

A Dream Deferred
Southern Black Education and the General Education Board, 1902-1916

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Introduction

The General Education Board, which was founded by John D. Rockefeller, Sr. in 1902, called for “the promotion of education within the United States of America, without distinction of race, sex, or creed.” From its founding days, however, the trustees of the General Education Board (GEB) realized that it was impossible to promote education without considering the issue of race, especially in the South, where the Board felt that resources for education were most lacking. From 1902 to 1918, the GEB appropriated almost \$2.5 million for black education in the South as compared to over \$24.5 million on “general appropriations,” or white education. By 1909, Rockefeller’s gifts to the board totaled \$43 million. In 1910, the GEB accounted for only 4% of all gifts to black education made by Northern philanthropies, including various missionary societies. Historians have often cited these figures to show that the GEB was biased in its approach and that its cautious spending on Southern black education in the first fifteen years reflected a certain skepticism that prevented full-scale aid to desperately needy institutions of black education.¹

This work contests the notion that the GEB neglected black education in the first fifteen years of its existence. There is no doubt that the members of the GEB, affluent Northern industrialists and Southern-bred leaders, harbored racial prejudices and assumptions which shaped their views on black education; however, in order to gauge the historical significance of the GEB, it is important to distinguish the intentions of the Board from its actual decisions and practices. By examining racial and intersectional tensions as well as personal motives, this work

¹ General Education Board, *General Education Board: Review and Final Report 1902-1964* (New York: General Education Board, 1964), vii. Eric Anderson and Alfred Moss, *Dangerous Donations: Northern Philanthropy and Southern Black Education, 1902-1930* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 220, citing General Education Board Appropriations in Black and White, 1902-1918, General Education Board, *Annual Report, 1918-19*, 68-70, 222, citing General Education Board Appropriations for Black Education, 1919-1933, General Education Board, *Annual Reports*.

will explain how the development of the foundation, its internal and external politics, and the social complex of its times framed the direction of the Board and influenced its decision-making process. Rather than relying solely on the fiscal reports to pass judgment on the effectiveness of the GEB's policies towards black education, a nuanced exploration of the foundation's programs, its personnel, and its evolving ways will yield a clearer and more accurate picture of why spending was limited in the first fifteen years and in what ways the GEB continually addressed the issue of Southern black education.

(i) The Southern Education Movement

By the late nineteenth century, John D. Rockefeller, Sr., who had amassed unprecedented wealth as founder of Standard Oil, began to focus his energies on philanthropy. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who had just graduated from Brown University in 1897, worked on his father's behalf and took on new responsibilities in the family's philanthropic operations. The Rockefellers were firm believers in the advancement of black education. Rockefeller, Jr. had witnessed his family's dedication to black education since he was a child. At ten years old, he had visited a Baptist seminary for black girls in Atlanta, Georgia, which was supported by his father and later renamed Spelman College, after his mother, Laura Spelman Rockefeller and her parents, who were once antislavery activists. A year later, Rockefeller, Jr. visited Hampton Institute and began making gifts to the school from his allowance on a regular basis. By the time he began working for his father, Rockefeller, Jr. entertained the idea of forming a Negro Education Board to consolidate philanthropic activities related to black education. At around the

same time, Rockefeller, Jr. became acquainted with Robert C. Ogden, a wealthy Northern capitalist who had taken the initiative to promote education in the South.²

Ogden had been an ardent supporter of black education since 1868, when he helped his college friend and Union army general Samuel C. Armstrong to establish the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Virginia. He was an active member of Hampton's board of trustees from 1874 to 1894, and served as president of the board from 1894 until his death in 1913. Having gained his fortune as manager of John Wanamaker's New York department store, Ogden used his business connections to funnel Northern donations to Hampton. He was also instrumental in raising money for the establishment of Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in 1881. Tuskegee was an offshoot of Hampton, and its first principal was Booker T. Washington, a graduate of Hampton and eventually the leading figure in black industrial education. By the end of the nineteenth century, Ogden spearheaded a movement in the South that embraced the Hampton-Tuskegee Model as the ultimate solution for black education.³

Industrial education was the belief that blacks should be trained to carry on work in Southern agriculture. It was developed with the assumption that the majority of the black population would remain fixed in the rural South and would continue to occupy the laborer role in the Southern economy. Samuel Armstrong, the man credited with developing industrial education, felt that only through manual labor and intense discipline would young blacks be taught to have the "moral character" necessary to do work. At Hampton, many of these young black students were trained to become teachers who would go on to spread the message of hard

² Raymond B. Fosdick, Henry F. Pringle, and Katharine Douglas Pringle, *Adventure in Giving: the Story of the General Education Board, a Foundation Established by John D. Rockefeller* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 4-8.

³ James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 86-88. Louis R. Harlan, "The Southern Education Board and the Race Issue in Public Education," *The Journal of Southern History*, vol 23, no. 2 (May 1957): 189-190. Ralph E. Luker, *The Social Gospel in Black and White: American Racial Reform, 1885-1912* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 125-127.

work and discipline to the Southern black masses. This form of education suited the affluent class of Southern whites, especially the plantation owners, who, after emancipation, sought to find ways to take control of black labor. With sharecropping emerging as one of the most effective ways for white plantation owners to control labor, industrial education became a useful accessory in conditioning a class of compliant black laborers.⁴

Historian James Anderson in *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, argues that Armstrong sought to “socialize” blacks through “the right industrial training [that] would make them an economic asset instead of a burden to the South.” Anderson finds Armstrong’s pronounced ideology and the imposition of manual labor on students to be veiled elements of white supremacy intended to subjugate blacks to a perpetual lower caste. Anderson strongly suggests that industrial education was a type of pseudo-education in which blacks were forced to toil in manual labor (e.g. hoeing and sawing) or engage in unenlightening domestic activities (e.g. sewing and baking) all day long. However, it is important to note that industrial education also included academic training such as English grammar, arithmetic, and American history. While, as Anderson notes, blacks were often subjected to long hours of labor and given limited time for their academic studies, the aim of industrial education was not to replace academic education; it was to ensure the development of black leaders whose mission was to placate black community concerns about social injustice while promoting the idea of uplift through “hard work” in agriculture. Through this process, white supremacy, the belief that whites are

⁴ Michael Dennis, “Schooling Along the Color Line: Progressives and the Education of Blacks in the New South,” *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 32 (summer 2001): 117. J. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 41-42. Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990), 78-81.

inherently superior to blacks, manifested itself in industrial education by working to mute discontent and political agency among Southern blacks.⁵

Ogden would hardly have considered a man like himself a “white supremacist.” He had thoroughly supported Booker T. Washington as the first principal of Tuskegee Institute and communicated to the black leader on various occasions regarding the future of blacks in America. In a 1896 letter to Washington, Ogden expressed his concerns about the “industrial position” held by blacks in the South: “[T]hey need not fear competition in the low grade of agricultural labor, but the higher positions of skilled labor and industrial leadership it seems to me must be grasped within a decade and tenaciously held, or they will be lost forever.” Ogden seemed to suggest that it was important for blacks to progress beyond agricultural labor.⁶

In 1899, at the second meeting of the Capon Springs Conference on Southern Education in West Virginia, however, Ogden’s views on black education began to change. The Capon Springs Conference, formerly known as the Capon Springs Conference for Christian Education, brought together progressive Southern whites – progressive in the sense that they supported universal education rather than education for only whites – and Northern white philanthropists in order to discuss the various issues of education in the South. Ogden, who saw men like himself as representatives of the “best North,” believed that the Southern white contingent, which included a group of North Carolina educators and a new breed of businessmen, represented the “best South” in terms of values and outlook on race relations. The conference excluded blacks and Indians, and black institutions were represented by their white workers. The conference, influenced heavily by the views of Southern white educators, quickly adopted two tenets that

⁵ J. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 43-59. W.B. Evans to Frissell, no date [1903], folder 1620, box 173, series 1, General Education Board, Rockefeller Archive Center.

