.) and life-course experiences (i.e. education, employment) (Denzin, 1989). Additionally, unstructured interviews were conducted with participants who had direct knowledge of the professional and personal activities of Thelma Daggs. The primary participants were former students of the Fort Totten Indian Boarding School whom were willing to share their recollections. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved Consent Form (Appendix A), Statement of Consent (Appendix B), Consent to Record Interview (Appendix C), Invitation to Participate in Study (Appendix D), and Advertisements (Appendix E) are located in the Appendices.

A series of potential, general interview questions were laid out. For example:

1. What was your association with Thelma Daggs?
2. What do you remember most about Ms. Daggs?
3. What was a typical day like in Ms. Daggs classroom?
4. How long were you in contact with Ms. Daggs?

5. Do you recall Ms. Daggs' interaction with others? If so, what were these events like?

These questions were formulated to provide direction, but the interviews were allowed to progress naturally.

Data analysis consisted of an interpretive, progressive, recursive, holographic manner of collecting, noticing, and thinking about things (Seidel, 1998). Codes were used to pull together and categorize a series of otherwise discrete events, statements, and observations into descriptive, topographical schemes (Seidel, 1998). All audiotapes of the interviews were transcribed, and notations were made of all interruptions, to include laughter and other apparent emotions, tone of voice, and emphasis on particular words with the use of the coding system developed (Fassinger, Johson, Geschmay-Linn, Prosser, Richie & Robinson, 1997).

Analysis and interpretation consisted of organizing the interview transcripts and other materials to bring meaning to them so they tell a coherent story, readable by others so they may ascertain what I have learned (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). Data triangulation was a key factor in avoiding elements considered to have been borne of incidence or chance.

Annotating life perspectives through language is hard and oftentimes, bridging the contrast of how others judge us with the success we create for ourselves is complicated and very difficult to explicate effortlessly and insightfully. It is imperative that the readers of this study realize that there is no clear window into the inner-life of a person, for any window is always filtered through the glaze of language, signs, and the process of implication (Derrida, 1992).

Collectively, Thelma Daggs' experiences were placed and analyzed in reference to the historical context and supplemented by speculation. *I focus on describing and understanding past events such as Thelma Daggs' life in Thibodaux, her stint in the Women's Army Corp, her college education at Indiana University and her teaching experience at Fort Totten Indian Boarding School.*

The main premise that drew me to a psychosocial interpretive portrait was the assumption that an individual becomes rather than is during their life (Bartosz & Zierkiewicz, 1966). The interpretive text was written with an "other" in mind (Denzin, 1989)—in this case Thelma Daggs. To the reader this means that I wrote with at least a double perspective—mine and the other's: the eye of the other will direct the eye of the writer (Elbaz, 1987). Using interpretivism allows me the opportunity to recount the dash on Thelma Daggs' tombstone, 1908-1996.

Readers will be asked to relinquish their grip on African American teachers as a southern phenomenon, instead to envision the dominance of a sole, soul woman who took a journey from the life of a maid, the life of a soldier; performed academic feats for her time to become a driving force in the lives of numerous Native American children and back to her home to rest. From the deeds and writings that linger, the aspirations of this woman and moments when she transcended obstacles is related. The aim is to gather information that will lead to increased knowledge about one from others and help remove the misinformation that may have been passed on through time. Though my main data will come from memories and records of days long past, some that are fifty years old; this is a story that must be told.

Organization of the Text

The next chapter, "Foundations of Self—Louisiana, (1908-1943)" takes a look at Thelma Daggs' life from birth to her enlistment in the United States Army. The viewpoint will incorporate the societal issues of that time to include oppression, segregation, the Negroes' struggle for self-consciousness and Thelma Daggs' choices. Also included will be the significant philosophers, psychological and political influencers of the time.

Chapter III: "Headstrong into the wind – A WAC's life in WWII (1943-1945)" will portray the life of Thelma Daggs as one of the few African American women enlisted in the United States Army. The gains and losses of enlisting in a segregated service while leaving the clutch of southern comfort will be highlighted. Chapter IV: "High hopes – Higher education (1947-1954)" follows Thelma Daggs' experiences through her Bachelor's and Master's Degree in a predominantly White school; her affiliations (both lay and religious) and her devotion to achieve education not normally provided for people of her culture during this time in history.

Chapter V: "Sharing gifts – Teaching at the Fort Totten Indian Boarding School" (1949-1967) reveals Thelma Daggs' life as viewed in the context of this Native American social milieu, while revealing her pedagogical pursuits and teaching techniques. This chapter will be supplemented with a brief look at the years from 1967-1996 when Thelma Daggs finished her commitment to the Federal government and the children of Fort Totten and returned home to rest. Chapter VI "Conclusion" is the crescendo text of eighty-nine years of living summarizing the feat of self-actualization, activism and Black feminism. My reflections and rationale for this study will be presented.

CHAPTER II

FOUNDATIONS OF SELF – LOUISIANA (1908-1943)

> "I wish I'd known from the beginning that I was born a strong woman. What a difference it would have made! I wish I'd known that I was born a courageous woman: I've spent so much of my life cowering. How many conversations would I not only have started but finished if I had known I possessed a warrior's heart? I wish I'd known that I'd been born to take on the world; I wouldn't have run from it for so long, but run to it with open arms."
>
> (Sarah Ban Breathnach, 1998, p. 5)

It would be impossible to begin to understand the experiences of Thelma Daggs without understanding something of the life of the Negro during her period in the South (Ahmann, 1969). The South from hereafter refers to the eleven states of the Confederacy: Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Texas (Ahmann, 1969). Thelma Daggs lived in New Orleans until she enlisted in the Women's Army Corps (WACs). Her life in New Orleans holds many twists and turns and mysteries that could not totally be uncovered. In this psychosocial, interpretive portrait I will take liberties and insert explanations at existing gaps.

The Early Years

Thelma Daggs was born in Thibodaux, Louisiana in 1908 to Albertha and Elijah Daggs (both now deceased). She was the second of five children—Augustine (now deceased), Thelma (now deceased), Wilburt (now deceased), Maria (now deceased) and Gloria (now deceased). The family moved to New Orleans Louisiana in the early 1920s to afford better job and living opportunities for Elijah, Albertha and their family. After Elijah Daggs' death in 1928, to make ends meet the family took in a roomer named Lee Gerin (now deceased). The 1930 United States Census reported a family of five and one boarder living at 2409 Amelia Street (U. S. Census, 1930).

The reported occupation and industry of each residence member was as follows: Albertha was listed as head of household, with no occupation or industry; Augustine was listed as a maid for a private family; Thelma was listed as a school teacher; Wilburt was listed as an office worker; Maria was listed as a servant for a private family; Lee Gerin (boarder) was listed as a shop worker; and Gloria was listed as having no occupation and not being able to speak or read English. The genealogists hired to assist in this life search revealed that descriptions of this type (of Gloria) on early censuses were indicative of listings given to people handicapped in one capacity or another.

The table below shows the caste-like system of segregation and discrimination Thelma Daggs was born into—her birthright as a Southern Negro was inferior schools, unequal protection under the laws, exclusion from public eating places, hotels, places of amusement, public transportation and most hospitals excluded them from public eating places, hotels, places of amusement, and most hospitals (Ahmann, 1969). The caste system did not prevent Thelma Daggs or any of her family from paying taxes or from

helping to defend the country in times of need (Couto, 1991). Thelma Daggs was twelve years old (1920) before society subtly and imperceptibly started to change its course and begin the slow removal of caste barriers (Couto, 1991).

		WHITE	
	Upper	Planters Merchants Officials Managers	(Anglo, Creole)
Class Line			
	Middle	Artisans Skilled Laborers Small Businessmen	(Anglo, Acadian Irish)
Class Line			
	Lower	Unskilled Laborers	(Anglo, Acadian Irish, Italian)
Color/Caste Line			
		NEGRO	
	Upper	Professional	(Creole)
Class Line			
	Middle	Skilled Laborers Artisans Small Businessmen	(Creole, Freedman)
Class Line			
	Lower	Unskilled Laborers	(Freedman)

Figure 1. Social Structure of Reconstruction, New Orleans, 1900

(Couto, 1991, p. 20)

The Negroes of the South came up against several obstacles while trying to secure their rights and privileges first, they were mainly farmers, unskilled laborers, domestic servants, incredibly poor and very largely uneducated; second, there was nothing even remotely resembling political or police protection; and thirdly there were very few respectable leaders to represent the Negro in negotiations (Ahmann, 1969).

The worst, and seemingly insurmountable problem facing the Negro was the stagnancy of thought and character resulting from the rationalizations they had come to be accustomed to—rationalizations necessary for the oppressed and oppressor to live with a system based on slavery and human abasement (Ahmann, 1969).

> "Racial division determined the social structure of southern cities and influenced virtually every aspect of urban life. In contrast to northern cities, anywhere from one-third to one-half of the residents of most southern cities were Black, and efforts to maintain White privilege and White domination were unceasing. Blacks were restricted to occupations at the low ends of the prestige and income scales, and they were increasingly confined to segregated neighborhoods. The institution of White primaries and the imposition of poll taxes and other restrictions on suffrage shortly withdrew the limited political power that urban Blacks enjoyed in the years immediately after the Civil War."
>
> (Plank & Ginsberg, 1990, p. 2)

Though there were few leaders to look to for guidance there were two that the Southern Negro could choose to follow—Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois. Booker T. Washington was one of the most powerful Negro leaders to live during the period when the Negro was being systematically disenfranchised: Washington devoted his energies to education as the mainstay in the improvement of the Negroes' plight (Ahmann, 1969). An except from an address before the Institute of Arts and Sciences Brooklyn, New York, September 30, 1896 sums up Washington's thoughts on the plight of the Negro and their quest for education:

> "... My friends, we are one in this country. The question of the highest citizenship and the complete education of all concern nearly ten million of my own people and over sixty million of yours. We rise as you rise; when we fall you fall. When you are strong we are strong; when we are weak you are weak. There is no power than can separate our destiny. The Negro can afford to be wronged; the White man cannot afford to wrong him..."
>
> (Washington, 1932/1986)

Washington's views on education were based on "action"—he wanted Southern Negroes to respect and value the need for industrial education both from a vantage of American and African experience (North By South, 1998). Washington wanted education to be more than a tool to enable speaking and writing English; more as a tool that the Negro could use to make life more endurable, and if possible, attractive - he wanted an education that would relieve the Negro of the hard times at home (North By South, 1998). Moreover, Washington saw education of the head as capable of bringing even more sweeping emancipation from work with the hands (North By South, 1998).

In opposition to Washington was W. E. B. DuBois. DuBois voiced educational philosophies that provided an interesting opposite to those preached by his intellectual counterpart, Booker T. Washington (North By South, 1998). DuBois believed that industrial education was not a true graduation from the grasp of slavery—a direct contradiction to Washington's teachings (North By South, 1998). DuBois wanted Negroes to organize under the leadership of the college-educated elite—"talented tenth"—and demand their needs, rather than complacently accept what was given to them (North By South, 1998). DuBois promoted education as a way to form a new "social

mind" capable of questioning an oppressive system, while he felt that Washington's policies were too conservative and did not hold high enough aspirations for the Black race (North By South, 1998).

The Daggs' family and other Negro families were offered two opposing manners in which to fight for their educational rights, but educate they must! Education of the youth within any cultural or ethnic context is a direct route to future success of that ethnic group or culture. The Early twentieth century South lagged behind in education more so than any other parts of the country (Plank & Ginsberg, 1990). Southern schools at the turn of the twentieth century were poorly attended, inadequately supported, wretchedly taught and wholly inadequate for educating the people (Woodward, 1971):

> "...a full 86 percent of all those children fortunate enough to go to school received less than six months of instruction per year. Even when schools were available, most of the children lived beyond a reasonable walking distance of one and a half miles from the schools in their area, and the region's rough topography made walking difficult. Unlike for White children, southern state and local governments refused to provide transportation for Black children. This structure of schooling for Black children had been solidified since 1875 and at the beginning of the twentieth century seemed fixed for a long time to come."
>
> (Anderson, 1988, p. 150)

Negroes were relentlessly trying to overcome their externally imposed fates while Thelma Daggs and her childhood friends played Negro games such as buck-buck and double-dutch. The games of children can be comforting, but no comfort was found in the

battle being waged by the adults. Negro parents were aware that their children must be taught to survive in a hostile, caste-system society: various mechanisms were created for dealing with the strategy of survival (Couto, 1991):

> "If the Negro child's life is one of having to learn how to confront a future of unrelenting harassment, his intimidated parents must prepare him for it. They must teach their child a variety of maneuvers and postures to cope with his baffling lot. By seven or eight most Negro children know the score, and I have seen them draw only faintly disguised pictures of the harsh future awaiting them."
>
> (Couto, 1991, p. 322).

Their children required education and though the parents' struggle to obtain education for their children was pre-empted by the dominant cultures attempt to restrain the voting privileges of the adults; parents kept hope alive for their children in supportive environments. Supportive environments, full of hope was the most important and readily available "poster" a Negro parent could devise.

Despite early gains during and after the Civil War, the educational opportunities provided for Blacks in New Orleans fell short of those available to Whites (Plank & Ginsberg, 1990). In 1910 sixty-five percent of the state's nearly 305,000 educable Whites were registered for school, while only forty percent of the 222,000 educable Blacks were registered (Plank & Ginsbert, 1990). This was not about education, but about politics. By educating the Negro, the dominant populace would be arming the Negro with the capabilities for registering to vote—a dangerous venture. The restriction of educational opportunities for Blacks was serving its purpose for White supremists by limiting the

number of registered voters (Plank & Ginsbert, 1990). *The Daily Picayune*, New Orleans largest newspaper, made known the entrenched sentiments in the city concerning schooling for Blacks with the following comments on compulsory education:

> "It is the south's duty to educate the negro population along with the White, but it is not bound to force any of them to become educated and thereby voters. It seems to be little less than madness to enforce any scheme that will make voters of the Negroes; but this is a mad age in which we live, and there seems to be nothing left but to take the consequences."
>
> (*New Orleans Daily Picayune, 10* September 1910, p. 6.)

"Black autobiographers writing between 1865 and 1920 saw education not so much as preparation for the jobs Whites were willing to allow Blacks to hold but as a vehicle for acquiring the tools to fight against oppression" (Berry & Blassingame, 1982, p. 274).

Luckily for the Daggs family, reformists in New Orleans won the battle for allowing the transformation of the school system to gradually include Negroes in the quest for education. The political machine (New Orleans Choctaw Club lead by Martin Behrman), reformers, parent groups, newspapers, and others all came to support the restructuring of the school system (Plank & Ginsbert, 1990).

Though years after the struggle battled by Negro families, MaGee (1971) captured the spirit of the time when he stated that Negroes realized they must "educate, educate, educate, until our people can take the helm and thus guide the ship of destiny among our own people, until we shall have reached that true eminence to which all greatness tends--

the moral and intellectual development of true manhood and womanhood" (Magee, 1971, p. 425).

The drowning sounds of protests were finally heard when the public school system was opened to include Blacks in separate, but public, elementary schools in 1915, long after common schools had become universal for other American school children (Anderson, 1988). Thelma Daggs was seven years old before she could be educated in public facilities. Public high school was provided for Blacks in 1917, thanks to the private endowments left by John McDonogh (Anderson, 1988, p. 150).

Thelma Daggs and her sister were now cleared to attend public school, but the Daggs children were sent to private Catholic schools for Negroes. John Mercer Langston (1894) laid the philosophical groundwork for many Negro Americans to choose Catholic venues to educate their children:

> "...high intellectual, moral Christian training for colored youth as the only means by which they might be brought to a wise, comprehensive understanding of their situation and duty as American citizens, and thus enabled to free themselves from prejudices which exist against them and brought, educated, cultured and refined, to take their places in general society."
>
> (Langston, 1894, p. 8)

New Orleans is a city strong in its Catholic heritage; the Black people of this city not only adopted the religious practice of the Catholic, but they turned to the large Catholic school system to aid them in their endeavor to educate their children. The Catholic Board for Mission Work among Colored People established programs at the turn

of the twentieth-century designed to assist religious sisterhoods in educating Negroes and Indians (Slaughter & Johnson, 1988). These schools were very affordable because they were developed under the guise of being "missionary" requiring little payment from the families, supplemented by the Mill Hill Brothers and later the Josephites (Studies of Society and Environment, 2004). *Using logic and addresses recorded by the Daggs family during Thelma Daggs' elementary and secondary education years, I determined that she attended St. Dominic's of the Holy Family Sisters—her first, but not her last experience as a historical first!*

Catholic Influences

Catholic school systems practiced segregation as mandated by law; New Orleans opened separate Black Catholic elementary schools and secondary schools in the early decades of the twentieth century (Slaughter & Johnson, 1988).

> "The opening of separate Black Catholic schools had become official Church policy by the end of the nineteenth century and the maintenance of separate Black parish schools remained diocesan policy throughout the United States until the end of World War II. This educational policy was in keeping with Jim Crow laws in many southern states as well as the Roman Catholic Church's overall practice of supporting the establishment of ethnic or 'national' parishes and schools"
>
> (Slaughter & Johnson, 1988, p. 95).

Constant exposure to racist and oppressive conditions that neither validated nor cultivated their existence was brought to an end for those Blacks that attended Catholic school (Baldwin, 1963). The Catholic school experience encountered by the Negro was

one quite different from the almost daily abasement faced in society. Catholic schools encouraged and promoted the following key values to all students regardless of race, color, or creed:

- Affirm students' basic goodness, to promote their dignity, to honor their fundamental rights, and to develop their gifts to the fullest.
- Educate students to live responsibly for the fullness of life for self and others.
- Convince and mold students to live as if their lives are worthwhile and have historical significance, that their every good effort advances the well-being of all.
- Encourage students to see that all of God's creation is essentially good; though we can misuse or abuse it, what God has made and makes is never inherently evil.

(Studies of Society and Environment, 2004, p. 1)

The Catholic Church's commitment to pluralism implies that the teachers were sensitive to diverse cultures while following an ethos of "freedom in what is doubtful and charity in everything"—the Catholic school invited not submission but dialogue and encounter (Bryk, Lee & Holland, 1993, p. 54). To encounter values and creeds such as those listed above could but have a resounding affect on the psyche of the children exposed.

Children of the segregated Catholic schools came to identify with, participate in, and feel valued by their schools; a need that came to be the sustaining factor of many of their successes (Jeffries, 2000). The time Thelma Daggs spent in Catholic, parochial

education proved to be a sustaining characteristic of her teaching methods as expanded upon in Chapter Five.

A Chameleon's Life

I was very lucky in finding the information to this point, but it was here that Thelma Daggs' life took on a chameleon-like appearance. The 1930 census lists Thelma Daggs as a "teacher" but exhaustive research by a professional genealogist, Louisiana state historians and myself found no record of Thelma Daggs as a teacher. The colored teacher registries, both private and public were studied from 1924 through 1943 when she enlisted in the Army. I checked with the registry at all the Catholic schools during that timeframe and ninety percent of the teachers were nuns and Thelma Daggs was not listed. I did find Thelma Daggs listed in several of the Negro registry phone books of the time and every listing had her listed as "maid."

Thelma Daggs may have taken advantage of the role of intentionality and the essential means of expressing identity (Wynn, 1976). Descartes said, "I think, therefore I am" (Descartes, 1637). Wynn (1976) furthers this supposition by indicating that the correct sequence is "I think—I can—I will—I am" (Wynn, 1976, p.48). Was Thelma Daggs' indication on the census a reflection of the above statement? "A person doesn't try if he doesn't believe he can...and, if this is his belief, then his identity must be profoundly affected" (Wynn, 1976, p.48).

