

EDUCATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION: AFRICAN AMERICAN EDUCATION IN
THE URBAN SOUTH, 1865-1890

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
Department of History.

Chapel Hill
2010

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ABSTRACT

HILARY NICOLE GREEN: Educational Reconstruction: African American Education in the Urban South, 1865-1890
(Under the direction of Heather A. Williams)

The central question that I ask in this dissertation is: how did African Americans and their supporters create, develop, and sustain a system of education during the transition from slavery to freedom in Richmond, Virginia and Mobile, Alabama? For newly freed African Americans, education served as a means for distancing themselves from their slave past, for acquiring full access to the rights of American citizenship, and for economic mobility in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War. Unwilling to accept African Americans' claims of citizenship through education and new postwar realities, many local white elites and restored city governments in the urban South opposed African American education. These socioeconomic conditions forced African Americans to seek strategic alliances with both non-local groups supportive of educational attainment, such as the Freedmen's Bureau, Northern missionaries, as well as a few local, sympathetic whites. African Americans' process of building networks to yield education for the largely under and uneducated masses, I argue, amounted to Educational Reconstruction. These relationships were continually negotiated, accommodated, and resisted by all involved as each had a stake in the success and failure of African American education. As in any relationship, power struggles ensued and internal strife sometimes marred the networks. Even as African Americans witnessed a contested

terrain concerning African American education globally, nationally, and locally to limit the growth of black education between 1865 and 1890, African Americans experienced educational triumph through two major developments in African American education---the Freedmen's Schools and state-funded public schools. As partners and circumstances changed, this dissertation argues that urban African Americans never lost sight of these aims in their struggle for educational access and legitimacy for the African American schoolhouse. Through Educational Reconstruction, African Americans successfully moved African American education from being a non-entity to a legitimate institution, established a professional class of African-American public school teachers, and ensured the continuation of this educated middle class for future generations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation could not have been completed without the help and support of many people. My advisor, Dr. Heather A. Williams, has assisted me at every stage of writing. She provided encouragement, guidance, and editorial suggestions that have only enhanced the dissertation. I would like to acknowledge the members of the dissertation committee: Dr. W. Fitzhugh Brundage, Dr. William L. Barney, Dr. Crystal Feimster, and Dr. Jerma A Jackson. Your comments have made for a better dissertation. Thank you.

I would like to also thank my family, friends, and co-workers for their support during these past months. My parents, Millicent and Nathaniel Green, and my brothers, Joshua and Zachary, have always encouraged me in this endeavor with their unconditional love and support. They have also endured my anxieties and ramblings without complaint. Thank you for reminding me why I decided to embark on this project. Your words of encouragement continue to motivate me.

Stretching the boundaries of a typical friendship, Marja (Brown) Humphrey, Catherine Connor, Georgina Gajewski, Elizabeth Gritter, Bryna O'Sullivan, and Dwana Waugh have read, commented, and offered advice on several sections of the final project. Thank you for serving as the necessary voices of reason during every phase of this project.

The project would not have been possible without several fellowships and archives. Travel grants from the Center for the Study of the American South, the

Massachusetts Historical Society, the Virginia Historical Society, and the History Department at the University of North Carolina allowed me to conduct necessary research. I would also like to give many thanks to the archivists and staff at the following facilities: the Massachusetts Historical Society, Virginia Historical Society, Library of Virginia, Virginia State University, Vanderbilt University, Duke University, University of South Alabama, Mobile Municipal Archives, Mobile Public Library, Historic Mobile Preservation Society, Davis Library at the University of North Carolina, and the North Carolina Collection at Wilson Library. Furthermore, the Doris G. Quinn Fellowship allowed me to write and complete this dissertation. I am grateful to have received these valuable resources.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the late Gerald R. Gill. While at Tufts University, he showed me that a life in the academy could combine teaching, scholarship, and community service without conflict. His encouragement and unconditional support allowed me to become the scholar, teacher, and community activist that I am today. You will be greatly missed but never forgotten.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.	viii
INTRODUCTION.	1
Chapter	
I. THE QUEST FOR ACCESS AND LEGITIMACY BEGINS: AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY AND THE FREEDMEN’S SCHOOLS, 1865-1867	13
Richmond: Remaking the Former Confederate Capital.	16
Mobile: Hard Struggle for Access and Legitimacy	57
II. IN TRANSITION: STATE CONSTITUTIONS, PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND THE FREEDMEN’S SCHOOLS, 1867-1870.	93
State Constitutional Conventions and the Creation of the Public Schools.	98
Richmond: From Resistance to Acceptance.	106
Mobile: Competing Visions and Communities at Odds.	120
III. REDEFINING USEFULNESS IN RICHMOND AND MOBILE: THE CREATION OF A CORPS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS.	152
Richmond Colored Normal: Richmond’s Response to the Crisis.	156
Emerson Institute: Fulfilling Mobile’s Needs.	195
IV. SHIFTING STRATEGIES: THE QUALITY CAMPAIGNS AND THE AFRICAN AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 1870S.	223
Richmond: Struggle for Quality Public Schools and a Unified Campaign.	225

Mobile: A Community’s Struggle for Quality Public Schools.	261
V. WALKING SLOWLY BUT SURELY: QUALITY CAMPAIGNS AND AFRICAN AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 1880s	310
No Longer Crawling: Readjusters and Success in Richmond.	311
Still Crawling: African Americans’ Struggle for Quality Schools Continues in Mobile.	341
EPILOGUE. THE BLAIR EDUCATION BILL AND THE DEATH OF EDUCATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION, 1890.	357
APPENDIX 1. POPULATION STATISTICS, 1800-1890	361
APPENDIX 2. FREEDMEN’S SCHOOL STATISTICS, RICHMOND, VIRGINIA, 1865-1870	362
APPENDIX 3. FREEDMEN’S SCHOOL STATISTICS, MOBILE, ALABAMA, 1865-1870	365
APPENDIX 4. COMPARATIVE STATISTICS OF THE RICHMOND AFRICAN AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 1869-1890	367
APPENDIX 5. COMPARATIVE STATISTICS OF THE MOBILE PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 1871-1890	368
APPENDIX 6. RICHMOND COLORED NORMAL GRADUATES, 1873-1890.	369
APPENDIX 7. EMERSON NORMAL GRADUATES, 1876-1890.	386
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	388

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABHMS	American Baptist Home Mission Society
AFUC	American Freedmen's Union Commission
AL-BRFAL-ED	Superintendent of Education for the State of Alabama, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands
AMA	American Missionary Association
BRFAL	United States Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands
BRFAL-ED	United States Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Education Division
LVA	Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia
MCPSS	Mobile County Public School System, Barton Academy, Mobile, Alabama
MHS	Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts
NEFAS	New England Freedmen's Aid Society
USA	University of South Alabama, Mobile, Alabama
VA-BRFAL-ED	Superintendent of Education for the State of Virginia, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands
VHS	Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia
VSU	Virginia State University, Petersburg, Virginia

INTRODUCTION

On June 13, 1888, Professor Daniel Barclay Williams took the opportunity to reflect upon the racial progress made since emancipation before an audience of Richmond Colored Normal graduates. “For the last twenty-three years the colored people have made rapid progress in civilization,” Williams informed the audience. “Their intelligence has been wonderfully augmented. Public schools, industrial, normal, professional schools, and colleges have taught millions of children, and educated thousands of teachers, ministers, doctors, lawyers, statesmen, business men, and mechanics.” Yet, Williams reminded them: “Although much as been done for our people by the powerful influence of intelligence, industry, and morality, much remains to be done.”¹

Despite the work ahead, Williams and his peers could still celebrate their achievements. Education had yielded them success in a variety of professions that might have been viewed as possible in 1865 such as a professorship for the former slave. Hence, Williams paraphrased the last two stanzas of Longfellow’s “Launch of the Ship,” and charged attendees with a mission to “Sail on, O Ship of Education! Sail on, O Normal, hold thy station!” Through the Freedmen’s Schools, state-funded public schools, and the insistence of urban African American men, women, and children, Williams and other

¹ Daniel B. Williams, *Freedom and Progress and Other Choice Addresses on Practical, Scientific, Educational, Philosophic, Historic, and Religious Subjects* (Petersburg: Daniel B. Williams Publisher, 1890), 7-8, 82, 86-87. In 1888, Williams was a professor of ancient languages and instructor in the science and art of teaching at the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute in Petersburg, Virginia.

Richmond Colored Normal graduates benefitted from the postwar educational developments that occurred in Richmond, across Virginia, and the entire South.²

Williams and his fellow Richmond Colored Normal graduates serve as a testament to the expectations and the collaborative efforts of urban African Americans who sought to define the meaning of freedom, citizenship, and the Civil War through education. In viewing education as essential to the transition to freedom, urban African Americans (newly freed and those free before the war) established strategic relationships with individuals and organizations who shared a common devotion to education in the postwar period. Yet, competing visions and expectations for African American education often made for uneasy alliances. Power struggles ensued, new partnerships developed, and old relationships were redefined or ceased. Despite these tensions, a sustainable system of African American education emerged within a twenty-five year period and made the aforementioned alumni meeting possible.

The central question that I ask in this dissertation is: how did urban African Americans and their supporters create, develop, and sustain a system of education during the transition from slavery to freedom? Through a process of establishing a network of relationships with individuals and organizations who shared a belief in education, such as the Freedmen's Bureau, Northern missionary associations, and later city and state government officials, urban African Americans developed a sustainable system of schools. African Americans' process of building networks to yield education for the largely undereducated and uneducated masses between 1865 and 1890, I argue, represents Educational Reconstruction. These relationships were continually negotiated, accommodated, and resisted

² Williams, 86-87.

by all involved as each had a stake in the success and failure of African American education. As in any relationship, power struggles ensued and internal strife sometimes marred the networks. Even as African Americans witnessed a contested terrain concerning African American education globally, nationally, and locally to limit the growth of black education between 1865 and 1890, African Americans experienced triumph through two major developments in African American education---the Freedmen's Schools and state-funded public schools. As partners and circumstances changed, this dissertation argues that urban African Americans never lost sight of these aims in their struggle for educational access and legitimacy for the African American schoolhouse. Through Educational Reconstruction, African Americans successfully moved African American education from being a non-entity to a legitimate institution, established a professional class of African-American public school teachers, developed educational resources essential to daily school operations, and ensured its continuation for future generations in their respective cities and states.

In order to explore these interactions, I focus upon on the port cities of Richmond, Virginia, and Mobile, Alabama. The reasons for selecting these particular cities were threefold. First, each was a major economic, political, and social center in its respective county, state, and region. Second, the local circumstances of the cities differed. These differences, such as Mobile's Creole of Color community and Richmond's close proximity to Washington, D.C., allowed me to engage in a more nuanced discussion of Educational Reconstruction. Third, each city had the unique distinction of being a port city. As port cities, they were sites in which the intersection of local, national, and global communities occurs. Using them, I reveal the ways in which local, national, and global forces, such as economy,

immigration and religion, influenced and shaped Educational Reconstruction in these two cities.

My dissertation on African American education in two southern cities in the late 19th century reflects a continued journey that started with a simple question in 2002. While contemplating a research topic for a Civil War and Reconstruction course at Tufts University, my mother asked me after revealing my plans to examine African American methods of resistance to the Ku Klux Klan---Were there any positive developments that occurred during the period other than the African American church? Taken aback by her direct and pointed question, I began my first forays into the topic of African American education with a short research paper on the educational developments in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. This paper expanded into a statewide study for my Master's thesis and now has been refined into the dissertation. By addressing the postwar educational transformation from the perspective of the participants, I have sought to illuminate a legacy of collaborative work and community involvement that allowed for the growth of African American education from 1865 to 1890. Through this bottom-up approach, I provide insights into making modern educational activism successful and provide an adequate answer to a question first asked in 2002.

This dissertation builds upon the existing Reconstruction and African American historiographies. Influenced by the Dunning school, Henry Swint's *The Northern Teacher in the South, 1862-1870* (1941) provided a comprehensive examination of the Northern secular and religious societies and the teachers sent to teach in the Freedmen's Schools from 1862 to 1870.³ He analyzed the Freedmen's aid societies and associations' missions, goals, and leadership, the teachers' motives, attitudes, and teachings, and the southern white reaction to

³ Henry Swint, *The Northern Teacher in the South, 1862-1870* (New York: Octagon Books, 1941; 1967ed).

the educational efforts. Swint argued that the teachers were vindictive religious fanatics. Rather than helping the region heal in the postwar period, these missionaries, who were often characterized as invaders, made conditions worse for the freedmen by provoking indignant responses by white Southerners. Southern whites, Swint concluded, were not hostile to African American education but to the invasion by northern teachers who symbolized their defeat and subjugation.

Jacqueline Jones's *Soldiers of Light and Love* helped to revise the image of the Northern schoolteacher perpetuated by Swint and other early Reconstruction historians.⁴ Her study focused primarily on the motivations and experiences of white Northern women who went to Georgia for the American Missionary Association (AMA) from 1865 to 1873. Although focused on northern white women, she treated African Americans as active participants and highlighted emerging tensions between African Americans and white AMA missionaries over the administration and daily operations of schools in Georgia. She concluded her study in 1873 when the transition from the AMA sponsored Freedmen's Schools to public schools was completed and the AMA shifted its focus toward higher education.

Ronald Butchart and Robert Morris also offered revisionist accounts of the Reconstruction educational efforts. In *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction*, Butchart examined Northern ideas, visions, and goals for the freedmen's education, the conflicting vision from African Americans and Southern society, and the

⁴ Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1980).

detrimental consequences of the contradictions for African Americans.⁵ His regional examination focused primarily on northern associations. African Americans appeared as the objects of rather than partners in the educational efforts. Similarly, African Americans were missing as active participants in the cooperative educational venture from Robert Morris's analysis. He examined the collaborative educational efforts of the Freedmen's Bureau and Northern religious and secular associations from 1862 to 1870 in *Reading, 'Riting, and Reconstruction*, stressing the motivations, attitudes, aims, policies, and curriculum of the groups.⁶ Both studies raised questions pertaining to agency and to the ongoing power struggles occurring between African Americans and the societies.

Heather A. Williams' *Self-Taught* extended the discussion by focusing on African American participation and agency in the creation of African American schools during Reconstruction. She demonstrated that the freedpeople's schools transformed public education in the South, benefiting both blacks and whites.⁷ She portrayed African Americans as initiators and active participants in the initial educational efforts and emphasized the obstacles they faced, including violence and a lack of funding. Like the other historians of African American education, Williams concluded her study with the ending of the Freedmen Bureau schools in 1870s.

This study addresses questions raised by this scholarship. Educational Reconstruction was a dynamic process of network building by African Americans. The dissertation provides

⁵ Ronald Butchart, *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction: Freedmen's Education, 1862-1875* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980), xi-xiii.

⁶ Robert Morris, *Reading, 'Riting, and Reconstruction: the Education of Freedmen in the South, 1861-1870* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

⁷ Heather Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 6.

a nuanced discussion of African Americans and their relationships with varied partners. It attempts to incorporate the various participants' aims, visions and experiences in one narrative in order to highlight the ongoing power struggles among all of the groups involved in the respective cities. Thus, it builds upon a historiography that has focused upon the participants from their motivations and experiences.

Most significantly, the dissertation extends the historiographical discussion beyond the ending of the Freedmen's Schools. While these aforementioned studies often ignore the public schools, several African American scholars have looked upon the first two decades of public schools. Horace Mann Bond's *Negro Education in Alabama: A Study in Cotton and Steel* examined the early public schools from the perspective of Jim Crow segregation in order to understand the problems of that period.⁸ However, this backward gaze raised assumptions of inevitability and presumed that racial, social, and political conditions remained static. James Anderson's *The Education of Blacks in the South* has continued this tradition with his overview of African American education in the South from the end of the Civil War to the early twentieth-century.⁹ He argued that the structure, ideology, and content of African American education was a part of a larger scheme of black subordination. Within this context, African Americans struggled to develop and maintain a system of education that justified their emancipation, first from slavery and later from second-class citizenship.¹⁰ Due to his emphasis on the link between education and oppression, Anderson provided only a brief overview of the creation of the common schools under the auspices of the Freedmen's

⁸ Horace Mann Bond, *Negro Education in Alabama: A Study in Cotton and Steel* (Washington, DC: Associated Publishers, Inc., 1939).

⁹ James Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1865-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

Bureau and northern missionary societies and focused his analysis on African American education during the Nadir and Jim Crow segregation. He paid little attention to the transition from the Freedmen's Bureau to state-controlled schools or to the early years of these public schools. Instead, he focused on the industrial school debate and the Hampton model and offered a top-down approach. These scholars have missed important opportunities to fully engage with the first two decades of public schools.

By focusing upon the initial years of African American public schools, the dissertation fills a void in the historiography. State-funded public schools for African Americans further complicated Educational Reconstruction. By 1870, city school boards replaced the Freedmen's Bureau and northern societies and fostered new relationships. These new alliances addressed unresolved problems from the Freedmen's School era as well as new challenges raised by the creation of public schools. Such an examination also offers new insights into higher education for African Americans during the 1870s and 1880s. In response to the immense need for public school teachers, state educational boards, Northern missionary societies, and African Americans established normal institutions. The transition to higher education emerged as a response to address the specific needs of the newly created public schools rather than a natural progression in African American education as suggested by the existing historiography. This study's bottom-up approach illuminates the complex and changing nature of Educational Reconstruction by highlighting these critical post-Freedmen's School developments in Richmond and Mobile.

Archival research forms the basis of the dissertation. In addition to newspapers, letters, and other sources produced by African Americans, the dissertation builds upon a variety of sources. City, county, state and federal government records serve as a main body

of sources examined. From the Freedmen's Bureau records to the annual reports of school superintendents, I am able to understand African Americans' relationships with political officials and to assess the precise nature of the system of schools developed. The records of the various northern missionary and secular organizations are another body of sources employed. These rich sources have helped with my understanding of the vision, motivations, nature of the participation, and more importantly, the nature of interaction with the Freedmen's Bureau and African Americans. Local and regional newspapers and journals have allowed me to understand the varying popular responses to the African American educational efforts. Lastly, manuscript collections, diaries, and personal papers supplement the other sources used and have often yielded additional commentary on Educational Reconstruction.

This study is organized chronologically and within the individual chapters certain themes will be highlighted. I begin each chapter with a general overview of the chapter's themes and questions to be addressed. I then examine each city independently during the period covered without direct comparison and highlight wherever possible the forces shaping the relationships between the participants. I conclude each chapter with a summary of the trends illuminated by the cities. This format has allowed me to demonstrate that the events and circumstances of Educational Reconstruction were time and place specific as local, national, and global forces affected the cities examined differently. Overall, the dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first two chapters detail the emergence of the Freedmen's Schools and the transition to state-funded public schools. The last three chapters focus upon the first twenty years of the state-funded public schools for African American children.

The first chapter examines the collaborative nature of Educational Reconstruction under the Freedmen's Bureau. Through a network of educational partnerships, I argue that Richmond's and Mobile's African American communities successfully developed the Freedmen's Schools which paved the way for extending African American education throughout the region. The Freedmen's Schools represented the first step in fulfilling African Americans' dual quest for literacy and legitimacy of education for their community. Questions guiding this chapter include: How did each group's vision for the Freedmen's Schools affect the alliances? What were the successes and limits of the relationships? What were the general responses to the schools? What role, if any, did local white opposition have on the relationships and Freedmen's Schools? By examining the various relationships, I show how the Freedmen's Schools initiated a legacy of collaboration and collegueship necessary for the legitimacy of African American education. Without collaboration between African Americans and their allies, the development of state-funded public schools would not have been possible.

The second chapter examines the local reactions to the creation of and transition to public schools. Its central question asks: how did white and black urban Southerners and the proponents for the Freedmen's Schools respond to the state mandates pertaining to education and citizenship? Despite producing similar state constitutional provisions for education, the implementation of the provisions varied greatly across the urban South. I argue that urban Southerners responded in a myriad of ways during this transitional period. These local reactions shaped the implementation of public schools and the transition from the Freedmen's School system to the new state system. Rather than signaling the demise of African American education, the new state constitutions ushered in a new phase of African

American education. These constitutions also created new opportunities, new partners in state and local officials, new challenges, and old friends in the Northern missionary associations. By understanding the transition period and the local responses to the state and national forces, it is possible to more fully understand the struggles for African American education after the Freedmen's Schools ended in these cities.

The third chapter examines the development of normal schools and the creation of a corps of African American public school teachers. Richmond Colored Normal and its counterpart in Mobile, Emerson Normal addressed the crucial question raised by the creation of public schools in the Reconstruction constitutions – who will teach African American students in the new state system? I argue that the corps of African American teachers emerged from their respective community's interpretation of a useful education for African Americans and educational partnerships formed by African Americans. These teachers, in turn, refashioned their useful education. This refashioning benefited each community's struggle for educational access, legitimacy, and racial equality. The resulting corps of well-trained and qualified educators became an essential asset for African Americans' struggle for African American public education and racial equality in Richmond and Mobile. As a result, they provided the foundation for future struggles by African American educator-activists.

The fourth chapter examines how African Americans shifted their activism in order to cope with new partners and challenges posed by the first decade of public schools. The central question guiding this chapter explores the ways in which urban African Americans' quest for quality public schools and activism shaped the educational developments of the 1870s. I argue that African Americans embarked upon the quality campaigns for a variety of reasons in Richmond and Mobile. This multi-pronged struggle centered upon improving the

overall quality of the schools by ensuring African Americans had a voice in decisions pertaining to the schools, providing adequate school accommodations, securing African American public school teachers, and ensuring adequate school funding. Over the course of the decade, they achieved success in some areas while encountering setbacks in others. However, African Americans never lost sight of their mission for educational access and legitimacy that began in 1865. Their struggle now focused upon making the public schools into enduring institutions instrumental in sustaining African American citizenship.

The fifth chapter examines African Americans continued struggle for quality public schools. Through their campaigns and strategies adopted in the previous decade, they achieved significant victories at varying rates of change. I argue that urban African Americans' continued insistence upon quality public schools reflected their firm commitment to becoming a literate people. Their activism ensured that African American children could continue to access a quality public school education after the end of Educational Reconstruction.