⁶ Ogden to Washington, May 23, 1896, *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, vol. 4, 172.

would define a new movement in Southern education: universal public education and the proliferation of the Hampton-Tuskegee Model. By the fourth conference, which took place in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Ogden expressed a shift in priorities among Northern philanthropists: “While we were originally interested in the South through negro education, our impulses have risen from negro education to the question of the entire burden of educational responsibility that you have throughout this entire section of the country.” In the spirit of intersectional cooperation and greater ambitions, Ogden began to see Southern black education as just one of the issues in the overall project of improving Southern education.⁷

The formation of the Southern Education Board (SEB) was announced in November 1901, and the committee consisted of Northern businessmen such as Wall Street banker George Foster Peabody, railroad executive William H. Baldwin, Jr., and Southern educators such as Charles Dabney, president of the University of Tennessee and Edwin Alderman, president of the University of Virginia. The president of this committee was none other than Robert Ogden, and the activities of the SEB, which lasted from 1901 to 1915, are collectively referred to by historians as the “Ogden Movement.” According to historian Louis R. Harlan, the SEB, with its limited funding and resources, was primarily “a propaganda agency both in the South and in the North” that issued literature and arranged speaking tours to inform and persuade people to donate and support the idea of universal education in the South.⁸

John D. Rockefeller, Jr. was present at the Conference on Southern Education in Winston-Salem in April 1901 when talks about the SEB first began to take shape. He was an

⁷ J. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 80-81. Luker, *The Social Gospel in Black and White*, 144-145. Quoted from Louis R. Harlan, *Separate and Unequal: Public School Campaigns and Racism in the Southern Seaboard States 1901-1915* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1958), 75.

⁸ Harlan writes that the SEB “flooded” the South with handouts and bulletins to arouse educational sentiment for a better supported public schooling system. Harlan, *Separate and Unequal*, 76-77, 89. E. Anderson and Moss, *Dangerous Donations*, 43.

invited guest on the “Ogden train,” a luxurious Pullman car expedition for fifty prominent Northern reformers interested in Southern education. The trip was personally funded by Robert Ogden, whose fortune from his days as manager of John Wanamaker’s New York department store allowed for such spending, and made stops at various black industrial schools, including Hampton and Tuskegee. Rockefeller, Jr. was impressed by the trip, calling it “one of the outstanding events in my life.” Raymond B. Fosdick, in chronicling the development of Rockefeller Jr.’s philanthropy, notes that a comment, during the return trip to New York, by Henry St. George Tucker, president of Washington and Lee University, greatly influenced the Rockefeller, Jr.’s approach to Southern education:

If the poor white sees the son of a Negro neighbor enjoying through your munificence benefits denied to his boy, it raises in him a feeling that will render futile all your work. You must lift up the ‘poor white’ and the Negro together if you would approach success.⁹

This message suggests that Northern philanthropists were well aware of the tenuous position they held as outsiders trying to affect change in the South, especially with any actions that seemed to bring attention to the race issue.¹⁰

Excited about the possibility of impacting Southern education and also taking in the various perspectives gained on the trip, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. consulted his father about creating a philanthropic foundation dedicated to improving education in the United States. With the philosophy of “scientific philanthropy” provided by trusted business advisor Frederick T. Gates, Rockefeller, Jr. began to meet with active members of the Ogden Movement that included members of the SEB. Ogden, Peabody, Baldwin, and Wallace Buttrick, secretary of the Baptist Home Mission Society, played important roles in shaping the charter of the new foundation. In January 1902, at the second meeting held by Rockefeller, Jr., the General Education Board was

⁹ Quoted from Fosdick et al., *Adventure in Giving*, 7.

¹⁰ See Section ii.

formed. At the same meeting, Baldwin was elected chairman of the board and Wallace Buttrick was named executive secretary. The GEB was formally chartered by Congress in early 1903 and Rockefeller, Sr. pledged \$1 million, to be spent in ten years. With interlocking members on both boards, the GEB and SEB worked closely together on the issue of Southern education.¹¹

(ii) White Supremacy and the Racial Climate of the South

To understand the social and political contexts in which the General Education Board operated, it is important to examine the evolving state of race relations in the South by the early twentieth century. The withdrawal of federal troops from the South in 1877 marked the end of Reconstruction, a brief period in which Republican idealism and military intervention granted equal civil and political rights to both blacks and whites. It was during this fleeting moment of social equality that blacks strongly expressed their desire for universal education. They moved quickly to open their own schools and staffed them with black teachers. Black churches were among the most active in pushing for autonomous black education. For example, the African Methodist Episcopal (AME), in 1868, enrolled 40,000 pupils in its Sunday schools and estimated over 200,000 students seventeen years later. The freedmen, according to historian James Anderson, went beyond the establishment of self-help education and were “first among native southerners to wage a campaign for universal public education.” Working together with the Freedmen’s Bureau, Southern blacks enthusiastically partook in the creation of a public schooling system that, by 1865, numbered 575 schools in fourteen southern states. The political autonomy practiced by the blacks during Reconstruction could only coexist with their economic

¹¹ Albert F. Schenkel, *The Rich Man and the Kingdom: John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and the Protestant Establishment* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 73-74. Fosdick et al., *Adventure in Giving*, 6-8. GEB, *General Education Board: Review and Final Report 1902-1964*, 18.

dependence for so long. Reconstruction, in the end, failed because blacks were denied land ownership and the planter class regained power by reclaiming their status as the primary landowners of the South. Social progress for blacks came to a screeching halt with the “Redemption” of the planter class, and the New South ushered in an era of political and civil repression.¹²

Southern whites, led by the planter class, began a rigorous campaign of violent racism to disenfranchise blacks in the 1890s. Historian C. Vann Woodward, in *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, notes that the increased intensity of racism in the South was “due not so much to a conversion as it was to a relaxation of the opposition.” The North, having tired of the “Negro problem” after a frustrating Reconstruction era, saw a decline in support for the views of Radical Republicans, who had fought for racial equality in the South. Southern planters, eager to restore their political dominance, sought ways to disenfranchise blacks as well as poor whites. By setting up literacy and property qualifications, poll taxes, grandfather clauses, and all-white primaries, Southern planters successfully eliminated the potency of the black vote and also limited the poor white vote. In many states, lynching, along with the government’s blind eye towards mob violence, terrorized and discouraged blacks from participating in politics.¹³

By disenfranchising the blacks, Southern planters were able to pass legislation that allowed them to establish a racial hierarchy that echoed the power relations of the antebellum era. Labor contracts bound blacks to a specific employer while enticement laws made it illegal for a laborer under contract to work for someone else. Vagrancy laws, which made it illegal

¹² J. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 4-27. E. Anderson and Moss, *Dangerous Donations*, 15-17. Eric Foner, *America’s Black Past: A Reader in Afro-American History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 206-209. Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1998), 112-113.

¹³ C.V. Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 51. Martin Carnoy, *Education as Cultural Imperialism* (New York: D. McKay & Co., 1974), 283. T.F. Gossett, *Race: the History of an Idea in America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), 265.

for non-landowners to be without labor contracts, forced blacks into a subservient agricultural labor class. Sharecropping gave blacks the illusion of economic autonomy but still forced them into an unequal relationship with white planters whose production demands pushed blacks into debt. These conditions disabled black hopes for social mobility and economic independence. Blacks, who had enjoyed, although briefly, the possibility of universal education during Reconstruction, found themselves stripped of the political and economic resources necessary to develop a viable educational solution. The Northern philanthropists who sat on the Board of Trustees for the GEB were aware of the plight of blacks in the New South. While some criticized, in private, Southern attitudes towards blacks, many of them believed that the blacks were limited in progress because of their inherent weaknesses. It was a view that echoed the sentiments of white supremacy in both the North and the South, a prevalent ideology in race discourse towards the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁴

In the antebellum era, Southern whites had defended slavery with the assertion that blacks were inherently inferior in both moral character and intellectual capacity, claims that were made based on long-held stereotypes. Race studies, which began in the mid-nineteenth century, were used by whites in both the North and the South to justify, with an air of science, the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon and the inferiority of blacks.¹⁵

The nineteenth century saw various attempts in anthropological race studies, including the measurements of crania undertaken by Samuel Morton and later, by Josiah Clark Nott. Both men believed that a larger cranium meant greater average intelligence, and they asserted, although with questionable data and methods, that Anglo-Saxons had the largest cranial size

¹⁴ J. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 24-25.