It was not until 1940, after the Great Depression that she appears again in the registry of college students at Xavier University in New Orleans. This is a large gap in Thelma Daggs' life journey, but one that does not change the course to her final

destination—a teacher! The next section takes a look at the psychology of being Black and how "hope" and "locus of control" may have played a role in the development of the character seen in later chapters of this study.

The Development of Self

> It matters not how strait the gate, how charged with punishments the scroll—I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul.
>
> (Henley, 1903).

Cross and Thompson (1971), suggest that African American personality and consciousness evolves through a transformative process in which Black's struggle to move away from oppressive identification and move toward ethnic pride and internalization of positive racial attitudes. Blacks' attitudes are not determined by contact with other Blacks, but with contact with the attitudes they face on a daily basis (Cross, 1971). Studies have consistently shown that the formation of the self in Blacks presents major problems because of the great influence of oppression (Ladner, 1995). The history of oppression that Thelma Daggs inherited (obvious and subtle) could but affect the images she developed of herself as a person (Wynn, 1976).

Thelma Daggs' birth as a "Negro" was less a racial identity than a necessity for her to adopt a subordinate social role (Pettigrew, 1964). The effects of playing the "Negro" role caused many to grow into the servile role; many, in time could be distinguished from the role or the person (Pettigrew, 1964). "It is difficult to imagine how the personality and self-concept of the Black American could fail to be influenced by the experience of the discrimination based solely upon his skin color" (Wynn, 1976, p. 4). The affects on Thelma Daggs' personality could have been devastating—confusion of

self-identity, lowered self-esteem, perception of the world as a hostile place, and serious sex-role conflicts (Pettigrew, 1964)—but they were not! Thelma Daggs' development of self-concept took a different stance; one in which she chose to rise above the color of her skin and persevere to achieve her goals.

Development of the African American identity serves three functions:

1. It provides a social anchor and meaning to one's existence.
2. It serves as a connection to the broader African community across the globe.
3. It serves as a protection or buffer against the social forces that continually bombard the psyche with nonaffirming and, in some cases, dehumanizing messages.

(Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1991, p. 1)

There is a unique blend of biological, psychological and sociological conditions that combine to form the Black self-concept peculiar to the conditions associated with the Black culture in the twentieth-century (Wyne, 1974). There is an undeniable promotion in American society to promote desirability, even the necessity, of being able to exert control over the environment, as against the prevailing realities surrounding Blacks in American society making locus of control a dimension of self-concept fundamentally important to Blacks (Parham, 1990).

Understanding the locus of control Thelma Daggs had on her environment requires an understanding of how the Black self is enhanced by the peculiar position which Blacks have occupied in American society (Parham, 1990). African Americans during Thelma Daggs' early years were convinced that even if they asserted their will,

their actions would do no good (Parham, 1990). Blacks, even if they knew who they were, concluded they had no significance if they were unable to influence their environment (Parham, 1990). These individuals were characteristically external in their view of control. Thelma Daggs was an individual whose locus of control was internally oriented, attributing responsibility on herself to shape and influence her environment (Comer, 1990).

Nobles (1986) notes that if one is aware of one's nature, they are less likely to allow social and environmental conditions to become internalized. From the research that was uncovered on Thelma Daggs family and the way she turned out in life indicates that she took advantage of being reared in a family setting which created a stable, relatively predictable psychosocial environment that fostered the development of a greater degree of emotional independence and inner control (Parham, 1990). Growing up under the strong arm of racism and lack of power, Thelma Daggs captured the one fundamental personal dimension which underlies and can overcome all these negative environmental encounters—personal efficacy, through which she overcame and become the master of her fate (Parham, 1990).

The prescription for exposure to elements that can harm the African self-conscious is to identify and utilize resources, networks, and institutions within the Black community that affirm and reaffirm the humanity of African-Americans: families, schools, churches, social clubs and organizations (Parham, 1990). Thelma Daggs took full advantage of the "prescriptions" in her life as seen in the numerous affiliations in her later life (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, St. Joseph's Society, Women's Vets, Newman Club, etc) in which she participated. Recognition of

her African self-conscious and self-affirmation led to the natural outcomes seen later in her life through the extensions she made to provide support, nurturance, and validation to others at Fort Totten Indian Boarding school (Parham, 1990).

Using positive self-theory, Thelma Daggs negotiated her reality though she was confronted by discrepant information (Snyder, 1999)—the discrepancy was that a woman of her color could obtain their dreams. The dream to become a teacher, notwithstanding the lot dealt her in life (being Negro) was motivated and driven by an intense level of hope. C. R. Snyder (1994) and several other psychologists have found that the overall perception of hope is that goals can be met: in order to meet these goals there must be two components; agency or willpower and the pathways or routes to reaching these goals.

Born thus, depreciated by her own kind and judged grotesque by her society, Thelma Daggs faced disheartening prospects of a life in which the cards were stacked against her and the achievement of a healthy, matured womanhood seemed a very long shot indeed (Ladner, 1995). The miracle is that, in spite of such odds, the exceptionality came through and produced a capable Black women (Ladner, 1995). Thelma Daggs' childhood was passed in the atmosphere of a race-caste system, but her adult life has the atmosphere of transition, with increasingly rapid elimination of the caste structure (Couto, 1991). "Perhaps it is through oppression and bountiful suffering that one's creative abilities reach their zenith" (Ladner, 1995, p. 279)

Volition and self-regulation were particularly important for Thelma Daggs: planning ways to reach her goals regardless of the elusiveness society had imposed or obstacles she may have encountered (Snyder, 1999). Thelma Daggs starts her journey down the pathway of hope by enlisting in the Army. The next chapter in my look at

Thelma Daggs' psychosocial, interpretive journey takes us with her through a war fought stateside and abroad.

CHAPTER III

HEADSTRONG INTO THE WIND—A WAC IN WORLD WAR II, 1943-1945

Thelma Daggs entered into the Women's Army Corps on January 16, 1943 in Shreveport, LA as an Aviation Cadet. Her military contract listed her as a 37 year old Negro citizen from New Orleans, Louisiana, single with no dependents. To understand Thelma Daggs' choice to join the Army at a time in life when most Negroes were knee deep in raising children, taking care of family and career issues, and trying to make their way through a segregated South; we must look at her position in historical context and the psychological factors that played a part in why she did and was Sgt. Thelma Bertha Daggs.

State of the Nation

War is the supreme test of a country's military, economic, political and social institutions; these institutions either meet the challenge by adapting or collapse under social pressures (Marwick, 1974). On December 7, 1941 America was shocked by the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. African Americans fighting their own daily battles against Jim Crow and Southern majority domination set aside their battle for equality in the United States and volunteered to fight alongside the majority culture for "one" America.

"While the war clearly had sweeping effects, it was especially significant for minority groups. The emphasis on national unity and cohesion and the need for 100

percent participation in the war effort brought groups normally ignored or excluded into the mainstream of life" (Wynn, 1976, p. 116).

The relationship between the Negro and the military had been inconsistent from the revolutionary war until 1940 (Stillman, 1968), but in 1941 America found itself in yet another war. Historically, the United States had a tendency to recruit from underrepresented segments of the civilian population only in times of need (Putney, 1992). The Negro had served throughout the armed services when considered necessary and waited patiently when not (Stillman, 1968). In order to avoid a loud outcry from White Americans, the Department of Defense decided that it would allow Negroes to participate at 10.6 percent, roughly equivalent to their representation in the total population (Putney, 1992).

"Segregation and discrimination have always been part of America's institutions and as such were subject to the test of war" (Wynn, 1976, p.2). Even after the 13th Amendment was ratified ending slavery and involuntary servitude (January 1865), Black codes continued to regulate the social economic and political inferiority of Blacks in America.

Negroes Step up to the Challenge

You're in the Army now,

You're not behind a plow.

You'll never get rich,

You son-of-a-bitch.

You're in the Army now.

(Unknown)

This is a little ditty I used to hear my dad sing quite often when I was a little girl. My father was in the United States Army and served in World War II, the Korean War, and Viet Nam. This made up rap was something he said the guys in his unit would sing back in his day—all the while laughing. Though they laughed, deep inside the thought resounded, "There was no sense dying in a world ruled by them..." (Stillman, 1968, p. 15). My father and several of his buddies had joined the fight for democracy in WWII when they entered into the Army in Richmond, Virginia—just some simple farm boys looking to do their part for freedom.

> "All had enrolled with the expectations of doing something to help in the war effort, of doing something special and novel. They joined to serve. All had expected a fair shake within the framework of a segregated Army. All had also expected some benefit from their service, some fulfillment of a cultural, social, educational, or economic nature. Most of them, if not all, had hoped the war would improve race relations in the nation; they were looking for a better social climate when the war was over"
>
> (Putney, 1992, p. 118).

Was this too much for Thelma Daggs and her fellow service members (such as my father) to ask? Yes. The Negroes, seen as second-class citizens, became important again when they were looked upon to provide an increased American military force in World War II. The United States based its view of the Negroes capability of fighting on the 92nd Division though the 92nd Division's poor performance, on and off the battlefield, could be seen as driven by low morale because of racial segregation, the limited facilities provided for them, and their lack of trust in their leadership (Gibran, 2001). This low opinion of

the Negroes' abilities went so far as to be reflected in a 1940 Army War College study which described the Negro as having less than developed mental capacities (Gibran, 2001).

The Army of WWII mirrored society with its obvious imbalance of power and clash of cultures. Within society, Whiteness characterized the oppressors: it constituted rules, culture and success guidelines. When White soldiers entered the military, in many ways they were walking into an extension of their own homes: a community in which they were well versed. Conversely, Thelma Daggs and other Negroes walked into a new situation confronted with cultural conflict and cultural ignorance. The Army community had the power to judge her (them) and deem worth based on the dominant power set of rules. The armed forces had the following guidelines when it came to Negroes:

1. Exclusion from many jobs in Army service and entirely from the Marines and the Army Air Corps
2. Segregation
3. Primary roles were to support White units rather than combat
4. Under represent them in leadership

(Stillman, 1968, p. 26)

"Although the United States was opposed to international racism, it fought the war with a Jim Crow military establishment and denied justice to members of more than one minority group" (Daniels, 1995, p. 157).

Negroes, especially females had relinquished themselves to the drudgery of living their lives through the direction of their employers' voices—jobs relating to servitude were the status quo. The chance to escape the normality of serving others was offered

with the realization of America that the help of all must be enlisted if they were to win the war. A common, yet precarious quote known by many Southern Negroes (to include myself) relates this in a somber but realistic manner; "Lincoln freed the Negroes from cotton picking...Hitler was the one that got us out of the White folks' kitchens" (Unknown). With war came choices: stay and remain caged or leave and risk facing other barriers or possibly losing your life to gain freedom from your fate.

To a certain extent, of course, participation was itself a reward, bringing increased economic opportunities and a sense of belonging and pride. However, underlying many of the Black demands for greater and equal involvement was their desire for complete equality once the war had ended. (Wynn, 1976, p. 17)

> "Military service thus became central to the whole campaign for civil rights, and the logic of the Black argument was further strengthened by American and Allied propaganda which emphasized democratic principles and practices. Black protest and the need to live up to the ideals expressed in propaganda might themselves have produced changes in American military racial practices, but a more powerful and urgent force for change was the total nature of the war. As a post-war writer remarked, 'the lesson of total war, so belatedly learned, was that we must rigorously apply the principles of economy of means in the utilization of all resources for war human as well as material'."
>
> (Davis, 1948, p. 499)

Southern political pressure denied Negroes the honor and prestige military service would bring (Stillman, 1968). The South stood stringently against enlisting Negroes even

though the Emancipation proclamation had been passed 80 years earlier allowing the use of Negroes as military members (Stillman, 1968). We must not forget, Negroes were property; that they were allowed to enter the U. S. Army required an ownership transfer—from Jim Crow to Uncle Sam. Even though slavery ended almost 100 years earlier, the South had a way of simplifying its environment by using prejudice and discrimination to increase the future predictability by categorizing individuals in certain ways (Zimbardo, 1992)—that sweet Southern comfort. "Old Jim Crow ruled in the Army as much as in the South" (Unknown).

The South was governed by the racist legal system known as Jim Crow. As an example of what Thelma Daggs experienced, a few of the Jim Crow laws in Louisiana are listed below:

> Circus Tickets: All circuses, shows, and tent exhibitions, to which the attendance of...more than one race is invited or expected to attend shall provide for the convenience of its patrons not less than two ticket offices with individual ticket sellers, and not less than two entrances to the said performance, with individual ticket takers and receivers, and in the case of outside or tent performance, the said ticket offices shall not be less than twenty-five (25) feet apart.
>
> Housing: Any person...who shall rent any part of any such building to a negro person or a negro family when such building is already in whole or in part in occupancy by a White person or White family, or vice versa when the building is in occupancy by a negro person or negro family, shall

be guilty of a misdemeanor and on conviction thereof shall be punished by a fine of not less than twenty-five ($25.00) nor more than one hundred ($100.00) dollars or be imprisoned not less than 10, or more than 60 days, or both such fine and imprisonment in the discretion of the court.

The Blind: The board of trustees shall...maintain a separate building...on separate ground for the admission, care, instruction, and support of all blind persons of the colored or Black race.

(Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site Interpretive Staff, 1998)

These are but a few of the Jim Crow laws that covered everything from recreation, housing and treatment of the handicapped. These laws were deeply rooted in Louisiana due to a Supreme Court decision in Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896 (Geocities, 2003).

From the time the first indentured servant set foot in America in 1619 through the Emancipation Proclamation (1863), Blacks suffered inhumanities that were still resounding while Thelma Daggs was standing in line to join the military to help fight "the good fight." The Army, its policies and commanders governed with the firm hand of Southern rule—apartheid-style operations (Putney, 1992). Yet, this did not deter Thelma Daggs from serving her full enlistment as stated on her enlistment contract: "for the duration of the War or other emergency, plus six months, subject to the discretion of the President or otherwise according to law" (Army Archival Database, 1943).

From Wet Nurses to WACS

Public Law 554 was the beginning of the slow inclusion of the African American woman toward military service to a country they aspired to as being theirs also (United

States Congressional Service, 77 Congress, 1 Session No. 8802). Mary Bethune called Negro women to arms. Bethune saw the Negro woman's opportunity "to help the nation in its hour of need but also to share in the fruits of victory...democracy, equality improved race relations, women's rights, and employment opportunities" (Bethune, 1939, Speech). Civil rights leaders such as Bethune adopted the "Double V" slogan as their rallying cry during World War II: demanding victory against fascism abroad and discrimination at home, they exhorted Black citizens to support the war effort and to fight for equal treatment and opportunity for Negroes everywhere (U. S. Army, 2001).

The volumes of cultural history associated with World War II are massive, however little research has focused on the undertakings of the African American women in World War II. Six thousand, five hundred fifty-two (6,552) African American women (enlisted and officers) fought for their country and their race from 1943 to 1945 (Moore, 1996): yet little research was done on these women until 1996.

Black women faced double jeopardy because of their race and gender—the military was a mere mirror image of civilian society (Putney, 1992). Brenda L. Moore's groundbreaking book, *To Serve My Country, To Serve My Race: The Story of the Only African American WACs Stationed Overseas During World War II* was the first study which looked strictly at the view of the effects of war on the warriors lives from the vantage of the African American woman. Moore's study encompassed the thoughts and narrative collection of 51 of the 855 women enlisted in the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, the only group of African America Women's Army Corps to be stationed overseas (Moore, 1996). The women of the 6888th represented all levels of

education, talent, and skills; they were ambitious and young and wanted to make something of themselves—to make a difference in the world (Moore, 1996).

Despite the hardships and second-class status, African American women were instrumental in transforming themselves and the United States. Studies by Browning, Lopreato, and Poston discovered that military service resulted in an income advantage for racial minorities (Moore, 1996). Thelma Daggs and those that chose to make the leap into military service went from private domestic service to public service: the loss of Black house servants was much bemoaned by many White southerners (Wynn, 1976). Many went from $15 a week to $100 per month.

Though these studies were all based on men and with no statistical evidence to back her theory, Moore postulates that women approached indicated that the military environment did create the opportunity for a break from the past and aided in preparing them for the labor market they would inevitably confront (Moore, 1996). "Many Black women actually did better in the Women's Army Corps than they would have done had they remained in the civilian sector" (Putney, 1992, p.118). Thelma Daggs took advantage of the natural bridging environment created by her military service: subsequently boosting her learning and earning power (Moore, 1996).

Other books such as *Bitter Fruit: African American Women in World War II,* edited by Maureen Honey, *Black Americans in World War II* by Albert Buchanan and, *Black Women in the Armed Forces* by Jesse Johnson took an interpretive look at the widened horizons of African American women during and after World War II. They offer components concerning race relations and historical factors for ethnic studies (Morehouse, 2002).

In March 1943, two months after Thelma Daggs' enlistment, there were 2,467 Black females enlisted out of the 44,530 Negroes total serving in the United States Army (Putney, 1992). *I can only speculate, but all evidence points to Thelma Daggs entering the WACs (as did many others) because of her volunteer spirit and her desire to change her position in life.* The common theme for the Black woman's rationale for going into the Army was that "they could not stand aside while their brothers, husbands, boyfriends, male relatives, and other Americans were fighting or when the nation needed help" (Putney, 1992, p. 2).

Thelma Daggs chose to fight with an Army that was both racially and sexually segregated. The attrition rate (drop-out rate) of the Women's Army Corps exceeded thirty-five percent (Putney, 1992). She fought alongside Whites and other women of color to keep the world safe for democracy—ironic as this may be (Morehouse, 2000). Stationed at Camp Polk, Louisiana she and other members of the WACS found themselves very unhappy with Louisiana and its racial tension (Morehouse, 2000). Louisiana style discrimination looked something like the following:

> "I got off the train on my way to camp and there were a couple of locals just standing on the platform. One said to the other, 'that looks like a bunch of them goddamn northern niggers. We'll have to show them how we do things around here'...that's an exact quote, and that was my first real exposure to the Army."
>
> (Morehouse, 2000, p. 99)

They were segregated before arrival, during travel to duty and during their entire service. Louisiana folk did not know how to react to a Black man or woman in uniform; they

were abusive and antagonistic (Morehouse, 2000). *It was like my father had told me—"They just don't understand...it pisses them off that we are willing to fight with them, even though they treat us like shit."*

To accommodate the unhappy WACS and stop any further racial strife, the enlisted women of Louisiana were moved around quite frequently. Thelma Daggs was transferred to Fort Des Moines, Iowa to receive her Aviation Cadet training. Fort Des Moines is famous for leading in the march toward racial and gender inclusion and equality throughout greater American Society (Fort Des Moines Memorial Organization, 2004). Aviation Cadet training was eight weeks in length, but it is speculated that Thelma Daggs (and others like her) did not have the opportunity to finish her training because several of the enlisted women were not sent to the specialized schools they were promised (Putney, 1992)—the majority of her enlistment was spent doing administrative work similar to that she had trained for in college. Off-duty activities were focused around amusement and entertainment at the segregated service club (Putney, 1992).

Women would leave the military with their Army job experiences and skills, the G. I. Bill of Rights, opportunities for career advancement, and veteran benefits which offered preference for civil service jobs and other advantages (Putney, 1992). Thelma Daggs' military service may have sparked her drive to later be a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Women's Veteran Club, and become a member of the National Federation of Federal Employees, of which she was the Secretary for the North Dakota Chapter.