In the end, urban African Americans created a sustainable system of schools over the twenty-five year period under examination. Although partners changed, they never lost sight of the larger goal of legitimizing African American education and providing access for anyone seeking an education. As a result of their insistence to become an educated people, they achieved two significant victories on their voyage upon the "Ship of Education" ---the Freedmen's Schools and state-funded public schools.¹¹

¹¹ Williams, 86.

CHAPTER I

THE QUEST FOR ACCESS AND LEGITIMACY BEGINS: AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY AND THE FREEDMEN'S SCHOOLS IN THE URBAN SOUTH, 1865- 1867

On April 23, 1865, African Americans crowded into the State Street Baptist Church. Eleven days after Confederates surrendered the city of Mobile to Union troops, African American organizers opened the mass meeting called to discuss their newfound freedom with the rousing song, "The Song of the Black Republicans." In their rendition, they proudly proclaimed their freedom in the second stanza:

Free workmen in the cotton-field,
 And in the sugar cane;
Free children in the common school,
 With nevermore a chain.
Then rally, Black Republicans---
 Aye, rally! We are free!
 We've waited long
 To sing the song---
 The song of liberty.¹

As freedpersons, Mobile's African American community proclaimed their freedom with mass meetings and songs asserting their liberty. Their joy filled the air as noted by a correspondent for the *Black Republican*. The newspaper reported to its New Orleans readers, "There is at this moment great joy in the hearts of our poor brethren who are just out of slavery." From this joy unleashed by their emancipation, they developed common schools. As suggested in the song's lyrics, "free children in the common schools" was a priority and it

¹ "The Song of the Black Republicans," *Black Republican* (New Orleans), April 29, 1865, 1.

quickly became a reality for African Americans living in Mobile. The realization of African American common schools extended beyond Mobile across the urban South, including the former capital of the Confederacy.²

Confederate defeat ushered in a revolution in African American education. Freedom brought new behaviors, new relationships, and new institutions. Schools and the educational relationships that sustained the schools became a postwar reality. White opposition and internal class strife tempered the African American community's expression of freedom and entry into the body politic through education. Yet these forces also galvanized African Americans and their allies in protecting the newly established institution. It also transformed their struggle of ensuring access to literacy and education into a fight for their very freedom. The struggle for Freedmen's Schools became a struggle for freedom, citizenship, and a new postwar social order.

Through an examination of the Freedmen's Schools, this chapter seeks to illustrate how African Americans defined the meaning of freedom and citizenship in the postwar urban South. It also seeks to show how the urban South paved the way for the development of Freedmen's Schools in their respective states. Lastly, it explores the ways in which internal strife between the educational partners and local white opposition shaped the quest for schools, access, and legitimacy. Through a network of educational partnerships, Richmond's and Mobile's African American communities successfully developed the Freedmen's Schools and began the process of legitimizing African American education.

Scholars have discussed extensively the development of the Freedmen's Schools. Influenced by the Dunning school, Henry Swint's *The Northern Teacher in the South, 1862-*

² T. W. C., "Joy Among the Poor Colored People of Mobile," *Black Republican (New Orleans)*, April 29, 1865, 1.

1870 (1941) provided a comprehensive examination of the northern secular and religious societies and the teachers sent to teach in the Freedmen's Schools from 1862 to 1870.

Jacqueline Jones's *Soldiers of Light and Love*, Ronald Butchart's *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction*, and Robert Morris' *Reading, 'Riting, and Reconstruction* helped to revise the image of the northern schoolteacher perpetuated by Swint and other early Reconstruction historians. James Anderson's *The Education of Blacks in the South* and Heather Williams' *Self-Taught* extended the discussion by focusing on African American participation and agency in the creation of African American schools during Reconstruction. This chapter offers new insights into this well-established historiography by emphasizing the educational relationships formed between African Americans and their white allies. These relationships proved instrumental in the development of the Freedmen's Schools. By focusing on the educational relationships, this chapter provides an in-depth view of how the quest for education manifested itself on the ground in two urban centers and examines the forces shaping the relationships.³

The chapter's first section examines Richmond; Mobile is discussed in the second section. Both sections will show how local circumstances and constraints in Richmond and Mobile influenced the educational partnerships and the development of the Freedmen's Schools. At the end of the chapter, I will bring the narratives together in a discussion of the

³ Henry Swint, *The Northern Teacher in the South, 1862-1870* (1941, reprint New York: Octagon Books, 1967); Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1980); Ronald Butchart, *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction: Freedmen's Education, 1862-1875* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980); Robert Morris, *Reading, 'Riting, and Reconstruction: the Education of Freedmen in the South, 1861-1870* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); James Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1865-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Heather Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

variations and trends in understanding the first major development of Educational Reconstruction---the Freedmen's Schools.

Richmond: Remaking the former Confederate Capital

African Americans embarked on their post-emancipation quest with the fall of Richmond on April 3, 1865. Within days of Union troops securing the city, African Americans began displaying their new found freedom through education. Encouraged by Union victory, they quickly established schools in churches that still stood amidst the ruins of the Confederate capital. This school system immediately attracted African Americans living in Virginia, and prompted a mass migration to Richmond. For instance, Henry and Augusta A. Hawkins Dixon came to Richmond from Amelia County, Virginia for educational opportunities for their daughter, Rosa L. Dixon. They quickly enrolled the future Richmond educator into the burgeoning school system. Joseph E. Jones also relocated to Richmond from Lynchburg. While Jones had received some education from a Confederate soldier, he relocated specifically for the city's schools as he desired increasing his limited education. Literate African Americans, such as Peter H. Woolfolk, diligently instructed those desiring an education in all of the city's African American churches. These schools quickly filled with eager students but the system lacked an efficient organization. In May 1865, African Americans from across the city met and officially inaugurated the educational movement. Meeting attendees attempted to unify the various schools under one system. Smaller schools were consolidated into the various churches. Attendees also appointed teachers, established school hours of operation, and created an administrative structure overseeing the schools. According to an article in the *Anglo-African*, "The project was so far perfected that the

schools will be opened at 9 o'clock this morning in all the colored churches of the city." The quest for access and legitimacy had a great start.⁴

Confederate defeat also prompted the arrival of northern benevolent societies. While local African Americans did not request assistance, white and African American missionaries traveled to Richmond as soon as transportation networks made it possible. Instead of finding a barren educational field, the first missionaries, Hannah E. Stevenson, Lucy Chase and Sarah Chase of the New England Freedmen's Aid Society encountered a patchwork system of schools operated by local African Americans. In early May 1865, the Chase sisters reported an attendance of 1,075 students within two weeks at their school in the First African Church. Missionaries flooded the city shortly thereafter. They either established additional schools, joined, or co-opted existing operations within the city's church system. Missionaries represented, but were not limited to, the following organizations: American Baptist Home Mission Society, American Freedmen's Union Commission, American Missionary Association, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Freedmen's Aid Society of the M. E. Church, New York Friends' Freedmen's Association, Pennsylvania Freedmen's Relief Association, and the Soldiers Memorial Society of Boston. These agencies desired the establishment of a permanent system of schools for African Americans that would ease their transition to freedom. Using these schools, the agencies also hoped to transform and reconstruct the region according to postwar definitions of freedom and citizenship.

⁴ Arthur R. Henry Report, 1865, 1-9, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia (VHS). Henry, a correspondent for the New York Tribune, provided an account of the fall of Richmond and initial conditions in the city after its occupation.; Howard Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890* (1978; reprint, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 18-22; Nicole Johnson, "Rosa Dixon Bowser," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, February 9, 2009; A. A. Taylor, "Religious Efforts Among the Negro," *Journal of Negro History* 11, no. 3 (July 1926): 442; "Peter Woolfolk," *The Freedmen's Record* 1, no. 7 (July 1865): 119; "Cheering News from Richmond: Glorious Surprise!," *Anglo-African*, May 6, 1865, 2.

Freedmen's enthusiasm and the potential of remaking the former Confederate capital invigorated their efforts.⁵

The number of literate African Americans in Richmond, though, surprised some white missionaries. The Chase sisters reported that among their 1,075 students, they "found eighty good readers, two hundred good spellers, and one hundred who had conquered the alphabet. Of the remaining five or six hundred many had picked up one or two letters in the secret corner where the negro father kept his treasured book." The sisters remarked: "In spite of the rigid laws against teaching the negroes, nearly every colored family in Richmond has one or more members who can read." Another missionary commented: "The colored people of Richmond are far more intelligent and thrifty than any I have met within the South---and though the laws against learning have been so strict, many can read and a large portion know their letters and can spell a little." These comments demonstrated that the obstacles against African American literacy neither diminished the desire to become an educated people during the antebellum period. Their clandestine efforts succeeded. Emancipation merely eliminated some of the obstacles.⁶

The teaching abilities of several African Americans living in Richmond impressed northern missionaries, white and black. Peter Matthew's teaching skills impressed Reverend George Stinson, a white American Missionary Association missionary. After witnessing

⁵ Hannah E. Stevenson, April 9, 1865 letter, folder 15, box 5, Curtis-Stevenson Family Papers, 1775-1920, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts-hereafter MHS; "New England Report of the Teacher's Committee," *American Freedmen* 1 no.2 (May 1866): 29, accessed at the MHS; Joe M. Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 19-20; "State Superintendent's Monthly Reports, July 1865-June 1867," microfilm roll 11, *Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Virginia, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1870* Research Group 105, M1053 (Washington: National Archives, National Archives and Records Service, General Services Administration, 1977)-hereafter VA-BRFAL-ED.

⁶ "New England Report of the Teacher's Committee," *American Freedmen* 1 no.2 (May 1866): 29, accessed at the MHS; Quoted in Peter Rachleff, *Black Labor in Richmond, 1865-1890* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 11; For African American education under slavery, see Williams 7-29.

Matthews instruct a group of young children to read the Bible, Stinson inquired of Matthews' educational training. Matthews explained that in "his younger years it was custom of some slaveholders to instruct their slaves so far as to give them ability to read Gods [sic] word but nothing else." Stinson's encounter with Peter Matthews made him confront assumptions regarding Richmond's African American community. Slavery had not completely denied African Americans an education. Sympathetic slaveholders and clandestine self-education permitted the existence of individuals like Peter Matthews. Instead of viewing Matthews as an object of American Missionary Association benevolence, Stinson expressed an interest in retaining Matthews in promoting the organization's educational interests.⁷

Such encounters enabled Richmond's African American community to establish educational relationships with northern missionary associations. African Americans recognized that these relationships could benefit their nascent educational movement. Matthews and others expressed their interest of building relationships with the outside organizations through individuals such as Stinson. Based upon his conversation with Matthews, Stinson informed American Missionary Association officials of the community's desire of a partnership. He wrote: "I was told that the colored people would gladly do what they could to support schools and ministers to labor with them." Hence, meetings between "intelligent colored" persons and outside organizations facilitated the growth of a network of educational relationships employed by Richmond's African American community.⁸

African Americans also entered into an educational partnership with the New England Freedmen's Aid Society. As a result of this partnership, the organization retained

⁷ Reverend George Stinson to Reverend M. E. Strieby, April 13, 1865, microfilm roll 4, AMA Papers, Virginia.

⁸ Ibid.

Peter H. Woolfolk as missionary and educator in its schools. Woolfolk was a light-skinned native of Richmond and a former slave. He taught initially at the school located at the Ebenezer Baptist Church before he was reassigned to the school operated by Lucy Haskell. He then assisted Lucy Haskell during the first month in which schools were in operation. In his April 1865 report, Woolfolk noted the pleasure received from his work. He hoped that his service was “beneficial as well as acceptable to the Society.” Indeed, Woolfolk’s service benefitted both educational partners. William L. Coan, an American Missionary Association missionary, depicted Woolfolk as “a perfect Gentleman very light color, very intelligent and although a volunteer is doing much to assist in our great work.” Coan’s fascination with Woolfolk’s personal attributes is significant. Neither race nor his former servitude hindered Woolfolk’s teaching abilities. Woolfolk’s complexion, demeanor, intelligence, and service forced Coan to confront any previous racial assumptions and recognize that the educational partnerships worked. Woolfolk’s success as an educator permitted the continuation of the partnerships. The African American community also benefitted from Woolfolk’s instruction of their children and from having direct representation in the organization. Through partnerships with Matthews, Woolfolk, and others, Richmond boasted “five public schools, four private four private schools, [and] a number of benevolent societies formed” by August 1865. As a result, the African American community became increasingly convinced of benefits derived from their network of relationships.⁹

⁹ Henry A. Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South: From 1619 to the Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 43; Regular Weekly Meeting, Minutes, May 12, 1865, folder Teacher’s Committee, 1864-1866, box 2, New England Freedmen’s Aid Society Records, MHS---hereafter NEFAS Records. Peter Woolfolk received a commission from the New England Freedmen’s Aid Society and remained a teacher in Richmond throughout the Freedmen’s School period; “Peter Woolfolk,” *The Freedmen’s Record* 1 (July, 1865): 119; W. L. Coan to M.E. Strieby, April 20, 1865, microfilm roll 5, AMA Papers, Virginia; “R. H. J. in Richmond City,” *Anglo-African*, August 5, 1865, 2.

During the summer of 1865, African Americans' educational network expanded to include the Freedmen's Bureau. Established in March, 1865, the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, simply known as the Freedmen's Bureau, was originally designed as a temporary organization. It was mandated by the United States Congress to provide assistance to Freedmen in their transition from slavery to freedom, deal with wartime abandoned lands possessed by the Federal government, and assist the displaced wartime population. The Freedmen's Bureau Act of 1866 extended the agency's tenure. During its existence, the Freedmen's Bureau was the sole, truly continuous federal presence in the defeated South and its power affected all Southerners. For African Americans, the Freedmen's Bureau became their government, protector from a hostile white community, and for some, creator of the Freedmen's Schools.¹⁰

African Americans found the federal agency's views on education as conducive to their interests. The most enduring responsibility of the Freedmen's Bureau lay in its educational efforts. The federal agency viewed education as a necessary component for the remaking of a slave society into a free one. According to historians John Cox and Wanda Cox, education served the purpose of encouraging the freedpeople to develop "the habits, attitudes, and knowledge necessary for free men in a free society." The strong emphasis on education reflected the attitudes and beliefs of General O. O. Howard, the first and only Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau. The Assistant Commissioners and Superintendents of Education in Virginia shared his precepts. General Orlando Brown, Assistant Commissioner for Virginia, stressed the importance of education in a public address to a

¹⁰ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1988), 69; Randall M. Miller, "Introduction. The Freedmen's Bureau and Reconstruction: An Overview," *The Freedmen's Bureau and Reconstruction: Reconsiderations*, ed. Paul A. Cimballa and Randall M. Miller (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), xvii-xviii.

group of Virginia freedmen in July 1865. “Schools as far as possible will be established among you, under the protection of the Government,” Brown informed the crowd. “You will remember, that in your condition as freemen education is of the highest importance, and it is hoped that you will avail yourselves, to the utmost of the opportunities offered you.” With education, Brown argued that a freedperson’s “new career” included “shaping the destinies of his race” and being a “peaceable, law abiding” citizen. Education, according to Brown and other Freedmen’s Bureau agents, was integral to the postwar definition of freedom and citizenship. As citizens, African Americans legitimately had a right to educational attainment. The Freedmen’s Bureau made this aim one of its primary missions.¹¹

The educational division of the Freedmen’s Bureau ensured this mission’s fulfillment. After the brief tenure of Professor William H. Woodbury, Ralza Morse Manly received a promotion from Assistant Superintendent of Education for Virginia to Superintendent of Education for Virginia. Born in 1822, the Vermont native sincerely believed “that the only true form of ‘Freedmen’s Aid’ was education.” After serving in the First Colored Calvary, Manly devoted his life to creating schools that might elevate African Americans living in Virginia. Like other Superintendents of Education, Manly maintained a supervisory role over the entire state operations and provided the organizational framework for the Freedmen’s School system. Unlike other superintendents, R. M. Manly had an active role in the day-to-day operations of the Richmond schools. He viewed the Richmond system as the model for the state. He frequently visited the schools, regularly corresponded with members of the African American community, and acted as the local agent for the New York and New

¹¹ Quoted in John Cox and LaWanda Cox, “General O. O. Howard and the ‘Misrepresented Bureau,’” *Journal of Southern History* 19 no. 4 (November 1953): 452.

England branches of the American Freedmen's Union Commission. In short, R. M. Manly served as an important advocate for African American education.¹²

These relationships between African Americans, Northern missionaries, and Freedmen's Bureau agents produced interesting interactions resulting in negotiations over the development and control over the Freedmen's Schools. Each group contended with questions pertaining to the definition of an education most useful in the transition from slavery to freedom and the role of African Americans in the process. As they navigated these questions, a more pressing concern of coping with local white hostility inadvertently fostered their cooperation. Within this context, the Freedmen's Bureau, Northern societies, and African Americans developed and sustained an educational system.

During the 1865-1866 academic year, African Americans and their allies developed a system of schools. The Freedmen's Bureau assisted with the maintenance of day schools for children, night schools for adults, and Sabbath schools. Each school provided rudimentary education including reading, writing, arithmetic, and geography, but the schools also offered basic industrial and domestic education. Students learned sewing, cleanliness, punctuality, and other skills of self-sufficiency. The schools attracted a large number of African American students. The academic year opened with 1,723 students and concluded with 2,042.

Attendance increased dramatically from January to May 1866 and then decreased in June.

This increase and decrease corresponded with the labor migrations from rural Virginia to Richmond and agricultural demands. Rural migrants came to the city for employment during the agricultural off-season. They took advantage of the city's educational opportunities prior

¹² Miller, xxviii; Brooks Smith and Wayne Dementi, *Facts and Legends of the Hills of Richmond* (Manakin-Sabot, Virginia: Dementi Publishing, 2008), 18-19; For Manly's appointment as an agent for a missionary society, see September 3rd Meeting, Minutes, September 3, 1866, Teachers Committee, 1866-1870 folder, box 2, NEFAS Records.

to returning for work during the more intensive agricultural season. The number of schools could not fully quench the thirst for education. Often overcrowded, efforts for securing additional accommodations remained continuous. By the end of the year, the school system expanded from nineteen to twenty-six schools, of which the African American community partially financed a substantial number. During the next year, the school system expanded to thirty-three at the beginning and concluded with forty-six. African Americans financially supported on average sixteen of the schools per month.¹³

Several of the African American community's allies also operated schools for white children. This separate system coexisted with the African American school system and received Freedmen's Bureau support. The Soldiers' Memorial Society of Boston, an auxiliary branch of the American Freedmen's Union Commission, advocated the education of former Confederate soldiers. The society regarded its schools as "monuments to our brothers who have served the country" and essential in remaking Richmond according to the new postwar racial and social rules. The society's schools also attracted poor whites that had been unable to receive an education in the antebellum Richmond school system. These students received admission "at the request of their mothers, who said they could not give them an education, being too poor to do so." As with their African American counterparts, educators, such as Kate Knapp and Horace Honey, noted the enthusiasm and progress made by their students in their monthly reports. The *Richmond Dispatch* praised the schools for making the scholars "men and women of mark." For this reason, the newspaper hoped that "the enterprise may be continued from year to year until some general system of free-school education shall supersede it." The schools educated from 225 to as many as 640 white

¹³ For statistics of attendance and total schools per month, see Appendix 2. Michael Chesson, *Richmond After the War, 1865-1890* (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1981), 133-134.

students per month in separate facilities from the African American schools. These segregated schools, designed to appease white Richmonders, became a legacy that lasted until the mid-twentieth century. Despite this legacy, these schools rarely interfered with the operations of the African American schools. Thus, both school systems coexisted.¹⁴

Students' scholastic achievement legitimated both the African American partnerships and the resulting system. Largely illiterate former slaves comprised the initial schools. The newly emancipated and those free African Americans unable to attend school prior to Reconstruction displayed a deep passion for learning. Freedmen's Bureau agents and teachers noted this passion as well as the rapid progression of their students overall in their monthly reports. Their academic success permitted the Northern partners' continued support. For the African American community, education became the ultimate vehicle for distancing themselves from slavery and expressing their new freedom. Their partnerships enabled the rapid scholastic progression of their children and growth of the school system. Hence, scholastic achievement validated their relationship-building efforts and allowed for the network's continuation.¹⁵

While the educational partners found agreement in the role of African Americans as students, disagreement and fierce debate arose over teaching positions for African Americans. These internal questions marred the educational alliances. As a result, the

¹⁴Broadside, Soldiers Memorial Society Records, 1865-1867, MHS; Letter received from Kate Knapp and Horace Honey, April 9, 1866 entry, Daily Record, 1865-1866, folder Daily Record, 1865-1866, box 1, NEFAS Records; "Untitled," *American Freedmen* 1 no. 5 (August, 1866): 79; "Close of the Laboratory Free Schools," *Richmond Dispatch*, June 30, 1866, 2; Morris, 132, 226; For statistics of the number of white students attending the Freedmen schools, please see Appendix 2. The Bureau did not maintain a racial breakdown of the students attending the schools during the first year. According to reports from the teachers, it can be estimated that approximately 250 students attended.

¹⁵ Helen Corwin Fischer, "Monthly Report, October 1865," microfilm roll 15, VA-BRFAL-ED.

questions prompted serious negotiations between the partners in order to ensure the continuation of the Freedmen's School system.

