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Training African-American Social Workers Through the NUL Fellowship Program

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The National Urban League (NUL), under Dr. George Edmund Haynes' leadership made the training and education of African American social workers one of its major functions during the early 1900s. This article provides detailed information about the unique and timely fellowship program which provided funding and opportunities for many African American to study social work at leading schools of social work in the country. The Social Science Department of Fisk University also played a significant role in pioneering African American social work education, and is also briefly discussed.

George Edmund Haynes's pioneering role in social work education for African Americans is unparalleled. When Haynes, co-founder and first executive director of the National Urban League (NUL), joined the faculty at Fisk University in 1910, he began the tasks of developing and implementing a comprehensive social work training program (Carlton-LaNey 1983). The training program consisted of both a social work certificate program and a fellowship training program. Haynes believed that securing and training African American social workers for service in urban communities was the "most pressing need" (Haynes, 1910, PPCU) of the newly established National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes (renamed the NUL in 1920). Furthermore, he projected that a well-conceived social work training program would give Fisk University "a most marked prestige" and place the school "before the world as a champion of the most up-to-date movement for the uplift of the Negro" (Waterman, 4/19/10, SFFU). Haynes' focus, personal and political power, and clarity of purpose, so impressed the

Fisk administrators they eagerly embraced the idea of establishing the Social Science Department. The department marked the beginning of social work training for African American students, and according to Haynes, was designed to serve as a "powerful stimulus to other institutions and other centers to emulate and draw experience from" (PPCU Box 32; Carlton-LaNey, 1983).

During Haynes' years at Fisk, five courses were offered which including: (1) Elementary Economics: Principles and Organization; (2) Advanced Economics: Economics and Labor Problems; (3) Sociology and Social Problems; (4) History of the Negro in America, and (5) The Negro Problem. In order to facilitate the comprehension of material and information, Haynes, within five years, had replaced the Sociology and Social Problems course with four separate courses: (1) Principles of Sociology, (2) Playground and Recreation, (3) Practical Sociology, and (4) Statistics and Methods of Social Research (*Fisk Bulletin*, 1916:58).

Convinced that social workers needed a historical perspective from which to understand the African American condition, Haynes developed and taught both courses in African American history. He carefully crafted the two courses to cover content ranging from labor force participation to music, culture, and military strength. These were the first courses in African American history to be taught in American colleges. Haynes' beliefs about the value of history to social workers was shared by several leaders in social work education. For example, Edward Devine of the New York School of Philanthropy, in a presentation before the National Conference of Charities and Corrections in 1915, stated that it was

desirable that social workers should have definite knowledge of the historical relations of social classes to one another, of the privileged and the exploited, of the distressed and their benefactors, of the employers and wage earners (1915:609).

George Mangold, director of the St. Louis School, speaking at the same conference, concurred with Devine and added that social work leaders who lacked a historical perspective, "will lack the sound and permanent elements which are necessary for the

definite improvement of social conditions" (Mangold, 1915:613). Haynes' interest, expertise, and commitment to African American history, provided the impetus for him to join Carter G. Woodson in 1915 as a founding member of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (Jones, 1974:143).

In addition to the courses cited above, a field work component was also an integral part of the Fisk social work program. The field experience required seniors to work in the field four hours per week for a thirty week period. Six additional hours were to be spent in the study of methods of statistics and social investigation, totaling ten hours per week for field involvement (Haynes, 1911:385). The field instruction program, was similar in content and length to other pioneering schools of social work in New York, Chicago, and Boston (Meier, 1954; Abbott, 1915; Smith, 1915).

Although Haynes was pleased with the success of the social work program, he was not content. He realized that the training of qualified leaders through the social work training program had had an excellent start. Yet he recognized that "more workers could be trained if there were more facilities." Haynes concluded that "the demand exceeds the supply" (PPCU Box 32). In an effort to reach a larger number of young scholars with a propensity toward social work Haynes established the National Urban League Fellowship Program.