Military service brought not only monetary benefits, but almost invariably psychological benefits as well (Moore, 1996). One statement of the many interviewed

that seemed to capture the spirit of Thelma Daggs and others noted that military service taught them how to live with people—"I can respect anyone. I don't care what you're doing; I have respect for you. I don't say I want to associate with you, but I can live with you" (Moore, 1996, p.155). The affect on Thelma's persona of her military enlistment from 1943 to 1945 may have had long-lasting, brilliant effects on how she lived the remainder of her life.

Social Psychology and Thelma Daggs' Choices

" We are constantly trying to make sense of our world by applying old knowledge and beliefs to new events, assimilating the new to the familiar and, at times, accommodating the old to the novel" (Zimbardo, 1992, p. 602).

Social psychological tradition looks at the power of the situation and the construction of social reality by the person in the situation as a social indicator of the resulting behavior (Zimbardo, 1992). Positing the notion that there is a "Black self-concept" would mean that Blacks developed their self-images from the peculiar conditions associated with their culture in the twentieth-century (Wynn, 1974).

The prejudice Thelma Daggs faced in New Orleans, Louisiana is a prime example of social reality gone awry—a situation created by the majority to demean and destroy the lives of the Southern Negro (Zimbardo, 1992). *It is hard for me to imagine how Thelma Daggs' personality and self-concept could fail to have been influenced by her experiences in a caste discrimination based solely on her skin color (Wyne, 1974). However, somehow Thelma Daggs' experiences had a positive effect by enabling her to develop even greater empathy for members of groups that are discriminated against in*

society (Zimbardo, 1992) as you will see in her journey through the Native American Boarding School assimilation education setting.

The roles that cognition and motivation have played in social psychological theories cast the social thinker into one of four types: consistency seeker, naïve scientist, cognitive miser, and motivated tactician (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Motivation tactician thinkers, like Thelma Daggs blend interests in wise, accurate, adaptable solutions with situational demands for efficiency, personal needs for self-esteem, and defensive motives—using the best tactics to achieve personal goals (Zimbardo, 1992).

Chapter II related the story of Thelma Daggs growing up in a stable (yet struggling) family setting. One advantage this stable, relatively predictable psychosocial environment provided her was to foster the development of a greater degree of emotional independence and inner control (Wyne, 1974). It is reasonable to assume that Thelma Daggs' rearing in the Jim Crow South was her access to valued societal goals limited by the larger society, would have influenced her to develop a self-orientation based on the external control characteristic of marginal groups in American society (Wyne, 1974). On the contrary, Thelma Daggs was a prime example of how the definition of self and its attributes is sensitive to the comparative context and the general tendency to view the self positively whenever possible (Baumeister, 1995)—survival of the fittest. *Thelma Daggs helps me stand fast to my rejection of Kardiner's & Odvessy's (1951) Black self-hatred thesis, which dominated psychological literature from the early 1940s through the 1950s.* The United States Army, though segregated and full of discriminatory practices offered itself as catalyst for enhancing self-esteem, self-worth and pride—important factors for advancement. Armed with her G. I. Bill, thirty-nine years of experience and her strong

Catholic faith, Thelma Daggs chose to leave the racially tense South; to leave the Negro college where she had begun her education, to be part of the Negro migration North—North to see if they (Northern Whites) were more forgiving of her God given hue.

CHAPTER IV

HIGHER HOPES – HIGHER EDUCATION, 1947-1954

One ship drives east and another drives west
With the selfsame winds that blow.
It's the set of the sails
And not the gales which tells us the way to go.
Like the winds of the sea are the ways of fate;
As we voyage along through life.
'Tis the set of a soul,
And not the calm, or the strife.

(Wilcox, 1897)

September 15, 1945 was the official end of World War II against enemies far and wide—from Asia, Africa, Europe and the Pacific Islands. Thelma Daggs was released from her military contract in March of 1946 to return home to her beloved New Orleans. But what did she return to find? She found that race tensions in civilian life had reached a new peak as the war ended, especially in the South where there was fear that the status quo in race relations would be further upset by the many returning Negro veterans (Dalfiume, 1969). Southerners feared that the newly democratized Negroes would return home expecting some semblance of the same desegregation and equality that they had

come to know during their military service. Negroes would be looking for the "full share of democracy" for which they had fought (Pittsburgh *Courier*, December 8, 1945).

Fearing the return of the "new" Negro, the Ku Klux Klan was revived with many new chapters; citizens who had benefited from the soldiers sacrifices for their country attacked and berated the returning soldiers:

- February, 1946: Isaac Woodard, a newly discharged veteran still in uniform, was blinded when South Carolina policemen pulled him off a bus and jabbed their night sticks into his eyes.
- July, 1946: two Negro veterans and their wives were taken from a car near Monroe, Georgia, by a mob of White men; the four Negroes were lined up and killed by approximately sixty shots pumped into their bodies.

(Dalfiume, 1969, p. 134)

Events such as these prompted a new wave of migration to the North, away from Jim Crow to look at another side of the land of opportunity—the second wave of the Great Migration.

"Throughout the twentieth century, geographic mobility was an important strategy that African Americans employed as they continued their quest for better living conditions and more promising opportunities for themselves and their children" (Tolnay, 2003, p. 1). The Great Migration took place between the early 1900s through the mid 1970s. A large number of the migrants moved for economic reasons toward economic opportunities created by the world wars. Migration theories also recognize that individuals moved due to a number of non-economic push-pull factors: among the most frequently mentioned were inferior educational opportunities, behavioral restrictions

imposed by Jim Crow laws, political disenfranchisement, and racial violence (Tolnay, 2003). These movements had important short- and long-term consequences for individual Blacks, the Black community, and American society (Tolnay, 2003).

Thelma Daggs made her move North less than one year after returning to New Orleans to find that things had not changed—the South was continuing its efforts to "rise again". Thelma Daggs was 41 years of age when she decided to make the move North to Bloomington, Indiana. She was a very motivated woman. Though motivation is an abstract concept, unseen by the human eye, behaviors on the other hand are observable (Zimbardo, 1998). She took action to start, direct, and maintain physical and psychological activities towards her goals (Zimbardo, 1998). "Evolution favors organisms that can move toward and obtain what they need for survival and move away from or oppose what threatens them" (Zimbardo, 1998, p. 424). She moved towards her goal to teach, using the opportunities afforded her by the Army GI Bill as a catalyst to move away from the racism riddled South. Her church, St. Joseph's Catholic Church aided in her transition, facilitating the move from New Orleans to their sister church St. Paul's in Bloomington, Indiana.

One of my favorite sayings is that religion is for people afraid to go to hell; spirituality is for those who have been there and do not want to go back. Could it be that Thelma Daggs rose up from the racially tense South with a certain spiritual mindset that determined her responses to the world around her? Thelma Daggs' beliefs and faith created a unique form of consciousness that enabled her to do some remarkable things. Thelma Daggs was a devout Catholic, reported to have a strong faith in God. "Faith in God is used to a means to maintain one's sense of self-worth while coping with hardship"

(Black, 1999, p. 1). Thelma Daggs' faith may have indeed enhanced her self-esteem, influenced her well-being and honed her method of coping with hardship (Black, 1999).

For a Negro in early twentieth century America, she was well-adjusted, mustering powerful social and psychological support from her religious and spiritual foundation. To explain the changes that we observe through Thelma Daggs' life, I must make inferences about her goals, needs, wants, and intentions to formalize her motivational charge (Zimbardo, 1998). Sleigh (1990) reminds us we only have three choices when we face challenges in life:

1. Ignore it and hope it will go away. It won't.
2. Try and live with it. Not forever.
3. Look for the gift within and benefit from it.

(Sleigh, 1990, p. 25)

When we choose the third option, we emerge on the other side of life, surprised by joy—be joyful, because it is humanly possible (Breathnach, 1998). African American religious ethics are entrenched in hope—hope as an essential element required for an oppressed people yearning and striving for justice if they wish to survive in the face of the difficult, persistent, often elusive quest for freedom, justice, and equality (Phelps, 1997). Thelma Daggs' spiritual lessons were soul-directed events—events which pushed her past the perimeter of comfort and the safety of old patterns to make choices for a better future; for full recognition as a human being (Breathnach, 1998).

Historically Black Colleges

Thelma Daggs left New Orleans with two years of college obtained at Xavier College in New Orleans, Louisiana. *I am certain this is the college she attended because*

there were no other colleges in the New Orleans area (her listed residence) that allowed attendance by Negroes. Xavier University, a historically Black college, located in New Orleans, Louisiana, was established as a secondary school in 1915 it became a two-year normal school and offered first instruction at post-secondary level in 1917, became a four-year college in 1925, and offered its first bachelor's degree in 1927 (Roebuck & Murty, 1993). Additionally, Xavier is a private Catholic School, falling in line with Thelma Daggs' strong Catholic faith. Her two years of college were obtained in the liberal arts. A brief look at historically Black Colleges is appropriate to reveal the higher education choices Negroes during Thelma Daggs' time were afforded.

Nowhere is this puzzle of inequality and limited opportunity in American society was discrimination and prejudice more apparent than in the field of education (Allen, 1988). Many have viewed education as the great leveler in American society: one of the few arenas where competition is based on merit and achievement rather than factors of personal background (Allen, 1988). What is reported to matter is intelligence, hard work, and high achievement – not his or her race, sex, or social class background (Davis & Moore, 1945). *It took 50 years for Blacks to come to grips with the thought that we too could excel at educational endeavors.*

Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) were established following the Civil War to provide post-secondary education for freedmen as a result of the impetus of northern missionary groups, the Freedmen's Bureau, and Black churches and social organizations (Goodenow & White, 1981). In the landmark study, *An American Dilemma*, Myrdal (1944) noted that Southern liberals supported the establishment of Black colleges partially because of an allegiance to the so-called American Creed of

Democracy. Additionally, some southern state liberals and municipal authorities held egalitarian virtues despite the rabid radical racists who considered educating Blacks a threat to their White dominant racially stratified social system (Myrdal 1944). The United States was firmly holding on to the thought of the Negro being inferior in all aspects, incapable of truly learning.

Living in New Orleans, Thelma Daggs was one of the two-thirds of the Blacks in the United States whose status at the time may be understood in terms of the U.S. Supreme Court's Plessy v. Ferguson, separate but equal decision of 1896 (Roebuck & Murty, 1993). This decision legitimized laws stipulating separation of races in public accommodations to include places of education (Roebuck & Murty, 1993). The primary curriculum of these HBCUs included religious, moral, citizenship, and secular educational components (Goodenow & White 1981). An overwhelming number of these institutions were private schools operated by White faculty and administrators: some Black administrators were present but most, Black and White ruled from a strong authoritarian position developed within an atmosphere of southern White hostility (Goodenow & White, 1981).

Ralph Bunche (1936) called attention to the dilemma of preparing Black youth to embrace the political struggle that would ultimately have to be engaged if Blacks were ever to succeed in changing their status in society by noting:

> "... the educational process for Negroes ... cannot be divorced from the dominant political, social and economic forces active in the society. The education of Negroes is inextricably tied with the group status of Negroes,

with their economic condition, their political position, and their cultural relations with other groups"

(Bunche, July 1936, Vol. V., p 351).

Ultimately, in the 1960s Black colleges rose to the challenge and began to serve the community, produce leaders, develop responsible citizens, and to strengthen civil and democratic society (Paul, 2002). To quote DuBois (1935), "had it not been for the Negro schools and colleges, the Negro would to all intents and purposes, have been driven back to slavery" (DuBois, 1935).

Returning from WWII with the intent of using her Montgomery GI Bill to further her higher education, Thelma Daggs found Xavier and other Black private colleges faced with financial crises. Shifting of funding to accommodate issues of WWII had depleted sources of support; private colleges were the only colleges available to educate over half the Blacks seeking college education. Possibly uncomfortable with the racial tension still rampant in Louisiana and the overcrowding of Black colleges, Thelma Daggs became part of the Great Migration north—north to Indiana University where education had been open to all races for over 50 years.

Indiana University

Thelma Daggs matriculated at the University of Indiana September 17, 1947 at the age of forty-one. Though racial segregation was still the established social custom and the common rule of law in America, Indiana University mirrored the social customs present in America but was somewhat progressive because it permitted African Americans to enroll, attend and earn degrees (Indiana University, 2003). Despite horrendous societal challenges and conditions Indiana University aided African

Americans seeking education starting in 1880 (Indian University, 2004). Thelma Daggs was not the first African American woman to arrive at Indiana University for the purpose of bettering her future:

> "In the fall of 1915, a young Black woman from Rushville, Indiana arrived at Indiana University to begin her freshman year. She carried with her all her worldly possessions, her hopes and dreams, her intellect, and $1.25. This would be enough. It had to be because back home the only career open to Black women was domestic servant or housewife..."
>
> (Woodard, 1999, p. 1)

Different women with similar ideas and goals; trapped in a time when to struggle was the first step you took in most endeavors! Thelma Daggs enrolled as an English major. At the time of enrollment there were 317 Negro women listed in the county records as residing in Monroe County, Bloomington, Indiana (U. S. Census, 2004). *My conversation with the Indiana University registrar's office provided no specifics because no racial demographic data were kept until the early 1970s, but I was assured that the number of African American female students during 1947 to 1949 could be counted on your hands.*

Thelma Daggs, with the assistance of the St. Paul Catholic Church, would have resided at the Dargan house on campus. This was the only living facility for African American students for miles. Samuel Saul Dargan was the first African American to earn a law degree and several properties he owned were converted to housing for African American Students (Indiana University, 2003). The dorm designated exclusively for Negro women became known as the Dargan House (Indiana University, 2003).

While attending college at Indiana University, Thelma Daggs was a member of the Newman Club. A club which was chartered to "In the larger cities, and especially where universities, colleges and secondary schools are located, let classes in religion be organized to instruct in the truths of faith and in the practice of Christian life the youths who attend such public institutions wherein no mention is made of religion" (Boyer & Sloyan, 1958, p. 243). The historical influence of religious affiliation is subjective, yet it is well known that spirituality and religiosity can play an important role in the life of humans.

The Newman Club gave Thelma Daggs a means by which she could retain and deepen her faith; a sense of student leadership and initiative (Boyer & Sloyan, 1958). The purpose of the Newman Club was to deepen the spiritual and enrich the temporal lives of its members through a balanced program of religious, cultural and social activities—something Thelma Daggs surely craved so far from home (Boyer & Sloyan, 1958). She was also a member of the St. Vincent De Paul Society.

Epoch Educational Influences

> "I believe it is the Negro's sacred duty to spiritualize American life and popularize his color instead of worshipping the color (or lack of color) of another race…No race is richer in soul quality and color than the Negro. Someday he will realize and glorify them he will popularize Black…Preachers, teachers, leaders, welfare workers are to address themselves to the supreme task of teaching the entire race to glorify what it has—its face (its color); its place (its homes and communities); its grace

(its spiritual endowment). If the Negro does it there is no earthly force that can stay him."

(Burroughs, 1927, p. 9)

Thelma Daggs was just nineteen years old when the powerful words above were written by Nannie Burroughs. *Could she have read or heard this persuasive, powerful plea to the Negro? Did this assertive communiqué find its way into her thoughts and lead her to choose the route she took in life—lead her to seek out a progressive college that would provide her the opportunity to become one the Black teachers Burroughs speaks of?* African Americans of this period (and today) lived lives full of mutual respect and shared expectations. To provide advancement and continuation of ones culture, nurturing and mentoring was the charter of the day. I can only speculate on Burroughs' influences on Thelma Daggs, yet speculation is sometimes the mother of great insight. The African American expressive, cultural influencers during Thelma Daggs' formative years were many: William Edward Burghardt DuBois, May Mcleod Bethune, Booker T. Washington, Margaret Washington, John Dewey and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

W. E. B. DuBois is noted as one of America's premier Black writers, scholars, and civil rights leaders and may have been an influence on Thelma Daggs' early development. Dubois attempted to pry the tools of education from the hands of the few and make them realize that the Negro too should, look to the stars, toward the skies. He saw Negroes of his time as not looking ahead, but always looking back on an injected inferiority (DuBois, 1976). He beseeched the current educators and educated to perform as guiding lights—stars—by which the present and future Negroes could set a course.

Throughout his essays, DuBois promoted a system of educational precepts meant to govern the deliverance of Negroes by educational wisdom and economic and political freedom. *Did Thelma Daggs heed?*

Another possible influence was Mary McLeod Bethune (1875 -1955). "The true worth of a race must be measured by the character of its womanhood..." (Lerner, 1973, p. 588). Mary McLeod Bethune was one of the great Black women of both Thelma Daggs' and my time. Founder and President of Bethune-Cookman College, she held several offices in civic and Negro organizations, as well as being founder and president of the National Council of Negro Women (Lerner, 1973). She was the first person of her race to be appointed by Franklin D. Roosevelt as Director of the Division of Negro Affairs of the National Youth Administration (Lerner, 1973). During World War II she served as special assistant to the Secretary of War and was appointed by President Truman to the twelve-member Committee for National Defense. (Lerner, 1973). The numerous honors she was awarded included eleven honorary degrees and the Spingarn Medal of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1935 (Lerner, 1973). Her genius, energy and spirit were dedicated to one aim—improving opportunities for all Black children (Lerner, 1973).

Margaret Washington (Booker T. Washington's wife) prodded the minds of many African American women. Her words rang loudly throughout the land:

> "...The first thing we are doing is trying to get into every school, private, public, or otherwise, Negro literature and history. We are not trying to displace any other literature or history, but trying to get all children of the country acquainted with the Negro. We feel that we can do this if we all

> pull together...I think you will be surprised to know how many schools, North and South, even our own schools where our children are taught nothing except literature of the Caucasian race. We are not fighting any race, we are simply looking for our own. The first law of nature is self-preservation"
>
> (Lerner, 1973, p. 543).

Washington's determination and desires to take the Negro from within the position of servant and into the spotlight through educational material that would enhance the education of both races, would influence the future of many of her Black sisters.

Another plausible influence on Thelma Daggs were the writings of John Dewey. John Dewey was one of the United States preeminent philosophers and educational reformers. Dewey began his journey away from traditional education in 1897 with his work *My Pedagogic Creed.* Principally Dewey wanted to replace education by rote with education by experience: his timely and important book, *The School and Society* examines the possibilities for the spread of educational liberalism and instrumentalism throughout education (Dewey, 1916). Dewey's works posed solutions to societal and educational dilemmas. Thelma may have read Dewey and all his promotions of the creation of a more democratic social arrangement that promoted a better quality of human experience (Dewey, 1916) and found solace in his words.

Finally, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (which Thelma joined during her enrollment at her Indiana University) may have played an important part in her sociological development. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is defined as an organization that seeks to end racial

discrimination and segregation for all Americans. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, from its outset, was the foremost civil rights organization in the United States. Its charters covered the subjects of lynching, the right to vote, upholding constitutional rights, civil rights legislation, and basic Democratic freedoms in an effort to capture equal rights and human brotherhood (Hughes, 1962).

Thelma Daggs was enrolled in college when most Negroes of her time were lucky to receive a high school education. Her commitment to obtain higher education is but one small step towards the transformation of the Negro from being seen as only capable of serving; from being viewed as objects to becoming viewed as subjects—a dramatic change due to the activism and commitment of all who preceded us whether in quiet fortitude of loud protest.