The African American school system benefited from competent teachers, white and black. Regardless of race, the Freedmen's Bureau expected all of its teachers to be competent. As education was essential to the Freedmen's Bureau efforts, mediocrity was not acceptable. R. M. Manly praised African American and white educators equally. He reported to Hannah Stevenson, secretary of the New England Freedmen's Aid Society: "The discipline in Miss M. E. Chase, Miss Angier, and Mr. Woolfolk is without fault, is most excellent, each is entirely and easily master of the situation." In discussing the "skill in the work of instruction," he deemed "all are excellent. Miss Canedy, Miss Ballard, and Mr. Woolfolk prominently so." R. M. Manly regularly evaluated teachers' performances. He retained educators deemed as competent and dismissed those who did not meet agency standards, regardless of race. For instance, Manly actively sought a position for Charlotte M. Keith, an African American educator, with another missionary organization in Richmond rather than have her leave the city's schools. Manly wrote Reverend Woolsey: "I think Miss Keith merits as a teacher and the strong attachment of the people worshipping at that Church for their teachers are reasons for returning her and send some others in the service of your society..." As evidenced by these examples, R. M. Manly preferred competent and well-respected teachers such as Peter Woolfolk and Charlotte M. Keith over incompetent ones for the Richmond school system. For Manly, competence and not race greatly aided the quest for legitimating African American education in not just Richmond but the entire state.¹⁶

¹⁶ R.M. Manly to Hannah E. Stevenson, December 22, 1866, printed pages 138-139, microfilm roll 1, VA-BRFAL-ED; Manly regularly reviewed the teachers' performances and wrote reports of his comments. The comments would also include recommendations for dismissal or continuation of their service. The following

Racial attitudes and stereotypes, however, resulted in the decline of African Americans teachers in the schools. The American Missionary Association, the American Baptist Home Mission Society and other Northern religious societies recruited the majority of the teachers. These religious societies and their teachers believed in and practiced an evangelical abolitionism. According to this ideology, slavery was a sin against God and mankind and denied African Americans the ability to function as an independent moral being. Thus, to be truly free, African Americans as a race needed liberation from the chains that bound them physically and spiritually. Therefore, education served dual purposes for the “Christian Abolitionists.” First, it provided moral and intellectual growth. Second, education permitted racial advancement to the status of an independent moral being. As a consequence, evangelical abolitionism, as suggested by historians Jacqueline Jones and Joe M. Richardson, assumed that African Americans lacked morality as a result of their enslaved status. Thus, the ideology discredited any religious and/or educational instruction African Americans, formally or informally, received as slaves. Unfortunately, these assumptions colored the associations’ attitudes in using native African Americans as teachers. These assumptions also influenced how African American teachers were used in the classroom. Initially, African Americans served as teachers in the Freedmen’s Schools but were slowly replaced by white teachers. According to Bureau reports, white teachers slightly outnumbered African American teachers initially. However, by February 1867, the numerical difference increased. To be sure, the majority of the African American teachers maintained a subordinate position to their white counterparts. They were not the principal teachers who wrote the official teacher reports to the Freedmen’s Bureau. Often, the teachers were listed as an aide rather

letter exemplified his critiques: R. M. Manly to J.M. McKim, July 23 1866, microfilm Roll 1, VA-BRFAL-ED; R. M. Manly to Reverend Woolsey, August 24, 1866, microfilm roll 8, AMA Papers, Virginia.

than instructor. Subsequently, African American teachers often remained voiceless in the official Freedmen's Bureau monthly school reports.¹⁷

Some educational partners proved more accepting of African American teachers over others. The American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS) retained seven African Americans as assistant teachers for the schools operated in the First African Church and Ebenezer Church. The New England Freedmen's Aid Society, a branch of the American Freedmen's Union Commission, demanded the retention of their African American teachers. For instance, Hannah E. Stevenson, secretary of the New England Freedmen's Aid Society, passionately argued for the hiring of Peter Woolfolk in September 1865. "Mr. Woolfolk, who has been our regular salaried teacher from the time schools were opened in Norfolk, has been Superintendent of the school in the Methodist Church for many years," Stevenson explained to R.M. Manly, "We expect he will be able to render more assistance to our ladies out of school than in, and commissioned [him]..." The organization also highly valued the recommendations and services of its African American teachers. Based upon the recommendation of Peter Woolfolk, the organization contacted R. M. Manly regarding the idea of increasing African American community participation in the schools' administration. Although R.M. Manly never acted upon the recommendation, it showed the organization's trust in all of its teachers, regardless of race. The New England Freedmen's Aid Society also closely worked with local African American community leaders in securing accommodations for day and night schools. William Harris' correspondence with American Missionary Association officials detailed the negotiations for a night school sponsored by the New England Freedmen's Aid Society in his church. These negotiations resulted in the

¹⁷Jones, 13-15; Richardson, 19-22; See Appendix 2 for racial breakdown of teachers per month from 1865 to 1867.

establishment of the Lincoln Night School, in which Harris served as the principal teacher. These organizations' more accepting attitudes of African American teachers attracted students and parents to their schools. The community easily discerned the benefits of African American teachers upon scholastic achievement and facilitating their community's transition from slavery to freedom. As a result, the schools operated by American Baptist Home Mission Society and New England Freedmen's Aid Society, especially the ones taught by African American teachers, received overwhelming community support.¹⁸

Despite the racial attitudes of some educational partners, African American educators were never invisible in Richmond's African American neighborhoods. These teachers took on responsibilities that extended beyond the classroom as they often served as spokespersons for the community. Peter Woolfolk actively participated in local self-help initiatives. He served as the secretary for a mass meeting that discussed the community's recent emancipation and the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. He had the meeting minutes published in the *Anglo-African*, an African American newspaper published in New York, New York. Others, such as Charlotte M. Keith, held regular religious meetings in their homes. African American educators never viewed their work as exclusive to the classroom. Nor did they allow their invisibility by white educational partners interfere with their

¹⁸For the ABHMS teachers, see R. M. Manly to Hannah E. Stevenson, October 27, 1866, printed pages 103-105, microfilm roll 1, VA-BRFAL-ED and R. M. Manly to Reverend Crammond Kennedy, September 21, 1867, printed page 280, microfilm roll 1, VA-BRFAL-ED; Hannah E. Stevenson to R. M. Manly, September 25, 1865, microfilm roll 6, VA-BRFAL-ED; R. M. Manly to Hannah Stevenson, August 15, 1866, printed page 72, microfilm roll 1, VA-BRFAL-ED; William D. Harris to Samuel Hunt, October 19, 1865, microfilm roll 5, AMA Papers, Virginia; William D. Harris to Hunt, November 4, 1865, microfilm roll 5, AMA-Virginia; William D. Harris to George Whipple, December 1, 1865, microfilm roll 6, AMA Papers, Virginia.

community service. Woolfolk and Keith actively resisted their marginalization by some white educational partners.¹⁹

William D. Harris offers another example of an African American educator who resisted his marginalization. Harris was a free-born African American from Cleveland, Ohio. In August 1865, he received an appointment as the pastor of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Richmond. As a minister and an American Missionary Association missionary, Harris's efforts centered upon educational and religious instruction. His church served as a day school, a night school, and a Sabbath school. While not fulfilling his pastoral duties, Harris successfully instructed adults in the Lincoln Night School held at his church. In the classroom, Harris made sure that his adult students read and understood the Constitution and news from Congress. He reported to George Whipple, corresponding secretary of the American Missionary Association, that daily exercises consisted of "spelling and defining the words contained in the clause read [of the Constitution] or selections from Congressional proceedings." These daily exercises made the education provided relevant to the lives of his students. Harris also recommended other African Americans for missionary positions, such as his brothers, Robert and Cicero. As a pastor, an administrator, an educator, and a missionary, Harris demonstrated the commitment and drive of African American missionaries in preventing the confinement of African American education to the classroom. Whether in the classroom, in the church, or in the community, racial uplift motivated Harris'

¹⁹ "Meeting in Richmond," *Anglo-African*, May 6, 1865, 3; R. M. Manly to Reverend Woolsey, August 24, 1866, microfilm roll 8, AMA Papers, Virginia.

missionary efforts and his refusal to remain voiceless in shaping the transition from slavery to freedom through education.²⁰

A few African Americans served as administrators during the initial years of the Freedmen's Schools. African Americans often took the initiative to create and maintain their own schools without the assistance of the Freedmen's Bureau and Northern benevolent societies. As tuition supported these schools, only those who could afford it could attend. Consequently, the schools reinforced class differences between elite, middle-class and working-class African Americans. R. M. Manly objected to these schools for the tuition charged and because they reinforced class differences. He felt that the schools attracted the best students and threatened the Freedmen's Schools from becoming legitimate. He also objected as they operated outside the direct control of the Bureau, thus, depriving him authority over them. Therefore, the Freedmen's Bureau did not have specific information on the schools except for estimations of the number students enrolled, teachers, and schools. During the 1865-1866 academic school year, African Americans maintained twelve independent schools. The number expanded to as many as twenty-two during the following academic year. As these schools operated outside of Bureau control, the few sources do not detail the schools' conditions and curriculum. It is clear that these tuition-based schools demonstrated that African Americans remained committed to becoming a literate people. Whether "self-taught" or with assistance, the independent schools and Freedmen's Schools

²⁰ Earle H. West, "The Harris Brothers: Black Northern Teachers in the Reconstruction South," *Journal of Negro History* 48, no. 2 (Spring 1979): 127-128; William D. Harris to George Whipple, December 1, 1865, microfilm roll 6, AMA Papers, Virginia; William D. Harris to George Whipple, April 9, 1866, microfilm roll 7, AMA Papers, Virginia; William D. Harris to George Whipple, February 17, 1866, microfilm roll 6, AMA Papers, Virginia.

fulfilled the community's quest for education regardless of the opinions held by some partners.²¹

Furthermore, territorial debates revealed the imperfect nature of the African American network of educational partners. African Americans and their educational partners sometimes competed for space, enrollment numbers, and ultimately power. To be sure, organizational competition for students sometimes yielded benefits for the African American community. As organizations fought for the Freedmen's minds and souls, they gave incentives in exchange for support. Incentives ranged from not imposing a fuel charge to implementing programs not offered by another organization, such as the industrial training program offered by the New England Freedmen's Aid Society. African American parents, students, and leaders exploited these incentives for their benefit. The incentive system also provided the community more choice in selecting the appropriate school for their needs. While organizations received increased enrollment, money, and support, African American students and their parents achieved educational choice and power in selecting a Freedmen's School. This competition often had more detrimental effects than positive ones. These internal fissures made the schools' less efficient as energies were diverted away from the schools.²²

Most internal problems stemmed from competition for school accommodations and retaining high student enrollment. The partners attempted establishing schools in areas not in

²¹ Chesson, 100-101; "State Superintendent Monthly Statistical Reports, November 1865 to May 1867," microfilm roll 11, VA-BRFAL-ED.

²² Letter from Peter Woolfolk, December 30, 1868, Daily Record, 1868-1869, box 1, NEFAS Records; February 21, 1866 entry, Letter from Andrew Washburn, Daily Record, 1865-66, box 1, NEFAS Records; March 21, 1866 entry, Letter from Sarah F. Foster, Daily Record, 1865-1866, NEFAS Records. The Industrial School initially trained young girls to construct garments for self-use and retail in local stores. The school expanded to include training of other vocational skills.

direct competition with another group. However, it proved too difficult. The lack of suitable school accommodations, and an unwillingness to expand into areas that could not guarantee adequate Freedmen's Bureau protection was further compounded by the large number of partners involved in African American education. Competition for space also resulted in competition for student enrollment. Educational partners often gauged the success of a school by the number of enrolled students and average monthly attendance. Hence, direct competition exacerbated the internal problems. O. B. Frothingham, agent for the New York branch of the American Freedmen's Union Commission, complained that "so much competition among the different associations, especially in the large towns like Richmond, Petersburg, Norfolk, that the expediency of retiring from several points in that State has been suggested and casually entertained." While the New York organization remained, some left Richmond for other areas in Virginia. For instance, the Pennsylvania Freedmen's Relief Association briefly operated a school from May to July 1865. The spatial and enrolment competition, however, forced the society's departure during the 1865-1866 academic year. Instead, the society concentrated its efforts in Petersburg, Lynchburg, Farmville, and Liberty. The departure of a few organizations never abated the problem, though. While some expanded operations to new neighborhoods, the remaining organizations still vied for space and autonomy. Two incidents in 1866 exposed the fragile nature of the educational partnerships as a result of the territorial competition.²³

²³ O. B. Frothingham, "New York: Report of the Teacher's Committee," *American Freedmen* 1, no 2 (May 1866): 31, accessed at the MHS; L. L. Seiler, "Richmond and Petersburg," *Pennsylvania Freedmen's Bulletin* 1 no. 8 (August, 1865): 53; By the December, 1865 edition of the *Pennsylvania Freedmen's Bulletin*, the Pennsylvania Freedmen's Relief no longer operated a school in Richmond. The organization concentrated its efforts in Petersburg, Lynchburg, Farmville, and Liberty. See *Pennsylvania Freedmen's Bulletin* 1, no 12 (December, 1865).

The Winder building, a confiscated Confederate property, prompted a major territorial debate in the spring of 1866. Known as the Bakery, the property provided accommodations for several schools and teachers' lodging. Two factions within the New England Freedmen's Aid Society and the American Missionary Association desired the property. Andrew Washburn, a white missionary for the New England Freedmen's Aid Society, desired the property for the schools operated for white children by the organization. Washburn represented both a faction within the New England Freedmen's Aid Society and local whites who would benefit from the proposed schools. Another faction within the New England Freedmen's Aid Society desired the property for its African American schools. This group hired C. Thurston Chase as its agent for securing the property. American Missionary Association officials also wanted the property. The American Missionary Association saw the property as essential in the expansion of its educational efforts in the city dominated by other organizations. Letters flooded the Freedmen's Bureau. In negotiating for the Bakery, the various groups placed the educational interests of African Americans and whites in direct competition. The fierce negotiations pitted one organization against another. From late April to July, 1866, Washburn and his supporters sent eleven letters to the New England Freedmen's Aid Society and thirteen letters to American Missionary Association officials. Washburn also held several meetings with Freedmen's Bureau agents in order to secure the property for the white schools. Likewise, Chase and his supporters barraged members of the organization's Executive Board, American Missionary Association officials, and Freedmen's Bureau agents with correspondence on behalf of the African American schools. The New England Freedmen's Aid Society even met with Washburn in May 1866 but to no avail. Each refused to make any concessions on this matter. The incident made race a factor within the

educational network and threatened the peaceful coexistence of white and African American schools sponsored under the Freedmen's School system.²⁴

The extensive correspondence and meetings grated upon the Freedmen's Bureau agents' nerves. As the various parties conducted negotiations privately, several Freedmen's Bureau agents promised the Bakery buildings to both Washburn and Chase. The contradictory promises caused more problems. Ultimately, General Orlando Brown ordered that the white schools, under the direction of Andrew Washburn, occupy one of the Bakery buildings. The New England Freedmen's Aid Society retained control over the other Bakery building for their Freedmen's Schools. Embarrassed over the affair, several organizational officials attempted to make amends through meetings and letters of correspondence. Washburn resigned his commission from the New England Freedmen's Aid Society. He became a missionary for the Soldiers' Memorial Society in Richmond and eventually the first superintendent of Richmond public schools in 1869. Most significantly, this resolution removed race as factor within the Freedmen's School system and the coexistence between white and African American schools returned.²⁵

After the Bakery incident, the Freedmen's Bureau took a more active role in preventing occurrences of such incidents. The organization's handling of the American

²⁴ Figures comes from manual computation of correspondence referencing the Bakery incident in AMA Papers, Virginia, April to July 1866 and NEFAS records, MHS, April-July 1865; For promises made to Washburn, see A. Merrill, Circular, June 2, 1866, AMA Papers, Virginia and O. Brown, Circular, June 2, 1866, AMA Papers, Virginia; For promises made to Chase, see R.M. Manly to William G. Hawkins, June 9, 1866, microfilm roll 1, VA-BRFAL-ED.

²⁵ O. Brown to Reverend J. H. Chapin, July 4, 1866, microfilm roll 1, VA-BRFAL-ED; C. Thurston Chase to George Whipple, July 2, 1866, microfilm roll 7, AMA-Virginia, For Washburn's resignation, see June 4, 1866 entry, Letter from Andrew Washburn, Daily Record, 1865-1866, folder Daily Record, box 1, NEFAS Records; R. M. Manly to Hannah Stevenson, July 20, 1869, target 2, microfilm roll 1, VA-BRFAL-ED; "Soldier's Memorial Society, *Register*, clipping, circa 1869, scrapbook 4, folder 2, Caroline Dall Papers, MHS; Adams Ayer, "List of Teachers Commissioned and Employed in Virginia by the Soldiers Memorial Society, December 1, 1869," Target 2, microfilm roll 1, VA-BRFAL-ED.

Baptist Home Mission Society's departure illuminated the Bureau's more active involvement. At its 1866 annual meeting, the American Baptist Home Mission Society decided against continuing its secular educational efforts. Organization officials deemed the training of African American ministers as more efficient and beneficial to Southern African Americans. The organization informed members in its annual report: "The most direct, accessible and effective way of teaching the mass of colored people is by EDUCATING THE COLORED MINISTRY." While the organization still supported missionaries to Richmond, the organization developed the Clover Institute (later renamed the Richmond Theological Institute and then Virginia Union University). American Baptist Home Mission Society's decision created a major void. The organization had successfully maintained several Freedmen's Schools in Richmond. Moreover, their schools and administration proved extremely popular in the African American community. The fate of these schools became uncertain.²⁶

Rather than have another Bakery incident, R. M. Manly developed a solution. He reorganized the Richmond schools into four districts. In a letter to John Walter, Manly explained that he wanted to minimize conflict between the Northern organizations and the African American community. The district system, if properly executed, would make the school system distinct from previous denominational-based system. With one exception, the

²⁶American Baptist Home Mission Society, *Thirty-Fourth Annual Report of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, Convened at Boston, Mass., May 17 and 18, 1866* (New York: American Baptist Home Mission Rooms, 1866), 17-18; For the rationale of the continued use of missionary educators, see American Baptist Home Mission Society, *Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, Convened at Chicago, Ill., May 23 and 24, 1867* (New York: American Baptist Home Missions Rooms, 1867), 17-18; For the organization's education of ministers, see Charles H. Corey, *A History of the Richmond Theological Seminary, with Reminiscences of Thirty Year's Work Among the Colored People of the South* (Richmond: J.W. Randolph Company, 1895) and Adolph H. Grundman, "Northern Baptists and the Founding of Virginia Union University: The Perils of Paternalism," *Journal of Negro History* 63, no. 1 (January 1978): 26-41.

African American churches remained as school locations. District one consisted of the schools at the Bakery buildings and all schools above 3rd Street. District two covered the area between 3rd and 12th streets. The Navy Hill schools dominated this field. District three included the schools located between 12th and 23d streets. The district included the old First African Church schools. District four comprised of the schools located below 23d Street. Schools included Asbury Chapel, Union Hill and Chimborazo. Manly then designated an organization for each district. He assigned the New England Freedmen's Aid Society to district one, and the New York branch of the American Freedmen's Union Commission to district two. He then divided the other districts among the other organizations and community leaders. For instance, the New York Friends' Freedmen Association maintained the Chimborazo schools. This plan permitted greater efficiency by lessening conflict. The plan, moreover, allowed for expansion. Additional districts could be created as necessary.²⁷

R. M. Manly's plan also addressed African American concerns over the American Baptist Home Mission Society's departure. African Americans had established beneficial relationships with the organization's teachers. With the organization's departure, they wanted the popular teachers to remain in the school system. Recognizing their concerns, Manly specifically wrote to the secretaries of the New England Freedmen's Aid Society and the New York branch of the American Freedmen's Union Commission. He hoped that either society would consider employing any of the three white teachers and six African American assistants from the First African Church school and three white teachers and one African American assistant from the Ebenezer Church school for their Bakery and Navy Hill schools,

²⁷ R. M. Manly to John Walter, October 10, 1866, printed pages 90-91, microfilm roll 1, VA-BRFAL-ED; R. M. Manly to Robert L. Murray, August 25, 1866, printed pages 75-76, microfilm roll 1, VA-BRFAL-ED; "Elizabeth Cartland, "Chimborazo School," In *Virginia History Society. It Occasional Bulletin* 43 (December 1981), 10, accessed at the VHS.

respectively. In his letter to Reverend Crammond Kennedy, Manly remarked that it would be “a great pity to not have Miss Knowles and her assistants returned.” Manly’s appeals were favorably received within both organizations as each employed the American Baptist Home Mission Society teachers. As a result, the American Baptist Home Mission Society continued sending missionaries to Richmond during the remaining years of the Freedmen’s Schools. In retaining the African American churches formerly used by the organization, the community retained a sense of ownership over the schools. Church leaders remained active partners in the new district system. Manly also ensured that the churches continued receiving the school rental income generated by their property. His plan avoided alienating the African American community. As a result, Manly’s plan averted a crisis. He thwarted another territorial debate. He placated the African American community by ensuring that the former American Baptist Home Mission Society’s schools continued under new management. Furthermore, his plan made the overall educational system more efficient while minimizing the territorial struggles. Manly restored African American education to the forefront of the educational partners’ agenda and salvaged the partnerships.²⁸

The most effective tool for bringing about unity among African Americans and their educational partners was the open hostility of Richmond’s white elites. Confederate defeat generated a myriad of feelings among white Richmonders. Ranging from disillusionment, withdrawal, and anger, these feelings fostered the opposition toward the Freedmen’s Schools by the majority of white Richmonders. This opposition resulted from a perceived Northern military occupation in the form of the United States army, the Freedmen’s Bureau and the

²⁸ R. M. Manly to Hannah E. Stevenson, October 27, 1866, printed pages 103-105, microfilm roll 1, VA-BRFAL-ED; R. M. Manly to Reverend Crammond Kennedy, September 21, 1867, printed page 280, microfilm roll 1, VA-BRFAL-ED. American Baptist Home Mission Society, Annual Reports, 1866-1870 (New York: American Baptist Reading Rooms, 1866-1870).

northern Freedmen School teachers. As revealed by Julia P. Read's letter to Harriett Sublett (Read) Berry, the sight of Union soldiers could cause fits of rage in even the most genteel Southern lady. Read described her anger to Berry: "It was anything but pleasant to walk down town as there were crowds of Yankees all over the streets. I felt once so angry that I could have knocked one of them with a good grace." Read's sentiments were not uncommon, as suggested by historian Foster Gaines. Southern defeat affected elite women, like Read, uniquely. Confederate defeat, according to Gaines, "altered the household status of many women, had forced women to recognize their...vulnerability to physical attack, and had exposed the fragility of the protection offered by their moral femininity." While elite white women endured unique challenges as a result of their gender, the trauma of Confederate defeat affected all white Richmonders, to varying degrees. To Read and other white Richmonders, troops, Freedmen's Bureau agents, and Northern teachers symbolized the South's defeat and a strong federal governmental interference in their culture and tradition. Although an actual military occupation by troops was limited and exaggerated, Freedmen's Bureau agents and Northern teachers remained a visible reality. According to Gaines, Northerners illuminated the scars of Confederate defeat. These scars, as Gaines has argued, made white southerners "a bit defensive about their public image and more than a little anxious for reassurance." Hostility directed toward the schools yielded them a degree of reassurance by making them forget about their scars of defeat.²⁹

The inversion of the antebellum racial hierarchy also fueled white resistance. White Richmonders simply could not conceive of a world without slavery. In her letter, Julia Porter

²⁹ Julia Porter Read to Harriett Sublett (Read) Berry, c. April-May 1865, section 4, Read Family Papers, 1828-1914, VHS; Foster Gaines, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865-1913* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 21, 31-33, 35.