The Fellowship Program

The NUL Fellowship Program, a vital part of the plan for training African American social workers, developed parallel to the training program itself. It may even be said that the fellowship program provided a component so basic—that of selecting and financing social work students—that its failure may have meant the failure of the entire training program. The NUL annual report covering the fiscal year 1910–11 demonstrated the interrelatedness of the fellowship program and the training program, noting that, "Last, but no means least, is the securing and training of Negro social work scientifically and efficiently" (Jones, 9/12/49 PPCU). The term "securing" refers, in part, to the fellowship program as a prerequisite to the "training"

itself. "Securing" meant not only finding "promising [college] students . . . who wish[ed] to make social work a life calling," but providing funds in the way of fellowships that would give opportunities for study at specific schools of social work. The fellowships were "open to candidates who had completed a college course or its equivalent in an institution of good standing" (WPCU Box 2). The NUL used several means to advertise its fellowship program including addresses at conferences, newspaper articles, word of mouth, and personal letters to friends and colleagues (WPCU Box 2; Haynes, 12/9/11 HPFU). The first NUL fellows had opportunities to pursue graduate studies at the New York School of Philanthropy or at Fisk University under Haynes' supervision.

The Fellowship Committee consisting exclusively of the NUL Executive Board members, was established to serve the fellowship program. Distinguishing itself as a committee with tremendous longevity, this committee "sifted the fellowship applications and selected the successful candidates on the basis of preparation, interest, fitness, and to a degree, need" (Jones, 9/12/49 PPCU). As a member of the Fellowship Committee, Haynes was responsible for (1) distributing applications, (2) providing test questions for examination and (3) supervising the candidate's trial field experience in Nashville. Haynes' assessment of candidates was, therefore, vital since he was often the only Fellowship Committee member to have face-to-face contact with candidates who did their trial field work in Nashville. Once the Fellowship Committee made their selections, Haynes sent the necessary application information to the New York School of Philanthropy recommending students for admission (Haynes, 9/5/13 PPCU). Perhaps a similar process took place for students at Fisk, however, no data were found describing that process.

Students who applied for the NUL fellowships were required to pass a preliminary examination which was designed to test the applicant's general education and knowledge. It was based upon an entrance test which had been given, in past years, by the New York School of Philanthropy (NUL *Bulletin*, 1916). The examination, consisting of approximately ten questions, tested an applicant's general awareness of social work and her/his familiarity with current societal issues (PPCU Box 32).

It also attempted to assess the applicant's "sympathy for and protection of the weak" along with her/his unselfishness and fellowship. These were qualities deemed imperative for the selfless endeavors of social work (WPCU Box 2).

The written examination not only tested the knowledge and awareness of applicants, but via a written book review in sociology or economics, also provided an assessment of candidates' language skills and aptitude for "scholastic achievements." Eligible candidates were required to be United States citizens, over twenty-one years of age, and in good health. The Fellowship Committee's final decision also took into account the candidate's previous school work, general personality and "ability in, knowledge of, and fondness for outdoor sports and recreation" (PPCU Box 32). The increasing trend toward organized play and fresh-air work in part accounted for the latter criteria. As Haynes saw it, "wholesome amusement" was imperative and "the provisions which people had for the play life of their children and themselves was nearly as important as the conditions of labor" (1913:116).

The entrance examination tested a student's knowledge of social work and "the business of social workers." The NUL's mandate defined the business of social workers as the:

coordination and cooperation among existing agencies and organizations for improving the industrial, economic, social, and spiritual conditions of Negroes . . . and in general to promote, encourage, assist and engage in any and all kinds of work for improving the industrial, economic, social, and spiritual conditions among Negroes (LC NUL Series).

The examination, in keeping with this mandate, asked students to define such terms as heredity, juvenile court, and death rate. In addition, terms which dealt largely with economics, such as capital, unearned increment, and standard of living were included. In an effort to determine the applicant's awareness of social conditions, s/he was required to describe the industrial revolution, outlining subsequent social and economic problems. One examination question presented a hypothetical situation in which a steel plant, employing ten thousand men, was erected in open country near a village. Applicants were asked to describe the divergent social problems which could result from

such an industry. Other questions asked applicants to discuss the most important functions of the family as a social institution, citing social and economic conditions which interfere with its healthy functioning.