¹⁵ James M. McPherson, *The Abolitionist Legacy: From Reconstruction to the NAACP* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1975), 339.

while blacks, Indians and Chinese had smaller cranial capacities. Later studies would disprove the correlation between brain or skull size and intelligence, but these studies quickly gained public approval and became, as factual knowledge, part of the national discourse on race.¹⁶

Southern whites, especially those of the planter class who envisioned a society in which blacks would remain as immobile laborers, found supportive arguments in Social Darwinism, championed by English sociologist Herbert Spencer in the late nineteenth century. Spencer created his concepts by extracting Darwinist observations and applying them to men. Therefore, the struggle among different species of animals, in human terms, became a struggle among races. This analogy spawned new theories about racial conflicts and the superiority of certain races over others. Spencer adhered to the Lamarckian concept of inherited traits and coined the phrase “survival of the fittest” to popularize his views of a progressive world. He advocated a laissez-faire ideology and criticized governments that provided social services for “interfering with the processes of wholesome natural selection.” Many whites in the South embraced Spencer’s laissez-faire ideology and rejected the idea of universal public education, asserting that “the Negro is by birth and natural capacity fitted only for manual labor.”¹⁷

Southern progressives, who included white educators from large institutions such as the University of Virginia and the University of North Carolina as well as white middle-class businessmen, believed in the moral and mental inferiority of blacks like their planter counterparts, but, like Hampton founder Samuel Armstrong, felt that blacks could be taught to embrace “Christian values” such as hard work and self-discipline. They whole-heartedly supported industrial education and called it “sound investment in social stability and economic

¹⁶ Gossett, *Race: the History of an Idea in America*, 73-75.

¹⁷ Gossett, *Race: the History of an Idea in America*, 144-175. J.S. Haller, *Outcasts From Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority, 1859-1900* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 121-142, 207-210. McPherson, *The Abolitionist Legacy*, 219.

prosperity” in that it would train a class of well-behaved black laborers. The Southern progressives also supported the disenfranchisement of blacks because it removed the threat of political action by blacks for social equality. In supporting the Ogden Movement, which, in essence, called for a separate type of education tailored to the assumed needs of blacks, the Southern progressives espoused a form of white supremacy that echoed the segregation movement in the Jim Crow era of the 1890s and early 1900s in which public facilities became segregated and blacks were systematically forced to submit to unequal treatment. Southern educators believed that the value of teaching blacks was considerably less than the value of teaching whites and readily accepted the discrepancies in teacher salaries and funding for supplies and equipment between white and black public schools in the South. In a letter to GEB chairman William Baldwin, Booker T. Washington noted that in Alabama, “the whites receive practically \$8 per child and the colored \$1 per child” and challenged the Southern white assumption that “the school fund is evenly divided between the races.” Such concerns, while discussed by the GEB, were rarely addressed. The Southern contingent of the GEB, which included educators Charles Dabney, Edwin Alderman, and Samuel Mitchell, felt that black education and white education were completely separate entities. Their influence and leadership on both the SEB and the GEB, to a large degree, enforced the element of white supremacy in the GEB’s approach to black education.¹⁸

(iii) Origins of Northern Philanthropy in Southern Black Education

¹⁸ Dennis, “Schooling Along the Color Line: Progressives and the Education of Blacks in the New South,” 115-118. Booker T. Washington to Baldwin, March 28, 1902, folder 7427, Box 722, GEB, RAC

While Southern white progressives pressed their agenda of white supremacy in the formative years of the General Education Board, the GEB was also influenced by the earlier efforts of other Northern philanthropic foundations in the field of Southern education. These foundations set precedents for Northern philanthropies by identifying the South as a region needing major aid, especially in education. In 1867, wealthy financier George Peabody, a native of Massachusetts, established the Peabody Education Fund with a gift of \$1 million. Peabody, not to be confused with SEB member George Foster Peabody, supported a philanthropic model that emphasized long-term planning and employed conditional grants rather than charitable giving.¹⁹

Traditional American philanthropy, exercised by individuals and Christian groups, was rooted in Judeo-Christian principles of charity and influenced by the social welfare practices of English statutory and common laws. Within this framework, philanthropy addressed social problems such as poverty and disease by providing immediate aid (i.e. buying food for the hungry, medicine for the sick). Modern philanthropic foundations, rather than provide funding for direct use, sought to find ways to prevent the source of the problem. Such high-minded goals entailed research and long-term planning. Early on, modern philanthropic organizations recognized the need to work closely with governments at both the state and federal level in order to influence wide-reaching public policy decisions. The Peabody Fund, committed to a long-term goal of helping to establish an adequate state system of education in the South, exhibited

¹⁹ Joseph C. Kiger, "The Large Foundations in Southern Education," *The Journal of Higher Education* 27, no. 3 (Mar., 1956): 125-132. Earle H. West, "The Peabody Education Fund and Negro Education, 1867-1880," *History of Education Quarterly* 6, no. 2 (Summer, 1996): 3-21.

the qualities of a modern philanthropic foundation and influenced subsequent philanthropies interested in Southern education.²⁰

The John F. Slater Fund, founded by and named after a cloth manufacturer of Connecticut in 1882 with a \$1 million gift, was a foundation of the Peabody mold. The Slater Fund adhered to the policy of conditional grants, requiring beneficiaries to raise matching funds through the state or other interested parties. Its long-term goal was to increase the pool of teachers in the South, and its funds were primarily used to support teacher training and teacher salaries at black industrial schools. However, unlike the Peabody Fund, which allocated only \$75,750, or 6.5 percent of its overall giving to black education from 1867 to 1880, the Slater Fund was solely designated for improving black education. This distinction did not keep philanthropists from serving on both boards, as was the case with Jabez L.M. Curry, Wickliffe Rose, and other men who also became members of the SEB and GEB. The Slater and Peabody Funds served as effective stimulants to a larger orchestrated effort to reform Southern education.²¹

Rockefeller, Sr. had given generously to his Baptist congregations and had poured millions of dollars into higher education throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. In the late 1880s and early 1890s, Rockefeller met with Baptist educational leaders to assess the situation regarding the University of Chicago, which had closed down in 1886 due to financial problems (Rockefeller eventually gave over \$35 million to the school in the next decade). It was during these meetings that Rockefeller was introduced to Frederick T. Gates, formerly a Baptist

²⁰ Merle Curti, "American Philanthropy and the National Character," *American Quarterly* 10, no. 4 (1958): 14-33. Warren Weaver, *U.S. Philanthropic Foundations: Their History, Structure, Management, and Record* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 25.