Read wrote: “The negroes are all free now, were publickly [sic] proclaimed so from the Capitol Square. They do as they please now & no one can exert any control of them. A lamentable state of affairs truly.” White Richmonders simply lacked precedent in dealing with the new social and racial conditions, exacerbating their fears of a diminishing white supremacy. As a result, the African American schools contributed to the “lamentable state of affairs” felt by white elites. Richmond’s antebellum school system had been used as a means of reinforcing African Americans’ lack of freedom and their non-citizenship status in the society. Emancipation inverted the social order with the extension of education to this group. Feeling helpless in preventing the Freedmen’s Schools, white Richmonders showed their displeasure through intimidation, harassment, and social ostracism of students attending the schools and their teachers. Male teachers faced whippings by local whites. Female teachers and students often found themselves pelted by rock-throwing white youth while walking the city’s streets. This behavior provided whites with a measure of racial control in the new society without slavery.³⁰

When the “lamentable state of affairs” proved too great, white elites exerted their power by tempering more flagrant displays of African American freedom. In April 1866, African American community leaders wanted to celebrate the anniversary of their emancipation with a parade and events at the local schools. With meetings primarily at the Second African Baptist Church, community organizers made their plans. In response to the proposed celebration, Richmond government officials and elites adamantly refused to permit the proposed celebration. Fearing possible violence to homes, churches, and schoolhouses,

³⁰ Read to Berry, c. April-May 1865, section 4, Read Family Papers, 1828-1914, VHS; Chesson, 101; Thomas Holt, *Black over White: Negro Political Leadership in South Carolina during Reconstruction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 23, 25.

event organizers appealed directly to white Richmonders through leaflets and broadsides. Committee organizers reassured local whites that the event was not intended “to celebrate the failure of the Southern confederacy, [as] it has been stated in the papers of this City...” Rather the celebration, according to the organizers, simply marked “the day on which GOD was pleased to Liberate their long-oppressed race.” The parade occurred as scheduled although arsonists destroyed the Second African Baptist Church on the night before the event. According to educator William D. Harris, approximately two thousand participants representing 163 military guards and 15 different fraternal and other social groups proceeded to Capital Square in “Military precision”. Upon reaching their final destination, Reverend J. W. Hunnicutt, a local white Republican, delivered the main address before a crowd of fifteen thousand observers. Harris considered the event as the “most respectable orderly and sensible demonstration” that he had ever seen. While Harris considered the event as marking the capture of Richmond by African Americans for a “second time,” the more subdued event reflected how white elites’ successfully exerted their authority over African Americans’ public expressions of freedom.³¹

Subsequent Emancipation Day celebrations occurred with restricted parades in deference to white public opinion. Historian Marie Tyler-McGraw noted that these parades remained restricted to the African American neighborhoods and on occasion traversed from one neighborhood to another through the center of town. While white public opinion restricted subsequent parade routes, African Americans and their allies did not tone down their speeches. For instance, parade attendees heard political speeches by Reverend J. W.

³¹ Read to Berry, c. April-May 1865, section 4, Read Family Papers, 1828-1914, VHS; “Notice! The Colored People of the city of Richmond would most respectfully inform the public, that they do not intend to celebrate the failure of the Southern confederacy...” broadside, Richmond, VA, April 2, 1866, VHS; Rachleff, 39; William D. Harris to George Whipple, April 6, 1866, microfilm roll 13, AMA Papers, Virginia.

Hunnicut, Peter Randolph, a popular black minister, and Lewis Lindsay, an African American bandleader at the 1867 celebration. Lewis's speech encouraged parade attendees to "be steadfast, fight the good fight, be strong, get your diplomas. Be peaceable and wait until you get to the ballot-box before you proclaim your political sentiments. Then vote for a good man without regard to color. But whatever you do, don't cast your vote for a rebel." Lewis's words reflected the community's adoption of strategies in order to cope with the limits placed upon African American expression of freedom by white Richmonders. These coping strategies permitted the community's perseverance until they could freely express themselves, whether at the ballot box, at Emancipation Day celebrations, or in the classroom.³²

Fears of miscegenation also fueled white opposition to African American education. For the majority of white Richmonders, white missionaries and Freedmen's Bureau agents displayed a willingness to go outside their race and community by making African Americans their social equals. White Richmonders equated social equality with miscegenation, and thus, the existence of African Americans heightened white fears. As historian Karin L. Zipf demonstrated, the "school issue and sexual imagery that it generated were part of a large campaign." White critics maintained that schools and the bi-racial educational partnerships, according to Karen Zipf, "fostered a dangerous combination of...social equality between blacks and whites." Critics argued that the presence of African Americans and whites in the classroom promoted race-mixing. Race-mixing eliminated natural hierarchies, and ultimately degraded the white race. Thus, the Freedmen's Schools

³² Marie Tyler-McGraw, "Southern Comfort Levels: Race, Heritage Tourism, and the Civil War in Richmond," *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory* ed. James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton (New York: The New Press, 2006), 155; Quoted in Rachleff, 41.

undermined white supremacy and white elite's claims to African Americans' educational decisions. With the miscegenation claims, white elites sought to delegitimize African Americans claims to freedom and citizenship by controlling their educational decisions.³³

Newspapers, such as the *Richmond Daily Examiner*, capitalized upon the miscegenation fears as a strategy against African American education. Newspaper editors shared white elites' anxieties. Similarly, they, as Martha Hodes explains, "fastened on the taboo between sex between black men and white women with newfound urgency." In June 1866, the *Richmond Daily Examiner* accused female Northern school teachers of finding "husbands in the persons of some of their pupils." The newspaper warned its readers: "Yankee philanthropy have aided in increasing the negro [sic] race, which is now on the decline, without even considering it necessary to observe the church laws on the subject." With statements such as this, the newspapers successfully incited a growing hostility to the Freedmen's schools and further de-legitimized African Americans quest for an education.³⁴

The newspapers also revealed non-recognition as another strategy of the opposition to the Freedmen's Schools. Newspaper editors refused printing articles that recognized specific details of the schools and the existence of an increasingly educated African American community. Like the independent Black church during the antebellum era, the Freedmen's Schools became invisible institutions in the newspapers. Non-recognition of the schools and the student's achievements served several purposes. The strategy upheld the myths regarding African American intellectual capabilities. A majority of white Southerners believed that African Americans were truly incapable of being educated, and it was assumed that African

³³ Karin L. Zipf, "The Whites Shall Rule the Land or Die:" Gender, Race, and Class in North Carolina Reconstruction Politics," *Journal of Southern History* 65, no. 3 (August, 1999): 499-500, 506.

³⁴ Martha Hodes, *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the 19th-Century South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 146; *Richmond Daily Examiner*, June 30, 1866.

Americans were content with being ignorant. For whites, freedmen “remain slaves in mind.” As intellectual slaves, African Americans proved “incapable of intelligently and independently exercising suffrage.” This widespread belief made the Freedmen’s Schools inconceivable. An unidentified resident of Richmond exemplified this belief with his exclamation, “the idea of a darkey’s going to school!” The resident’s disbelief is quite understandable. Non-recognition offered white Southerners the opportunity of escaping into a private world in which African American education did not exist. This private world harkened back to the post-Nat Turner’s Rebellion period in Richmond in which the efforts of an anti-literacy campaign posed as a major obstacle for free and enslaved African Americans desiring an education. This escapism also permitted white Southerners to ignore the growing evidence to the contrary. African American scholastic achievement and the Freedmen’s Schools increasingly invalidated their arguments for a form of republicanism that excluded African American suffrage and upheld white supremacy. Acknowledgement prevented such escapism.³⁵

Furthermore, this strategy had economic implications. The schools, especially those independently created and/or maintained by African Americans that charged tuition, demonstrated the economic achievement and strength of the African American community within a short period. The Freedmen’s Schools also represented the trans-regional, and in some instances, transnational mobilization of capital. African Americans and their

³⁵ Zipf, 509; Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). Raboteau developed the idea of the “invisible institution” in this seminal work. I am borrowing this concept in relation to local whites’ treatment of the Freedmen’s Schools. Richmonder quoted in Rabinowitz, 152-153; Peter H. Wood, “Nat Turner: The Unknown Slave as Visionary Leader,” in *Black Leaders of the Nineteenth Century* ed. Leon Litwack and August Meier (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 23-24. Nat Turner was an educated, and religious enslaved person who led a slave insurrection in southeastern Virginia in 1831. This insurrection resulted in the deaths of over 50. White Southerners enacted harsher slave codes to prevent future slave insurrections. For Virginia and Alabama codes regarding African American literacy, see Williams, *Self-Taught*, 203, 208-210; Gaines, 17-18.

educational partners maintained ties to Northern, Midwestern, Western and English financial circles. A quick glance at the financial statements and expense reports of the various educational partners, such as the American Baptist Home Mission Society and the American Missionary Association, illuminates the extensive financial commitment made to the city's Freedmen's Schools and African American education in the state. Heavily damaged by the war, Richmond's economy needed restoration to its former economic glory. Richmond's economically-viable African American community and financially solvent Freedmen's School system created jealousy within the larger white community concerned with economic recovery. Moreover, the schools' success resulted from their independence rather than dependence upon Southern white elites. For these reasons, the newspapers featured few articles regarding the Freedmen Schools.³⁶

The few articles regarding the Freedmen's Schools in newspapers, such as the *Richmond Daily Examiner*, were highly negative. The articles often posited the schools as a Northern institution imposed on the South and did not recognize the independent schools created by African Americans. Thus, the articles inferred that African Americans, with Northern help, stepped outside of their natural position in the social hierarchy and behaved audaciously. In reference to the educational department of the Freedmen's Bureau, the *Richmond Daily Examiner* wrote: "...we are now to have a "Bureau of Education," framed especially for the enlightenment of the ignorant barbarians of the south. This is really too much." The article rhetorically asked its readers: "Can we ever submit to be loaded with such

³⁶ American Baptist Home Mission Society, *Thirty-Third Annual Report of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, Convened at St. Louis, MO., May 18-23, 1865* (New York: American Home Mission Rooms, 1865), 13; American Baptist Home Mission Society, *Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, Convened at Chicago, Ill., May 23 and 24, 1867* (New York: American Home Mission Rooms, 1867), 46-47; American Missionary Association, *History of the American Missionary Association with Illustrative Facts and Anecdotes* (New York: American Missionary Association, 1891), 87; Chesson, 61-72.

heavy obligations to our Yankee friends?" In answering the question, the newspaper reasoned: "It is imposition of the grossest kind... Let an effort be made to spare us this last heavy load of gratitude."³⁷ Also, these articles would be presented on the same page or edition highlighting educational achievement by white Virginians. On the same page as the above quote, the *Richmond Daily Examiner* featured an article about the University of Virginia's commencement. The coverage even praised the commencement speaker's address, which invoked "Lost Cause" ideology. The white conservative press served a crucial role in disseminating the arguments of the opposition. Furthermore, it encouraged hostile behavior toward the schools, teachers, and students.³⁸

Richmond's white opposition also adopted several strategies pertaining to the purchase of school accommodations by Northern and Federal agencies. The nascent Freedmen's School system required accommodations for school purposes and housing the Northern teachers. One strategy involved a ban of landownership by a non-state resident or non-Virginian incorporation. This strategy specifically addressed African Americans' alliances with Northern missionary associations. When asked by General O. Brown whether a "corporation in the North... purchase and hold real estate under the laws of Virginia" for educational purposes, John H. Gilmer responded: "I respectfully answer in the negative. Neither by state or Federal laws can this be done." By preventing Northern organizations from holding real estate in Virginia, officials sought to minimize outside influences in African American education. Lawyers, such as John H. Gilmer, made sure that the African

³⁷ "Untitled," *Richmond Daily Examiner*, June 30, 1866, 2; "Commencement at the University of Virginia," *Richmond Daily Examiner*, June 30, 1866, 2; For more examples, please see "Untitled," *Richmond Daily Examiner*, May 26, 1866, 2; "Untitled," *Richmond Daily Examiner*, July 30, 1866, 2; and "The Freedmen's Bureau in Richmond," *Richmond Daily Examiner*, July 30, 1866, 3.

³⁸ *Richmond Daily Examiner*, June 30, 1866, 2.

American community and their educational partners upheld state laws. Such laws and their enforcement placed obstacles for African Americans and their educational allies. In order to bypass these obstacles, African Americans and their partners developed creative solutions such as the creation of trusteeships for school property. Under this system, African Americans and their partners purchased property under the management of a Board of Trustees. The selected trustees included local African Americans and representatives from the Northern educational partners. This solution allowed for the inclusion of a Northern organization in the purchase of school property. For instance, the New York branch of the American Freedmen's Union Commission utilized this strategy with the establishment of the Navy Hill schools. Therefore, the educational partnerships successfully overcame this obstacle.³⁹

The real estate strategies also entailed the rental and sale of property to individuals for school purposes. This strategy further compounded the problem of a corporation outside of Virginia from owning real estate and the trusteeship solution. William W. Woodbury noted in his December 1865 report that the "prevailing hostility of the inhabitants to the education of the colored people" made it "difficult to obtain lots for building sites at any price." As a result, the Freedmen's Bureau and Northern societies continued a policy of renting any available property including vacant lots, churches, and other accommodations. Likewise, renting accommodations for teachers' homes and schools proved difficult as evidenced by Woodbury's report. While it failed to stop African American education, this strategy created an obstacle that required time and energy for the educational partners in securing school

³⁹ John Gilmer to General O. Brown, January 3, 1866, microfilm roll 6, AMA Papers, Virginia; R. M. Manly to Robert L. Murray, August 25, 1866, printed pages 75-76, microfilm roll 1, VA-BRFAL-ED.

property and teachers' accommodations. The more time and energy placed in securing accommodations equated to less time that could be devoted to African American education.⁴⁰

Furthermore, the real estate strategies even addressed the Freedmen's School system's reliance upon African American churches for school accommodations. The opposition also attempted a ban on the use of churches for schools. Several African American churches functioned as Freedmen's Schools due to the various real estate strategies adopted by the opposition. In order to thwart the spread of African American education, the opposition proposed a ban on the use of churches for schools. This ban would have had detrimental effects. American Missionary Association officials recognized the potential threat of such proposal. They almost abandoned their efforts in Richmond until Reverend William D. Harris dispelled the rumors of the ordinance's success. These various real estate strategies demonstrate the comprehensive attack on the educational partnerships and the Freedmen's Schools by local whites. From landownership to a potential ban on church property, white opposition remained resilient and flexible in the strategies employed in thwarting African American education.⁴¹

Richmond's white opposition utilized the legal system as another strategy. Educators often found themselves arrested, imprisoned, and tried for minor offenses. Police officials sometimes arrested individuals based upon the most circumstantial evidence. Both tactics served the purpose of temporarily closing the schools operated by the incarcerated educator. These tactics also brought negative publicity to the African American schools. While they ignored reports of the progress in the African American schools, the white conservative press

⁴⁰ John Gilmer to General O. Brown, January 3, 1866, microfilm roll 6, AMA Papers, Virginia; W. W. Woodbury, Superintendent Monthly Report for 1865, microfilm roll 6, AMA Papers, Virginia.

⁴¹ William D. Harris to Samuel Hunt, July 5, 1866, microfilm roll 7, AMA Papers, Virginia.

featured scathing reports of these incidents in their papers. African Americans and their supporters actively confronted this misuse of the justice, even if it highlighted fissures within the African American educational network.

The seduction trial of Reverend William Harris exemplified the use of extra-legal measures. In December 1866, Lomax Smith, an African American barber and former Confederate sympathizer, accused Reverend William Harris of seducing his daughter, Eliza Smith. Smith's accusations convinced the mayor of Harris's guilt. Police officials arrested and imprisoned the popular minister and educator. The white press found the case alluring for its coordinated attack on the Freedmen's Schools. Harris's alleged seduction of his young charge fit within several popular narratives of dishonorable Northern Yankee teachers and gullible freedmen. The only "true friend" and protector of African Americans were the former white elite and not Northerners. This line of attack directly countered the messages imparted to African Americans attending the schools operated by the American Freedmen's Union Commission. In May 1866, a *Christian Recorder* article noted that the organization instructed their students "that the friends of the Union are their friends and that the Union itself is their friend." As their friends, the article reasoned, "nothing that can wound their feelings or lessen their self-respect is done, or said, or encouraged." In the eyes of the press, though, Harris's alleged seduction of Eliza Smith caused harm and lessened the self-respect of his student and her parents. Moreover, Harris' alleged seduction raised the specter of African American males as sexual brutes. Harris' case defied the racial and class inequity typical of the postwar ideology of female purity. In this case, instead of a white woman, the purity of a black woman deserved white patriarchal protection. Furthermore, the seduction

case of the “Yankee Nigger Preacher,” had the potential of threatening the burgeoning school system.⁴²

Recognizing the threat, the African American community came to Harris’ defense. At the trial, several educators and community members attested to Harris’ innocence. Peter Woolfolk, a colleague of Harris in the Freedmen’s School system, and several church deacons testified on Harris’s behalf. Through these witnesses, it became apparent that Harris counseled Smith’s daughter against an elopement with William Jennings, a young African American teacher in Richmond. Her father preferred another suitor for her and forced an engagement between them. The broken engagement and Harris’s counseling prompted the accusations. The judge acquitted Harris. The white newspapers published articles detailing the acquittal rather than the originally anticipated conviction. Richmond’s African American community had successfully vindicated Harris. The white opposition could not use the incident as a means of inflicting irreparable harm to the Freedmen’s Schools.⁴³

Still, the incident resulted in a minor victory for the opposition. Harris never adequately repaired his reputation. Church officials reassigned Harris to the Georgetown section of Washington, D.C. in 1867. Richmond’s African American community lost an important educational partner as a result of internal strife and false accusations. Indeed, the white opposition achieved a victory.⁴⁴

⁴² William D. Harris to George Whipple, December 11, 1866, microfilm roll 8, AMA Papers, Virginia; “Free Schools in Richmond,” *Christian Recorder*, May 19, 1866; Hodes, 159-165; Quoted in Harris to Whipple, December 11, 1866, AMA Papers, Virginia.

⁴³ A Member of the Church, “The Rev. W. D. Harris Honorably Acquitted,” December 13, 1866, clipping, enclosed in William D. Harris to George Whipple, December 11, 1866, microfilm roll 8, AMA Papers, Virginia; “The Negro Abduction Case-The Negro Preacher Harris Discharged,” clipping enclosed in William D. Harris to George Whipple, December 11, 1866, microfilm roll 8, AMA Papers, Virginia.

⁴⁴ West, 128.

Despite local white hostility to the schools, the Freedmen's School system succeeded. Opposition only cemented the educational relationships and the partners resolve to overcome the obstacles posed by it. By 1867, a shift in attitude toward the Freedmen's Schools occurred. The obstacles never stopped the school system's development and growth in size and influence as desired by those opposed. The resolve of African Americans and their educational partners impressed some individuals who once were opposed. This resulted in a shift in public opinion toward the Freedmen's Schools.