On June 19, 1949 Thelma Bertha Daggs graduated from Indiana University with an AB in English and a veteran's preference for civil service employment. This was not the last Indiana University would see of Thelma Daggs. During the summer months of the following four school years, Thelma Daggs returned from her job with the Bureau of Indian Affairs under the guise of returning home to visit relatives and obtained her AM - Master's of Arts for Teachers. *Several have asked me why? Was it for more money? My firm answer is no, it must have been to defy the double consciousness and enhance her level of self-actualization. In the words of DuBois:*

> The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world--a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this

> sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,--an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.
>
> (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1994, p. 644)

Thelma Daggs was a Negro who saw and used the connection between opportunity and hard work; achievement and aspiration; and moral rectitude and success (Pleasure & Loftin, 1995). *Though written twenty-seven years after Thelma Daggs received her Master's, Maya Angelo (1978) captures the perseverance of the Negro in her poem "Still I Rise" with her depiction of Negroes who rose above anything that had happened to them—she creates a voice for Thelma Daggs and similar, persevering Blacks.*

Thelma Daggs was hired by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) as a First grade teacher at the Fort Totten Indian Boarding School in Devils Lake, North Dakota in July 1949. Her Veteran's preference, Bachelor's Degree and Catholic affiliation were instrumental in her being considered for the job. The next chapter addresses issues she faced and choices she made.

CHAPTER V

SHARING GIFTS—TEACHING AT THE FORT TOTTEN INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOL, 1949-1967

Introduction

> "We have different gifts according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully."
>
> (New International Version Holy Bible Romans 12:6-8)

(Please note that several individuals were interviewed for portions of the information provided below. The names of the individuals were not used in this study and all names listed are pseudonyms. *Appendix F contains several pertinent photos of the Fort Totten Indian Boarding School that may help the reader get a sense of what life was like during Thelma Daggs' time there.*)

Thelma Daggs' story is superimposed over the spiritual journey of a devout Black Catholic. Her bags packed snuggly with devotion, motivation and an AB in English from Indiana University, Thelma Daggs journeyed to the Fort Totten Indian Boarding School in Devils Lake, North Dakota where she became the first-grade teacher for many Native American students for the next eighteen years of her life. What follows is a brief look at

the factors important to understanding and making sense of Thelma Daggs' presence at the Fort Totten Indian Boarding School—why she may have come to share her gifts.

African American Teachers

Traditional writings on African American teachers are classically conceived from the oral tradition found in the Black churches of the South. This tradition strives to preserve a rich heritage that was forged from a culture where reading and writing were left to those inside the master's house. Education by and of Blacks has traversed a long and arduous route originating in dimly lit slave cabins and venturing on to today's halls of sanguine equality. Along the way, several African American women, particularly those that fashioned themselves as teachers and those who broke the barrier and became teachers played an important role in the education of all cultures.

There has been slow emergence from the attitude that Black females were nothing more than chattel, capable of only providing household services. There existed a prevailing attitude that Blacks and their children should be raised and educated by Blacks as they see fit: not only Blacks but all non-White entities (Foster, 1997). African Americans and other people of color found little opportunity in the teaching profession during the 1950s: only seven percent of American teachers during this period were Black (Cohen and Scheer, 1997). The majority of the seven percent taught in schools in the segregated South (Cohen and Scheer, 1997). "Like ministers, teachers' image combined knowledge and respectability, traits particularly important to African Americans because of a tradition of exclusion from education and stereotypes of American ignorance" (Reid, 1996, p. 1). "Throughout history, Black teachers have been hired primarily to teach Black students. In the 1940s Negro teachers in the North were already segregated by

custom; Negro teachers in the South, by law" (Delpit, 1997, p. xxv). Teaching outside the exclusionary pedagogical atmosphere of the South is rare in and of itself.

Ruskin Teeter's (1983) brief historical account of the American education system speaks to the lack of support Blacks and women—particularly Black women—received during the first 100 years of freedom through the lens of the demeaning attitude toward this combined segment of society. Black women were not only not worthy of receiving knowledge, but also highly discouraged from imparting it. One thing the Euro-American forefathers may not have seen in their stereotypical look at the Black female human was the personal commitment that Black women placed on the well being of the children and families they served. Similar qualities like these should have been sought in reference to gaining superior educators.

Hence, what the innate, nurturing, Black women were accused of having was the same thing that kept them from furthering their education and the education of others—furthering in the open. Subversion became the mantra of the Southern Black School Marm. Several of the early Black teachers obliterated the high incidence of prejudice in the South, if only long enough to allow Blacks to get their foot in the school door. The legacy of the Negro teacher in the South was the belief in the possibilities of their own people and the willing cooperation given to anyone who had high-sounding programs that promised rehabilitation of the race (Dagbovie, 2003). Thelma Daggs was one of the "rehabilitated" that left the south to venture out and share her knowledge, nurturing and gift in more receptive venues.

Despite the long years of service by Black teachers (sometimes sub-radar), the absence of research devoted to Black teachers in the 1930s to 1950s is both puzzling and

disturbing (Delpit, 1997, p. xix). This absence may be attributed to the fact that Black teachers were prohibited from teaching White children; like others of their race, Black teachers were perceived as inferior to Whites and not suitable to teach White pupils (Delpit, 1997, p. xxix)—absence from the White arena, led to absence from research. Though Blacks were prohibited from teaching White children, there was no prohibition from teaching "others": in Thelma Daggs case teaching Native American children posed no threat to mainstream education. What problem could be found in an oppressed few teaching a people seemingly lacking in motivation to seek self-actualization; injected inferiority could always use company?

Oppression is an unfortunate, complex component of society, both in the past and today. The greatest barrier to the oppressed can be found in their view of the world. Inaccurate perceptions and errors in reflective thought combine to give faulty views of hopeless futures. Fortunately nature's most important gift to us is adaptability. Those oppressed have learned to adapt to their oppression and accept their lot in life. Farsighted individuals like Thelma Daggs were well aware that learning breeds hope and learned behaviors can potentially be changed by new learning: oppression need not be a closing chapter.

Thelma Daggs appears to have stepped into a setting that was less than usual for an African American teacher in this timeframe (1949-1967). *I, as an African American am very familiar with the desire, dare say I need to be within a comfort zone composed of people who are like myself, both in terms of culture and phenotype. For Thelma Daggs, the oppressive environment of the Negro and the oppressive environment of the Ft. Totten*

students may have induced a similarity which made it easier to exist—shared oppression provides shared understanding.

That Thelma Daggs was an influence on those she taught and how her role as a teacher figures prominently in their lives is a contention of this research. Negligible academic attention has been focused on the role of African American educators in North Dakota—much less African Americans as a whole. This may stem from the fact that in the 2002 to 2003 school year (reflective of the majority of school years prior) there were 8,676 teachers in North Dakota; of those seven (7) were listed as African American (Department of Public Instruction, 2004). Even less consideration has been given to the significance of her presence in the historical development of Native American education.

The ability to teach is definitely not a genetic trait or something one accidentally stumbles upon. Controversial statements such as "I was born to teach" can be argued endlessly, good teachers are a result of the hard work exemplified by Thelma Daggs: considered study, purposeful practice and sometimes, (not always) heartrending life experiences. Was Thelma Daggs born to teach; I'm not sure. I will say however that she was definitely born with the innate potential to be a teacher and laid her life on the line to achieve her goals—teach, love and lead children.

African Americans in North Dakota

Researching the political, social, cultural and economic contributions of African Americans to North Dakota was quick research. *Stephanie Roper's (1993) "African Americans in North Dakota, 1800-1940" provided a foundation for the atmosphere Thelma Daggs may have encountered. And, of course, Era Bell Thompson's American Daughter (1946) rose immediately to the surface. Unfortunately, it did not offer the type*

of insight I was looking for in Thelma's story. Thompson's plight and the prejudice faced did lend credence to further literature I located. I found that it is not enough to merely know the written (captured) facts of African Americans' contribution to North Dakota; to find true meaning one must also delve into the folklore.

Thomas Newgard and William Sherman, foremost North Dakota historians, studied the historical evolution of North Dakota's ethnicity—seeking to ascertain the genesis of all recorded cultures, ethnicities and races. Their book, *Plains Folk* (Newgard & Sherman, 1988) is a smorgasbord of peoples that have established flourishing homesteads in North Dakota. African Americans comprised eight pages of the 481 page book.

I spoke to William Sherman on the phone and he made the comment that "Blacks did not stay in North Dakota because they were smarter than the rest of us. When the depression hit, the intense cold made it worse and they could read and write unlike many on the farmsteads, choosing to go elsewhere where the weather was better and the living could be come by easier" (Sherman, Personal Conversation, July 2003). His portrayal of African American life in North Dakota in *Plain Folks* took on a somewhat grayer complexion—"They were involved in homesteading and farming; and, finally, they were active in small and large town business and social life. In short Black men and women deserve at least an 'honorable mention' in the annals of North Dakota history" (Newgard & Sherman, 1988, p.388).

Newgard's and Sherman's research on African Americans dated back to the early 1800s to a man listed in historical accounts as York, a Negro slave belonging to William Rogers Clark (Newgard & Sherman, 1988). The gamut of African Americans featured as

living in North Dakota ran from professional baseball players to zealous entrepreneurs. The hidden influences, informal cultures and networks were peeled back to reveal the short stints of involvement and fleeting contributions formed by African Americans during their long, small and fluid presence. "Blacks were present in every period of North Dakota's life—never major actors, always in supporting roles but nevertheless always part of the scene" (Newgard & Sherman, 1988, p. 381). Blacks were:

- Explorers and traders – James Beckwourth, Edward Rose, John Brazo, Pierre Bonga
- Steamboat and railroad employees – Frederick Goode, James Fields, Phillip Wansley
- Buffalo Soldiers
- Homesteaders
- Farmers
- Barbers, café owners, small shopkeepers

Other writings on African Americans were mostly found in newspaper articles throughout the state (See Appendix G). The majority of those articles were of a negative nature noting the illegal and immoral acts of African Americans while living in North Dakota; or they are the Step-and-Fetch-It portrayal of aging-Blacks and their obituaries. *Below are but a few article titles sent to me by the State Historical Society when I inquired about writings on African Americans in North Dakota newspapers:*

Infested With Bad Darkies, October 4, 1906 – Minot Ward Newspaper

"Negro laborer kills White worker after being called nigger" – Wells County Free Press, Aug 3, 1906.

Background of Preston L. Mayo, more popularly known as "Uncle Joe." Was a Negro from the South who cooked for train passengers. Larimore Leader, May 12, 1976.

Familiarly known as "Old Shady" died in Grand Forks Sept 20, 1894. Faithful friend and servant of General Sherman. The Record, December, 1895 and Minot Daily News, October, 1981.

Mayfield, Jack...Grand Forks. Now in his 90s was for many years the only Black in Grand Forks, mentioned in an article on UND's Black History Week. Grand Forks Herald, February, 1978.

"Most Blacks Have Chosen Not To Stay" 1981 – Bismarck Tribune

Of course, these are not all the headlines on Negroes during this timeframe, but *I found it interesting that these were chosen to send for my research request.*

The following North Dakota maps (by county) were prepared using the University of Virginia Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, 1940 and 1950 U. S. Census data. Numbers indicate counted Negro population during each respective census.

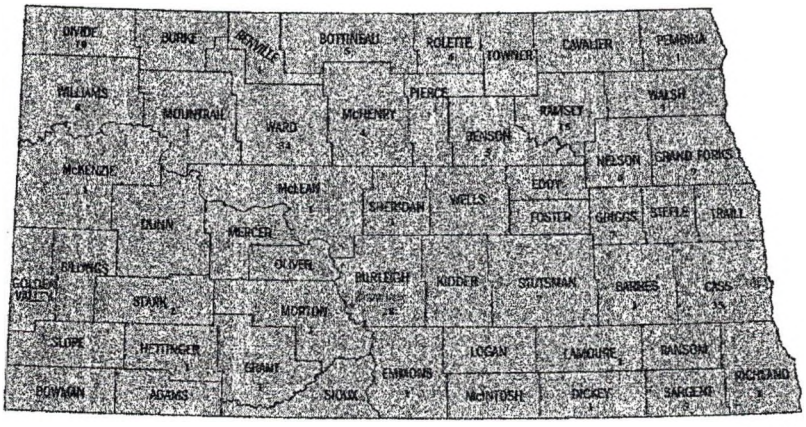


Figure 2. 1940 Census Data

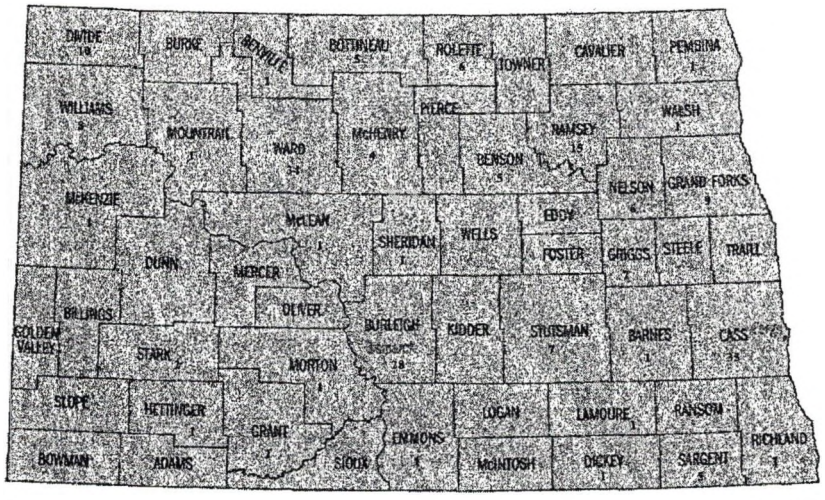


Figure 3. 1950 Census Data

As the previous maps indicate, the African American population in the timeframe of Thelma Daggs' presence in North Dakota was minimal. Somewhere in that increase from 201 to 257 was Thelma Daggs—why she chose to come to this area becomes even more intriguing. The odds were definitely against her!

In an article written by Roger Hardaway of the Negro History Bulletin, he noted that African American women have been overlooked in the pioneering plains and west for two basic reasons; 1) the number of African American women in this area (even today) has been minimal and 2) African American women are normally overlooked for the historically correct male experiences (Hardaway, 1997). He elaborates on this in his article "African-American Women on the Western Frontier" by reminding the reader that the few African American women that are profiled in his article and writings of others are representative of other African American females and that they contributed to the

development of America—deserving of any and all recognition and respect they can receive (Hardaway, 1997).

Indian Education in Indian Boarding Schools

Thelma Daggs' plight as an African American growing up in a predominately mainstream education system paralleled in many ways the plight of the Native American in North Dakota—both were strong examples of the oppressed learning through "antagonistic acculturation" (Spindler, 1997, p. 78). In the aftermath of colonization of the Indian nation, Euro-Americans found that they had over powered the Indians, but what then should they do with the conquered? Somewhere in the answer to that question were the words assimilation, assimilation, and more assimilation. A doctor from Pennsylvania State University and a former co-worker of Thelma Daggs noted that the children "had no economic future prepared to go off on their own from 'assimilation education" (Dr. Smith, Personal Conversation, June 07, 2004).

One primary place to accomplish assimilation is in the education of the young. In as much, society set out to assimilate, while educating Native American children. One of North Dakota's most famous sites for this education was the Fort Totten Indian School in Devils Lake. What started out as a fortress for military encompassment ended up being an educational "institution" designed to assimilate Native Americans into the Euro-American culture. The problem was "schools should be the main instrument that democratic societies use to generate and transmit new knowledge, and to inculcate democratic values and respect for ethnic and racial difference" (Trueba, 1997, p. 91); something that was not supported by the stories related. Further research on Indian

Boarding Schools as a whole found that Euro-Americans as a society fell very short of this goal—probably intentionally in some ways!

Like the southern schools Thelma Daggs attended, Indian education, whether sponsored by the United States government, religious organizations, or in partnership, was intended to convert the students from "savages" to patriotic American citizens capable of adding to the culture that was now American (Barrett & Britton, 2003). Life at the Fort Totten Indian Boarding/Day School was a common thread running through American Indian history—a history that will not be forgotten (Archuleta, Child & Lowamaima, 2000). Thelma Daggs was faced with a culture somewhat similar to her own, full of strategies for survival and resistance, accommodation, and faith in oneself and one's heritage complimented with the ability to learn from hard times and to create something beautiful and meaningful from the scraps offered by the oppressors (Archuleta, Child & Lowamaima, 2000).

"Indian education in the United States, which has a complex history, was often difficult for the young people who participated in this system." (Barrett & Britton, 2003, p. 1) Children and parents alike knew that when they entered the boarding school that an attempt would be made to strip them of their culture, ban their tribal languages, and otherwise discourage their identification as Indian (Reyhner, 1992). Thelma Daggs did what she could to allow the children to maintain as much of their heritage as possible: "There were two boys in our class that we never knew could not speak English, Miss Daggs would allow them to sit and read, while not speaking...did they learn, I don't know but they are two of only a few that can still speak our language" (Anna, Personal communication, August 25, 2003).

Notwithstanding the knowledge that their culture was losing its grasp of the constant struggle to reform the culture and make it "American;" Native Americans were somewhat unaware of the price they were going to have to pay in school and society because of their linguistic and socio-cultural differences. They are not silent today about the boarding schools tardiness to respond to their social, economic, emotional, and especially their educational needs, and our misgivings regarding their place in public schools; but their potential contributions to our society will be revealed in the future (Trueba, 1989).

Thelma Daggs' appearance on the Fort Totten Indian Reservation came almost twenty years after the government stopped supporting the Gray Nuns and hired regular teachers to staff the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools (Schnerder, 1994). The Gray Nuns of the Sacred Heart were/are an autonomous group of nuns who traced their spiritual roots to the faith and charisma of Saint Marquerite D'Youville, Mother of Universal Charity (Catholic Encyclopedia, 2004, p. 1). They were called Gray Nuns because of the color of their habits. Their mission was one of "universal charity, which is rooted in a spirituality of unlimited confidence in Providence, reflecting God's love for everyone, especially the marginalized and the poor" (Catholic Encyclopedia, 2004, p. 1). Fort Totten acted as an industrial school and Catholic mission school until 1935 when it was closed to house a Tuberculosis Preventorium (BIA, 2004). The Gray Nuns moved their mission to the Little Flower Mission at St. Michael's, North Dakota and the federal government opted to hire degreed, U. S. Civil Servants to teach the Native American children (BIA).

Thelma may have not fallen into the hiring category noted by Schnerder (1994) —"teachers were hired more for their willingness to teach in the remote schools than for their interest in or knowledge of Indian culture" (Schnerder, 1994, p. 217). More appropriately, the words of Jacqueline Jones in *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present* captures the spirit that Thelma Daggs brought with her to the Indian Boarding School (Delpit, 1997, xliii):

> The writings of Black teachers reveal that many teachers considered their pupils apt and intelligent learners, that they were committed and related well to students, and that they did not always try to imbue them with traits like tractability that so often characterized the teaching of White Northern schoolmistresses. This was often true despite class differences between the teachers and their students.
>
> (Jacqueline Jones, 1985)

Thelma Daggs' knowledge of the Indian culture may not have been one of her great assets. However, a prime example of the extent of her caring and sharing her gift can be seen in her writing (Appendix H) on how to teach reading to "all pupils." Education lead by the Gray Nuns of Fort Totten mandated the use of English and emphasized the acquisition of basic skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic, along with industrial training (Barrett & Britton, 2003). No bilingual textbooks were available. Thelma Daggs' concern for the future of Native American children led her to collaborate with her colleagues to accomplish a reading program that incorporated her universal knowledge and love of education, to which Delpit (1997) was referring.