²¹ Earle H. West, "The Peabody Education Fund and Negro Education, 1867-1880," 2. Kiger, "The Large Foundations in Southern Education," 126-127. B.C. Caldwell, "The Work of the Jeanes and Slater Funds," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 49, *The Negro's Progress in Fifty Years*. (Sept. 1913): 173-176. Harlan, *Separate and Unequal*, 7-8, 85-86.

minister and then serving as secretary of the American Baptist Education Society. Frederick T. Gates, with his combination of intensity and frankness, quickly became a confidante of Rockefeller. His business savvy and administrative skills soon enabled him to become Rockefeller's closest advisor not only on matters of the family's business, but also on the question of how to give.²²

Gates worked closely with Rockefeller, Jr. to outline the objective of the General Education Board. He first served as a trustee on the board and then as chairman from 1907 to 1917. Gates strongly believed that philanthropy should direct money towards research, endowments, and ideas rather than buildings. He scoffed at those who seemed to care more about erecting buildings that vainly bore the donor's family name. Gates was a harsh critic of steel tycoon Andrew Carnegie's philosophy of giving, which focused on gifts that led to the immediate erection of new facilities.²³

Carnegie, in an essay now referred to as "The Gospel of Wealth," expressed his belief in the rich man's obligation to administer his own wealth and serve as "the sole agent and trustee for his poorer brethren... doing for them better than they would or could do for themselves." Carnegie, whose assets were worth more than \$350 million, encouraged wealthy individuals to help found universities, build libraries and other facilities such as hospitals, parks, and concert halls. Gates contemptuously dismissed Carnegie's philosophy as "retail philanthropy." Historian Judith Sealander, in *Private Wealth and Public Life*, notes that the word "retail" was a Gates's euphemism used for "the highest indication of scorn." For Gates, philanthropy was a

²² Weaver, *U.S. Philanthropic Foundation*, 34-35.

²³ GEB, *General Education Board: Review and Final Report 1902-1964*, 96.

means of achieving social change through “big ideas.” In other words, philanthropy, done the right way, was “wholesale.”²⁴

Gates and the Rockefellers believed that efficient and organized structure of their business ventures could be applied to the new philanthropic institutions. These philanthropies would be run by independent boards of trustees staffed by specialists who would formulate detailed plans and make informed decisions on behalf of the benefactor. The goal of philanthropies was not to develop entire systems that would rid society of its problems; both Rockefeller and Gates saw such an approach as fruitless. Like the Peabody and Slate Funds, the Rockefeller philanthropies (there would be seven created by 1932, including the GEB) sought to raise awareness through demonstrations, conduct thorough research, and find ways to influence public policy making decisions. Gates encouraged the idea of working together with public officials and using the philanthropic foundations as incubators of new ideas that the government could then absorb and fully subsidize.²⁵ In an era of limited government spending and drastic social changes (such as the situation in the South), Gates saw great philanthropic potential in wealthy private citizens. “Few crowned kings,” he said,

have ever been able to exercise the power that twelve or fifteen uncrowned men actually do exercise every day, as they surround the table of the Board of Directors of the United States Steel Corporation.²⁶

As the chief advisor to the wealthiest “king,” Gates laid out the blueprints to the Rockefeller-funded foundations of the early twentieth century.

²⁴ Frederick T. Gates, “The Purpose of the Rockefeller Foundation with Suggestions as to Policy of Administration,” typed report, 1906, Rockefeller Family Archives, Record Group 2, folder 198, box 19, Series: “Rockefeller Boards,” RAC. Andrew Carnegie, “Wealth,” *North American Review*, vol. 148, no. 391 (June 1889): 653. Judith Sealander, *Private Wealth & Public Life: Foundation Philosophy and the Reshaping of American Social Policy from the Progressive Era to the New Deal* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 252.

²⁵ Weaver, *U.S. Philanthropic Foundation*, 36-37.

²⁶ Frederick T. Gates, “Competition vs. Cooperation,” undated typed manuscript, Gates, box 1, folder 13, RAC.

Working through the philanthropic framework envisioned by Gates, the General Education Board began its operations in April 1902 in a two-room office on Nassau Street in New York. Wallace Buttrick, a close friend of Gates since their days as members of Baptist mission societies, conducted the day-to-day business of the GEB as its first executive secretary. From what seemed to be humble beginnings for an organization funded by America's wealthiest man, the GEB moved quickly to influence the course of Southern education.²⁷

(iv) The GEB and Its Programs

Wallace Buttrick was seldom found in his Nassau Street office. The GEB, instantly recognized by the public through its association with Rockefeller, was flooded with requests for funding. Buttrick, keeping Gates's "wholesale" idea in mind, traveled to the Southern states to conduct field work in order to understand the problems of Southern education. Buttrick and his staff planned surveys for each state and collected data related to education. In the fall of 1902, the GEB sponsored a series of conferences for county superintendents in Georgia, Virginia, the Carolinas, and Florida. Topics such as school consolidation, finances, and black education were discussed at these conferences. The field agents of the GEB prepared monographs containing various statistics related to Southern education for members of the Board. Figures from these monographs, which revealed that less than half the children of school age (black and white) were enrolled in existing public schools, convinced the Board that no amount of private giving would ever be enough to establish an adequate universal public school system.²⁸ The Board sought to gain support from the local communities through the work of its agents. In a report of its

²⁷ Fosdick et. al, *Adventure in Giving*, 13-14.

²⁸ Fosdick et al., *Adventure in Giving*, 17-21. General Education Board, *The General Education Board: An Account of Its Activities, 1902-1914* (New York: n.p., 1915), 12-13.

activities from 1902 to 1914, the Board stated its desire to “aid, not by foisting upon the South a program from outside, but by cooperating with Southern leaders in sympathetically working out a program framed by them on the basis of local conditions and local considerations.” The Board felt that its activities were geared towards customization according to the needs of each local community rather than a single template imposed on each new area.²⁹

In working towards the development of a comprehensive public education system, the GEB also carefully managed its perception among Southern whites. According to historians Eric Anderson and Alfred Moss in their work *Dangerous Donations: Northern Philanthropy and Southern Black Education, 1902-1930*, many Southern whites, having reclaimed power after Reconstruction, felt threatened by the presence of Northern philanthropy in the South. Anderson and Moss provide “three basic assertions” made by these Southern white critics: (1) Northern philanthropy had a “hidden agenda for the Negro” and subverted existing race relations; (2) they had a “patronizing attitude toward the South”; and (3) Northern philanthropists, by creating an “educational monopoly,” retarded “southern self-reliance” and exercised inordinate powers by “[closing] schools of which it disapproved.”³⁰

Members of the GEB felt that an inharmonious relationship with Southern whites jeopardized the Board’s chances of gaining support for a public education system. In a confidential report to the Board in 1904, Buttrick felt that blacks “ought to participate proportionately with the whites” in education. “But,” he went on, “we are confronted ‘with a condition and not a theory.’ . . . We shall err and invite defeat, if, in the present state of public sentiment, we demand too much from the white people of the South.” The GEB adhered to the aims of the Ogden Movement, which had made conscious efforts to appeal to the broadest

²⁹ GEB, *The General Education Board: An Account of Its Activities*, 14.

³⁰ E. Anderson and Moss, *Dangerous Donations*, 49-56.

Southern white population by downplaying its intentions to help black education. In showing its commitment to improving the lives of Southern whites, the GEB launched its Farm Demonstration program in 1906, which was led by Seaman Knapp, a renowned educator who specialized in agriculture.³¹

In 1886, Seaman Knapp, as faculty member and president at the State Agricultural College at Ames, Iowa, traveled to Louisiana and successfully demonstrated the arability of the land, persuading newcomers to employ his methods to grow rice. Knapp's method included the use of carefully chosen seeds and strict observance of his "Ten Agricultural Commandments" that included crop rotation and use of better machinery. Knapp was eventually employed by the United States Department of Agriculture and went on missions trips to Asia and the West Indies. In 1903, amid the Mexican boll weevil plague in Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas, Congress appropriated \$40,000 for Knapp's demonstrations in heavily infected counties. Buttrick, while visiting Texas, became aware of the program and immediately pushed for its expansion to other Southern states.³²

James Wilson, the Secretary at the Department of Agriculture, told Buttrick that his department lacked the authority to expand the demonstrations to areas not affected by the boll weevil. Buttrick felt that the Southern states would benefit greatly from a program that taught practical skills in agriculture, and he went on to secure the Board's approval to fund the expansion of the Knapp demonstrations. In 1906, Buttrick and Wilson signed a memorandum that allowed the GEB to subsidize the salaries of over six hundred state agents conducting farm demonstrations all over the South. During the next eight years, the GEB provided almost \$1 million to the program. Southern blacks were largely excluded from the demonstrations as the

³¹ Quoted from Harlan, *Separate and Unequal*, 94.