Tourism also played a pivotal role in shaping local white public opinion regarding the Freedmen's Schools. Civil War attractions caught the imagination of American and international travelers in the immediate postwar period. Civil War tourism exploded as travel to once-popular destinations such as the Hudson River Valley waned. Northern and international visitors flocked to the former Confederate capital as soon as transportation networks and public accommodations had been restored and personal safety could be ensured. They toured Davis's mansion, the "Burnt District," and other related sites. Some tourists, such as Edward Mosley, concentrated their travels to the battlefields and the physical ruins of the city and nearby Petersburg. Mosley was one of the first tourists who arrived in Richmond. On April 8, 1865, five days after the fall of Richmond, Mosley limited his sightseeing to physical ruins of the city and surrounding battlefields and provided a vivid account in this letters. On this trip, he never ventured into the African American community. Unlike Mosley, other tourists toured the African American community, specifically they made visits to the Freedmen's Schools. For these tourists, the schools, African American scholars, and the teachers served as concrete examples of the meaning of freedom and citizenship wrought by four hard years of war. Awed by the experiences in the classrooms,

tourists followed the conventions established under antebellum tourism. They wrote of their visits to the schools in their diaries and letters. Often, they published the details of their grand tours of the former Confederacy. Informal and formal travel literature captivated others and brought more visitors to Richmond as earlier travel accounts had done previously. By shaping public opinion and attitudes, the largely positive depictions in the literature legitimated African American education.⁴⁵

David Thomas provided a glimpse of a tourist's visit to the city's Freedmen's Schools. Thomas traveled the country during 1865 and 1866. While touring Richmond, he visited three schools conducted by the American Baptist Home Mission Society. His experience proved memorable as he extensively wrote about it in his published account of his grand tour. In discussing the school conducted by Mary A. Howe, Thomas remarked: "There are about 400 children taught here, and although the school was only commenced in October last, the children have made very rapid progress." He found that the students "could say from memory the multiplication table, backward and forward, could spell words of five or six syllables, could answer questions in geography quite correctly, could sing beautifully, and Miss Howe, who had been a teacher in the state of Maine, said she never knew children in the North learn so fast as the coloured [sic] children did in Richmond." Thomas shared her sentiments as he concluded: "I heard some of the children read very well indeed." After visiting Howe's classroom, Thomas then toured the Freedmen's School operated by Annie B. Hancock. Again, the experience profoundly impressed him. He wrote: "I visited another

⁴⁵ Catherine Cocks, *Doing the Town: The Rise of Urban Tourism in the United States, 1850-1915* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 2-7; Richard H. Gassan, *The Birth of American Tourism: New York, the Hudson Valley, and American Culture, 1790-1830* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 70-84. Chesson, 57-62. According to Chesson, the Burnt District was the area of Richmond heavily damaged by fire as the Confederate army made its retreat from the city. The damage was extensive and affected all classes in the city; Edward Mosley, April 8, 1865 letter, Letters, 1863-1865, VHS.

school under the management of Miss Hancock, and I never saw children equally advanced who had had so little training. A negro man was writing in his first copy book, and he did it very nicely indeed.” Amazed by the progress made at the Howe’s and Hancock’s schools, Thomas completed his trip with a visit of the Freedmen’s School conducted at the Ebenezer Baptist Church. He remarked: “I also visited the Ebenezer Baptist School where there were about 400 children taught, and here, as at other places, there was a perfect race for learning, all appearing to be doing their ‘very best.’” Thomas’s tour of the Freedmen’s Schools left an indelible mark. The scholars impressed upon him the success of Educational Reconstruction. It also demonstrated that the carnage of Civil War had not been in vain. For Thomas, African Americans had proved to be the “perfect race for learning,” and thus, the students’ achievement justified the destructive nature of the war for him.⁴⁶

Published tourist accounts, such as Thomas’, piqued the interests of Northern and international circles. Indeed, the interest generated by the tourist accounts made the Freedmen’s Schools, especially the schools on Chimborazo Hill, must-see tourist destinations for visitors of the former Confederate capital. Thomas’ account also proved to be not an anomaly as others wrote of their trips. Sarah S. Carter offered another glimpse of the Freedmen’s Schools as popular tourist destinations. In 1866, Carter received an appointment to teach a Freedmen’s School in Yorktown, Virginia. While en-route from her home in Philadelphia to Yorktown, Sarah S. Carter, her sister, Rebecca (Carter) Evans, and three friends, Emma Cadbury, Joel Cadbury, and Sarah Cadbury, toured Baltimore, MD., Hampton, Petersburg, Richmond, and Williamsburg, VA., and Washington, D.C. before reaching Yorktown. Her journal vividly documented her tour of the former Confederacy with

⁴⁶ Quoted in A. A. Taylor, “Solving the Problem of Education,” *Journal of Negro History* 11, no. 2 (April 1926): 383.

drawings and detailed entries. Like Thomas's account, Carter's journal captured the fascination associated with tourism to the Freedmen's Schools.⁴⁷

Carter and her fellow tourists found a trip to a Freedmen's School to be a highlight of their Richmond trip. After a day of touring the "burned district," the Capital building, and former slave pens, the group made the "long, long walk to Chimborazo Hill and the Chapel for colored people." The group attended the day school session at the Chimborazo Schools. She observed: "After the Chapel services those who attended the First day school gathered in very quietly and gently and behaved, generally, very well. There was a colored pastor and, at least, nine female teachers mostly young and very earnest. The attendance of the scholars was three hundred." The school's educators then cajoled the group into participating rather than merely observing the session. "Joel declined the offer that he should instruct a class of men," wrote Carter. "After some very sweet singing and the distribution of "The Good News" J. C. [Joel Cadbury] made an address; another hymn followed and the school dismissed." As evidenced by Carter's detailed account, the Richmond schools appealed not just to individuals deeply committed to African American education but everyday citizens. While herself an educator, the remaining members of Carter's group were not. They included the Chimborazo schools as a must-see attraction on their grand tour of Richmond. Instead of viewing the city's other attractions, they devoted a day to visit the schools prior to the start of Carter's appointment in Yorktown. For Carter, the Chimborazo school trip reinforced her conviction to participate in Educational Reconstruction.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Sarah S. Carter, *Diary, 1866, May 20-31*, VHS.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Tourist interest and the dollars it brought had several major consequences. First, tourism curbed some of the more violent manifestations of white hostility toward African American education. Vandalism and arson of the Freedmen's Schools on the tourist circuit would have greatly diminished the revenue possibilities of the tourist sites for city boosters. City boosters employed tourism as a strategy in remaking the city's postwar image immediately after the Civil War. Heavily invested in restoring the city's image, city boosters desired the protection of the schools as long as they proved beneficial. By the 1890s, African American heritage sites lost their utility. The United Daughters of the Confederacy's memory project proved more saleable. As a result, city boosters effectively separated the city's African American population from the white population in the public commemorative space.⁴⁹

Second, tourists and published accounts placed the schools and the work of Educational Reconstruction under constant surveillance. Surveillance unexpectedly aided Richmond's African American community. Overt expressions of white hostility toward the Freedmen's Schools would have brought reprisal and possible extension of military occupation or Federal intervention. Thus, white Richmonders adopted more subtle forms of opposition such as social ostracism, harassment, and preventing corporations from outside of Virginia from owning property in the state. To be sure, tourism never completely eliminated more violent forms of white hostility. With the exception of the destruction of the Second African Baptist Church by arson, violence was directed toward individuals associated with

⁴⁹ Anthony J. Stanonis, "Introduction: Selling Dixies," *Dixie Emporium: Tourism, Foodways and Consumer Culture in the American South*, ed. Anthony J. Stanonis (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 2; Tyler-McGraw, 153-155; Karen L. Cox, *Dixie Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 5, 49-72; For an example of the effectiveness of the Lost Cause memory project, see Andrew Morrison, *Richmond, Virginia and the New South* (Richmond: George W. Engelhardt and Co., c.1889). In this 96-page pamphlet, Morrison made no mention of the African American community's public spaces.

the schools and not to the physical structures. Richmond would never become like Mobile, in which arson defined a major role in the development of the city's Freedmen's Schools. Neither John Alvord's semi-annual reports nor the Ku Klux Klan hearings mentioned the occurrence of the acts of violence in the city as experienced in Mobile and elsewhere in the region. Still, tourism produced more positive consequences for legitimizing the Freedmen's School system.⁵⁰

Third, tourism aided African Americans' struggle for education in Richmond. The detailed accounts highlighted the success of the schools and African Americans' capacity to learn and in some instances, to instruct scholars. Moreover, tourists legitimated African American education with the designation of the Freedmen's Schools as must-see attractions. Published accounts made acquiring financial and educational support easier. Indeed, tourism validated African American education as a natural right of citizenship in the postwar South. Tourism proved to be the best form of publicity for the schools and the African American struggle for education.

In April 1865, Richmond's African American community embarked on its quest for education. By 1867, the community successfully established a firm educational foundation based upon an extensive network of relationships. In the process, Richmond's African Americans overcame various obstacles in establishing a system of schools. However, this system remained vulnerable. As long as African Americans lacked suffrage, they remained dependent upon sympathetic federal and Northern agencies for protection of the school system. The African American community also did not have the full support of the broader

⁵⁰ Rachleff, 39; John Alvord, *Semi-annual Report on Schools for Freedmen: numbers 1-10, January 1866-July 1870* (1868-1870; reprint, New York: AMS Press, c1980); United States. House, *Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States*. 42nd Cong., 2nd Sess., H. Rep. 22, Pt. 1.

white community for African American education as a legitimate right of citizenship.

Tourism, scholastic progress, and African American determination changed some attitudes but more needed to be done. Undeterred and still hopeful, African Americans would build upon the foundation established during the initial years in future struggles.

Mobile: Hard Struggle for Access and Legitimacy

Union troops captured the city of Mobile on April 12, 1865. As defeat came three days after General Robert E. Lee's surrender, Mobile never experienced the wartime educational experimentation as Richmond or other areas did. Schools emerged within days of Union victory in the basements and sanctuaries of the city's African American churches. The timing resulted in intense white resistance in the city. As African Americans expressed their freedom with schools, whites in one of the last major Confederate urban strongholds were coming to grips with occupation and Confederate defeat. This section will explore the development of the Freedmen's Schools and educational partnerships and the obstacles endured.⁵¹

While schools operated by African Americans existed days after Union victory. Official Federal reports noted that the Freedmen's School system opened on May 11, 1865 in the State Street Methodist Episcopal Colored Church. Dr. C. H. Roe and E. C. Branch, white missionaries for the Northwestern Freedmen's Aid Society of Chicago, served as the school's principal teachers. This organization came to Mobile for the purpose of "promoting the moral elevation" and "exerting a positive religious influence" over the city's African American community. The State Street School quickly expanded from the 121 enrolled students on the

⁵¹ Arthur W. Bergeron, Jr., *Confederate Mobile* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), xi. Bergeron provides a comprehensive account detailing the defense of the city during the entire war. Mobile's defensive strategic measures, such as railroad networks, blockage running abilities, and the ability to create a perception of impregnability to the Union army, aided the city's longevity until April 12, 1865. Bergeron's study, though, focuses upon the city rather than the entire campaign which included the 1864 Mobile Bay campaign.

first day to 510 enrolled students by the tenth day of operations. Schools also existed at the Stone Street Colored Baptist Church, the St. Louis St. School, and the Medical College.

These schools operated until the end of June 1865 and then resumed in the fall.⁵²

Mobile's nascent educational system had a new partner at the beginning of the 1865-1866 academic year. The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands organized its educational division in Alabama. The Freedmen's Bureau, as noted by historian Kenneth White, developed slowly in the state. The organization concentrated its initial efforts primarily in Mobile and Montgomery in order to develop a strong base for a statewide system. Headquartered in Montgomery, Major General Wager Swayne served as the Assistant Commissioner for the state's operations. Swayne's background never prepared him for this position. Born in New York City in 1834, Swayne grew up in Columbus, Ohio, the son of a lawyer. He received his undergraduate education at Yale University in 1856 and then obtained a law degree from Cincinnati Law School in 1859. He practiced law with his father in Cincinnati until the start of the Civil War. During the war, Swayne initially served as a major in the 43rd Ohio Infantry prior to moving up the ranks. At the end of the war, he was recuperating from the amputation of his leg when asked to become Alabama's Assistant Commissioner by O. O. Howard. While his background may not have prepared him for the position, Swayne made justice for Alabama's African Americans his top priority. He oversaw both the educational and non-educational programs and personnel. As a result of his lack of

⁵² E.C. Branch, "Report of Our Schools," *The Nationalist*, January 18, 1866, 2; John B. Myers, "The Education of the Alabama Freedmen During Presidential Reconstruction, 1865-1867," *Journal of Negro History* 40, no 2 (Spring 1971): 165.

educational administration knowledge, Swayne worked directly with Reverend Charles W. Buckley, the state's first Superintendent of Education for the Freedmen's Bureau.⁵³

The Bureau regarded its function as coordinating and supervising the various educational efforts for African Americans. Rather than hiring educational agents throughout the state, Swayne preferred utilizing individuals directly involved in local African American educational movements as local school superintendents. These individuals often had a greater knowledge of local conditions and concerns. These individuals, furthermore, often had the trust of the communities in which they served. Hence, hiring individuals directly involved in local efforts often instilled trust in the Freedmen's Bureau as an organization. Mobile's Freedmen's School system reflected this model. Swayne hired E. C. Branch as the Superintendent of Schools for the District of Mobile in March 1866. Branch reported directly to C. W. Buckley rather than the Freedmen's Bureau agent located in Mobile. As a result, Mobile's African American community and their educational partners often deferred to the Freedmen's Bureau headquarters whenever problems arose.⁵⁴

The symbiotic relationship between Mobile's African American community and the Freedmen's Bureau proved essential in the development of schools for African Americans in Alabama. The relationship offered legitimacy to the community's efforts for education and convincing the broader white community of its merits. It also afforded federal protection of nascent educational efforts in Mobile. Likewise, Montgomery agents benefited from the relationship. As one of the earliest educational systems in Alabama, Montgomery often looked toward Mobile as a model for its operations elsewhere in Alabama. Success in Mobile

⁵³ Kenneth B. White, "The Alabama Freedmen's Bureau and Black Education: The Myth of Opportunity," *Alabama Review* 34 no. 2 (April 1981), 109; Kenneth White, "Wager Swayne: Racist or Realist?," *Alabama Review* 31 no. 2 (April 1978): 93-95.

⁵⁴ "Mr. E. C. Branch," *Nationalist*, April 5, 1866, 3.

allowed for the spread of the Freedmen's School system to other areas, especially rural Alabama. By September 1866, the Bureau had established the basic organizational structure and cemented relationships with several Northern agencies. This foundation permitted the statewide expansion of the Freedmen's School system. Mobile's schools demonstrated that African American education to white naysayers was a worthy endeavor. As a result, the Freedmen's School system expanded throughout Alabama.⁵⁵

Unlike Richmond, Mobile attracted fewer Northern organizations. During the first year, the school system was comprised of the Northwestern Commission of the American Freedmen's Aid Commission's schools located at the Medical College and several independent schools located in the various African American churches. The lack of organizational attention did not reflect a lack of support by the city's African American community. The school system was truly integrated in the city's African American community. The school system raised money for benevolent and educational purposes. In addition to its own operational expenses, the nascent school system regularly made financial contributions to burial societies, an orphan asylum, alms houses, and other relief societies. Through its philanthropic and educational efforts, Mobile's schools for African American children quickly developed into an important cultural institution. By January 1866, E. C. Branch reported to the city's African American newspaper that the city's schools had 1,700 students enrolled and 17 teachers employed. At the end of the 1865-1866 academic year, the

⁵⁵ White, *Alabama Freedmen's Bureau*, 109; Horace Mann Bond, *Negro Education in Alabama: A Study in Cotton and Steel* (1939; reprint, Tuscaloosa : University of Alabama Press, c1994), 81-83.

school system included day, night, and Sabbath schools with 728 enrolled students. The system also included several private schools operated solely by African Americans.⁵⁶

According to E.C. Branch, the initial schools thrived for several reasons. First, Branch cited the school system's admittance of any interested student, regardless of class or financial circumstances. Branch proudly proclaimed in his regular report to the city's African American newspaper that "no one is debarred the privileges of the school on account of *color or poverty*." Students paid tuition in relation to what they could afford. As a result, tuition charged ranged from twenty-five cents to one dollar and twenty-five cents per enrolled student. Second, the school system provided regular structure to the enrolled students' daily routine. The six-hour daily sessions were highly regimented as evidenced by the daily exercises at the Medical College. Daily exercises began precisely at "fifteen minutes before nine o'clock the different departments meet in the Assembly Room for divine service, which exercises consist of reading short selections from the Bible, after which the school repeat the 23d Psalm," according to Branch. He then noted that "then all kneel, when a short prayer is offered by some designated teacher, at the close of which, all join in the repetition of the Lord's prayer, when the exercises are concluded by singing, and the departments return to their respective rooms in military order." By January 1866, school system boasted classes in all of the various readers ranging from the *Pictorial Primer* to the *Rhetorical Fifth Reader of the Saunders' New Union Series*. Classes existed in more advanced mathematics and grammar courses as well. The school system, according to Branch, provided the students

⁵⁶ E.C. Branch, "Report of Our Schools," *The Nationalist*, January 18, 1866, 2; "Monthly Reports of District Superintendents, September 1865-June 1870," microfilm roll 5, AL-BRFAL-ED. For statistics of the Mobile schools, see Appendix 3.

with a curriculum and a rigorous schedule comparable to any other common school, regardless of race.⁵⁷

Third, the school system's teachers accelerated its success. The school system's teachers employed the latest teaching methods in their classrooms. The white and African American teachers gave lessons, according to Branch, in object teaching, map drawing, concert rehearsals, composition and declamation." The teachers also oversaw the publication of a student newspaper entitled, "The Acorn." The teachers' ability to harness their students' desire to become educated resulted in the progress made by the majority of the students within nine months that Branch described as "truly surprising."⁵⁸

In addition to schools, Mobile's African American community also established a local newspaper, the *Nationalist*. The community and Freedmen's School officials viewed sustaining a newspaper as essential to their quest for educational access and legitimacy. Although white American Missionary Association educators served as editors from Montgomery, the *Nationalist* had a trustees' board comprised entirely of African Americans and a few Creoles of Color. In addition to news coverage, the newspaper placed an emphasis on literacy and citizenship building. John Silsby, the newspaper's first editor, noted this aim in the announcement of the paper's formation. "The era upon which we have just entered is essentially an era of freedom," Silsby proclaimed, "It implies the supremacy of ideas greatly in advance of those which formerly prevailed in our community, and a remodeling of all institutions and customs which are not in harmony with the new state of things." For Silsby, the advancement of literacy through a newspaper constituted the "new state of things." He

⁵⁷ E.C. Branch, "Report of Our Schools," *The Nationalist*, January 18, 1866, 2

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

also promised that the *Nationalist* would contain “a variety of instructive and interesting matter...inculcating the truth that true religion and the virtues that germinate in it, are the only foundations of individual and national happiness.” To this end, the paper featured a Children’s section which included short morality tales and poems. The paper encouraged subscribers to promote reading among children and illiterate members of the community. The newspaper also featured advertisements for literary society meetings and events at the local schools. The *Nationalist* quickly became an important organ for the African American community’s educational quest.⁵⁹

Despite the initial success of the Freedmen’s Schools, some of the educational partners disapproved of the African American community’s involvement. Racial assumptions colored these educational partners’ attitudes. They viewed the schools operated by African Americans as inferior and led by incompetent educators. Charles W. Buckley, Alabama’s Bureau Superintendent of Education, voiced this opinion in a report to Major General Wager Swayne. He wrote: “There are in Mobile several colored schools taught mostly by colored teachers. Some of these teachers are not competent for the position they fill. They need suggestions from experienced teachers...and thus bring those of the same degree of advancement into the same school.” In the same report, Buckley noted that the school operated by E. C. Branch, a white educator, was “flourishing” and had “done a great work for the colored people of the city.” Buckley considered the existing educated class of African Americans as too inexperienced for teaching. He could not overcome the racial assumptions

⁵⁹ John Silsby, “The Nationalist,” broadside, October 16, 1865, microfilm roll 1, AMA-Alabama; Michael Fitzgerald, *Urban Emancipation: Popular Politics in Reconstruction Mobile, 1860-1890* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 55, 62-64; For an example of the Children’s Department, see “Children’s Department,” *Nationalist*, January 25, 1866, 3; For a history of the newspaper, see Kimberly Bess Cantrell, “A Voice for the Freedmen: The Mobile Nationalist, 1865-1869” (master’s thesis, Auburn University, 1989).

regarding slavery, African American intellectual abilities, and teaching capabilities. For these reasons, Buckley viewed guidance and supervision by experienced white educators, such as E. C. Branch, as necessary during the initial years of the Freedmen's Schools. As a result, he discouraged schools operated by African Americans and encouraged schools operated and administered by white Northern missionary associations.⁶⁰

For African Americans, the question over schools operated without white assistance never raised such anxieties. Some preferred independent schools as evidenced by the students attending these schools instead of the school conducted at the Medical College. However, pragmatism influenced their acceptance of schools operated by the Northwestern Freedmen's Aid Society of Chicago. Individuals often considered factors such as location, costs, and a teacher's experience. Furthermore, the community members gave their support to any sincere individual devoted to African American education as evidenced by the communal support of E. C. Branch. By the end of the first academic year, E. C. Branch proved his sincerity inside and outside the classroom. He had both the trust and full support of the community, as evidenced by the *Nationalist*. The newspaper noted that E. C. Branch's "constant and faithful labors in this community" received the appreciation of "every loyal citizen." For this appreciation, the newspaper, on behalf of the African American community, hoped that: "he [would] long remain to diffuse among the colored youth that education which will be their best protection." Hence, competition between the independent and schools receiving outside financial support never bothered the African American community as it did C. W. Buckley.⁶¹

⁶⁰ C. W. Buckley, Draft Report Made to Major General Swayne Relative to Colored Schools, March 30, 1866, microfilm roll 1, AL-BRFAL-ED.

⁶¹ "Mr. E. C. Branch, *Nationalist*, April 5, 1866, 2.

In short, educational access mattered rather than educational type. Advertisements and articles regarding both types of schools peppered the pages of the *Nationalist*. The various editors praised the work done by both. In its coverage of a school exhibition at the Medical College, the *Nationalist* remarked: “The success of this school reflects great credit upon the efficient corps of teachers, who are devoting their times to the noble work of elevating a depressed race.” All of the teachers listed, except one, came from the North and Midwest. The exception was an African American teacher from Mobile. The newspaper afforded the same level of praise to the work done in the private schools. The newspaper proudly endorsed the school operated by Miss Jeane Ashe, an African American from Mobile. In calling attention to the advertisement for her school, the newspaper editors noted: “Her work is a glorious one and we hope that she will be well sustained.” For the *Nationalist* and the community, access to an education for all classes rather than the type mattered. Independent schools afforded parents choice but often at a cost greater than the schools receiving outside financial support. They selected the type most beneficial to their family’s domestic economy. Independent schools often provided African American teachers, a similar curriculum offered at the Medical College schools, and a local administration more in tune with the community’s dynamics and concerns. But both school types, though, fulfilled the community’s desire of becoming a literate people. Hence, both types could co-exist without difficulty.⁶²

Schools operated outside of direct Freedmen’s Bureau supervision also filled an important void during the summer. As white missionaries vacationed in their Northern residences, these schools made educational opportunities available. Often conducted at local

⁶² “School Exhibition,” *Nationalist*, April 19, 1866, 2; “Untitled,” *Nationalist*, December 27, 1866, 2; “Private School,” advertisement, *Nationalist*, December 27, 1866, 3.

churches and private residences, these schools offered a common school curriculum similar to the one featured at the Medical College. For instance, the school operated by Joseph S. Holmes at the Lawrence Street Baptist Church boasted a curriculum similar to the Medical College. He also provided his credentials for teaching such a curriculum. This helped in legitimizing his school. His advertisement also revealed Holmes' concern over educational accessibility to all African Americans living in Mobile. In December 1865, Holmes first articulated this concern at the Colored Convention held in the city. Holmes and other convention delegates discussed the role of education in their transition to freedom. As one of their demands, convention delegates encouraged their African American brethren to "learn to read and to obtain all the knowledge we can; and especially, let us be uniting in wise efforts for the education of our children." Hence, in his advertisement, Holmes' maintained that his school was for "the benefit of the colored families and their children in the south part of this city." As distance often proved too great for individuals interested in obtaining an education at the nearest Freedmen's School, Holmes continued the school during the 1866-1867 academic-year. In so doing, he demonstrated his commitment to educational accessibility for all African American residents in the city and the state.⁶³

Motivated by a desire for schools during the summer months, several members of the African American community went into action. In the July 19, 1866 edition of the *Nationalist*, Benjamin H. Jones, Pear Mitchel, John Dempsey, John McNeil, Nora Mitchel, William Coleman, George Fears, and Henry Austin announced a meeting calling for the

⁶³ "A School," announcement, *Nationalist*, July 19, 1866, 2; "Address Issued by the Colored Convention at Mobile," *Nationalist*, December 28, 1865, 2. Holmes served as the secretary for the convention and had the resolutions adopted at the convention published in Mobile and across the state.

creation of an school board independent from the Freedmen's Bureau and Northern organizations. The brief announcement read:

Believing that the interests of education would be promoted by the organization of a Colored School Board for the city of Mobile, the undersigned hereby request all parents and others favorable to the education of the colored people to meet at Fears' hall, on Monday next, at 6 P.M., to discuss the subject, elect a board, and determine what other steps had best be taken to secure our children the advantages of a liberal education.