Sharing the Gift

Reading a chapter titled "The Teacher as the Enemy" by Harry Wolcott in Spindler's (1997) Education and cultural process: anthropological approaches, I started to wonder why anyone would go into an area, naked of any cultural tools to teach a culture different from their own. Wolcott, a White ethnographer, taught at the Kwakiutl Indian Village school on the coast of British Columbia, Canada. He was not prepared for the classroom problems he had to confront: problems imbedded in the cultural hostility toward White teachers and nearly every nonmaterial aspect of the way of life the teacher represented (Wolcott, 1967). Harry Wolcott noted that he was not assigned to the Village to teach villagers their way of life, but was assigned to teach them something about his (Wolcott, 1967).

Assuredly, the dominant culture was not placing Thelma Daggs among the Native American children to teach them anything of their ways of life. Was she put there to teach them what she had been taught? Was Thelma in essence another prisoner running from one encampment to the other? Was Fort Totten a camp where she was no longer among the oppressed, but among a legion of the oppressors? I find this hard to believe. All the information I've gathered leads me to believe that Thelma Daggs was incapable of intentionally embracing oppressive actions. Maybe this was a way for her to sleep easier at night—"to sleep, per chance to dream". Though the manifestation of the enemy lines was slightly different for Thelma Daggs than that read in Wolcott's story, teaching must have made Thelma Daggs feel a part of "the school" and the cultural differences may have played a very small role when it came to giving her gift to others.

Well aware that the school is one of the most important institutions to help both mainstream and minority groups in the process of healing; healing from racial and ethnic hatred, healing form the traumas of leaving one's own land, healing from the cultural shock of being in a new land (Trueba, 1992). Thelma Daggs' venture into a new land was a way to fulfill her life's gift—teaching.

Thelma Daggs seemingly sacrificed a great deal of her life (even her Blackness) in order to halt the miseducation of the Indian—she left behind her Negro community, her family and the familiarity of all that comes with being Black. Thelma Daggs recognized life as a continuum on which one's potential for transformation and growth can be found in everyday experiences. From all accounts, she believed education should be planted in students and allowed to grow within while being nurtured or taught from without:

> "..she made you want to do things for her, I don't know what it was..."
>
> Sally
>
> "...two young men in the class couldn't speak English. I just thought they were quiet. She wouldn't try and force them to learn the language."
>
> Able
>
> "I always remember her having these cards she would flash and if you got the answer right you got to keep the card, whoever had the most cards was the winner...I don't remember getting anything if you won, it was just that idea that you could do it, so you won."
>
> Minnie

The education in the boarding school prior to her arrival failed to take into account the "within" factor of children's educational needs.

Thelma Daggs stepped into a battle that would be waged for many years to come: an unknown player in the never-ending cultural evolution that is Indian education. Thelma Daggs left the tumultuous South and its infamous Southern hospitality (or inhospitality if you were a Negro) to take a trip on a less than traditional educational journey engaged in the Indian schools of North Dakota; more specifically the Fort Totten Indian Boarding School.

I asked three former students of Ms. Daggs if she was seen as the "enemy" and the answers came back threaded with both yes and no. The reader must keep in mind that the teacher in many ways is always seen as something "other" and in some cases this other may appear to be the "enemy". The enemy in this case, was more congruent with an outsider that must first gain trust before being capable of rising above this denotion. Thelma Daggs' students promoted her as an eloquent spokesman for individualism and educational democracy. As far as I could tell, prior to her arrival, students attending first grade resembled assembly-line workers. Freedom was at a premium. Thelma Daggs must have seen intellectual freedom as the mainstay of progress. Along with several African American teachers, Thelma Daggs (according to Minnie) used the saying "an idle mind is one of the devil's workshops." Restraining a child's freedom of intelligence disturbs that child's individuality and enhances conformity and groupthink: something which Thelma Daggs reportedly did not advocate. She was well aware that the restraint of mental freedom also restrains ones impulses and desires.

A statement by a former student of an Indian Boarding School sheds light on how inadequate some of these schools may have been and what Thelma Daggs may have come up against:

> "The Indian boarding school era encompassed one of the most blatant expressions of racism in the history of North America—the wholesale taking of Indian children away from their large extended families and tribal nations and thrusting them into a foreign world, where they were abruptly, systematically and totally deprived of their Indianness. In the boarding schools, children's names, languages and clothing were taken away and their sacred objects destroyed. They were beaten and worse, even jailed within the schools for minor infractions of rules they didn't understand. They were made to eat lye soap for trying to communicate with each other in their own languages. Many children died in the boarding schools, of disease, malnutrition, and broken hearts. The rationale for the boarding schools was to "kill the Indian and save the man," as Carlisle founder Richard Henry Pratt was so fond of saying."
>
> (Beverly Slapin, Personal Email, 2002)

I spoke to several students to defend or provide evidence to the extent of truth in Ms. Slapin's statement. One of the responses follows:

> "Over exaggerating? No! Remember, I went to 12 years of boarding school, after my parents. It was worse for them, but the statements are true. Not to mention sexual abuse at the hands of priests (Catholic boarding schools) and other government officials. Also they forbid us to

> speak our native language, and they willfully removed children from hospitals and adopted them out to White families, many times without fully explaining what they were doing until it was too late. I know! This was done during my era and while girls were in boarding school it was like they didn't want Indians to be raised by Indians. The American public likes to minimize what happened. Jews are given the right to remember, but Indians are supposed to forget...I never did understand that."
>
> (Carrie, Personal Interview, August 25, 2003).

From all accounts of the prior students interviewed, Thelma Daggs encouraged her students to work with their experiences rather than against them to allow for interaction and continuity. In essence her students knew they had to control any outbursts that may cause disruption in the learning process. The Nazi-like control of the past gave way to the control of a firm Black matriarch, engrossed in developing all her students into future leaders.

Thelma Daggs' theory of education incorporated the use of the whole: the whole student, their senses, habits and mental freedom. Unlike the soup-line effect of the traditional education brought to those before her first grade classes, Daggs realized the educational prototype she was advocating was much harder and required more training for all involved. Teachers, even administrators would be required to go within; within the students and in some cases within themselves. Daggs emphasized the "how" of teaching more than the "what": as can be seen in the comprehensive reading program in the Appendix A formulated by Daggs to enhance the reading skills of her students.

Thelma Daggs taught her first grade with fervor and the students found themselves outside more than they did inside the covers of their books. They were allowed to grow and enhance the growth of others in the classroom by sharing their experiences. The students appreciated her because she recognized specialness in each of them while not ignoring the specialties of the rest of the class. Freedom was the word, yet even at that young age with minds racing and life nipping at their heels they dared not disrupt her class or the flow of educational wisdom she imparted. They respected her for all that she gave them: she educated them in a manner that they all appreciated.

While speaking in an interview to Sally, I found that sometimes they simultaneously felt awe and uneasiness toward Miss Daggs; she had an outward difference that she never seemed to explain:

> "Miss Daggs was a good teacher. I think overall she was a kind person, she didn't like disruption but I remember her more than I do my White teachers. I think she understood but it was something all the teachers didn't talk about. They were there to make us forget we were Indian. She didn't attend Indian functions; I think she was scared to venture too far from the school. I really think she was discriminated against by her coworkers. I think she was alone most of the time, I knew she had friends but we never saw her out of the classroom. She was the first Black person I ever saw. I know I cried when my mom left me in her classroom and I went home at recess for a week, but eventually, I got to know and respect her. Up until then it was White and Indian only. I don't ever remember her saying anything negative about us being Indian, like the White

> teachers did some times. They would make fun of our songs; our language (they would say it was gibberish) but she would talk to us after school. She in turn didn't really like to talk about being Black. We asked to touch her hair and she refused, she wore nylon stockings on her hair to keep it flat at all time, and she never talked about how it was being Black or living among Indians. We often wondered why she didn't marry, go out, have family members around, etc. I asked my friends what they remembered about her and they agreed with what I was going to tell you." (Melody, Personal Conversation, August 25, 2003).

After several months of searching, I found a co-worker of Thelma Daggs who shed further light on what it was like to teach at the Fort Totten Indian Boarding School and to share his memories of Thelma Bertha Daggs. Dr. Smith came to Fort Totten as an alternative service to participating in the Korean War. I asked him if he felt like an "enemy" at the boarding school…"The teacher is always an enemy. Coming from Pittsburgh though I was disappointed with the lack of warm local relationships and greetings at Fort Totten. As for what it was really like to teach there he noted that:

> "the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) was to provide a continuing workforce. Roy Batey ran North Dakota State Curriculum and he set the curriculum goals. Our principal was Sam Phillips out of Rochester, NY. He was a musician and career BIA person—one they moved around to develop no loyalty. The administrators were outsiders like the teachers. Thelma was one of four female teachers in the elementary school. There were 11 teachers for all grades. The higher grades were for education

prep. You must realize that working for the BIA was then a good career for African American teachers beyond the largely segregated Black school systems. Civil Service security and pay were good. I never heard of any special interest by Thelma Daggs in Native American children, just in education itself—that was shared with most non-native BIA teachers. I came in BIA in the late 1940s after the push of community education Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. Dillan S. Meyer was the Commissioner after his success during the Japanese relocation camps. He was getting out of the camp business and into other community areas. You must remember that this was a civil service culture. They were joined with the Turtle Mountain consolidated agency. Boarding schools were frightening during that time so she never really talked about reasons for being there or much about herself. I do remember that about one-fourth of the students spoke no English on arrival at the school and some were boarding students. She (Thelma) liked to say that the kids learned English on the playground from their friends and it was to no effort to teach them English."

(Dr. Smith, Personal Conversation, June 7, 2004).

How then did Thelma Daggs manage to complete the cyclical process of educating the future's children; children of all races, colors and creeds? The simple answer is to look beyond the aforementioned categories and read the words of those she educated. I spoke to thirteen former students of Miss Daggs and below are some of the

more memorable moments of our interview. The former students of Thelma Daggs have bittersweet memories of her and their boarding school days—hear their voices:

Pat Maggard: What do you remember most about Miss Daggs?

Minnie: The warm loving smile and the strict discipline that she demanded. You respected her because of her sincerity. She was light-hearted, could laugh easily, very independent lady who was private and not very social or outgoing. She was very dedicated to her teaching career.

Charlie: I remember taking long walks with her and her sharing her wisdom. She did not need any children because she had us. She use to tell me things like don't believe what they tell you…they will tell you a lie that they did not take your land and that they will take care of you. She used to always tell me, don't lose your language. She kept in touch with me all through my education and told me that I was special…I don't know why she was drawn to me, but she was. She was the most beautiful person that I ever met. As far as like Natalie, no. But she was really, in her own way, she went to church like an Indian woman. In her own way. Like we pray every day, pray for this, pray for that. I'm an Indian and I'm more Christian than the Christians…I mean, she was like that too."

George: The thing that I remember most about her is her dedication. I can remember incidents when I was six or whatever, but she always used to put together a Christmas play, the Christmas nativity. And that had to be a lot of

work, but she did it. I mean, she took the time. In fifth grade she forced me to read a lot, which was good…a lot of reading was good for me. I didn't like it at the time, but once I got into it, it wasn't that bad. I often wondered who she was…Black person on the reservation.

Matt: I guess it was almost like me at home in the classroom. I mean there was nothing like mean there. It was, you were there to learn, you were turned on….she had this nature about her, it was like no different than my mom or my aunt…that was neat.

Able: She was a very positive influence in my life, beyond just the first grade. The mold for a dedicated teacher like her no longer exists.

Good teachers evaluate students for increased responsibility based on their ability rather than their culture, their parents' culture or how much money they have. Jon Reyhner (1992) sums up what I see as Thelma Daggs' gift to the Indian children in her first grade class:

> True appreciation and respect do not come easily when teachers are not members of the culture that their students belong. True appreciation and respect are attitudes that take a long time and a lot of effort to translate into behaviors. Appreciation and respect are the antecedent attitudes for teaching Indian children. The resulting behaviors needed to put the attitudes into effect are the efforts to provide Indian children a thorough foundation in the academic areas needed for school and occupational

> success...true appreciation and respect for the Indian child are teaching characteristics that will surmount a multitude of other shortcomings.

This was the gift given to the first grade students of the Fort Totten Indian Boarding School by Thelma Daggs for ten years.

Going Home

Not all horses are born equal; a few are born to win!

Mark Twain

Thelma Daggs survived the oppression associated with her skin color. How deep the wounds, we will never know.

> *"Of course we are all wounded, and not all our wounds are the same. However, there is a lesson we can take from every woman's tale...our authentic calling, our true work in this world, becomes and outgrowth of our lives. Our work can transform and transcend whatever traumas we survive, turning them into something useful for ourselves and, we hope, for others."*
>
> (Breathnach, 1998, p. 239).

For 18 years of her life, the gift she shared with Native American children as their teacher became her "authentic self". In the movie "The Natural," Glen Close explains what authentic self means; she notes that there is the life we learn with, and the live we live after that—our authentic self (Breathnach, 1998). I believe that Thelma Daggs took an authentic journey in which she enriched and transformed her life by remembering and reexamining the dreams, loves, and fears of her past (Breathnach, 1998). The life she was given in the oppressive society became her own, not her mother's, not her sister's

and not the life of the Negro growing up in the Jim Crow South, but the Life of Thelma Daggs; a woman who came into her own. As in the psalmist's prayer, she passed through the Valley of the Shadow of discouragement, denial, doubt, and darkness—emerging into the light of something more (Breathnach, 1998). What follows is my interpretation of others' stories that will take the reader home, back into the shadows, with Thelma Daggs to her final resting place at the Metaire Cemetery, New Orleans, Louisiana.

On May 5, 1959 the last bell tolled and the students of Fort Totten Indian Boarding School went home, never to return to those buildings again. Time had taken a toll on the buildings and the Bureau of Indian Affairs determined that it would not be cost effective to repair them. This was not the end of Thelma Daggs' career as a teacher of Native American children—when the next school year started, they simply walked across the street to the new, Fort Totten Community School.

Exactly how long Thelma Daggs remained a teacher at Fort Totten is up for contention. The consensus among former students queried in passing is that she was at the school until 1967: "she came to my graduation and gave me one of those men's grooming kits…I couldn't believe it, she was my first grade teacher in 1955 and there she was at my graduation" (George , Personal Conversation, August 24, 2003). Lore is that Miss Daggs attended many high school graduations of her former students until she moved. In 1967, Thelma Daggs would have been sixty-one years of age and at the end of a 20 year civil service commitment. (Civil Service takes into account time served in the military when computing years eligible for retirement. In this case, two years as a WAC and eighteen years as a Bureau of Indian Affairs teacher).

The day Thelma Daggs left the Fort Totten Indian Reservation (where she lived) is recorded only in the minds of those that would feel her absence. "Miss Daggs had requested to stay on the reservation with the elders and this was approved, but something happened in Louisiana and she had to leave" (Norma, Personal Conversation, August 23, 2003). It is not recorded in any annals what happened, it is just known that Miss Daggs left and never returned.

Thelma Daggs retreated quietly back into the shadows on February 6, 1996 in the same manner in which she came out—with peaceful, proud steps. Her involvement in the Civil Rights Movements, the Women's Movement and educational advancement of African Americans from 1967 to 1986 would be fodder for further research; to add to the voice of Black women and the composite story that is ours.

She was private to the very end; ordering and purchasing her own coffin and burial site from the Metaire Funeral Home. Her obituary (Appendix J) presented some of her accomplishments: Sergeant in the Women's Army Corp, Teacher at the Fort Totten Indian School, family member and friend. Members of her church, family and friends, and the children and parents of the Berean Child Care/Head Start Center—where she volunteered as a teacher—were all invited to attend.

The long winding road had come to the end. The genealogist in Louisiana tried unsuccessfully to find a headstone for Thelma Daggs (just her grave marking). If I could be so bold, I would add under her dates "Sister, Teacher, Activist." If you turn to Appendix I, you will see Thelma Daggs for the first time. A picture is not just worth a thousand words, it's worth a Jungian personality inventory; for there, in Black and White, are the personality assets or deficits (depending on the circumstances and who's

making the assessment): strong, dogged, tenacious, courageous, steadfast, purposeful, unflinching, Stubborn—defining traits summed up in a single snapshot (Breathnach, 1998, p.5).

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The first African American teacher at the Fort Totten Indian Boarding School in Devil's Lake, North Dakota was Thelma Bertha Daggs. Thelma Daggs is not listed in any traditional history book as a pioneer, however she was a Black woman who penetrated the race, sex, and class barriers set up by the South to go forward and live a life notable of many "firsts." She journeyed from the debased class of a Southern Negro, to one of the first group of Black women to serve during World War II; to receive a Bachelor's and Master's degree from a predominantly White university when higher education was not the norm for African Americans; and on to become a beloved first-grade teacher for Native Americans in the assimilation pedagogy of an Indian Boarding School.

Within her personal context, Thelma Daggs single-handedly destroyed centuries of oppression wrought by Jim Crow laws and expected inferiority. Entrenched customs and lingering racist social conditions from the time of indentured servitude may have slowed her progress, but in no way deterred her from reaching the goal of breaking free and becoming "somebody"—not another object of oppression. Thelma Daggs' story "represents the triumph of dignity in the face of the indignities of all forms of oppression" (Evans-Herring, 2003, p.258).

Race, Class and Gender Lens

Black women's experiences are influenced by race, class, and gender, creating forms of oppression that are jointly unique to their existence. Thelma Daggs strived for equality on three fronts—African American, female and poor. Portraying Thelma Daggs as a self-defined, self-reliant individual who confronted race, gender and class oppression head-on speaks to the importance knowledge plays in empowering oppressed people (Collins, 1990). "Knowledge is central to power. Knowledge helps us envision the contours and limits of our own existence, what is desirable and possible, and what actions might bring about those possibilities" (Santora, 1998, p. 2). Thelma Daggs is a prime example of a Black woman who actively used knowledge to change her circumstances and bring about change in her life—a worldview where the goal is not merely to survive or to fit in or to cope, rather obtain ownership and accountability (Collins, 1990).

Knowledge provides individuals with the analytical tools necessary for thinking through questions, situations, and problems (Santora, 1998). Knowledge that is empowering centers around the interest and aims of the knower: apart from the knower, knowledge has no intrinsic power, but when coupled with the knower's desires and purposes, knowledge has meaning and power (Sleeter, 1991). This knowledge afforded Thelma Daggs the power to overcome the multiple forms of elitism rampant in the South, to affect systems of inequality found in the caste system of existence and to leave behind the social injustice of Jim Crow (Santora, 1998).

The changed consciousness of Thelma Daggs (individual transformation) and the social transformation of community institutions constitute the essential ingredients for social change (Collins, 1990). To view Thelma Daggs in light of these changes as a

Black feminist would be presumptive. However, placing Black women's experiences (such as Thelma Daggs') at the center of analysis, offers fresh insight on the prevailing concepts, paradigms, and epistemologies of the Black feminist worldview (Collins, 1990).