³² Fosdick et al., *Adventure in Giving*, 39-45. Sealander, *Private Wealth and Public Life*, 47-48.

demonstrations took place in predominantly white regions in the South; the only funding appropriated for blacks was for demonstrations at the Hampton Institute.³³

What should have been a tremendous success in winning the confidence of Southern whites turned out to be a disaster for the General Education Board. This outcome was due to matters outside the realm of philanthropy. In April 1914, the Rockefeller-owned Colorado Fuel and Iron Company refused to negotiate with the United Mine Workers in the community of Ludlow, Colorado. A violent skirmish broke out among state militia, there to protect the company's interests, and the UMW, leading to forty deaths and headlines about the "Ludlow Massacre." The Rockefellers quickly became public targets for their ownership stake, and politicians in Washington, according to Sealander, were quick to capitalize on the situation and found every means to discredit and attack anything Rockefeller.³⁴

Senator William Kenyon of Iowa, informed of the agreement between the General Education Board and the Department of Agriculture, led a vicious attack on the "conspiracy" to create an "invisible government – through gifts to education." "It is no more right for Rockefeller to be paying the employees of the Department of Agriculture," Kenyon decried, "than it would be for him to pay the salaries of the members of the Supreme Court or the Senate." At the height of the Rockefellers' unpopularity, Kenyon even led a campaign to revoke the charter of the GEB. The measure failed to pass, but the federal government passed instead the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, which appropriated a minimum of \$4 million a year to support programs such as the Knapp Farm Demonstrations and forbid out-of-state organizations from giving to such programs. On a political level, the Smith-Lever Act disassociated the government

³³ Fosdick et al., *Adventure in Giving*, 45-46. Sealander, *Private Wealth and Public Life*, 49.

³⁴ "Refuses to Halt Deadly Mine War," *The Washington Post* (1877-1954), Apr 28, 1914; ProQuest Historical Newspapers *The Washington Post*, 1.

from the GEB; on a strictly policy level, the government had decided to adopt and supplement the proven program. While the politics of Washington, D.C. left a feeling of bitterness for the members of the General Education Board, the Smith-Lever Act proved to the GEB that private giving could spur wide-reaching public policy decisions.³⁵

The GEB's activities were not confined to farm demonstrations. In 1905, the Board authorized a plan to develop the high school system in Southern states. The existing system, according to a GEB report, lacked any real organization and was often "merely the addition of two or occasionally three grades" to an elementary school. Studies of existing Southern high schools prior to 1902 by the State Department of Education and by the Bureau of Education in Washington showed that a great majority of the schools outside of major cities "had no separate rooms or instructors, no organized curriculum, no regularly organized classes, [and] no differentiation of subject matter according to the qualifications of the teachers." The GEB's plan regarding high schools involved collaboration with each Southern state university to create a post for a "trained specialist in secondary education – a man who could inform, cultivate, and guide professional, public, and legislative opinion" in order to push forward the development of a high school system. The GEB agreed to pay for the salaries of these agents, who would also serve as faculty members at state universities. Beginning with Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Tennessee in 1905, states allowed these specialists, also called "professors of secondary education," to begin their work. These men, all white, conducted field work that informed the GEB and the states of educational conditions in the South. They also worked as

³⁵ "Spurns Oil King Fund," *The Washington Post* (1877-1954); May 2, 1914; ProQuest Historical Newspapers *The Washington Post*, 4. Sealander, *Private Wealth and Public Life*, 54-57. Quoted from "Scorn Rockefeller Money," *New York Times* (1857-Current file); May 5, 1914; ProQuest Historical Newspapers *The New York Times*, 3. "Kenyon Reveals Dark Plot," *New York Times* (1857-Current file); May 2, 1914; ProQuest Historical Newspapers *The New York Times*, 2.

lobbyists who drafted bills and launched local campaigns to win appropriations for public high schools. Bruce R. Payne, the specialist representing Virginia, traveled all over the state and noted the “dilapidated structures” of schoolhouses and the lack of interest in education among Southern whites living in Rappahannock County. He also obtained pledges from candidates running for state office and made sure elected officials followed up on their promises. The efforts of such men were instrumental in making education an important issue in the South. By 1914, eleven Southern states added over \$50 million through taxation to their school funds, student enrollment rose sharply, and four-year high schools, practically non-existent in rural areas a decade earlier, were created by the dozens in ten states. Such vast improvements, however, were limited to the white population.

Booker T. Washington, having observed the discrepancy between the remarkable progress in white education and the relatively non-existent progress in black education, wrote to Wallace Buttrick in 1910. “I very much fear,” he wrote, “that if the General Education Board continues to employ people to encourage white high schools, and does nothing for Negro high schools, the southern white people will take it for granted that the Negro is to have few if any good high schools.”³⁶ As principal at Tuskegee and an influential black leader, Washington has often been characterized, whether by historians or by opponents of his day, as a proponent of “gradualism” and accommodation with Southern racism, but at many instances, Washington expressed his frustration with the GEB’s overcautious approach. From 1902 until his death in 1915, Washington was the only black leader in constant touch with the members of the Southern Education Board and the GEB.³⁷

³⁶ Quoted from Fosdick et al., *Adventure in Giving*, 110.

³⁷ McPherson, *The Abolitionist Legacy*, 354-375. Fosdick et al., *Adventure in Giving*, 21, 25-33.

Washington's pleas went largely ignored. The influence of Southern white progressives on the SEB and GEB made arguments in support of black education only tougher. Calling for "universal education," which in essence meant public schools for whites, the Southern progressives adopted the rhetoric of caution when it came to any mention of "Negro education." The GEB willingly accepted an odd logic put forth by a Southern member of the Board: "The education of the white youth of the South is the shortest road to the education of the Negro." It was a statement that only made sense within the context of white supremacy: Southern progressives believed that the Southern whites who fiercely opposed any form education for blacks would only support black education if a comprehensive educational system for whites was developed first. And even then, Southern progressives explained, black education could only exist in a form that was proper for the mental capacity of its race: industrial education. Booker T. Washington, as the main spokesperson for Hampton-Tuskegee Model in the early twentieth century, generally agreed with the notion that the majority of blacks were better suited for industrial education. However, he also believed that allocation of resources to black education should not be sacrificed for the sake of white education. While historically criticized for what seemed to be his public complicity with white supremacy, Washington never strayed from making the advancement of black education his top priority.³⁸

(v) Higher Education and Tuskegee

Before examining Washington's involvement and interaction with the General Education Board, it is worth exploring his educational philosophy and his personal activities on behalf of black education in order to understand why his influence was largely ineffective in the decisions

³⁸ Dennis, "Schooling Along the Color Line: Progressives and the Education of Blacks in the New South," 115-117. Former Confederate veteran, J.L.M. Curry, quoted from Fosdick et al., *Adventure in Giving*, 31.

made by the GEB. Two topics reveal the complexities of Washington's beliefs and actions: the higher education of blacks and the administration of Tuskegee.