While the details of the meeting and the outcome are not known, the proposed meeting illustrated that community leaders and local African American school educators did not want the summer months to end the schooling of African American children. In acting outside of the Freedmen's Bureau, the meeting demonstrates that the African American community was not solely dependent upon their white educational partners. While they recognized the importance of such partnerships, community members' desire for self-determination encouraged such meetings. Moreover, they utilized all forums and channels in order to ensure educational accessibility for interested community members. Their initiative showed that Mobile's African American schools were not the result of outside influences but their self-expression of the meanings of freedom and citizenship.⁶⁴

Intense hostility from Mobile's white community overshadowed these debates over school type. Indeed white opposition represented a major obstacle to the city's Freedmen's Schools. As African Americans expressed their freedom, the white community coped with their defeat as a city and a nation through violence directed at the initial African American schools. White elites deemed the initial African American and white teachers as a "pack of thieves," and "little dirty schoolmasters and schoolmistresses." Dr. Josiah C. Nott led the opposition movement. Nott had received notoriety for his promotion of polygenism or the

⁶⁴ "Colored School Board," *Nationalist*, July 19, 1866, 3.

belief of multiple origins as a justification of slavery and the repression of African Americans. In 1854, Nott's collaborative work with George Gideon on polygenism formed the scientific defense of slavery in the years leading to the Civil War. As the dean of the city's Medical College, which was confiscated for African American educational purposes in April 1865, Nott publicly declared that he "would rather see the building burned down, than used for its present purposes." Nott's proclamation reverberated among white Mobilians opposed to the Freedmen's School system.⁶⁵

Several individuals acted upon Nott's call to action. By the end of the summer 1865, the Methodist Church and Presbyterian Church fell victim to "acts of incendiary violence." Each church housed a Freedmen's School. Throughout the 1865-1866 academic year, arson plagued the city's churches that housed Freedmen's School. According to Major General Swayne's report to O. O. Howard, arson even destroyed the Zion Methodist Church in late 1865 "directly after a military order restoring possession to the congregation previously excluded by white Trustees." Arsonists found great support among the white community. The *Nationalist* reported the remarks made by a white citizen after the destruction of another church in March 1866.

Said he, "On the morning after the burning of the church on St. Francis street, I was conversing with a citizen, who, in reference to the fire, said he was d___d [sic] glad of it, and he hoped the Medical college would go next. I said, "You must be a fool to desire the destruction of your own property." He replied that when all places of resort for the negroes shall be destroyed, and the troops withdrawn, the whites would be able to manage them."

Arson quickly became a strategy employed towards African American education in Mobile.

Unlike Richmond, tourism never abated the more violent manifestations of local white

⁶⁵ Reginald Horsman, *Josiah Nott of Mobile: Southerner, Physician, and Racial Theorist* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 170-221; Quoted in Wager Swayne, Report to Major General O.O. Howard Concerning the Continued Occupancy of the Medical College in Mobile and the Reasons Therefore, January 24, 1866, microfilm roll 3, AL-BRFAL-ED.

opposition. Mobile was not seen as a popular tourist destination in comparison to Richmond or nearby New Orleans. Furthermore, the city's tourists rarely visited the city's Freedmen's Schools and thus the benefits of tourist dollars never revealed itself as a reason for protecting the schools. As evidenced in the citizen remarks, the majority of white Mobilians desired a swift end to Educational Reconstruction even if it meant the destruction of confiscated property that were seen as "places as resort."⁶⁶

Nott's attack on African American education and the resulting arson, though, never yielded the desired effects. After his initial call for the destruction of the Medical College, Nott made similar arguments to General O. O. Howard. Nott drafted a more elaborate case against the continued use of the Medical College as a "Negro school" and the overall Freedmen's School system after meeting with Howard in the Fall of 1865. While extracts of the letter appeared in the local press, the *Popular Magazine of Anthropology*, a London publication, published the entire letter in its July 1866 edition. Entitled "The Negro Race," Nott argued that African Americans lacked the intellectual facilities and capabilities necessary for full citizenship and equality as whites using scientific and historical evidence. Ultimately, he concluded that the Freedmen's Bureau efforts could not overcome African Americans' natural inferiority, intellectual deficiencies, smaller brain sizes, and lack of history worthy of study. Thus, Nott advised Howard to "remove your bureau and the United States troops (particular blacks) as speedily as possible from our soil, and leave the relations between the races to regulate themselves." "The Negro Race" and its variations prompted swift and well-developed intellectual responses from Mobile's African American community

⁶⁶ "The Recent Fires," *Nationalist*, March 18, 1866, 2; Quoted in Wager Swayne, Report to Major General O.O. Howard Concerning the Continued Occupancy of the Medical College in Mobile and the Reasons Therefore, January 24, 1866, microfilm roll 3, AL-BRFAL-ED; White, 118, 123-124.

and their educational partners. The nature of their responses directly challenged Nott's characterizations of African American intellectual abilities and their access to an education, citizenship, and equality in postwar Mobile.⁶⁷

Instead of remaining silent, African Americans responded directly to Nott's arguments against their right to education, citizenship, and equality articulated in the "Negro Race." An anonymous letter to the *Nationalist*, most likely written by E. C. Branch, elaborately detailed the flaws in the Nott's argument. First, the letter's author addressed the racial underpinnings of Nott's argument. "The Dr.'s entire letter is predicated upon a theory in regard to the negro race," the author informed *Nationalist* readers. "All facts that are not in accordance with this theory are ignored by him, while his deductions from this theory lead him to repudiate all the results of the war in regard to this race, and to condemn all the measures of the government based upon these results. There was a time, in the history of our world, when the white race were not only not [sic] the dominant race, but had not up to that time, had any history at all." In ignoring the outcome of the Civil War and African American historical achievements, Nott failed to acknowledge African Americans' rich history and the gains achieved by them in the war's immediate aftermath. "According to Dr. Nott's logic, the struggles of our ancestors for a place in history should have been discarded as the futile schemes of an inferior race, which should have been consigned to permanent subordination," the author argued. However, the author concluded that the reality of Reconstruction and the Freedmen's Schools revealed another reality. Postwar achievements demonstrated that African Americans had not been "consigned to permanent subordination" as suggested by Nott. Instead, they had accepted their rightful place in the postwar Mobile as the equals and

⁶⁷ Horsman, 296-301; Josiah Nott, "The Negro Race," *The Popular Magazine of Anthropology* 1, no. 3 (July 1866), 102-106, 116-118.

not the racial subordinates of whites.⁶⁸

The author then turned his attention to Nott's demand for the removal of the Freedmen's Bureau from Mobile, the state of Alabama, and the entire region. "Dr. Nott demands that the Bureau shall be removed and that he and his compeers be permitted to settle the matter with the colored people themselves," the author reminded readers. "This settlement would, of course, be made upon the basis of the Dr's theory of the permanent inferiority and subordination of the colored people."⁶⁹ To this demand, the author forcibly and cogently responded: "We tell the Dr., and all others, that the hope of any such settlement is perfectly visionary. There will be no settlement of matters here but upon the basis of perfect reciprocity of rights and privileges between the two races." "If the theory of Dr. Nott is attempted to be carried out in any of its applications to the colored people of Alabama," the author predicted that there will be "a war of races at hand, compared to which Hayti was mere boy's play. The moment the attempt is made to put this people under, or to suppress their efforts are education and self-advancement, we shall dread the results, and the guilt and the entire responsibility of the whole thing will be upon the heads of the Dr. and his adjutors[sic]." Through his prediction of a race war, the author illuminated the African American community's absolute refusal to give up their freedom and postwar gains. They were not persuaded by Nott's arguments. Indeed, they would fight first rather than give up their freedom and the newly acquired rights of citizenship.⁷⁰

Yet, the author still hoped that African Americans and the contingent of Nott supporters could reach a peaceful resolution. Since Nott's speech occurred "shortly after the

⁶⁸ "Letter of J. C. Nott, M.D.," *Nationalist*, March 1, 1866, 2.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

surrender, and before conciliatory ‘statesmanship’ had fostered the ideas of the old regime, under their present attitude of rebellious self-assertion,” the author hoped for better race relations in his conclusion. Through this engaged response, the author defined the terms in which participants in Educational Reconstruction would deal with the local white elite. African Americans and their allies demanded the end of the antebellum white elite’s infringement on African American citizenship and defended educational decisions as a non-negotiable term in postwar relations. In their eyes, emancipation ended African Americans’ subservience. As members of the body politic, African Americans justified their freedom and right to claim their citizenship through an education with arguments against Nott and other white elites.⁷¹

Emboldened by the postwar promise of African American citizenship, the *Nationalist* featured several accounts detailing the arson to the church buildings utilized as Freedmen’s Schools that placed the blame directly upon the shoulders of Dr. Josiah Nott and his supporters. In “Another Church Burned,” the newspaper reported: “This is the fourth colored church, in this city, that has been fired by the enemies of the colored people...According to Dr. Nott’s theory, ...the burning of these churches is regard[ed] by such persons as a public blessing.” The newspaper then kept the community informed of all developments from the city’s initial lack of condemnation to the increased concern by the white community. The publication of these accounts further demonstrated the community’s defiance of continued subservience to the former white elite.⁷²

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² “Another Church Burned,” *Nationalist*, March 1, 1866, 2; “Proclamation,” *Nationalist*, March 8, 1866, 2; “The Recent Fires,” *Nationalist*, March 15, 1866, 2.

The African American community found in the Freedmen's Bureau a crucial ally against Dr. Josiah Nott. Nott's public denunciations and the resulting arson enraged Major General Wager Swayne. Swayne demanded justice from the unreconstructed Confederates. He first insisted that Mobile's mayor condemn the violence and conduct a thorough investigation of the arson using the city's police department. In compliance, the Mayor issued the following proclamation:

Now, therefore, to further the demands of justice, and to vindicate the many, by the detection and punishment of the cowardly and infamous, whose nefarious conduct inflicts disgrace and perpetuates oppression on this community, I do issue this Proclamation, offering a reward...for the detection and proof to conviction, of the guilty perpetrators.⁷³

Local Bureau agents kept Swayne abreast of the Mayor's investigation of the arson.

Although no arrests resulted, the Freedmen's Bureau response and support of Educational Reconstruction put Nott, arsonists and other hostile white Mobilians on notice. The Bureau would not tolerate such manifestations of opposition. Also, Swayne's swift response showed that the Freedmen's Bureau fully approved of African Americans' expressions of freedom and citizenship through education. As a consequence, the educational partnerships between the Freedmen's Bureau and African American community strengthened.⁷⁴

Overall, Nott's proclamation and the resulting arson galvanized African American community's activism. They viewed their flight against Nott and the arsonists in terms of moral warfare. An March 1866 *Nationalist* article outlined the rationale behind their war.

The *Nationalist* informed readers:

⁷³Wager Swayne, Report to Major General O.O. Howard Concerning the Continued Occupancy of the Medical College in Mobile and the Reasons Therefore, January 24, 1866, microfilm roll 3, AL-BRFAL-ED; "Proclamation," *Nationalist*, March 8, 1866, 2.

⁷⁴ C.W. Buckley, Draft Report Made to Major General Swayne by the Superintendent of Colored Schools, April 20, 1866, 3, microfilm roll 1, AL-BRFAL-ED.

Ours is a moral war. The collision of arms, mighty as it was, illustrated the might or moral forces, which had been gathering in this country since the pilgrims came and planted the free state, the free church, and the free school. We say the war illustrated those powers, but it did not measure them... The popular education of the North made it necessary that the war should come, and that it should be triumphant. The war simply put down the insurrection of barbarism against civilization, and opened the way for education which is the real liberation. The sword may make the freedman, but only the truth makes the freeman.⁷⁵

In defining their plight as a moral war for protection and education, the community saw their white partners as essential allies against the hostile white community. The article continued: “There are two necessities---protection, which the people are now demanding that the Government shall insure, and education,... We have excellent instrumentalities in the offices of the Freedmen’s Bureau, and in the Freedman’s Aid Commission and the American Missionary Association.” The arsons increased African Americans’ resolve and reinforced the importance of their educational partnerships.⁷⁶

School operations continued. The Medical College remained unscathed by the arsonist’s wrath. As a result, the school absorbed several of the independent schools destroyed by fire. St. Louis Street School, Methodist Church School on St. Michaels Street, and the Presbyterian Church on Dauphin Street either temporarily or permanently moved into the building. As a result, the Medical College’s enrollment increased accordingly.⁷⁷

The Medical College also remained a community center for public events as arson had destroyed several community meeting spaces. For instance, the Emancipation Day celebration of 1866 saw approximately “two thousand freedmen and women” in attendance.

⁷⁵ “Education of the Freedmen,” *Nationalist*, March 29, 1866, 2

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ E.C. Branch, “Report of Our Schools,” January 11, 1866, 2; Wager Swayne, Report to Major General O.O. Howard Concerning the Continued Occupancy of the Medical College in Mobile and the Reasons Therefore, January 24, 1866, microfilm roll 3, AL-BRFAL-ED.

Joseph S. Holmes and several other community leaders made addresses. E.C. Branch regularly held public receptions at the school as evidenced by a January 18, 1866 notice in the *Nationalist*. Moreover, the Medical College's closing exercises in June 1866 received extensive support from the African American community in terms of attendance and media coverage. While the extensive *Nationalist* coverage highlighted the teachers, the students took center stage. The newspaper proudly named the scholars who performed remarkably in the school's exercises and who received awards. Many of those named included future educators in the Mobile public schools. Mary Europe delivered the valedictory address and received an award for attaining perfect grades. Other future educators recognized included: Mattie Summerville, Alice Summerville and Leanna Saxon. The newspaper signaled out the Summervilles for their academic excellence. The newspaper reported: "As usual the three daughters of James A. Summerville---Mattie, Ella and Alice---equaled the best and excelled the majority." The *Nationalist* concluded its coverage by highlighting the overall success of the school despite the tumultuous year. In conclusion, the *Nationalist* offered some words of hope for the scholars: "The seeds of knowledge have germinated in hundreds of minds, and all that is now needed is that the young plants may receive the needed culture for a few years longer, and then our *Tribune* neighbor will cease to write about teaching them mechanically." These public events held at the Medical College validated the community's continued activism. Neither arson nor other expressions of the local white opposition deterred them. It only spurred them into action.⁷⁸

During the 1866-1867 academic year, a minor shift in organizational alliances occurred. The American Missionary Association took over the operations of the schools at

⁷⁸“First of January,” *Nationalist*, January 11, 1866, 2; E. C. Branch, “Notice,” *Nationalist*, January 18, 1866, 2; “School at the College,” *Nationalist*, June 28, 1866, 2.

the Medical College. The organization pushed E. C. Branch out of the school system. While Branch's opinions regarding the American Missionary Association's maneuvering is not clear, it is evident that Branch's commitment to the city's African American community never waned. Despite his departure, Branch remained active in the community by opening a grocery store that catered to their needs. According to his advertisements in the *Nationalist*, Branch's utilized his prior connection to the schools in order to secure patronage from the African American community. His store also carried textbooks and school supplies for his African American clientele. Branch also acted as a mediator between the African American community and the American Missionary Association. For instance, Branch attempted negotiations with the American Missionary Association, on behalf of the community, in order to secure textbooks for the city's other African American schools in April 1867. Branch also participated in the development of the city's Republican party alongside former educational partners. Branch's presence and continued activism demonstrated his commitment to Mobile's African American community's educational quest, even after his departure.⁷⁹

The existing sources suggest that the organizational changes had little effects. The African American community merely established ties with the American Missionary Association. American Missionary Association missionaries quickly proved their commitment toward African American education in Mobile. Under the organization's leadership, the Medical College remained the cornerstone of Mobile's Educational Reconstruction and community services as a result of the organization's fundraising efforts. American Missionary Association missionaries prove capable of fundraising among local

⁷⁹ "Glorious News," advertisement, *Nationalist*, April 18, 1867, 2; E. C. Branch to E. P. Smith, April 19, 1867, microfilm roll 1, AMA Papers, Alabama; "Union Meeting," *Nationalist*, March 7, 1867, 2.

white elites and not only from outside of the region. Gustavus W. Horton, future mayor of Mobile, made a \$5 contribution to organization's Mobile operations in November 1866. According to his letter to William E. Whiting, the receipt of an American Missionary Association's "Thanks and Appeal" plea directly motivated his donation. Fundraising and the continued existence of the Medical College schools cemented the African American community's trust in the American Missionary Association. School attendance remained high and public events continued to draw many members of the community. As a result, the African American community continued their activism with a new partner.⁸⁰

Lastly, Nott's proclamation and resulting arson prevented the return of the confiscated Medical College property to the school's former trustees. Dr. Nott petitioned the Freedmen's Bureau for the restoration of the Medical College to the school's antebellum Board of Trustees. Recalling Nott's involvement in the arson, Swayne refused. Swayne's refusal caused some alarm to his superiors in Washington, D.C. However, he remained obstinate in his refusal. He outlined his reasons in a lengthy report to O. O. Howard, ending with following summation: "The original right above mentioned, the equitable title of the colored people to some educational facilities, this failure of civil justice, the value of these schools, this impossibility of their transfer, and the want of evidence of increased security led us to the conclusion I shall hold, that it is not my duty unless so intimated in orders to resolve this building to applicants at present." Instead, Swayne brokered a sale between the Freedmen's Bureau, African American community, and the American Missionary Association for the property.⁸¹

⁸⁰ G. W. Horton to W. E. Whiting, November 4, 1866, microfilm roll 1, AMA Papers, Alabama.

⁸¹ Wager Swayne, Report to Major General O.O. Howard Concerning the Continued Occupancy of the Medical College in Mobile and the Reasons Therefore, January 24, 1866, microfilm roll 3, AL-BRFAL-ED.