Individual Transformation

Thelma Daggs spent her childhood in the South, more specifically New Orleans and the surrounding communities. She grew up during a time when the first order of business for the dominant culture was to break a child's self esteem; similar to the way a horse is broken to be rode and serve the rider—she was not broken. Zora Neal Hurston's 1937 novel, Their Eyes Were Watching God, relates so eloquently the familiar schema Negroes were faced with:

> "It was the time for sitting on porches beside the road. It was the time to hear things and talk. These sitters had been tongueless, earless, eyeless conveniences all day long. Mules and other brutes had occupied their skins. But now, the sun and the bossman were gone, so the skins felt powerful and human. They became lords of sounds and lesser things. They passed nations through their mouths. They sat in judgment."
>
> (Hurston, 1937, p. 55)

Was Thelma Daggs one of the children who sat on those mythical porches, grasping for self-efficacy and voice? From the minimal amount of information this private, yet public figure left behind, I will never be able to tell; I can take calculated risk and say that by some method she found a strong sense of self-efficacy, self-esteem, and knowledge to lift her above the inferior design she inherited by virtue of color.

The concept of universal education did not find its way to the South until the mid 1800s. It was not until 1864 with the opening of the Pioneer School of Freedom, by the New Orleans Union that Negro children in the New Orleans area could receive education in the Negro Common School (Anderson, 1988). These schools reflected the less than adequate attempt at educating Negroes found in society. Thelma Daggs could have attended one of these schools, but many Negroes, having relied on their church for support in their lives, turned to the church for assistance in educating their young.

Catholic school education provided a fundamental basis for the religiosity, spirituality and academic aspirations of Negro children throughout the United States. Thelma Daggs' individual transformation was stimulated by the spiritual foundation, self-efficacy, self-discipline and accountability provided by her Catholic school education. The social context of parochial schooling provided Thelma Daggs with an empowering environment that enhanced her self-worth, self-esteem and self-efficacy. The influence of the Catholic school setting continued to call and Thelma Daggs returned to its halls at Xavier University, New Orleans, Louisiana before her enlistment in the Women's Army Corps.

Community Transformations

The community Thelma Daggs was born into mirrored the market community model, one that was arbitrary and fragile, structured fundamentally by competition and domination (Collins, 1990). Jim Crow laws and the overarching dominance of Eurocentric and male supremacy ruled the land with a firm southern hand. Conversely, the Afrocentric model of community stressed connections (family, friends, and associations), caring, and personal accountability (Collins, 1990). Though Thelma Daggs

was a member of the "market community," her soul belonged to the Afrocentric community, as did every Negro who felt the pressures of dominant oppression.

Thelma Daggs transcended the market model of community and created an alternative community built on the foundation of afrocentricity and personal empowerment. "To increase the likelihood of the community's success, Negro leaders encouraged women to take responsibility for their own futures and, simultaneously, to become agents of social change" (Evans-Herring, 2003, p. 263). Thelma Daggs became a member of several organizations, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Women Veterans, The Newman Club and the St. Joseph's Society—all elements of communal change. Thelma Daggs' greatest act as an agent of social change was to become a teacher—an individual transformation relevant to the community, market and Afrocentric models.

The personalized community created and sustained by Thelma Daggs and others who "overcame" adds to the sphere of influence available for individual Black women and men for retreat; potential sanctuaries for nurturing on how to confront oppressive social institutions (Collins, 1990).

In the Shadows

Thelma Daggs' private life was just that, very private. She maneuvered below the radar of the public eye through many notable periods in American and Negro history—segregation, World War I, The Depression, World War II, the Women's Movement, integration, the Civil Rights Movement, the 70s, 80s and a large portion of the 90s. She was a private person as noted by her co-workers and students:

"She didn't cotton to the other teachers I don't think, basically she had us."

Norma

"I remember her walking a lot, taking long walks by herself."

David

"She kept to herself."

John

She never married and she never had any children. All of Thelma Daggs immediate family is deceased and more than likely most of the friends she made along the way are deceased or I was unable to locate them. The choices she made in her private life were choices that went with her to her grave and the grave of those who new her best. The importance of her story is no less relevant for not having the innermost details of her private life.

The Public Thelma Daggs

The influences that shaped the lives of the turn-of-the-century Negro woman were many: the plight of the working woman, limited economic opportunities, inferior housing, the political straightjacket of Jim Crow, and how to efficiently and effectively raise their young (Evan-Herring, 2003). To those outside the realm of Black experience, Black women's experiences suggest that they may have overtly conformed to the societal roles laid out for them, yet covertly opposed those roles in numerous spheres—an opposition shaped by the consciousness of being on the bottom (Hesse-Biber, Gilmartin, & Lydenberg, 1999). How Thelma Daggs fought back from these oppression-driven conditions, is at the heart of her story.

Thelma Daggs was placed in a time and setting where total conformity was expected and whose traditional forms of activism (collective movements) was virtually impossible (Hesse-Biber, Gilmartin, & Lydenberg, 1999). She meticulously worked her public-self (WAC, Student, Teacher)—with her Afrocentric community consciousness and knowledge she became self-defined: she was an activist! African American women who can overcome and view themselves as fully human, to become part of the larger worldview, as subjects, become activists, no matter how limited the sphere of their activism may be (Hesse-Biber, Gilmartin, & Lydenberg, 1999).

Reflections

> "One muffled strain in the Silent South, a jarring chord and a vague and uncomprehended cadenza has been and still is the Negro. And of that muffled chord, the one mute and voiceless note has been the sadly expectant Black Woman . . . The 'other side' has not been represented by one who 'lives there.' And not many can sensibly realize and more accurately tell the weight and the fret of the 'long dull pain' than the open-eyed but hitherto voiceless Black Woman of America..."
>
> (Cooper, 1892, p. 1)

Thelma Daggs' story presented and opportunity for me to provide the account of an African American woman whose life transcended time—"a mute and voiceless note ". She was not, upon initial view, someone that others would consider a pioneer or an activist or an early model of a Black feminism; but after several months of tracing her steps through life, I came to see her as just all those things. Her self-image was deeply rooted in her socialization for individual empowerment and indoctrination to strive to

make community contributions—her use of internal controls were much stronger than the external forces that surrounded her (Evan-Herring, 2003).

Thelma Daggs was an early Black feminist, though she may have not been aware of her feministic traits, her actions were undoubtedly feministic in nature. Her beliefs and actions were a spark in the ignition of a tradition of anti-racist and anti-sexist movements and thought which now defines Black American Feminism (Barnes, 2004). Women, such as Thelma Daggs worked consciously or unconsciously toward the eradication of race and gender inequality, and among other systems of oppression, which have historically subjugated Black American women (Barnes, 2004).

Thelma Daggs' life experiences spoke to the demand for social, economic and political equality: the desire for a compatible and progressive vision of freedom and equality based on the historical and ongoing struggles against the race and gender (at least) oppression Black American women have experienced at home, at work, in their communities and, moreover, within the dominant culture as a whole (Barnes, 2004). I as an African American possess a view of Black feminism and women like Thelma Daggs that cannot be achieved by one who is White (male or female). My view is one that encompasses theoretical interpretations of a Black woman's reality by one who has lived it (Collins, 1990). Thelma Daggs was right there, hidden plainly in view as just another teacher, teaching Native American children, sharing her gift.

Black feminist thought requires that lives of Black women be exposed for what they were and are; a struggle to muster the strength to unravel and overcome the tangled web of race, class and gender oppression. That Thelma Daggs was not recorded in public annals as someone "special" makes her no less worthy of sharing. Somewhere in her story another may find the strength and wherewithal to make choices that make them

memorable to those they have encountered in their life's journey. I had to take the opportunity to carry out an autonomously defined investigation of Black-self in a society, which through race, sex, and class oppression systematically denies our existence (Evan-Herring, 2003). We must define a history of our own (Giddings, 1984).

This dissertation was an act of self-recovery for Black feminist, critical thinkers and for myself. As hooks reasons:

> "Social construction of the self in relation would mean ... that we would know the voices that speak in and to us from the past.... Yet, it is precisely these voices that are silenced, suppressed, when we are dominated.... Domination and colonization attempt to destroy our capacity to know the self, to know who we are. We oppose this violation, this dehumanization, when we seek self-recovery, when we work to unite fragments of being, to recover our history."
>
> (hooks, 1981, p.)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

"PTE WA USPEWICAKIYAPI (Buffalo Teacher: Former Student's Recollections of a Negro Teacher at the Fort Totten Indian Boarding School"

You are being asked to participate in a research study about Thelma B. Daggs, an African American teacher at the Fort Totten Indian Boarding School. You were selected as a possible participant because you were a former student of Thelma Daggs at the Fort Totten Indian Boarding School. Please read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Patricia Maggard, a doctoral candidate at the University of North Dakota is conducting this study.

Background Information

The purpose of this research is to look at the life history of an individual who was a member of a social group that has received little attention—African American teachers in North Dakota. A closer look at her life experiences during this period may reveal some new perspectives on African American teachers; especially the experience as an educator on an Indian reservation.

Procedures

If you agree to be a participant in this research, I would ask that you do the following things:

1. Participate in a very informal interview on your experience with and relation to Thelma Daggs.

2. Provide pictures and/or artifacts that you are willing to publicize that are directly related to Thelma Daggs and her teaching or your learning experience during her time at the Fort Totten Indian Boarding School.

Risks and Benefits to Being in the Study

There are no physical risks associated with this study. You may however become emotional when recollecting events of this period. If I notice you are distressed by these recollections, the interview will be immediately terminated. Also, if you start to feel any undue stress in relating your memories, please feel free to stop the interview and if necessary terminate the interview.

There are no benefits to you personally; the benefits of this study are sociological and educational in nature.

Compensation

You will receive $20 at the end of the interview for your participation.

Confidentiality

The records of this research will be kept private. They will be kept in a locked safe and any report I publish will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant unless that participant has signed a consent form indicating that they wish for their name to be disclosed. Access to research records will normally be limited to Patricia Maggard. However, the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), Dr. Mary Ruth Laycock (my Graduate Advisor) and other regulatory agencies may review the research records to ensure that the rights of human subjects are being adequately

protected. Tape recordings of this interview will only be accessible as mentioned above, and they will be destroyed upon completion of this research.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Your participation is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, it will not affect your current or future relations with the University of North Dakota. There is no penalty or loss of benefits for participating or for discontinuing your participation. If either of us chooses to terminate the interview due to emotional distress, your monetary benefit will not be lost.

Contacts and Questions

The researcher conducting this study is Patricia R. Maggard. I am being advised by Dr. Mary Ruth Laycock. You may ask any question you have now. If you have any questions later, you may contact me at (701) 747-3102/(701) 543-3431 or Dr. Mary Ruth Laycock at (701) 747-2171.

If you would like to talk to someone other than those listed above about: (1) concerns regarding this study, (2) research participant rights, (3) research-related injuries, or (4) other human subjects' issues, please contact the IRB. The IRB oversees research conducted at the University of North Dakota that involves human participants. Questions or problems should be directed to Renee Carlson, IRB Coordinator, at (701) 777-4079 or renee.carlson@mail.und.nodak.edu or Patty Peterson, IRB Administrative Secretary, at (701) 777-4279 or patricia.peterson@mail.und.nodak.edu. You may also write: Institutional Review Board, P. O. Box 7134, Grand Forks, ND 58202-7134.

You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

University of North Dakota
Institutional Review Board
Approved on JUN 10 2004
Expires on JUN 9 2005

APPENDIX B
Statement of Consent

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information. I have received answers to the questions I have asked. I consent to participate in this study. I am at least 18 years of age.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Adapted from the University of Chicago Human Subjects Consent Form, 2003.

University of North Dakota
Institutional Review Board
Approved on JUN 10 2004
Expires on JUN 9 2005

APPENDIX C
Consent to Record

Consent to Record Interview

Thank you for participating in the "PTE WA USPEWICAKIYAPI (Buffalo Teacher: Former Student's Recollections of a Negro Teacher at the Fort Totten Indian Boarding School." By signing the form below you give your permission to record our interview session for scholarly and educational purposes including publications.

I agree to have the interview session recorded.

(Signature)

(Date)

University of North Dakota
Institutional Review Board
Approved on JUN 10 2004
Expires on JUN 9 2005

APPENDIX D
Invitation to Participate

PATRICIA R. MAGGARD

1024 Wheat Ave
Hatton, ND 58240
(701) 747-3102
(701) 747-4043 (Fax)
patricia.maggard@grandforks.af.mil

July 17, 2003

Invitation of Participate in Study

You have been invited to participate in a research study titled "PTE WA USPEWICAKIYAPI (Buffalo Teacher): Former Student's Recollections of a Negro Teacher at the Fort Totten Indian Boarding School." This project is being conducted by Patricia Maggard under the supervision of Dr. Mary Ruth Laycock in the Department of Educational Foundations and Research at the University of North Dakota.

Your participation in this project will be strictly voluntary and you may withdraw from participation at any time without any penalty. The purpose of this research project is to explore the life of Thelma B. Daggs (deceased) in relation to her life as an African American teacher at an Indian boarding school in North Dakota. Thelma's story is a cultural anomaly and when looked at closely may reveal a new perspective on African American educators; in particular educators on Indian reservations. The benefits to this study may be groundbreaking to the history of African American teachers.

This should not take a great deal of your time, though it will depend on the amount of information you have to contribute to the study. There are no physical risks anticipated, however some individuals may experience enhanced emotions due to memories brought forth during the interview. All information obtained in this study will be strictly confidential. In no way will your responses or any artifacts you contribute be identified in connection to you. Your name will not be used for any portion of this study unless you indicate that you would like your true name used. If any information is published, there

Will be no information which would identify you as a participant; pseudonyms will be used unless otherwise requested.

Any questions you may have about this study can be answered by Patricia Maggard (701) 747-3102/(701) 543-3431 or Dr. Mary Ruth Laycock at (701) 777-2171. The University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board oversees research conducted at the University of North Dakota that involves human participants. Questions or problems should be directed to Renee Carlson, IRB Coordinator, at (701) 777-4079 or renee.carlson@mail.und.nodak.edu or Patty Peterson, IRB Administrative Secretary, at (701) 777-4279 or patricia.peterson@mail.und.nodak.edu. You may also write: Institutional Review Board, P. O. Box 7134, Grand Forks, ND 58202-7134.

Before you sign this document, be sure that any questions have been answered to your satisfaction and that you have a thorough understanding of the study. If you agree to participate in this study, a copy of this document will be sent to you. I will contact you when I receive your consent form and set up a convenient time for us to conduct our interview.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

University of North Dakota
Institutional Review Board
Approved on JUN 10 2004
Expires on JUN 9 2005

APPENDIX E
Advertisements

Study Participants Wanted

Must be prior student of THELMA B. DAGGS, Fort Totten Indian Boarding School

Participate in a research study entitled: **"PTE WA USPEWICAKIYAPI (Buffalo Teacher: Former Student's Recollections of a Negro Teacher at the Fort Totten Indian Boarding School."**

Participants will be asked to participate in an interview concerning the teaching and other activities of Thelma B. Daggs. The interview will take approximately 1-3 hours and you will receive $20 for your participation.

If you are interested in participating or have any questions regarding this study, please call Pat Maggard @ (701) 747-3102 or (701) 543-3431 or send an email to pmaggard@hotmail.com indicating your interest.

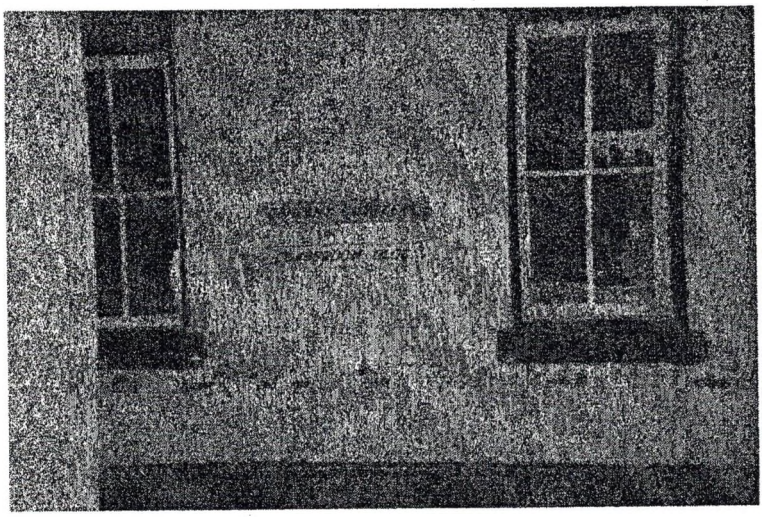
DEVIL'S LAKE JOURNAL ADVERTISEMENT

ATTENTION FORMER STUDENTS OF THELMA DAGGS – If you were a student of Thelma Daggs at the Fort Totten Indian Boarding School, I would like to interview you. Receive $20 for your time. Call or email Pat to set up an interview time and date. I will come to you if you are within 200 miles of Grand Forks, ND. Any photos or artifacts that you would like to donate to the memory of this great teacher would be greatly appreciated.

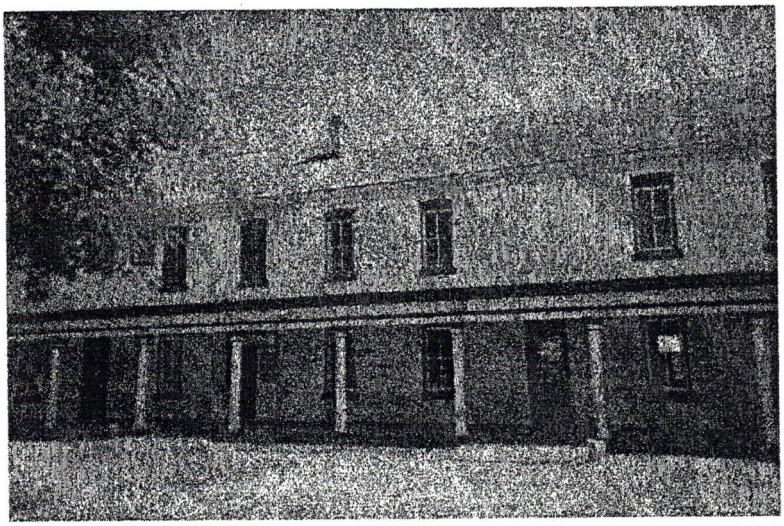
If you are interested in participating or have any questions regarding this study, please call Pat @ (701) 747-3102 or (701) 543-3431 or send an email to pmaggard@hotmail.com indicating your interest.