When discussing black education in the early twentieth century, historians have often highlighted the struggle between the industrial education advocated by Booker T. Washington and the academic education advocated by William Edward Burghardt DuBois, a black intellectual and Washington's contemporary. While there were ideological differences in the vision each leader held for the black race, their interests were not wholly polemical. Starting in 1905, DuBois, after observing the Ogden Movement and the GEB's focus on white education, accused the Washington of surrendering black civil and political rights and cooperating with Northern philanthropists to create Hampton and Tuskegee clones all over the South. DuBois had generally supported industrial education because he believed it instilled discipline and trained much-needed teachers, but felt that the proliferation of industrial schools such as Hampton and Tuskegee would sap funding from Negro colleges. For DuBois, the academic training – which followed a classical curriculum that included the study of languages, literature, and philosophy – offered by colleges such as Howard University and Atlanta University would gear exceptional African Americans for leadership of their race. Ironically, Washington's popularity had greatly benefited some of the most established Negro colleges in their neediest moments. Washington served as a trustee of Howard University as well as Fisk University, which DuBois had attended as an undergraduate. While Washington often criticized the curricula of these institutions for covering too many “abstract subjects rather than concrete subjects,” he used his influence over Northern philanthropists such as Andrew Carnegie and J.P. Morgan to raise funds for Negro colleges. In 1913, for example, he took charge of a fundraising campaign at Fisk and raised over \$200,000. While Washington's exclusion from the meetings of the GEB raises questions about

his influence and impact on the foundation, his ability to raise funds from various Northern philanthropists should not be overlooked. As much as Washington's belief in industrial education drew criticism from black proponents of higher education, Washington never opposed the idea of higher education for blacks and felt that Negro colleges should be strengthened, not undermined.³⁹

A great bulk of Washington's time as Tuskegee's principal was spent on the road visiting various philanthropists and leaders in hopes of raising money and increasing publicity. Washington biographer and historian Louis Harlan notes that as Tuskegee's spokesperson, Washington portrayed the school in ways that suited the audience. For Southern whites, Tuskegee taught its student to be obedient and geared towards agricultural labor, while for Northerners, Tuskegee trained skilled workers who could provide non-union labor to industrial centers. Tuskegee did employ a curriculum which included elements that would have appealed to both groups, but to blacks, Washington portrayed the Tuskegee curriculum as a program centered on self-help. "The quality of self-help," Washington preached, "[is] the most important and significant force in the uplift of any person or race, the absence of which must be regarded as a fatal defect of character."⁴⁰

While Tuskegee has historically been labeled an industrial school, especially because of Washington's own application of the term and his association with Hampton, it is interesting to note that the school's faculty was distinctly divided into industrial teachers and academic teachers. Industrial teachers who specialized in agriculture or manual labor skills were often

³⁹ Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Wizard of Tuskegee, 1901-1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 174-190. W.E.B. DuBois, *A W.E.B. Du Bois Reader*, ed. Andrew G. Paschal (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1971), 31-51.

⁴⁰ Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington*, 144. An Article in *The Independent*, November 23, 1905, *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, vol. 8, 445.

self-taught or had minimal formal education. George Washington Carver, the celebrated agricultural chemist, was one example of an industrial teacher who taught specialized courses without a formal educational background. The academic faculty, however, was staffed with “college-bred men” who graduated from institutions such as Harvard, Oberlin, and Atlanta University. DuBois noted that the prevalence of these highly educated men at Tuskegee was a sign that more and more black institutions would require highly educated teachers with academic backgrounds. Washington’s public emphasis on the importance of industrial education and his simultaneous hiring of talented academic teachers created tensions between the academic and industrial faculty members, who often competed for greater control of the curriculum. Washington held firmly on to the notion that education should be something “concrete” rather than “abstract,” and advocated programs that seemed to bridge the two sides such as writing “essays on how to prepare a field for turnips” or “an arithmetic class [that] figured the amount and cost of plastering the recitation room.” This balancing act was a departure from the late nineteenth century, when an industrial school was centered on manual labor with very basic academic courses. In the early twentieth century, Tuskegee still offered an industrial program, complete with manual labor, to the great majority of students who lacked literacy skills, but for the students who demonstrated high levels of learning, Tuskegee had the resources to offer them comprehensive academic training necessary to progress on to the college level. That Tuskegee willingly adapted itself to the changes in the levels of black education under Washington reflects a degree of flexibility in Washington’s educational philosophy. “Self-help” had been his mantra since the founding of Tuskegee in 1881, but it was used in the context of instilling self-discipline and a hard-work ethic among blacks; by the 1900s, Washington continued to preach his earlier version of self-help but also embraced a self-help philosophy that valued the preparation of black

students for college education and race leadership. Washington was an accommodationist in that he remained unsupportive of black leaders who agitated for political power or equal social treatment and was more inclined to work within the framework of racial injustice and the notions of white supremacy. However, this did not preclude him from desiring change, and it is important to note that the greatest difference between DuBois and Washington may not have been their approach to education, but their approach to timing. While DuBois never gained a wide audience among whites, in both the North and the South, Washington, for two decades, became the most widely respected and influential black leader in the eyes of white America.⁴¹

(vi) Booker T. Washington and the GEB

Booker T. Washington entered Hampton Institute in 1872 and soon became its most outstanding student. Samuel Armstrong, the Hampton founder and the architect behind black industrial education, convinced Washington to serve as the chief spokesperson of the Hampton-Tuskegee Model. Named the first principal of Tuskegee, Washington, by virtue of being black, brought credibility to the Ogden Movement.⁴²

Washington gained national fame in 1895 when he delivered what came to be known as the “Atlanta Compromise Address” at the Cotton States and International Exposition. Southern whites applauded Washington’s sense of “realism” and found his outlook on black education to be compatible with their views on race. “Our greatest danger,” Washington declared, “is that in the great leap from slavery to freedom we may overlook the fact that the masses of us are to live

⁴¹ W.E.B. DuBois, *A W.E.B. Du Bois Reader*, 50-51. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington*, 145-151. Donald Johnson, “W.E.B. DuBois, Thomas Jesse Jones and the Struggle for Social Education, 1900-1930,” *The Journal of Negro History*, vol. 85, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 81-84.

⁴² J. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 102-103.

by the productions of our hands... No race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem.”⁴³

The speech not only advocated industrial education, which trained black teachers to spread the message that blacks were to become agricultural laborers, but it also scoffed at the notion of social equality – Washington referred to it as “extremest folly” – for the present moment. Washington voiced no concern regarding the recent segregation movement, legalized by Jim Crow laws, and told the audience that “[in] all things that are purely social, we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress.”

Washington’s accommodationist stance reflected his willingness to work within the social framework of white supremacy in order to avoid racial tension while achieving gradual social progress for blacks. Southern whites, neo-abolitionists, Northern philanthropists, and even members of the black community supported Washington’s views in 1895. Such wide support allowed Washington to emerge as the face of black leadership at the turn of the century.⁴⁴

The influence of Southern whites on the General Education Board prevented Washington’s full participation in both the GEB and the Southern Education Board. He was never granted membership as a Board member and excluded from the meetings. Wallace Buttrick, in a letter to William Baldwin, expressed his concern for the omission of a black voice on the Board and suggested Washington’s inclusion. “We are favorable to the full education of Negroes,” Buttrick wrote, “and this fact should be made known by calling to our counsels the man of all men who is best fitted to advise us.” Such lobbying efforts never saw fruition, and Washington was forced to work on the periphery. “I confess to you personally,” Washington

⁴³ The Standard Printed Version of the Atlanta Exposition Address, Sept 18, 1895, in *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, vol. 3, 583.