White opposition resulted in the American Missionary Association's purchase of the Medical College from the Freedmen's Bureau. Arson forced the continued usage of a church system instead of a district system similar to the one implemented in Richmond. Since the arsonists destroyed both schools and churches employed as schools, the issue of procuring school accommodations was a continual problem. Attempts in finding school accommodations outside of the African American churches proved futile, as well. George Tracey, Freedmen's Bureau agent, considered the Garner House, a former hotel, and the Marin's Hospital but could not secure either property for school purposes. Unable to find a suitable locale, Tracey recommended the purchase of the Medical College for school purposes by any of the educational partners. While African Americans provided some funding, negotiations began in earnest after the American Missionary Association received a large monetary donation from Ralph Emerson, Jr., in early 1867. The son of Reverend Ralph Emerson, a Congregational minister, derived his wealth through manufacturing in the Rockford, Illinois area, and regularly made contributions to various religious enterprises. As a result, Emerson College opened in the former Medical College during the next academic year.⁸²

Independent of their partners, the African American community also assisted in the procurement of school accommodations outside of the local churches. Arson destroyed both schools and churches. As a result, community leaders sought suitable accommodations for larger schools throughout the city. To this end, the community came together. In a March 1867 meeting, community leaders and members met and discussed the feasibility of

⁸² George Tracey to C. W. Buckley, January 11, 1867, microfilm roll 3, AL-BRFAL-ED; George Tracey to C. W. Buckley, January 24, 1867, microfilm roll 3, AL-BRFAL-ED. William A. Talcott to C. W. Buckley, February 5, 1867, microfilm roll 3, AL-BRFAL-ED; Charles A. Church, *History of Rockford and Winnebago County Illinois: From Settlement in 1834 to the Civil War* (Rockford: New England Society of Rockford, Illinois, 1900), 334.

purchasing land for new school houses. Meeting attendees formed a school committee and charged it “to investigate and report of the matter of purchasing lots.” By April 1867, the community, according to George Tracey, American Missionary Association agent, purchased one lot and had commenced finding other lots for school purposes. Whether acting alone or together, the community’s educational partnerships strengthened as a result of the local white opposition. Instead of abandoning the cause of African American education, the network successfully resolved the obstacles posed by arson and other expressions of opposition.⁸³

Local white opposition did not present the only obstacle to African Americans’ struggle for education. Class division, specifically the divide between Creoles of Color and African Americans, posed as another obstacle. Dating from French and Spanish colonial rule, Mobile’s social structure was tri-racial. Creoles of Color and their descendents claimed an African ancestry mixed with either a French and/or Spanish ancestry. Light complexion, Catholicism, general acceptance of mixed race ancestry, and pride in their European heritage characterized this population. In ceding their land to the United States, colonial officials in Mobile ensured the continued existence of this group with first the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and later the Adams-Onis Treaty in 1819. The Adams-Onis Treaty had the greatest impact. The treaty stipulated that African Americans and their descendents who could claim French or Spanish descent would be recognized as full citizens by the state of Alabama. As full citizens, the treaty guaranteed Creoles of Color their civil, social, and legal rights. Furthermore, this treaty elevated this mixed-race group into a new social status, widely

⁸³ George Tracey to C. W. Buckley, March 22, 1867, microfilm roll 3, AL-BRFAL-ED; George Tracey to Wager Swayne, April 18, 1867, microfilm roll 3, AL-BRFAL-ED.

known as the “treaty population.” This treaty and the benefits bestowed upon Creoles of Color fostered the hostilities between Creoles and African Americans.⁸⁴

Creoles of Color carved a space within Mobile’s antebellum racial order. They represented approximately one-third of the city’s population of free persons of color. They ensured the continuation of their rights by regularly invoking the Adams-Onis Treaty. According to Michael Fitzgerald, Creoles enjoyed rights not afforded to free or enslaved African Americans. For instance, Creoles’ mobility was not restricted by the nightly curfew or pass system. They could testify in court. Some Creoles owned slaves in Mobile and the adjacent counties. Others later willingly served in the Confederate army. Economically, Creoles prospered. These social and economic advantages caused the Creole community to disavow any association with free and enslaved African American community in Mobile. As historian Virginia Meacham Gould indicated, Creoles “fiercely protected their identities and status” through disassociation. Creoles primarily protected their identity and community with

⁸⁴ Harriet Amos, *Cotton City: Urban Development in Antebellum Mobile* (Birmingham: University of Alabama Press, 1985), 185, 189-190; Fitzgerald, 10-11; Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 131. Ira Berlin offered an early discussion of the antebellum experience in the Gulf Region in *Slaves Without Masters*. Although his discussion primarily focused upon Louisiana, he briefly discussed Mobile’s Creoles. He concluded that Creoles in Mobile and the Gulf region were an exception in the South’s caste system. The essays by Virginia Meacham Gould, Loren Schwening in *Creoles of Color in the Gulf South*, ed. James H. Dorman (Knoxville, University of Tennessee, 1996), Christopher Nordmann’s dissertation and Dian Lee Shelley’s master thesis have further enriched Berlin’s initial conclusions. Each has provided more in-depth discussion of this population and their antebellum experiences. See Virginia Meacham Gould, “The Free Creoles of Color of the Antebellum Gulf Ports of Mobile and Pensacola: A Struggle for the Middle Ground,” in *Creoles of Color in the Gulf South*, ed. James H. Dorman (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1996), 28-50; Loren Schwening, “Socioeconomic Dynamics among the Gulf Creole Populations: The Antebellum and Civil War Years,” in *Creoles of Color in the Gulf South*, ed. James H. Dorman (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1996), 51-66; Christopher Nordmann, *Free Negroes in Mobile County, Alabama* (Ph.D. diss, University of Alabama, 1990) and Dian Lee Shelley, *The Effects of Increasing Racism on the Creole Colored in Three Gulf Coast Cities Between 1803 and 1860* (Master’s Thesis: University of West Florida, 1971).

exclusive, by-invitation-only social and civic organizations such as the the Creole Fire Company No. 1 and the Creole Social Club.⁸⁵

The antebellum Creole community also used their access to education and literacy as a way to distinguish themselves from the African American community. While African American education constricted after Nat Turner's rebellion, Creole education remained legal and expanded. Creole children typically received an education in private academies or parochial schools. Mobile's Catholic Archdiocese established pay schools for Creoles under the direction of the Brothers of Sacred Heart and Sisters of Charity. In 1849, Reverend Alexander McGlashen established the Bethel Free School for Creoles. Financed by special offerings and events, seventy students quickly enrolled in the school. The white Mobile community offered public support of the school with financial donations and positive press coverage. The Mobile press deemed the school "greatly needed" for Creoles who "had certain of the rights and privileges of American citizens secured to them by the treaty." Reverend McGlashen later established the Creole Academy. Members of the Creole community oversaw both schools' operations. Faustin Collins, Joseph B. Laurant, Lawrence Broux and John A. Collins served as the administrators. By 1860, the Creole schools had 114 pupils which represented the only free colored persons attending school.⁸⁶

The creation of the Creole schools drew sharp and immediate criticism from nearby cities outside of Alabama. Mobile officials responded by defending the schools and the

⁸⁵ Fitzgerald, 11-13; Virginia Meacham Gould, "Free Creoles of Color of the Antebellum Gulf Ports of Mobile and Pensacola," *Creoles of Color*, 43-44.

⁸⁶ Amos, 185; Quoted in Nordmann, 201-202; Peter Kolchin, *First Freedom: The Responses of Alabama's Blacks to Emancipation and Reconstruction* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1972), 79-80; *Eighth Census Statistics*, 507. In the aftermath of Nat Turner's Rebellion, African American education constricted while Creole education expanded. For Alabama codes regarding African American literacy after the rebellion, see Williams, *Self-Taught*, 208.

Creole community. For instance, the *Mobile Daily Register* responded to criticism made by the New Orleans *Bulletin* in an 1849 news article regarding the Bethel Free School. The *Bulletin* charged the city with breaking state law and starting an abolitionist movement with the “negro free school.” The *Daily Register* article acknowledged the opening of the school but corrected the assumption that the school was for free African Americans. The article declared “these Creoles, for who a school has been established here, are of French and Spanish descent. They are those, and the descendents of those, who were in this city, or its vicinity, when it was transferred to the United States.” In addition, the article reaffirmed the Creoles’ non-threatening status in the racial hierarchy in order to lower the anxieties of the people of New Orleans and other white Southerners. “It is true that all the descendents do not mingle upon an equality with the highest class of society, neither do they with the slave population. They are neither treated nor regarded as negroes.” The article clarified: “They are humble, unobtrusive, uniformly quiet, industrious and respectable. . . . Our contemporaries are unnecessarily alarmed.” As evidenced by the newspaper’s defense of Creole education and the community, education and who could acquire literacy strongly encouraged division rather than cooperation between the Creole and African American communities. Indeed, resentment over the expansion of Creole education as African American education constricted carried over into the immediate postwar period as evidenced by insults traded between the communities in the local black press.⁸⁷

The establishment of a public school system in Mobile also encouraged division. The school system extended to the Creole population but only at their insistence that city officials

⁸⁷ “What Next?,” *Mobile Daily Register*, May 3, 1849, clipping, Black School Clippings File, Historic Mobile Preservation Society, Mobile, Alabama; For example of the postwar manifestation of African American resentment toward antebellum Creole education, see A Subscriber, “Letter to the Editor,” *Nationalist*, January 25, 1866, 2.

upheld their status mandated by the Adams-Onis Treaty. The city assumed the management of the Creole School in 1852 and maintained the school until the beginning of the Civil War at taxpayers' expense. The Creole Fair continued as a financial source for the school's operations. This "important cultural outgrowth" of the common school movement developments, according to historian Christopher Nordmann, reinforced Creoles' unique antebellum identity. Like the annual Creole Fair, Mobile's school system maintained exclusive admission policies and excluded enslaved and free African Americans. Some exceptions existed though. Although the Mayor required school administrators to provide the names of eligible children, some elite free African American children managed to receive an education from the Creole School. Lack of consistent enforcement of anti-literacy laws, the Catholic Church's desire for conversion, and occasional intra-class cooperation permitted these few exceptions. Overall, Mobile's educational developments reinforced Creoles' social status over African Americans and reaffirmed their community.⁸⁸

After the Civil War, the Creole School remained a source a division. The school was the only non-white school recognized by the Mobile school system. It remained outside of the Freedmen's School system whose existence Mobile school officials did not recognize. Recognition and separation reinforced a feeling of superiority in Creoles over African Americans. Rather than remain silent on the issue, African Americans attacked the logic of Creole's superiority through the press. The Freedmen's Schools and access to an education invalidated the Creoles' claims of superiority as noted in a January 1866 letter to the editor of the *Nationalist*. "A Subscriber" remarked: "I rejoice to see the names of scores of our most intelligent citizens enrolled in the glorious enterprise, many of our best informed Creoles

⁸⁸ Amos, 189-190; Nordmann, 204-205, 210-212; Kolchin, 79; *Eighth Census Statistics*, 507.

falling into the ranks with their less favored brethren, to contend for our rights before the law.” The high tensions resulted in verbal and written insults and social ostracism between the communities.⁸⁹

Events following the 1866 annual parade of the Creole Fire Company No. 1 forced a change in relations. Established in 1819, the Creole Fire Company No. 1 was one of the first companies established in the city. John A. Collins, Sr., Lawrence Broux, Augustus Nicholas and other Creoles founded the company. Though founded and staffed by Creoles, Mobile’s racial order still dictated that the company have a white person serve as its proxy. This proxy gave the company representation in the city’s firemen association and legitimated the organization’s existence. Like other nineteenth century fire companies, the Creole Fire Company No. 1 functioned as a fraternal organization. They held social meetings and functions separate from the white fire companies. Social exclusivity also defined the organization’s membership. Only Creoles belonged to the organization and members had to uphold strict guidelines which included their day-to-day behavior in the community. The organization even considered fining members for unnecessary fraternization with the members of the free and enslaved African American community. Each year, the fire company held a parade. The fireman displayed their equipment for community review and approval. The fire company’s band provided the music for the event. Creole and white dignitaries delivered speeches at the festivities. This parade annually reaffirmed Creole identity and distinction over the African American community through the parade

⁸⁹ Mobile City Directory, 1865-1866, Mobile Municipal Archives, Mobile, Alabama; A Subscriber, “Letter to the Editor,” *Nationalist*, January 25, 1866, 2.

participants and attendees. As a result, the Creole Fire Company No. 1 and its annual parade held a prominent place in the Creole community.⁹⁰

One year after Confederate defeat, the Creole Fire Company No. 1 celebrated its 47th anniversary through its annual parade. As described by the *Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register*, the parade was quite a spectacle. The evening parade opened with a Creole brass band performing “Dixie” and other musical selections. The finely dressed firemen displayed their gleaming fire equipment and the Confederate flag in the procession. Each fire wagon was decorated with natural and artificial flowers provided by “lady friends of the Company.” The parade concluded with a tribute to the organization’s founders. Five of the surviving founders followed the decorated fire wagons and trucks. In the meeting preceding the torch light parade, the Creole community relished the official recognition received by the antebellum white elites. Mayor Withers, several white Mobile fire companies, and other white dignitaries toasted the company. Each praised the Creole Fire Company No. 1’s southern patriotism and allegiance to the antebellum social hierarchy in their speeches. The conservative white press also featured two full length articles on the celebration.⁹¹

However, not everyone was impressed by the celebration. The African American community attacked the Creoles’ refusal to accept postwar racial realities and their place within the African American community through the *Nationalist*. The newspaper rhetorically asked: “Let us ask these Creoles a few questions---Do any of you suppose that the men who partook of your good cheer would for one moment, advocate the extension to

⁹⁰ “Forty-Seventh Anniversary of Creole Fire Company No. 1,” *Mobile Daily Register and Advertiser*, April 28, 1866, 3; Fitzgerald, 12-13.

⁹¹ “Forty-Seventh Anniversary of Creole Fire Company No. 1,” *Mobile Daily Register and Advertiser*, April 28, 1866, 3; “The Symposium of the Creole Fire Company,” *Mobile Daily Register and Advertiser*, April 29, 1866, 3.

you of the right to vote or hold office?” In response, the newspaper rebuked: “You may toady to white men till doomsday without becoming any whiter, and will only increase the stain by bringing yourselves individually into contempt. There is only thing, which you can do, however, which is both sensible and honorable, and that is elevate your own race...”⁹² The African American community limited its rebukes to the printed page rather than physical violence. However, a group of young white men showed no such restraint. Enraged by the spectacle, a group of young white males went into interracial crowds viewing the procession. These roving young white males attacked any African American and Creole encountered. The men viewed both groups as belonging to the same race and made no distinction between African Americans and Creoles. In their indiscriminate attacks, the young white men killed an African American bystander who resisted. Horrified by the events, the Mayor ordered the arrest of the white men. Instead of imprisonment, the convicted youth received a fine for their actions.⁹³

After the riot, a shift occurred. Although the schools remained separated, Creoles and African Americans reconciled some of their differences. Shared experiences with white supremacy and burgeoning political activism fostered the reconciliation and better relations. The *Nationalist* called for better relations. The article implored its readers: “But if the sensible portion of both Creoles and freedmen resolve to rise superior to their prejudice and to cultivate a spirit of amity to work *together* in all good undertakings, their combined efforts secure to both classes the more undisturbed exercise of all the rights of manhood.” The article reasoned: “It is to be hoped that the freedmen will do everything in their power to

⁹² “A Talk With the Creoles,” *Nationalist*, May 1, 1866, 2.

⁹³ Fitzgerald, 73.

strengthen the fraternizing disposition now beginning to manifest itself, and show a willingness to forget the past of all those who will take a proper position at the present and for the future.” While sources remain silent upon the details of the behind the scene discussions, it is evident that reconciliation between the communities began within the year. The subsequent Creole Fire Company No. 1 events received positive commentary from the *Nationalist*. Ovide Gregory and others Creoles joined their non-Creoles brethren in a mass convention of African Americans held in Mobile in May 1867. Together, Creoles and African Americans advocated for the creation of a common school system throughout the state regardless of race, class, color, and previous servitude.⁹⁴

The reconciled communities advocated in their Union Leagues and Republican meetings for the rights of citizenship for the other group. The communities argued for suffrage, political office holding and other rights guaranteed to all United States citizens. More importantly, they defended the other community when attacked by white conservatives for their political agitation. When the *Mobile Times* sought an alliance with the Creoles politically, the Creole community refused. An unnamed Creole of Color provided an explanation in a letter to the editor of the *Nationalist*.

Mr. Editor, let me assure the *Times* that the trick comes too late in the day to be of any influence...since the war, the Creoles have been placed on the same plane as the humblest freedman. Like him they have been denied the ballot and have been kept out of the jury box, and turned out of street cars...And yet, with this record of the conservatives plainly before us, we are asked to join them; and we are not even promised that we shall be lifted any higher, but only that some of our fiends and brethren, in whose veins runs the same blood that course through our own, shall be crowded still lower.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ “Time Makes No Changes,” *Nationalist*, May 10, 1866, 2; “Ball of the Creole Fire Co.,” *Nationalist*, January 31, 1867, 2; “Creole Fire Co. No. 1,” *Nationalist*, May 2, 1867, 2; “Colored State Convention,” *Nationalist*, April 4, 1867, 3; “Colored Mass Convention of the State of Alabama,” *Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register*, May 4, 1867, 2.

⁹⁵ “The Colored Men,” letter to the editor, *Nationalist*, July 11, 1867, 2.

For these reasons, the author proclaimed:

No, sir! The Creole or man of “mixed blood” who would not spurn such base overtures deserves to wear the yokes of political bondage forever. We are all tarred with the same stick---knit together by bonds of common sympathy and suffering, and must rise or fall together. For my part, and I believe I speak the mind of nearly every Creole in Mobile---my vote will support the party that gave it to me, and which as for its platform the civil and political equality of all men, without regard to race, class, or color.⁹⁶

Shared experiences with racism made Creoles align themselves with their African American brethren. To be sure, this cooperation never truly eliminated tensions between the groups.

However, both groups willingly put them aside for the benefit of the entire non-white community. They began seeing their postwar experiences as being a common rather than a separate one.⁹⁷

Mobile’s African American community also had to overcome internal class divisions in its struggle for education. Fears of retribution by white elites prevented some African Americans in certain professions from sending their children to the Freedmen’s Schools. These fears also caused some African Americans to not support the local African American press as an expression of the new postwar literate identity. The majority of the African American community saw literacy via formal schools and sustaining a newspaper as linked. As a result, they criticized those who did not actively support the Freedmen’s Schools and the *Nationalist*. In a January 1866 letter to the editor, the author questioned the lack of support by individuals employed as cotton samplers and steamboat men. He asked rhetorically: “Do they fear to identify themselves with their people, lest they offend old masters, and thereby imperil the almighty dollar? Or are they blind to the fact that a people

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

who cannot sustain a public journal cannot maintain their freedom.” To the letter’s author and the community, formal schools and the African American press gave access to literacy and sustained their freedom. Hence, the community viewed subscribing to the *Nationalist* as essential to their quest for access and legitimacy. By not subscribing to the newspaper and attending the schools, as suggested by the letter to the editor, African Americans questioned others’ commitment to the community struggle for an education. Dependency upon white approval also raised questions pertaining to one’s support for the African American community. While overt white opposition managed to minimize internal strife, it never completely eradicated class division. As a result, internal strife remained an occasional obstacle to the community’s struggle for educational access and legitimacy.⁹⁸

In April 1865, Mobile’s African American community embarked on its long and arduous quest for an education. The initial success was quickly tempered by a vocal white opposition and internal division within the city’s black community. Despite these obstacles, the African American community successfully established an educational foundation based upon an extensive network of relationships. In the process, African Americans and their educational partners never failed to remember the system’s vulnerability. The extreme manifestations of local white hostility convinced black Mobilians that only a strong relationship with federal agencies and suffrage would give the system any possible future. Undeterred, African Americans continued upon their fight using the foundation established during the first two academic years in Mobile.

Conclusion

⁹⁸ A Subscriber, Letter to the Editor, *Nationalist*, January 25, 1866, 2.

Confederate defeat initiated African Americans' quest for educational access and legitimacy in Richmond, Virginia and Mobile, Alabama. Both communities capitalized on the new definitions of freedom, citizenship and education by establishing schools without outside assistance. Their actions moved African American education from the margins to the forefront of the nation's imaginations. Their struggle found national and international support as Northern benevolent societies and the Freedmen's Bureau legitimated their claims to citizenship through education by becoming partners in the enterprise. By 1867, African American education was the cornerstone of the postwar realities in Richmond and Mobile. Yet, Richmond and Mobile undertook different paths during this initial two year period.

The histories of Freedmen's Schools in Richmond and Mobile demonstrate that local conditions matter. The intersections of local conditions with state and national forces produced different processes. Richmond attracted more attention from Northern benevolent societies, tourists, and the nation than Mobile. As the former capital of the Confederacy, Richmond symbolized the region, the war, and the perceived antebellum ills of Southern society. As a result, remaking the former capital of the Confederacy was a top priority for the African American community and its educational partners. This resulted in fierce competition. Competition between the educational partners existed for the hearts and minds of the African American community. It also permitted competition for resources, such as space, classroom materials, and financial contributions. Mobile simply lacked Richmond's appeal. Fewer organizations became partners in the city. As a result, the Freedmen's Schools developed alongside a well-formed independent black school system. Also, the African American community formed more lasting relationships with the Freedmen's Bureau and Northern benevolent societies. Despite the divergent histories, the Freedmen's School system

in Richmond and Mobile developed strong foundations. Furthermore, the organizational developments were translated into other areas throughout the respective states. Without the efforts of these urban African Americans, postwar educational efforts in Alabama and Virginia would have stalled.

The histories of Freedmen's Schools in Richmond and Mobile also illuminate the role of white opposition. Opposition by local whites had a profound effect in shaping the development of the Freedmen's Schools. The various manifestations of the opposition forced the African Americans and their educational partners to overcome any internal division for the sake of the survival of the nascent school system. In Richmond, internal strife became relegated to the margin and the relationships strengthened. Arson played a significant role in strengthening the relationships between Mobile's African American community and its educational partners. In both cities, the call for unity and a strong public front proved essential in combating the opposition. To be sure, internal problems continued within the relationships but were minimized publically as much as possible.

By 1867, urban African Americans and their partners reached a turning point. First, the communities established a system of schools. However, not everyone had access to them due to white intimidation, their financial situations and the physical distance necessary for attendance. Additional schools were necessary to ensure educational access for everyone in the community. Second, the communities remained dependent upon federal agencies and outside organizations, to some degree. Even the private schools of Mobile required the Freedmen's Bureau protection against arsonists. As long as African Americans lacked suffrage and the ability to fully exercise their freedom, the nascent school system remained

vulnerable. Expanding the nascent school system and ensuring its permanency became the next priorities for African Americans and their partners in Richmond and Mobile.

National and state events, starting in 1867, would greatly aid their cause and lead the development of state-funded schools. The next chapter will explore the role of new state constitutions in providing for the permanency of the African American education with state-funded schools. The incorporation of the state as an educational partner would also permit the necessary expansion of educational access desired in Richmond and Mobile.

CHAPTER II

IN TRANSITION: STATE CONSTITUTIONS, PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AND THE FREEDMEN'S SCHOOLS, 1867-1870

On May 16, 1867, in an open letter to the *Nationalist*, Lawrence S. Berry, William V. Turner and R. D. Wiggins made an appeal to Mobile's African American and Creole of Color communities and the Republican Party. The respected African American leaders made two demands for the upcoming state constitutional convention. First, they requested that "no discrimination on account of color" be used in the Republican Party's nomination process for convention delegates. Second, and most significantly, they called for the creation of a state-funded public school system that included all citizens regardless of race. "The lack of education which is the consequence of our long servitude, and which so diminishes our powers for good, should not be allowed to characterize our children when they come upon the stage of action," the men passionately pleaded, "and we therefore earnestly call upon every member of the Republican party to demand the establishment of a thorough system of common schools throughout the State, and indeed of the Union, for the well-being of [such or much] ensures to the advantage of all." With "education secured to all," Berry, Turner, and Wiggins concluded, "Alabama will commence a career of which she will have just cause to be proud." The men's demands came to fruition in November 1867.¹

¹ Lawrence S. Berry, William V. Turner, and R. D. Wiggins, "Untitled," *Nationalist*, May 16, 1867, 3

In compliance with the Reconstruction Acts, a series of federal legislation enacted in 1867, black, white, and Creole delegates convened in Montgomery, Alabama to craft a new state constitution in order to be considered for readmission to the Union. John Carraway, an African American slave prior to the war, and Ovide Gregory, a free Creole of Color prior to the war, served as the non-white convention delegates from Mobile. As charged by Berry, Turner, Wiggins, and other members of their communities, Carraway and Gregory actively advocated that the proposed constitution make no distinctions in terms of race, class, caste or former servitude, especially in the new educational article. Indeed, the final educational article addressed their communities' desire for inclusivity. Section 6 specified that the State establish "schools at which all children of the State, between the ages of five and twenty-one years, may attend free of charge." Establishing schools for all children, regardless of race, class, caste or former servitude, was quite revolutionary. This change was not limited to Montgomery. Conventions meeting in Richmond and in other capitals of the former Confederate states adopted constitutions with similar educational provisions and made state-funded African American public schools a reality.²

The actions of convention delegates and the state constitutional articles drew immediate reactions from the communities most directly affected by the new educational mandates. Intense, sometimes personal, and often polarized, the local reactions by white and black urban Southerners shaped the discourse pertaining to the new public schools and the transformation in African American education in their communities. These reactions profoundly influenced the transition period to public schools and informed the initial years of

² "Letter from Montgomery," *Mobile Daily Register*, November 10, 1867, 2; Alabama Constitution (1868), Article 11, Section 6; Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988), 276.

the schools in the cities. Furthermore, these reactions shifted the direction of urban African Americans' activism.