APPENDIX F
Ft. Totten Indian Boarding School Photos

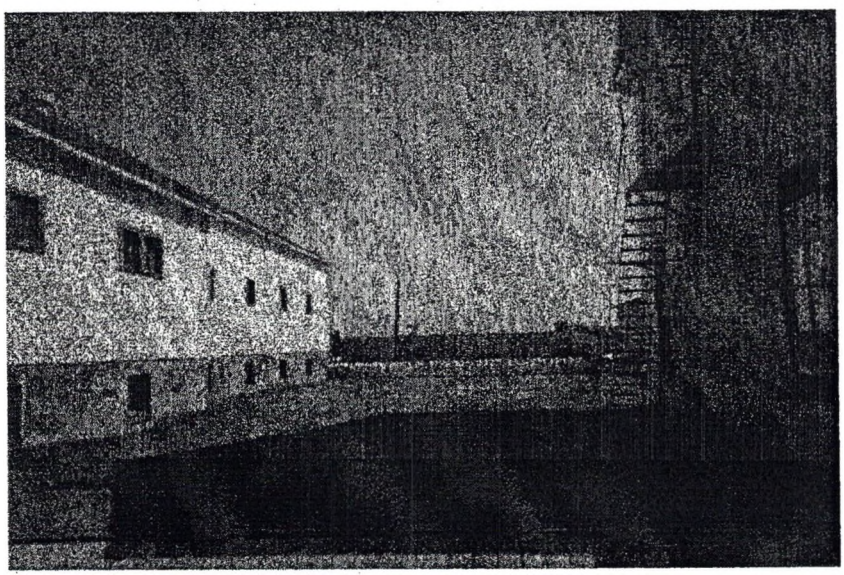
Outside View of Classroom



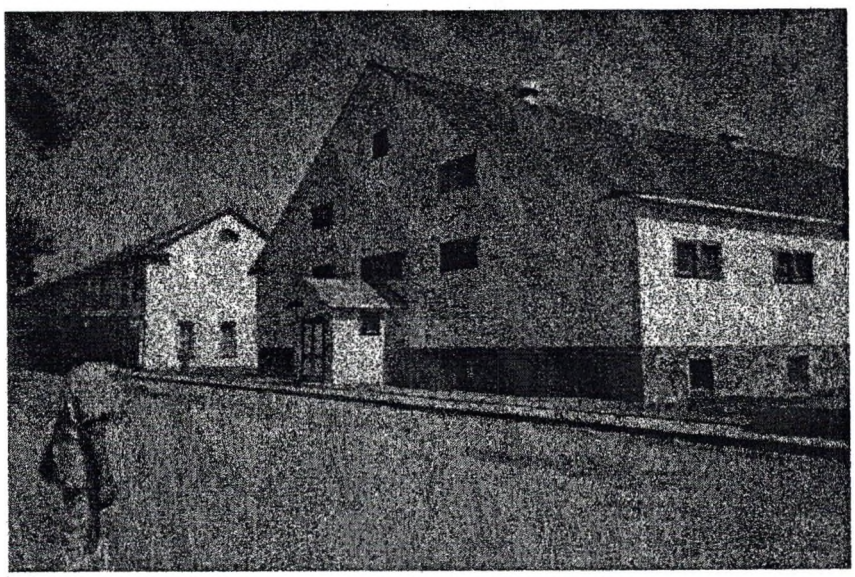
Elementary School



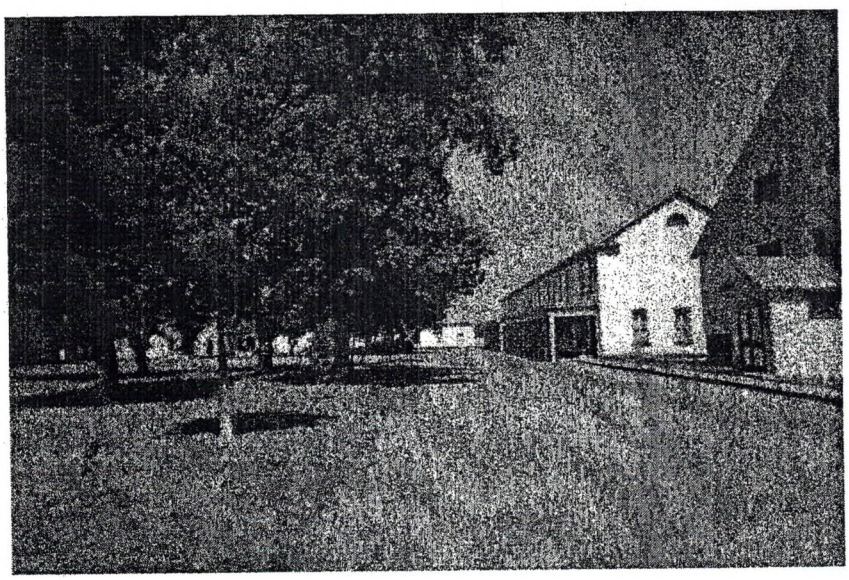
Elementary School Recess Area



Former Student in Front of Girls Dorm

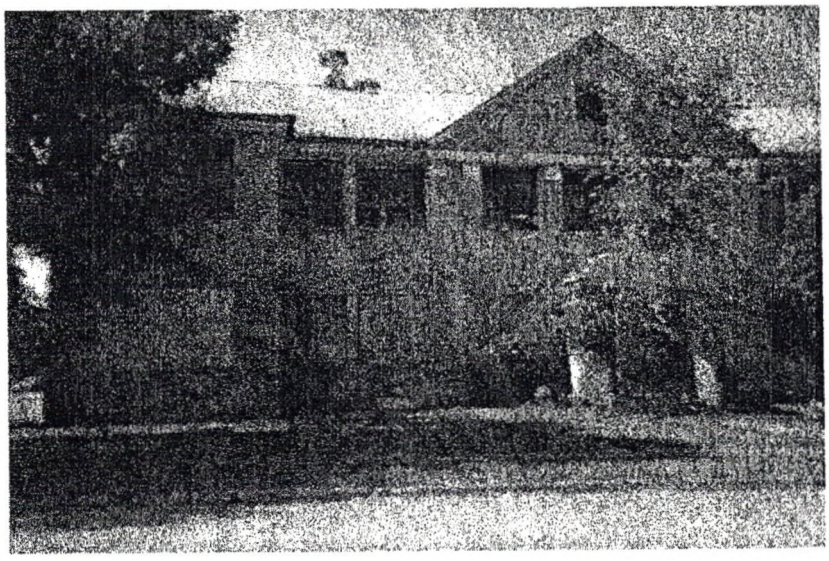


Walk Area – Road to Commissary

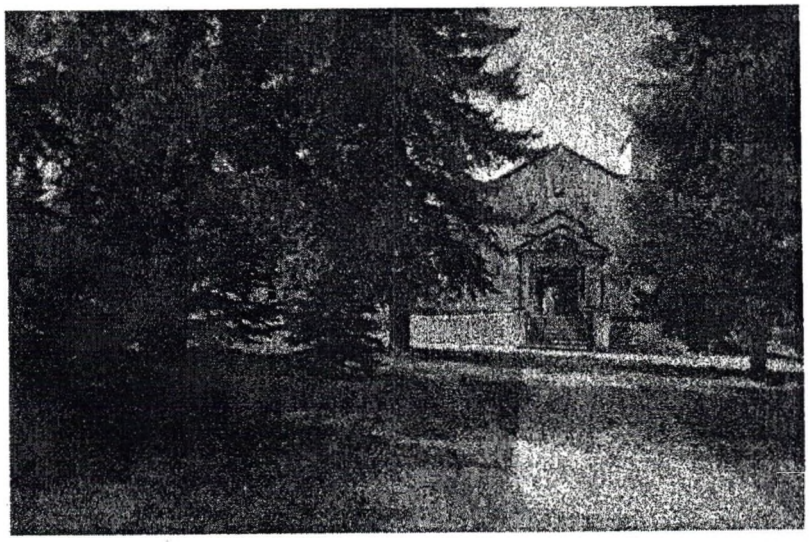


Temporary Elementary School

Thelma Daggs' Living Quarters



Seven Dolors Catholic Church



APPENDIX G
Articles

Fair Tomorrow, The Kilties are Comin' October 10th

ARD COUNTY INDEPE

MINOT, WARD COUNTY, NORTH DAKOTA, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 4, 1906

INFESTED WITH BAD DARKIES

Wm. Green, a very black darkey was given a hearing before Judge Murray at the city hall Friday afternoon, charged with stealing $19, a gold watch, two diamond rings, one turquoise ring, a gold chain to a pair of glasses, another ring and a gold bracelet, from Marie Booker's trunk, in her residence near the sand pit, a week ago Saturday night. Green had a nice story all fixed up, but it wouldn't work with Judge Murray.

Miss Booker is an aggressive sort of an individual and seems to always be looking for trouble and notoriety. Green, according to his own story, was the woman's lover for some months, and as such answered her beck and call.

All went well until he was "cut out" by two white men.

Mr. Green realized that winter is close at hand and his summer wages all spent, so he didn't just exactly like the idea of "losing his happy home" in this manner. He told Marie so in plain coon language and threatened to compare the strength of a beer bottle with that of Miss Booker's cocoanut. Miss Booker says that when the bad man was about to carry out this threat, she sought protection "under the protecting wing" of Officer Seigenbein. About two o'clock Sunday morning she says that as she was about to enter her shack, she saw Mr. Green, hammer in hand, breaking into her trunk. She ran back to town for the officers but when they returned, Green had "flew the coop." As a matter of fact, Officer Seigenbein located Green a short time afterwards in a small building at the real of the European restaurant and arrested him. Green pretended to walk along like a little man with the officer, but when the men were in the darkness between the two buildings, Green dropped the two grips which he was carrying under his arms and "skiddooed" under some box cars.

He walked to Surrey that night and caught a morning train for Crookston. There he was located and returned ta Minot by Officer Tom Hagen who went after him. The bracelet and the two rings were found on the coon, but he says that he did not take the watch, but he got ten dollars in money.

He says the woman gave him permission to take the money and the jewelry to keep until she could square herself on an old debt of fifty or sixty dollars.

The story does not seem probable. Minot is just having a sample of the trouble which the darkies are going to cause. There are a hundred or more of the colored ladies and gentlemen in Minot, most of whom are toughs of the worst character. It would be a good thing if Miss Booker, Mr. Green, esq., and a good many more of the "colored individuals" could be deported to darkest Africa.

ed to Get Deed.

N. D. Oct. 1.—Be- sed to deed his s wife's name, John city, who has en- d life only one short severely mauled by he is in a serious

er Gallahue was police court to ans- harge of assault and pleaded not guilty. that both the priest tried to get him to perty to her, and al they set upon ded him until he ous. The wife, for reason of shielding tified that she only n. Notwithstand- saw fit to impose a parson.

College Opens.

t Business College ay in rooms in the ck. The college has etter quarters than ond expects a large his year. The en- nday was very sat- ixty pupils can be ted now. on of Eau Claire, hort hand teacher. uate from the Ras- ge of St. Paul, and at the Rasmussen llwaukee, Minn. nell will teach book- ness arithmeric and dies of the course. raph is being used at r dictation.

Takes the Cake.

Teutsch-Benbow

Eugene Teutsch, on well known contra Miss Sarah Benbow, in marriage last even Methodist parsonage G. L. Powell But friends witnessed the after which the br went to the J. H. home where a daint supper was served. Mrs. Powell were host ess. The bridal pai tended by Miss Anna W. H. Sibbald.

The couple will beautiful Teutsch cot corner of Fifth and Va An extended eastern been planned for the year.

The bride has resid for sometime. She is young woman. Both Mrs. Teutsch have friends who join the in well wishes.

Iowa Man Praises No

T. H. Cable of Han transacted business w Bros. last week. He i ent real estate dealer and is all taken up wi calitv. He said reg "Why you fellows count us with our $6 an acre land. We g thirty or forty bush and fifty bushels of cc on our Iowa land, an we have invested. W all our good renters. come to North Dakot land at $20 an acre, terest on the money less than the rent th Iowa. Five years ago to see a consignment

Negroes
John Tyler, rancher in the badlands of N.D. when Theodore Roosevelt and the Marquis de Mores lived there, died January 24, 1928 at the Dickinson hospital. Interesting biography.

Hettinger County Herald January 26, 1928
New England

Negroes
Paul Pitts, Grand Forks alderman, believed to be the only black ever to be elected to public office in North Dakota will resign--he has been unable to find work in the Grand Forks area-story and photo

Grand Forks Herald
Dec. 14, 1977 p. 1, 2A

Negro
Bryant, Ella
Dakota's land, people have been good to Negro pioneer

Valley City Times-Record
June 24, 1964 p. 33

Negro
Allen, Carl --Grafton

was a pitching and hitting star-honored with a Carl Allen day in 1927

Grafton Record
August 24, 1977 p. B-2 "25 Years Ago"

Baines, Moses
Obituary
Baines, a farmer near Bartlett, N.D., died recently. Resided in Nelson County since 18[illegible] Was an ex-slave and believed to be about 90 years old. Called "Uncle Mose" by the local people.

Devils Lake Weekly Journal Oct. 14, 1909 p.

Negroes
Grand Forks. Colored church
Williams, Bishop W.M., of North Dakota visits
Grand Forks Herlad, Feb. 1, 1902. p.6

Negroes
Some historical facts on negroes in Territorial days in Dakota given in Robert Cory's column
Minot Daily News, April 1, 1967, page 5

Negroes
Considering settling in Dakota Territory in 1886

Washburn Leader January 11 1962 p 2

Negro

Wm. Bond, farmer six miles northeast of Esmond, beat white wife who hid out in straw stack 8½ days before being found.

Esmond Bee, Nov 11, 1905, p. 5. Roll 1701

Negro

Railroad construction worker attacked workers at Flasher, escaped.

Mandan News, July 16, 1909, p. 1.

Captured west of Dickinson, glad to be returned to jail in Mandan.

Dickinson Post, July 24, 1909, p. 5, c. 5.

Negroes

The black-owned bar in Hazen, N.D. known as Rocking R Brew and Steak is closing. The owners, Earl and Cheryll Rush, place the blame for the apparent business failure on intolerance to their mixed racial marriage. People of the town say mismanagement is the cause.

Hazen Star March 10, 1977 p.3

Negro

Charles Smith, a black and former revolutionary organizer from Watts, Calif., will speak in Grand Forks, N.D. for the American Opinion Book Store, a part of the John Birch Society. Will speak on gun control.

The Gleaner March 3, 1977 p. 1
Northwood

Negro

Negro laborer kills white worker after being called "nigger."

Wells County Free Press, Aug 3, 1906, p. 1

Negroes

Background of Preston L. Mayo, more popularly known as "Uncle Joe." Was a Negro from the South who cooked for train passengers. Lived in Moraine Township.

Larimore Leader May 12, 1976 p. 2 (photos)

Negro

Garrison, Mina
Obituary

Born a slave in Virginia in 1821, died at the home of her son James Garrison four miles southwest od Driscoll. Mother of 12 children. Lived with her son since 1909.

Driscoll News, May 24, 1911, p. 5.

Negro
Durant, Blakeley (1826-1894)
Obituary

Familiarly known as "Old Shady" died in Grand Forks Sept. 20, 1894. Faithful friend and servant of General Sherman. The cook-musician composed and sang the song "Old Shady."

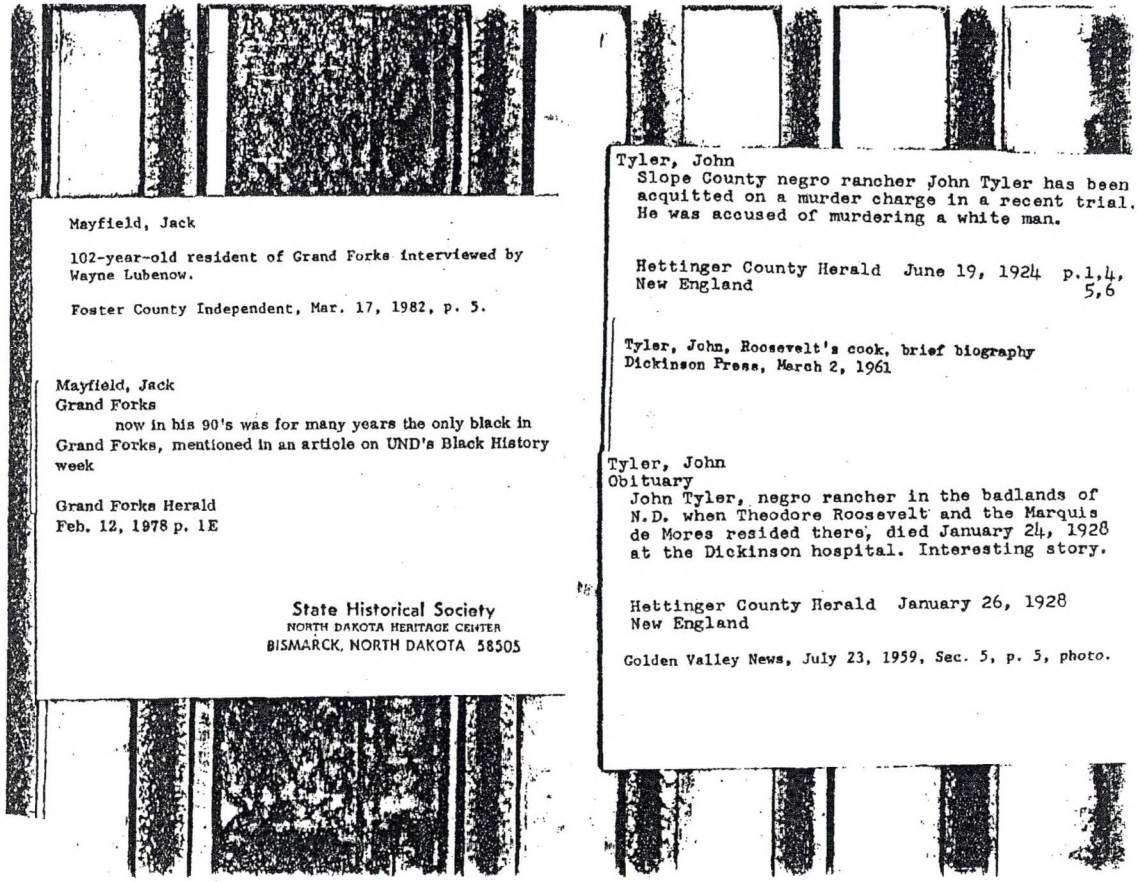
The Record, December 1895, p. 9, c 1.

Minot Daily News, Oct. 10, 1981, p. 28.

Negro

Pete McGregory, homesteader, 6 miles west of Pretty Rock; civil war veteran. Nearly 80 years old.

Mandan News, May 21, 1909, p. 1



Mayfield, Jack

102-year-old resident of Grand Forks interviewed by Wayne Lubenow.

Foster County Independent, Mar. 17, 1982, p. 5.

Mayfield, Jack
Grand Forks
now in his 90's was for many years the only black in Grand Forks, mentioned in an article on UND's Black History week

Grand Forks Herald
Feb. 12, 1978 p. 1E

State Historical Society
NORTH DAKOTA HERITAGE CENTER
BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA 58505

Tyler, John
Slope County negro rancher John Tyler has been acquitted on a murder charge in a recent trial. He was accused of murdering a white man.