⁴⁴ Harlan, *Booker T. Washington*, vii-ix. McPherson, *The Abolitionist Legacy*, 359. W.E.B. DuBois to Washington, Sept 24, 1895, in *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, vol. 4, 26.

wrote to Baldwin in 1903 regarding a report he was asked to submit to the Southern Education Board, “that I have found it difficult to bring myself to the point where I could feel it proper to make a written report to a body which did not feel that it could afford to have me personally present at a meeting in order that I might make a report in the same way that the other officers made theirs...” While Washington expressed his grievances privately, he continued to serve as a paid agent to the SEB and GEB.⁴⁵

In 1905, the Anna T. Jeanes Fund gave Washington an opportunity to partake in the decision-making process of Northern philanthropy. The Jeanes Fund focused on the development of rural schools for blacks, and its endower Anna Jeanes specifically requested Washington’s involvement. He served as chairman of the Jeanes trustees. The Jeanes Fund also included members of the GEB such as George Foster Peabody, James Hardy Dillard, and Howard Frissell. It was no wonder then that “the Jeanes teachers,” black agents dispatched to rural areas, bore much resemblance to the “professors of secondary education” who worked with state universities to develop the South’s high school system. Jeanes teachers visited various country schools, gave lessons on industry, organized parents’ clubs, campaigned locally for better equipment and a longer term, and advised the local teacher on various matters. The Jeanes Fund, while forty times smaller than the GEB, contributed \$200,000 between 1906 and 1912, almost a third of what the GEB spent on industrial schools and black colleges in a twelve-year span. While its impact was relatively minor in scale (compared to programs for Southern whites), the Jeanes Fund allowed blacks to establish and develop much-needed schoolhouses in rural areas. In 1913-14, for example, Jeanes teachers working in Virginia helped to build 22 new rural school houses, enlarge 12, and extend the terms of 182 schools by one month. The Jeanes

⁴⁵ Buttrick to Baldwin, August 21, 1903, folder 3177, box 305, GEB, RAC. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington*, 190-191. Washington to Baldwin, September 9, 1903, *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, vol. 7, 278.

teachers were also able to coordinate local fundraising efforts that totaled almost \$30,000 for school improvements. The GEB took much of the credit for the achievements of the Jeanes Fund, and rightly so because of its effective guidance. However, that it took outside funding and specific instructions for use in black education only to finally spur on GEB involvement reveals a great deal about the the Board's conservative attitude and hesitancy in taking the initiative to help Southern blacks.⁴⁶

If Washington was successful in raising money for industrial education from Northern philanthropy, then the General Education Board was one of his least generous donors. A memorandum to GEB members sent in January 1911 showed that Tuskegee had received over \$4 million in donations since its founding in 1881. From 1902-1914, the GEB contributed \$135,483.48 to Tuskegee and \$555,781.13 overall to industrial education. On this scale, the GEB's effort to sustain industrial education was limited and Washington's requests for additional funding were largely ignored. Washington found greatest success in soliciting money from steel tycoon Andrew Carnegie, Sears & Roebuck founder Julius Rosenwald, and a number of other individuals who were inspired by Washington's personal life story, published in his book *Up From Slavery*, and charmed by his ability to flatter.⁴⁷

The positive results of the Jeanes teachers convinced the GEB that more could be done for black education. Jackson Davis, a white Southerner from Virginia, was the first state supervisor of black rural schools. His work was sponsored by the Peabody Fund and the position was a brainchild of Wickliffe Rose, who also served as a trustee on the GEB. Buttrick, impressed with Davis's work, pushed for the extension of the supervisor-agent program. By

⁴⁶ GEB, *The General Education Board: An Account of Its Activities*, 196-197. Fosdick et al., *Adventure in Giving*, 88-89. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington*, 196.

⁴⁷ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Dover, 1994), 25-35. Memorandum to all Members, January 16, 1911, folder 3651, box 353, GEB, RAC.

1914, white agents supervised black elementary schools in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. These agents, whose salaries were subsidized by the GEB, were official state employees, and they worked exclusively to improve rural black public education. As it had done with farm demonstrations, the GEB sought the cooperation of the government, this time working with the states, in order to give agents official authority and to push for public funding. The agents' responsibilities included organizing weekend and summer institutes for black teachers, lobbying for state appropriations, and supervising the Jeanes teachers. They also attempted to improve relations with local Southern whites through "industrial exhibits," which displayed live work demonstrations such as "sewing, chair-caning, basketry, and gardening," in hopes of persuading the Southern whites that the education of blacks was helpful and productive for the entire community.⁴⁸

By the time of Washington's death in 1915, the GEB had developed its own way of contributing to black education. Robert Ogden and William Baldwin, Jr., key Northerners in the Ogden Movement, had also died in previous years, and the original Southern members of the board, the progressives who had influenced much of the GEB's earlier decisions, had moved on as well. Experiments with state agents in both black and white education as well as the foundation's firm belief in working towards a long-term goal convinced the GEB that black education would benefit most from the establishment of a public school system. The GEB placed its faith, perhaps too optimistically, in Southern white progressives to ensure the adequate support from the state for black education. This decision to prioritize public education for blacks meant decreasing funding to the less established black institutions and encouraging blacks to turn over their schools to state superintendents, all of whom were Southern whites.

⁴⁸ Fosdick et al., *Adventure in Giving*, 93-97. GEB, *The General Education Board: An Account of Its Activities*, 194-195.

(vii) The Jones Report Reflects GEB Plans

While Northern philanthropy, whether it was wealthy industrialists, foundations founded by successful businessmen, or missionary societies, made progress for elementary-level education, blacks still lacked an adequate high school system in the South. Booker T. Washington, since the founding of Tuskegee, had advocated for an “independent survey of the black private schools and colleges that competed for funds in the North” which would set a kind of “objective standard” for all black institutions. In 1912, the Phelps-Stokes Fund, which originally helped to improve conditions of New York tenement buildings and also sought to help blacks and Native Americans through long-term projects, commissioned \$50,000 to conduct such a study on black education in association with the United States Office of Education. While Washington recommended the appointment of his ghostwriter Robert E. Park, the Phelps-Stokes Fund chose Thomas Jesse Jones, a Welch-born immigrant and sociologist who had worked on developing a social studies curriculum at the Hampton Institute. Jones, who received his Ph.D in Sociology from Columbia and had previously studied “Negro statistics” with the Census Bureau in 1910, took five years to compile and publish a two-volume report titled *Negro Education: A Study of the Private and Higher Schools for Colored People in the United States*. *Negro Education*, or the Jones Report, as it was called, pointed out the shortcomings of the Ogden Movement, which advocated industrial education for blacks, even though Jones himself had been an educator at Hampton. Jones noted that in the entire South, there were a total of sixty-four black public high schools, only forty-seven of which offered four years of education. As a white educator, Jones was not a proponent of black autonomy in education, although he did not oppose it either. In observing black-controlled private schools, Jones felt that they did not reach enough

of the population in the South and recommended wide-scale efforts to establish public education. He even encouraged the closing of schools that severely lacked the resources to stay competitive.⁴⁹

Northern philanthropic foundations found the report useful because it determined which black secondary and industrial schools were deserving of support and which were best left unfunded. The release of the report attracted fierce criticism from W.E.B. DuBois who used his magazine *Crisis* to condemn Jones for his attempts to reorganize black education through the report.⁵⁰ In the report, Jones, like DuBois, supported the development of higher education for blacks and named schools such as Fisk, Howard, Atlanta, and Richmond as “first-class” institutions while criticizing industrial schools such as Snow Hill Institute, a Tuskegee offshoot, as poorly run and “ineffective.” Jones made various recommendations for black institutions that ranged from improvement in student life conditions to reorganization of the school’s administration. Studies showed that foundations and the schools followed over fifty percent of the report’s recommendations. Jones also identified sixteen state-controlled agricultural and mechanical schools as the institutions with the most potential for training teachers especially because of their “official school system status.” Like the General Education Board, Jones felt that educational institutions would be most effective if they had the backing of the government.

While blacks, most notably DuBois, had conducted their own field research and written

⁴⁹ Fosdick et al., *Adventure in Giving*, 112-113. E. Anderson and Moss, *Dangerous Donations*, 202. Walter Crosby Eells, "Results of Surveys of Negro Colleges and Universities," *The Journal of Negro Education*, vol. 4, no. 4. (Oct. 1935): 476-481.