As noted above, the rigorous testing procedure also required that prospective candidates go to New York or Nashville for a few weeks of observation and trial in the field. If the students then showed promise in scholarship and capacity for social work as assessed by the Fellowship Committee, letters of recommendation were written and final awards made. In the case of the New York School of Philanthropy, Haynes wrote letters of recommendation to Edward Devine, the Director, requesting scholarship loans for the fellows (Haynes, 6/26/16; 8/21/13; PPCU Boxes 31 and 32).

These scholarship loans were in the form of tuition waivers. Once students were employed, they were expected to repay the loans. Eventually, as the fellowship program became more established, the schools that accepted fellows paid the tuition as part of the fellowship award. The early fellowships were provided in several forms. One consisted of a grant of \$50 per month for approximately eight months to cover living expenses. The New York School of Philanthropy gave an additional \$100 in the form of tuition. The other was an award of \$150, which was the approximate amount necessary for living expenses in Nashville and tuition at Fisk University for one year (PPCU Box 32).

The fellowships were expected to cover most of the student's expenses. Haynes, responding to one fellow's query about expenses in 1915, indicated that reference books furnished by the library would be used for much for her work and that "probably eight to ten dollars would cover what [she] would be expected to pay for books" (8/26/15 HPMV).

As the number of fellows increased and the expenses for fellows grew, the NUL was able to secure funding for the program from various sources. For example, two fellows, attending the New York School of Philanthropy in 1929, were financed by the Julius Rosenwald Fund and granted free tuition. In Pittsburgh, the Pittsburgh Urban League along with the NUL office financed one student for the same year. Similarly, individual

philanthropists such as Mrs. Samuel Sachs, and organizations such as the Department of Education of the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World (I.B.P.O.E. of W.) provided fellowships.

To ensure that fellows received executive training, each fellow was assigned regular duties both in the NUL office and in the field. The fellows in New York studied at the New York School of Philanthropy with the privileges of some courses at Columbia University. Under the auspices of the NUL, these fellows also did practical field work in connection with several other agencies in the city including Victoria Earle Matthews' White Rose Home, and the New York Charity Organization Society (HPMV 1914-15). Their field work was supervised by the NUL's Field Secretary, Eugene K. Jones. Haynes supervised the work of students in Nashville and was instrumental in organizing and developing the needed "laboratory" or agency facilities such as Bethlehem House. Students in Nashville also did practical work with agencies and/or organizations such as the Women's Missionary Council, the Methodist Episcopal Church South, and the Public Welfare League of Nashville.

The NUL had minimal obligatory requirements for its fellows. They were required to devote only one year to social work after completing their training. The fellowship and training program was designed to spread an appreciation for scholarship and training in the social work field. Furthermore, it was expected to raise the standards both of personnel and programs within the African American community (Jones, 9/12/49 PPCU Box 55). Although the NUL was one of the most important agencies pursuing social work activities during this time period, fellows were not bound to work for the League. Nonetheless, perhaps a third of the fellows at one time or another were involved either with the national office or in various positions with NUL affiliates (OPPORTUNITY, 1935:334). Forrest B. Washington, the tenth NUL fellow, went on to organize and direct the Detroit League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes and, in 1927, became director of the Atlanta School of Social Work. Washington's work was so impressive that he was described as "one of the foremost social workers during his time period" (Parris, 12/12/80). He maintained a prominent position

among social work leaders in the United States by holding successive positions as local league Executive in Detroit, Area Director of Negro Economics in the United States Department of Labor during World War I, and Director of Research of the Detroit Council of Social Agencies (Jones, 9/12/49 PPCU).