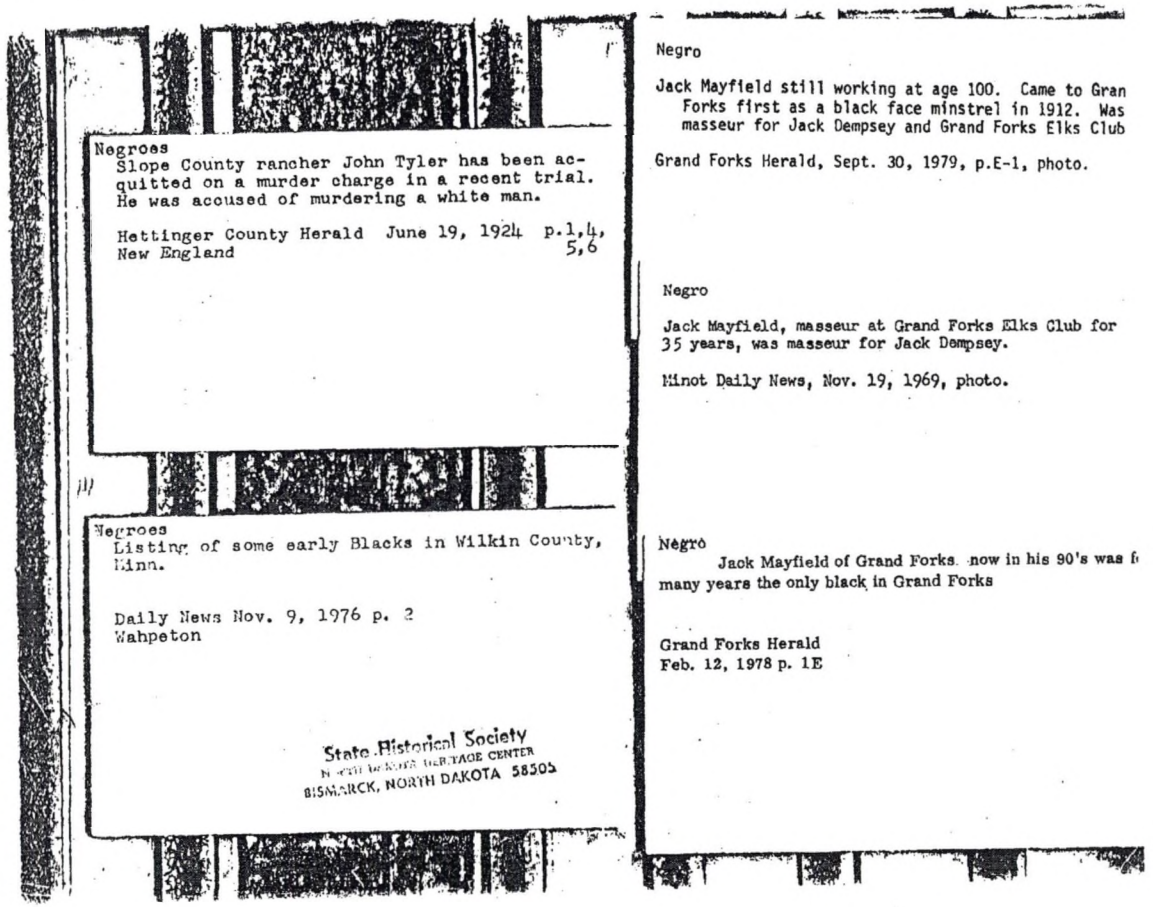
Hettinger County Herald June 19, 1924 p.1,4,
New England 5,6

Tyler, John, Roosevelt's cook, brief biography
Dickinson Press, March 2, 1961

Tyler, John
Obituary
John Tyler, negro rancher in the badlands of N.D. when Theodore Roosevelt and the Marquis de Mores resided there, died January 24, 1928 at the Dickinson hospital. Interesting story.

Hettinger County Herald January 26, 1928
New England

Golden Valley News, July 23, 1959, Sec. 5, p. 5, photo.



Negroes
Slope County rancher John Tyler has been acquitted on a murder charge in a recent trial. He was accused of murdering a white man.

Hettinger County Herald June 19, 1924 p.1,4, 5,6
New England

Negroes
Listing of some early Blacks in Wilkin County, Minn.

Daily News Nov. 9, 1976 p. 2
Wahpeton

Negro

Jack Mayfield still working at age 100. Came to Gran Forks first as a black face minstrel in 1912. Was masseur for Jack Dempsey and Grand Forks Elks Club

Grand Forks Herald, Sept. 30, 1979, p.E-1, photo.

Negro

Jack Mayfield, masseur at Grand Forks Elks Club for 35 years, was masseur for Jack Dempsey.

Minot Daily News, Nov. 19, 1969, photo.

Negro

Jack Mayfield of Grand Forks now in his 90's was f many years the only black in Grand Forks

Grand Forks Herald
Feb. 12, 1978 p. 1E

Most Blacks Have Chosen Not to Stay

By MARCIA HARRIS
Tribune Staff Writer

There are black people in North Dakota.

There have been black people in North Dakota nearly as long as there have been white people in North Dakota.

Like other ethnic groups, blacks were homesteaders, cowboys, soldiers, drifters and steamboat hands.

LIKE OTHER ethnic groups, they came in search of the promises of the American West: adventure, wide-open spaces, free land and a chance at a better life.

Today there are 2,568 blacks in the state out of a total population of 652,695, according to the 1980 census.

In most cases, blacks are in North Dakota to attend school or are with the Air Force. Most live on or near the air bases at Minot and Grand Forks.

A few stay on, but most do not.

In a sense, they fit an old pattern: blacks have always come to this state, but with few exceptions, have not settled permanently.

But they were here at the very start.

IN 1804, when Lewis and Clark began their journey up the Missouri River, they brought with them a black man called York, who served as a translator, speaking both French and English.

And when the fur trader Alexander Henry first visited the state, he brought with him a black named Pierre Bonga.

Newspaper clippings from the days of Dakota Territory contain isolated stories of blacks, usually in the form of obituaries.

But blacks didn't arrive in numbers until the latter part of the children reached adolescence, the black homesteaders left the farms. They wanted to avoid the problems of interracial marriages and wanted to preserve their culture.

Sherman's study of the black homesteaders in North Dakota matches the experience of Era Bell Thompson, a black woman who in 1917 moved as a child with her family from Des Moines, Iowa, to a small farm near Driscoll.

THOMPSON, WHO went on to become an author and international editor of Ebony Magazine, now is retired and living in Chicago.

"I think it's true about immigrants being more accepting," Thompson says.

She recalls Norwegian and German neighbors helping her family during their first difficult winter on the farm.

"These people would stop and stare at first, but they didn't know anything about black people. But neither did I," she says.

Thompson says she has no regrets about being raised in North Dakota. But Thompson, who never married, says if she had had children, she would have wanted them to grow up with other blacks, at least for part of their lives.

"HAD I attended a black school or a black college, I would have associated with people of my age and color. I think we all need that. Otherwise, you're kind of lost out there.

"I never really adjusted to black life in Chicago. I've found as much prejudice among blacks as among whites. If it came to a division of the races in this country, and I had to make a choice, I couldn't. I would just leave," she says.

"The people in Chicago didn't talk my language. I had an accent.

Blacks have always come to this state, but with few exceptions, have not settled permanently.

The Minot Air Force Base Gospel C

WHEN THE project was in the planning stages, opposition to it came from many Bismarck residents, the city commission, the park board and some of the clergy.

The proposal was quite controversial, according to articles and letters to the editor published in The Bismarck Tribune during that time.

One article seems to sum up the conflict:

"Most of the furor, however, stemmed from the supposition that some of the corpsmen would be Negroes. Bismarck now has no permanent Negro residents, and city officials argued the young men would have no contacts."

But the Job Corps at Fort Lincoln caused few problems for citizens of Bismarck.

DAVID HUMMEL, now assistant manager at Midway Furniture in Mandan, was a live-in counselor at a Job Corps dormitory at Fort Lincoln.

Hummel says that after the controversy over the project died down, there was little attempt by community leaders to deal with the black youths in any way.

"It was an isolated situation. The community ignored it as much as possible, although some efforts were made by church groups to

here only "if there black people."

Stanley, whose fath Air Force, grew up ou Force Base near Wa she misses the fashio tainment available in t

"I wish there were to go. A lot of us go up but that gets expensive

Black cosmetics ar the base, but not in to and soul records a although the selecti month behind."

"Nobody knows ho hair, for men or wome

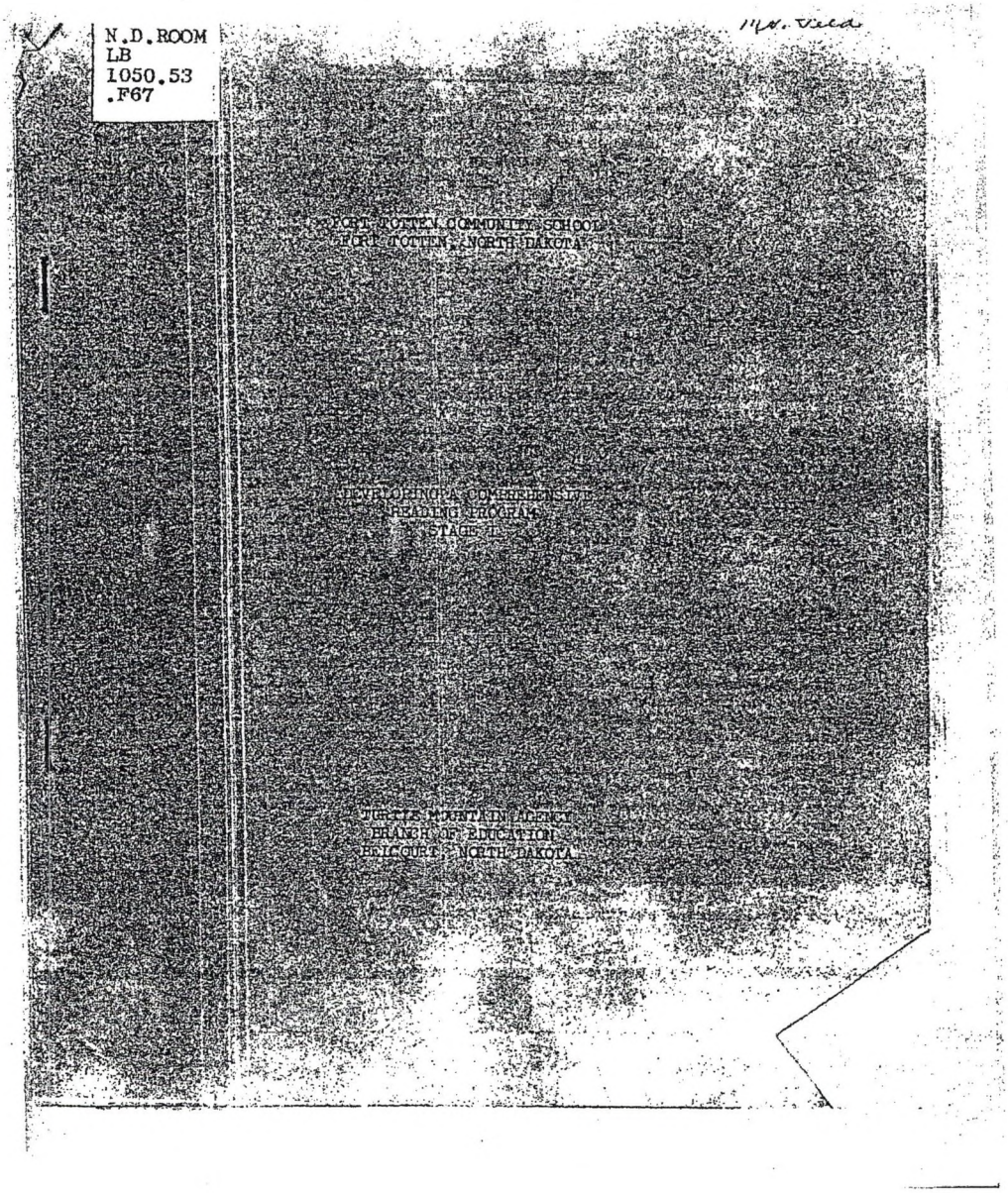
She says the dov chants are friendly, feels uncomfortable in

"SOMETIMES, YO only black couple Everyone stares. One Torchlight, me and n got up and left," she sa

Trying to provide community for black Minot has been the go Harold Ray, who hold pel services for a co about 350, directs a g about 40 voices and s time helping young b culture shock.

"The services are t source of retainable

APPENDIX H
Thelma Daggs' Chapter



Developmental Reading Program

The following material relative to the current reading program was compiled by the primary teachers, Thelma Daggs, Darlene Swartz and Alpha Randle of the Fort Totten Community School and was presented at a staff meeting. The reports covered information concerning skill in the mechanics of reading and skill in reading comprehension.

Report on Some Phases of Developmental Reading

Thelma Daggs
Grade 1B

I should like to put a preface to this report by including this general basic fact. "For success in reading all pupils in all grades need good guidance in the four types of reading which are basic, curricular, news, and literature." A basic developmental skill program provides instruction for all pupils on all grade levels in the habits, skills and abilities necessary to adequate control of reading as a means of learning. These skills vary but are essentially readiness skills, comprehension skills, vocabulary meanings, word analysis skills, and interpretative skills. Successful reading at any level, grade one through college, depends upon readiness for the type of reading to be done. Readiness consists of more than just the ability to pronounce words, important as that may be. Unless the child has the proper background and vocabulary necessary for understanding what he is to read, he cannot succeed. Readiness applies both to the primary grades and upper grades. It is a factor to be considered throughout the elementary and secondary school life of the pupil. Now to get to some of the skill and abilities necessary for good reading.

GOOD EYE MOVEMENT HABITS: One very important basic skill or ability for good reading is eye movement. Approximately five or six per cent of reading time is required for making eye movements. The remainder of the reading time is spent on fixation pauses, or stops. The eyes make short discontinuous movements as each line of type is read. A good reader will make three or four fixation pauses or stops, on each line. Since the good reader does not make very many fixation pauses in each line, he can read from 400 to 1200 words each minute. Furthermore, the good reader is more likely to comprehend more about what he has read than the poor reader. This is true because the poor reader is bogged down with word recognition or other difficulties. The poor reader makes many fixation pauses per line and very often takes a long "look see" during each pause. In the classroom, the teacher may observe eye movements by looking over the top of the book as the child reads. Poor reading habits cause the individual to use faulty eye movements, and we may conclude that inefficient eye movements are symptoms of poor reading habits. However, we cannot improve inefficient eye movements by telling the child to do better. Instead, the teacher must guide the child in the development of visual discrimination, word recognition and other skills and abilities so that efficient eye movements will be used.

Left-To-Right Progression is one of the skills to be taught as a part of good eye movement. The knowledge that the reading of English is done from left-to-right should not be left to chance discovery by the pupil. The general notion of left-to-right involves both the reading of sentences and word attack. First, the teacher should make sure that each child is using his preferred hand for all unimanual activities such as writing, cutting, and hammering. Second, in explaining left-to-right, the teacher will avoid considerable confusion if she demonstrates with her back to the class. Third, when writing on the blackboard, the teacher can call attention in an incidental manner to the left-to-right progression. Fourth, in the preparation of paper movie strips attention should be directed to the left-to-right sequence. Fifth, when dealing with bulletin board or blackboard notices and class dictated material, the teacher can emphasize left-to-rightness by means of the pointer or the sweep of the hand. Failure to emphasize this left-to-rightness may be responsible for mirror writing and later to reversals in number writing, and reversals in reading such as "left" and "felt", "saw" and "was" and "on" and "no."

Other things being equal, providing there are visual efficiency, mental maturity, and adequate background experience, the ability to distinguish between word forms can be taught. Activities for this ability include left-to-right progression already mentioned, word matching games, and constructing and using picture dictionaries. Occasionally it is necessary to resort to the kinaesthetic techniques. During the initial stages of reading, the child is concerned with the acquisition of a sight vocabulary. Visual Discrimination is sharpened by teaching him to use context clues, configuration clues, rhythm clues and picture clues. As soon as the child has acquired a sufficient stock of words to read for meaning, visual perception is further developed by systematic instruction in word analysis, word analysis activities based on phonetic principles. This is followed by activities dealing with syllabication.

In the main visual discrimination for word forms is developed through systematic guidance. Reading readiness tests are used to determine readiness of children. Those children tested who know the most letter forms and sounds tend to be among the first to learn to read and to be the best readers.

Another skill to develop is the proper Use of Books. A part of the joy in the use of books should be the care in handling them. By holding a beautiful book before the class, the teacher should lead a discussion about books to instill respect for them. Even in very young children a pride can be developed in clean, unsoiled and unmarked books. Following a discussion of the care of books, the teacher should demonstrate how to turn the pages. By means of a little practice the children can learn to hold the book in the left hand and turn the pages from the top corner with the right hand. All pupils should be carefully taught this skill which should be frequently checked during his browsing or reading activities.

My last topic deals with skills in Oral and Silent Reading. In initial reading activities silent reading should precede oral. This preparation avoids word by word reading, develops the habit of anticipating meaning, and leads to

the skill of glancing ahead so that the eye is ahead of the voice. A desirable eye-voice-span is developed so that the reader is free to look at his audience occasionally. Oral reading should be done fluently. This requires rhythm, accurate interpretation of punctuation, accurate pronunciation of at least ninety-nine per cent of the running words, and the use of a conversational tone that is loud enough for everyone in the group to hear easily. The pupil should be taught good posture and relaxation. The group should engage in audience reading. This provides practice in oral reading. The teacher should provide a convenient place and time for this practice. During such an activity, there should be no adverse criticism of the child who is over sensitive or tends to become nervous. The teacher should also determine the main cause of failure of a particular child. Then, give him helpful advice in such a way as not to embarrass him. "Look at the audience," "Read as you talk" or "Read so that everyone can hear" is good advice before the child begins. The main difficulty may be that a child reads too fast, that he fails to group his words, that he fails to emphasize the important words, that he fails to enunciate clearly, that he uses a high keyed unnatural tone of voice, that he fails to take notice of his audience.

In the earliest stages oral reading is as fast or faster than silent reading. As reading habits develop and become more mature the rate of silent reading surpasses the rate of oral reading increasingly. Much practice in reading for fun and in specialized class practice helps greatly in increasing speed and skill. In silent reading there should be no evidence of tension, finger pointing, vocalization head movement or other forms of frustration.

An important foundation to speed in silent reading is accuracy fluency and independence in word recognition and fluent accurate oral reading. Clarence R. Stone has prepared Silent Reading books expecially arranged for use in speed practice. Buswell* has outlined techniques for silent reading.

The material in this report is based on readings from:

Betts, Emmet A. Foundations of Reading Instruction.

Johnson, Eleanor M. How to Get Best Results in Reading.

Stone, Clarence R. Progress in Primary Reading.

*Buswell, G. T. Fundamental Reading Habits.

APPENDIX I
Thelma Daggs

APPENDIX J
Obituaries

THELMA BERTHA DAGGS

Thelma Bertha Daggs, a retired schoolteacher, died Tuesday at Mercy+Baptist Medical Cemetery. She was 88. Mrs. Daggs was born in Thibodaux and lived in New Orleans for the past 30 years. She graduated from Indiana State University and was a teacher for many years at the Sioux Indian reservation at Fort Totten, N.D. She was a sergeant in the Women's Army Corps during World War II. She was a parishioner of Mater Dolorosa Catholic Church. Survivors include nieces and nephews. A Mass will be said Saturday at 10 a.m. at Mater Dolorosa Catholic Church, South Carrollton Avenue at Plum Street. Visitation will begin at 8 a.m. Burial will be in Metairie Cemetery. Lake Lawn Metairie Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

DAGGS

Thelma Bertha Daggs, on Wednesday, February 6, 1996 at 7:15 a.m. Age 88 years. Daughter of the late Albertha Towles Daggs and Elijah Daggs. Sister of the late Augustine St. Amant and Wilbert Clyde Daggs. Aunt of Thelma Daggs Hathorn, Linda I. Daggs, Wilbert C. Daggs, Jr. of San Francisco, CA. and the late Gloria Lafiton, Melba Herron and Joycelyn Saucier. Also survived by a host of great and great-great nieces and nephews, other relatives and friends.

Relatives and friends, also M.L.K. Training Center, Berean Head Start Center, Greater St. Stephens Full Gospel Baptist Church and Fellowship Baptist Church are invited to attend services with a Funeral Mass at Mater Dolorosa Catholic Church, Carrollton Avenue at Plum Street, Saturday, February 10, 1996 at 10:00 a.m. Visitation at the church from 8:00 a.m. until 10:00 a.m. Interment in Metairie Cemetery. LAKE LAWN METAIRIE FUNERAL HOME IN CHARGE OF ARRANGEMENTS.

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