⁵⁰ DuBois felt that Jones sought to “lower the peaks in African-American college and professional training and intensify its isolation from the academic mainstream for more than decade.” DuBois also felt that Jones wholeheartedly approved industrial education while deriding black-run liberal arts institutions. Historians Eric Anderson and Alfred Moss in *Dangerous Donations: Northern Philanthropy and Southern Black Education, 1902-1930* argue that DuBois inaccurately dismissed the Jones Report as a propaganda piece and that Jones was more sympathetic towards the idea of equal education for blacks than DuBois made him out to be. Also see Harlan, *Booker T. Washington, 1901-1915*, 201 and Johnson, “W.E.B. DuBois, Thomas Jesse Jones and the Struggle for Social Education, 1900-1930.”

extensively on the conditions of black institutions in previous years, the Jones Report became an important survey because it was the first of its kind conducted by whites and supported by a respectable philanthropic organization and the federal government. This air of legitimacy allowed the report to gain wide circulation among various foundations and provided a nationally recognized standard towards which philanthropies could work. While hardly a call for radical change, the report identified problems that foundations could immediately address through grants and additional field work. The General Education Board, however, had already updated its direction and attitude on black education a year earlier.⁵¹

In November 1915, when the Negro Education Conference took place in the Broadway office of the Rockefeller Foundation, the makeup of the General Education Board had changed. Thirteen educators, including Abraham Flexner, assistant secretary of the GEB, Hollis Frissell, the principal of Hampton, Thomas Jesse Jones, and James H. Dillard, president of the Jeanes Foundation, were in attendance. Most notable was the presence of three black participants: John Hope of Morehouse, W.T.B. Williams of the Slater Fund, and Robert R. Moton, the successor of Booker T. Washington at Tuskegee. The inclusion of blacks at the meeting signaled a shift from the earlier days, when the Board's discussions on black education precluded any input from blacks themselves. With the original Southern white trustees no longer a part of the Board, more liberal-minded trustees were willing to listen to the opinions of black educators and leaders.⁵²

The GEB, led by Flexner, outlined the Board's initiatives and its primary goals. The GEB continued to believe that the ultimate way to educate blacks was to establish a permanent public education system supported by taxation. What troubled some of the participants was

⁵¹ E. Anderson and Moss, *Dangerous Donations*, 202-207. Raymond Wolters, *The New Negro on Campus: Black College Rebellions of the 1920s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 14-15.

⁵² Conference of the General Education Board on Negro Education, November 29, 1915, 70, GEB. RAC. Fosdick et al., *Adventure in Giving*, 102. E. Anderson and Moss, *Dangerous Donations*, 85-87.

Flexner's insistence that black private schools should not receive great support if public schools were to develop. Flexner even suggested "sweating out" some of the less efficient private institutions by cutting off funding, allowing only the "best" schools to survive. John Hope disagreed with the approach, cautioning the Board about the growing population of blacks and the need for more facilities. He also warned Flexner that blacks often desired a black-run private school because of its autonomy and self-reliance. If such schools were closed down, Hope argued, "the Negroes... would start another college, and we would be worse off than we are now." As for industrial education, Moton and Williams criticized the Hampton-Tuskegee Model for lacking academic training that gave young black leaders "certain intellectual powers." Both men felt that industrial training should only be a part of an overall curriculum that trained effective black leaders.⁵³

Two months later, in January 1916, an ad hoc Committee on Negro Education, consisting of Frissell, Wickliffe Rose, Flexner, and E.C. Sage issued a GEB report that was, to a large degree, consistent with the actions of the Board. "The field of Negro education is almost without limit, the very magnitude of the work offering a temptation to spread out unwisely," the report warned. The report maintained its commitment to public education but also admitted "that many decades will elapse before Negro education is adequately provided through taxation." The Board agreed that proven private schools should still be supported, but warned against becoming "the main prop of any one school." Absent in the report was any mention of respecting the racial sentiment of Southern whites or the incapacity of blacks to receive higher education. The report that emerged in 1916 was not much different in goals and aims from the proclamations of the Board a decade earlier. What was significant, however, was that the report was a direct address

⁵³ Conference of the General Education Board on Negro Education, November 29, 1915, 110-141, 150-160, GEB, RAC.

of black education – something that the Ogden Movement had made taboo subject – and that the report came after an interracial meeting in which the voices of blacks were heard and recorded. The GEB no longer hesitated in making public its plans for black education.⁵⁴

Conclusion

As the most visible Northern philanthropy in Southern education, the General Education Board has been scrutinized by historians for underlying motives and hidden agendas numerous times. There is no question that the GEB, in its earlier years, was heavily influenced by the Ogden Movement, which focused on the development of public education for Southern whites and industrial education for Southern blacks, considering that the major figures of the Southern Education Board were also trustees and officers of the GEB. The GEB was at first an ardent supporter of industrial education, giving more to Tuskegee, Hampton, and the Spelman Seminary than it did to black colleges. However, the GEB's commitment to industrial education soon faded with the death of its chairman William H. Baldwin, who was perhaps the most vocal supporter of the Hampton-Tuskegee Model and close friend of Booker T. Washington. What survived throughout the various programs and policies was the Board's commitment to establishing a system of public education, for both whites and blacks. Frederick T. Gates had envisioned a comprehensive system of education in the United States supported by taxation. This dream was never forgotten, and the GEB's initiatives were often picked up and fully funded by the state or federal government.

The social context in which the GEB existed had much to do with its decisions. While there is no doubt that Northern philanthropists espoused their own form of white supremacy,

⁵⁴ "Negro Education," January 24, 1916, 1-3, box 329, GEB, RAC. E. Anderson and Moss, *Dangerous Donations*, 93-94.

their concern for intersectional tension was genuine. The Southern whites, having “redeemed” the South after Reconstruction, were suspicious and skeptical about the reform-minded gestures offered by the North. For many, the slightest idea of “universal education” was unacceptable; even if their own children were to be publicly educated, it was not worth the education of blacks who might one day clamor for social equality. The GEB, operating out of New York, faced the challenges of improving a region that was economically underdeveloped and socially charged with racial tensions.

As a philanthropic foundation, the General Education Board was thoroughly modern. By “modern” in this sense, the GEB was an organization that believed in progress and that its ideas would improve in the future. The GEB was a bureaucratic structure that recognized the importance of its adaptability from the start. The GEB’s charter required meticulous accounting practices and periodic reports to ensure that the Board was accountable for all its activities. As mentioned before, field work was highly valued and detailed observations provided the data necessary to make informed decisions. While it took more than a decade to finally shed itself of Southern prejudices and fears that limited spending on black education, the GEB never ignored the issue. Through the Jeanes Fund, Slater Fund, or the secondary school specialists, the GEB was almost always involved with creating strategies and policies for black education. Even in ignoring some of the recommendations of Booker T. Washington, the GEB was not neglectful of black education; it involved itself in a continual negotiation process in which the views and intentions of Northern philanthropists, Southern white progressives, and Southern white conservatives sought to push their respective agenda on black education. What was most unfortunate about the process was the omission of the African American perspective, which, save Booker T. Washington’s limited role, did not have access to the Board’s decision-making

process until 1915 when the fiercest period of white supremacy had passed and new leadership emerged on the Board.

From 1925 to 1931, the GEB poured \$25 million into black education, most of which was allocated to private schools. This was a departure from Flexner's firm commitment to public education, but it was also an example of the Board's modern sense of assessing the situation and acting accordingly. It had realized, after twenty years of trying, that alternative sources of education needed to exist along with a still-developing public education system. Also, with a growing population of black students and a stronger voice for equality in the black community, the GEB responded with a record sum that provided schooling for a generation of students who would go on to fight for integration.

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