Inabel Lindsay, another noted fellow, so engaged herself in social work education at Howard University that her name was nearly synonymous with the organization and development of Howard's School of Social Work, where she became the school's first Dean in 1937 (Matthews, 1976:1). William Colson and Maurice Moss pursued careers as Executive Secretaries of the Virginia and Pittsburgh Urban League, respectively. Other fellows engaged in a wide range of social work roles (PPCU Box 55). Eugene Jones, the Executive Director who superseded Haynes, identified the following as positions held by some of their seventy-seven fellows by 1935:

Case workers with family or children's agencies	13
Aides, supervisors, etc., with emergency relief organizations	10
Professors of sociology	4
Professors of economics	1
Teacher in college	1
Public school teachers (including teacher of mental defects)	4
Director of a children's home	1
Settlement house heads	2
Big Brother and Big Sister Organization Director	1
Field of recreation	2
Field of health	2
Field of religion	2
One each in the field of girl's work with the YWCA, parole officer, and research (Jones, 1935, p. 334).	

Haynes evaluated the subsequent careers of NUL fellows as "concrete approval of our system of scholarships and fellowships and our training center methods" (12/14/16 JWJC Box 1). Not all fellows, however, brought such laudable praise to the League Fellowship Program. Chandler Owens, a 1913 fellow and one of the most prominent African American sociologists

of his time, lambasted Haynes and the NUL through his editorials in the *Messenger*. Through the *Messenger*, "the only Radical Negro Magazine" during the early 1900's, Owens and A. Philip Randolph attacked Haynes for his "compromises [in] the case of the Negro." This attack stemmed from one of Haynes' releases from the office of the Director of the Department of Negro Economics, which praised African Americans for their patriotism and "usefulness in industry" during the war. The *Messenger* expressed a lack of concern with such "loose and meaningless praise of the Negroes' part in the war" and advocated a need to force "hand-in-hand, Old School Negro leaders" from public life (1919:7). In another article entitled "The Invisible Government of Social Work," Owens and Randolph further attacked the NUL, labeling it "an organization of, for, and by capital" (1920:177). To substantiate this charge, they listed the 1919 contributors to the NUL referring to them as "capitalists or capitalist representatives." Haynes was embarrassed by Owens' outspoken rejection of the League and wrote to his friends in New York that the agency was tightening its screening of fellows (Parris and Brooks, 1971:154). According to available data, Haynes made no attempt to respond to the substance of the attack. Perhaps his firm belief in his mission and his noncontroversial style dissuaded the need for a counterattack.

Although both Haynes and the NUL were subjected to criticism, such as those presented by the *Messenger*, both were praised for their substantive contributions to social work practice and education. Perhaps the overall success of the fellowship and training program, more than any other phase of the NUL work, illustrated the organization's accomplishments and widespread acceptance. The success of the fellowship program is demonstrated not only by the large number of qualified social work fellows it produced, including Drs. Inabel Lindsay, Abram Harris, and Ira de A. Reid, but also by the prestigious schools of social work from which these fellows graduated. By 1920, this list of schools included the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy, the Social Work School of Simmons College and the Philadelphia Training School for Social Work. During the following two academic years, the fellowship program spread to the Carnegie Institute of Technology and the University of

Pittsburgh. By 1935, the list included the Atlanta School of Social Work, Ohio State University, and Bryn Mawr College (PPCU Box 55; Jones, 1935).

These schools' decision to accept NUL fellows also demonstrated their commitment to Haynes' idea that African Americans should have opportunities for professional training in social work. Students overwhelmingly took advantage of these opportunities. Furthermore, George Haynes' goal to train African American social workers came to fruition as young scholars, social work educators, organizers, and practitioners who benefitted from his work make their impact on the development of American social work and social welfare. Although Haynes left the NUL before 1920, the organization continued to develop and refine programs that he initiated. The George Edmund Haynes Fellowship Program which was established by the NUL in 1979 is a testament to Haynes' vision and commitment to the education and training of African Americans interested in human services and planned change.

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- HPFU George E. Haynes Papers/Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee
- HPVM George E. Haynes Papers, Mount Vernon, New York
- JWJC George E. Haynes Papers in the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection of Negro Arts and Letters, Yale Collection of American Literature in Beinecke Library at Yale University.
- LC NUL Library of Congress/National Urban League Series.
- PPCU Guichard Parris Papers — Columbia University Rare Books and Manuscripts—Butler Library
- SFFU Haynes' Student File/Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee
- WPCU L. Hollingsworth Woods Papers at Columbia University Rare Books and Manuscript Library