This chapter examines local reactions to the creation of and transition to public schools using a case study approach. The central question asks how white and black urban Southerners and the proponents for the Freedmen's Schools responded to the state mandates pertaining to education and citizenship. Despite producing similar state constitutional provisions for education, the implementation of the provisions varied greatly across the urban South, and the case study approach will illustrate the process by which these variations occurred. Through an examination of constitutional convention minutes, the new state constitutions, local newspapers, Northern philanthropic organization records, and the Freedmen's Bureau educational records, I demonstrate that urban Southerners responded in a myriad of ways during this transitional period to state-funded public schools. These local reactions shaped the implementation of public schools and the transition from the Freedmen's School system to the new state system. Rather than signaling the demise of African American education, the new state constitutions ushered in a new phase of African American education and African American activism. These constitutions also, however, created new opportunities, new partners in state and local officials, new challenges, and old allies in the Northern missionary associations and Federal government. By understanding the transition period and the local responses to the state and national forces, it is possible to more fully understand the African American community's struggles for education after the Freedmen's Schools ended in these cities.

This chapter seeks to move beyond the histories of the Reconstruction constitutions and their local consequences that are told as separate political and social narratives. Both

Dunning and revisionist scholars have detailed the political history of the creation of state constitutions as a federally mandated prerequisite for readmission to the Union in their political histories. The difference between the two schools lay in the discussion of the delegates of the bi-racial or “black and tan” conventions and the actual constitutions produced. Dunning scholars, including Edgar Knight and J. N. Brenaman, viewed the delegates as inept and ignorant African Americans, vindictive white Northerners, and Southern white collaborators who created a radical postwar vision for the region as punishment.³ In this view, the new educational mandates, though benefiting whites and blacks, were a Northern imposition and not an outgrowth of Southern interests. In addition, the true leaders of the region, disenfranchised white elites and antebellum leaders, did not participate in the process. Therefore, these scholars characterized the constitutions as undemocratic and unconstitutional. Revisionist scholars, such as Eric Foner and Richard L. Hume, have presented a positive view of the convention delegates and the constitutions they produced.⁴ Rather than inept, ignorant, and vindictive, these scholars depicted the delegates as educated and competent. They also revealed that the men held leadership positions in the community and the Reconstruction governments. In addition, the conventions produced non-vindictive constitutions based upon the new republican vision for the postwar, bi-racial nation which included education.

Social historians have paid scant attention to the political process during this period.

Social histories, both Dunning and revisionist schools, are often devoid of specific mention

³ William A. Dunning, *Reconstruction, Political and Economic, 1865-1877* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1907); Edgar Knight, *Reconstruction and Education in Virginia* (Syracuse: Gaylord Brothers, 1916); J.N. Brenaman, *A History of Virginia Conventions* (Richmond: J.L Hill Printing Company, 1902).

⁴ Foner, 316-345; Richard L. Hume, “Carpetbaggers in the Reconstruction South: A Group Portrait of Outside Whites in the ‘Black and Tan’ Constitutional Conventions,” *Journal of American History* 64, no. 2 (September 1977): 313-330.

of the process in which public schools were created and implemented.⁵ These narratives concentrate on the activities in the classroom without mention of broader Reconstruction events. Consequently, the narratives end in the 1870s when the public schools opened and Freedmen's Schools ended without a discussion of the transition process. If the transition process was discussed as in some regional studies, the regional nature oversimplifies the interactions of local, state, and national forces and, thus, minimizes the complexity of the process.

Dunning and revisionist scholars have neglected three critical aspects. First, neither has explored the connection between the Freedmen's Schools and the delegates. Second, neither school of thought fully explains the implementation of state educational mandates in the local communities most affected by those mandates. The implementation process and local reactions to it needs further exploration. Third, they do not tell the political and social histories of this period in an integrated narrative. The Freedmen's Schools and local communities did not exist in a vacuum. National and state Reconstruction debates shaped local debates; the local debates influenced the national and state debates. A new framework engaging both the political and social histories together is needed.

For sake of clarity, the chapter is divided into two distinct sections. The first section examines the constitutional conventions, the delegates who created the constitutions, and the new educational mandates contained in the adopted state constitutions. The second section focuses upon the local reactions to the new state educational mandates and the transition

⁵ Henry Swint, *The Northern Teacher in the South, 1862-1870* (1941; reprint, New York: Octagon Books, 1967); Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), Ronald Butchart, *Northern Teachers, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction: Freedmen Education, 1862-1875* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980); Heather Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

process to public schools. It will discuss the cities separately with minimal comparison until the conclusion. This will enable me to show how local circumstances and constraints in Richmond and Mobile shaped the responses to the state and national forces. The conclusion will then discuss the trends and various processes that permitted the variation.

State Constitutional Conventions and the Creation of Public Schools

The Reconstruction Acts of 1867 proved to be an important milestone in African American education. Historians often discuss the acts in terms of African American enfranchisement and Congressional mandates on the readmission process for the former Confederate states. The political significance of the Reconstruction Acts cannot be denied, but merely focusing upon the political significance minimizes the effects of the Acts on education. For the individuals involved in the Reconstruction process and African American education, the Reconstruction Acts fundamentally changed the nature of their efforts. General Orlando Brown, assistant commissioner for Virginia's Freedmen's Bureau, recognized the significance of the bill. He commented that the new "military bill" would "give a wholly new character to Freedmen's work." While he recognized the bill for its political significance, he also could see the implications for the educational efforts for African Americans. He realized that the Freedmen's Bureau would soon end its educational operations with the creation of new state governments and readmission of the former Confederate states in the Union. In short, this series of legislation determined the parameters for a new phase in African American education, redefined the Bureau-supported Freedmen's School system, and ensured that Southern African Americans would have a political voice in that process. William Lloyd Garrison also commented. He considered the bill "a courageous measure." In a March 5, 1867 letter to his son Francis Jackson Garrison, the elder Garrison

predicted: “The South will probably reject it, and be the loser.” It was not clear initially whether Garrison’s prediction would come to fruition, but the process began shortly thereafter.⁶

The former states of the Confederacy and border states convened constitutional conventions which met during late 1867 to late 1869. Special state elections determined the convention delegates and included Southern African Americans, Northern African Americans who had migrated to the region, Southern whites, and Northern whites who had migrated to the region. Contrary to the sentiment expressed in the white conservative press, the convention could not be described as being dominated by “Negro supremacy.” African Americans comprised a sizeable percentage at the various conventions but not the majority. In Richmond, African Americans represented twenty-two percent of the convention delegates, Northern whites accounted for eighteen percent of all delegates, and Southern whites comprised a plurality with fifty-five percent of the delegation. In Montgomery, seventeen percent of the delegation was African American, fifty-two percent were white Southerners, and twenty-four percent were white Northerners. Despite the actual percentage of African American delegates, the *Richmond Whig*, a prominent conservative newspaper, described the gallery of the convention as “opaque enough for an Egyptian, while here and there in the other gallery there was a moderate sprinkling of white men.”⁷

Although described by conservative white newspapers as depraved, ignorant and/or outcasts of the society, convention delegates were well-educated, literate, Union army

⁶ General O. Brown to Whipple, March 1, 1867, microfilm roll 8, AMA Papers, Virginia; William Lloyd Garrison to Frances Garrison, March 5, 1867, William Lloyd Garrison Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA, hereafter MHS.

⁷ John Hope Franklin, *Reconstruction After the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 102; Foner, 316-321; Hume, 315 for Table 1 detailing the breakdown of delegates by race and region in the conventions. “The State Convention,” *Richmond Whig* December 14, 1867, 1.

veterans, and/or business professionals. Moreover, urban African Americans and educators in the Freedmen's Schools were well-represented. Lewis Lindsay and John Cox, both African American, represented the city of Richmond at the convention. The city of Mobile sent John Carraway and Ovide Gregory to the Alabama convention as delegates. John Carraway, a literate former slave, was the assistant editor of *The Nationalist*, an African American newspaper in Mobile. Ovide Gregory, Creole, served as the assistant chief of police under the Mayor Gustavus Horton administration. Carraway and Gregory joined the former city mayor Horton and Alfred E. Buck, a white Maine transplant living in Mobile, at the convention.⁸

A sizeable percentage of white Southerners, who were often conservative Democrats, opposed the convention on the basis of a lack of representation. The Reconstruction Acts disqualified a majority of these individuals for their prior loyalties to the Confederacy and required loyalty oaths to remove the restrictions. Others simply refused to participate. Their inability and/or refusal to participate in the constitutional convention resulted in a feeling of a lack of representation at the conventions. This feeling created and sustained a hostile environment during the convention proceedings. They often dismissed the white delegates with the pejorative terms of "carpetbaggers" and "scalawags" instead of seeing them as truly representing their community's needs. As a result, they viewed the political gathering as an imposition on the natural order of society and ridiculed the convention in the press. In their dismissal of the delegates and the conventions, these Southern whites convened a conservative constitutional convention as an expression of defiance to the federally mandated constitutional conventions. Within its coverage of the counter-convention, the *Richmond*

⁸ Foner, 316-318; Brenaman, 76; Monroe N. Work, Thomas S. Staples, H. A. Wallace, Kelly Miller, Whitefield McKinlay, Samuel E. Lacy, R. L. Smith and H. R. McIlwaine, "Some Negro Members of Reconstruction Conventions and Legislatures and of Congress," *Journal of Negro History* 5, no. 1 (January 1920): 64; Michael V. R. Thomason, ed. *Mobile: The New History of Alabama's First City* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001), 123, accessed at the Historic Mobile Preservation Society Archives, Mobile, AL.

Enquirer and *Richmond Whig* devoted space to ridiculing the proceedings of the federally mandated convention and reinforced the myths about the intentions of the delegates. The *Richmond Enquirer*, according to historian A. A. Taylor, used “Mongrel Convention,” the “Convention of Kangaroos,” and the “Black Crook” to describe the Virginia convention. The *Richmond Whig* reported that it preferred “military rule to despotism of an ignorant rabble” when discussing the “so-called convention or whatever it is, sitting in the Capitol.”⁹ The conservative press in Mobile also ridiculed the proceedings by calling them the “so-called conventions” or “gorilla conventions.” These pejorative monikers encapsulated the conservatives’ anger over their disenfranchisement, lack of representation, and views of the proceedings as illegal, undemocratic, and unconstitutional. Their attacks and the existence of the counter-conventions set the tone for the convention proceedings and the actions of the delegates.¹⁰

Within this hostile climate, the constitutional delegates created democratic constitutions that did not include vindictive provisions toward the former Confederates. The constitutions generally expanded suffrage to males, never disenfranchised all ex-Confederates, created a progressive tax system, expanded property inheritance rights to include children of former slaves, and created a Bill of Rights which detailed rights considered to be guaranteed to all citizens of the state. John Underwood, president of the Virginia convention, commented that the constitution’s “provisions are thoroughly

⁹ A. A. Taylor, “Giving Virginia a Democratic Constitution,” *Journal of Negro History* 11, no. 3 (July 1926): 478; “The Conservative Convention,” *Richmond Whig*, December 12, 1867, 1.

¹⁰ The conservative press printed attacks on the convention in their daily reporting on the convention proceedings. So-called convention was typical term employed in the Mobile press as well, see “The Convention,” *Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register*, November 5, 1867, 2.

Republican, excluding no man from equal privileges except for crime, or temporarily for rebellion.”¹¹

The creation of a state-funded educational system was among the most significant provision of the new constitutions. The delegates deemed the creation of a state funded educational system as a paramount goal from the outset. Most, if not all, of the delegates attending the convention had an awareness of the general enthusiasm for free public education, as indicated by the success of the Freedmen’s Schools. A resolution establishing a committee whose primary task entailed the creation of a state public school system for all classes and races occurred early in the proceedings. The resolution was proposed by either an African American delegate, as in the case in Alabama, or as in Virginia, African American delegates and white delegates with direct connections to the Freedmen’s Schools made statements supporting the reports and resolutions passed by the education committee. These committees recommended the inclusion in the new constitution of an article that called for the creation of a uniform system of public schools and provided the general framework for the new state educational system. The final educational articles typically included clauses for the establishment of normal and agricultural schools, the creation of a school fund, and the use of uniform textbooks throughout the state. The most controversial clauses in all of the constitutions centered upon tax-funding and mixed schools. While nearly all clauses of the educational articles passed without amendment, the clauses proposing separate schools and tax-funding caused much debate.¹²

¹¹For a discussion of the democratic provisions in the state constitutions, see Foner, 319-333. Jane Dailey, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 21; John C. Underwood, “Virginia: Disqualifications under the New Constitution,” *New York Times*, January 10, 1869, 5; Foner, 322.

¹² Dailey, 23; Knight, 5-6, 8, *Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register* November 10, 1867, 2; John Carraway proposed the resolution in the Alabama convention.

Although African American and white delegates shared a common goal in the creation of public schools, questions regarding the means to support the schools and questions pertaining to mixed schools versus separate schools challenged the delegates' unity. Delegates agreed that funding for the schools was to be derived from taxes; however, they were divided over the specifics. Were new taxes to be levied or would existing taxes be used to support the schools? What would be the financial burden on the still impoverished state? The delegates contemplated several potential funding sources for the schools. Poll taxes, vice taxes on alcohol and tobacco sales, and the sale of state lands for educational use were popular suggestions at the Virginia and Alabama conventions and the measures were eventually adopted. These measures reflected the delegates' concerns over the financial burden to their state and their desire to have the tax-funded schools accepted by their citizens. Another question raised was whether the schools were to be separate on the basis of race. If so, would the revenue derived from the poll taxes be applied to their respective schools or would the tax revenue be applied evenly? In addition, was the tax revenue raised to be applied only to the school system or should a portion be used to alleviate the state debt? As a compromise, the Virginia and Alabama delegates proposed to have their respective state legislature determine the specifics for the allocation of tax revenue.¹³

The question over mixed or separate schools sparked much debate and division among the delegates in the conventions. Some African American as well as white delegates recognized the revolutionary nature of the concept of state-funded schools and knew that most white Southerners would not be able to accept racially integrated schools. Some delegates, like Ovide Gregory and John Carraway, did not want race-based distinctions in the

¹³ Knight, 7; Brenaman, 118; Alabama Secretary of State, *Ordinances and Resolutions of the Constitutional Convention of 1867*, SG020651, Alabama Department of Archives and History.

state constitution but were opposed to mixed schools. Furthermore, the creation of the schools was enough for these delegates. They did not want to risk the passage of the educational article over the issue of mixed race schools. Tax-supported and mixed schools would have been simply too much to accept all at once.¹⁴

However, a minority of the delegates in Richmond, composed mainly of African American delegates and individuals with direct connections to the Freedmen's Schools, strongly advocated for mixed schools and not separate schools. These delegates desired mixed schools as a means of ending discrimination more broadly in the society. In their thinking, mixed schools and the lack of race-based distinctions in the constitution would have made a step toward achieving a harmonious postwar Southern society without racial discrimination. In Richmond, Thomas Bayne, an African American dentist from Norfolk, led a small minority of delegates who advocated mixed schools. "The free public schools of this state shall be open free to all classes, and no child, pupill [sic] or scholar, shall be ejected from said schools on account of race, color, or any other distinction," Dr. Bayne passionately argued, "and the general assembly shall [not] have pour [sic] to make any law that will admit of any invidious distinction in any public free schools in this state." The Bayne's contingent, which included Lewis Lindsay, proved unsuccessful in its efforts.¹⁵

The debate over mixed schools stalled the proceedings in the majority of the conventions until a compromise could be met. As with the funding debate, the conventions decided not to make racial distinctions in the newly created school system. Rather than follow the precedent set by Louisiana and South Carolina and forbid mixed schools, the

¹⁴ Knight, 6-7; "Letter from Montgomery," *Mobile Daily Register*, November 8, 1867, 1; "Letter from Montgomery," *Mobile Daily Register*, November 10, 1867, 2; "The Plot Thickens," *Mobile Daily Register*, November 30, 1867, 2.

¹⁵ Foner, 322; Quoted in Knight 10; Taylor, 481-482.

conventions decided that their respective state legislatures should make the decision for either mixed or separate schools. The educational articles eventually received approval. The conventions adopted the constitutions. Special state elections then ratified the constitutions. The provisions for education represented the states' first acknowledgement that it had a responsibility to educate children of all races and classes. Early antebellum state attempts at public schools in its large urban centers restricted education to white children in Richmond and to both white and Creole children in Mobile. African Americans, free and enslaved, were denied access to these antebellum schools. These new constitutions represented a reversal in state governmental attitude toward African American education. It also signaled the respective states' obligation of financially supporting African American education as a state right of citizenship. By mid-1868, Alabama received Congressional approval for readmission shortly after the creation and ratification of their constitutions and they reentered the Union. After some time between the adoption and ratification of the constitutions, Virginia reentered the Union in 1870.¹⁶

Although the new constitutions created a free school system and affirmed state support for African American education, several questions still remained concerning the funding, racial composition, and specifics of the new school system. The new state constitutions charged their respective legislatures with providing for a uniform system of public free schools, and for its gradual, equal and full implementation by a given date or earlier, if possible. Moving the contentious issue of funding and integration to the legislature allowed for the gradual implementation of the statewide system. Alabama adopted its system

¹⁶ Knight, 10; Foner, 322; Howard Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890* (1978; reprint, Athens: University of Georgia, 1996), 165; William L. Barney, *Battleground for the Union: The Era of the Civil War and Reconstruction, 1848-1877* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1990), 277. For the specific educational articles, see Alabama Constitution (1868), art. 11; Brenaman, 117-118.

in late 1868. In Virginia, the state system was successfully created and fully implemented on July 11, 1870, more than two years after the constitution was adopted by the convention, one year after it was ratified, and six months after readmission.¹⁷

During this interim period between ratification and implementation of the schools, local responses included resistance, negotiation, and accommodation. These responses sometimes resulted in experimentation in defining what the bi-racial system would look like in their respective communities. White opposition yielded to a reluctant acceptance in Richmond. This change in white sentiment encouraged experimentation in bi-racial education prior to the beginning of the state system. Internal division within the African American, Creole of Color, and white communities and intense opposition by conservative whites influenced Mobile's experiences. These variations resulted from specific local conditions and were not merely imposed by the state and federal political mandates. The next section will explore the local responses and processes mapping each city's unique pathway toward public schools and the end of the Freedmen's Schools.

Richmond: From Resistance to Acceptance

The creation of public schools produced several responses in Richmond. Reactions of white Richmonders to the educational provisions in the new constitution varied and included hostility, jubilation, and resignation. African Americans in Richmond mainly responded with continued enthusiasm and anxiousness. The varied responses by white and African American Richmonders influenced the transition period to public schools and the demise of the Freedmen's Schools.

¹⁷ For a discussion of the state legislative debates in Richmond, see Knight, 15; A.A. Taylor, "Solving the Problem of Education," *Journal of Negro History* 11, no. 2 (April 1926): 388; Vaughn 73; Brenaman, 78-79; Charles William Dabney, *Universal Education in the South* v. 1 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936), 173-74, 318, 417.

Initially, many native-born white Richmonders opposed the newly created public schools. Their opposition derived from the constitutional convention process which created the schools, the revolutionary shift in attitude toward education by the convention delegates, and a general hostility to the perceived illegitimate Reconstruction government. They focused their hostilities on the Freedmen's Schools and later the African American public schools. They expressed their opposition through minor acts of violence directed toward individuals connected with the schools and editorials in the Richmond newspapers. John A. McDonnell, Freedmen's Bureau agent in Richmond, continually wrote in his monthly reports: "The people are opposed to Free schools." Other participants in the schools also observed this noticeable attitude in their reports. Historian Howard Rabinowitz argued that it would take decades for some white urban Southerners to accept the concept of publicly supported education.¹⁸

Open opposition strengthened the African American community's and their partners' resolve. Community activists and educators often came to the support of one another against this opposition, regardless of race. Mary Kellogg, a white American Missionary Association missionary, described at length the arrest and imprisonment of an African American educator for his political activism and her efforts directed toward his release. Officials arrested Reuben Wright forty miles outside of Richmond "just before the election" for "instructing the people around him as to their true course at that time." For this offense, Kellogg wrote that the "rampant rebel spirit connecting it with another trifling occurrence by bribing an unworthy

¹⁸ Knight, 4; William Vaughn, *Schools for All* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1974), 53; Dailey, 21; "The Conservative Convention," *Richmond Whig* December 12, 1867, 1 and "The State Convention," *Richmond Whig*, December 21, 1867, 1; John A McDonnell, "Sub-Assistant Commissioner's (or Agent's) Monthly Report, December, 1869," Monthly School Reports of Assistant Sub-assistant Commissioners and Agents, *Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Virginia, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1870* (Research Group 105, National Archives Microfilm Publication M1053), microfilm roll 13 (hereafter, VA-BRFAL-ED); Rabinowitz, 152.

officer, successful in arresting him and 3 others and sending them to the prison in this city and under the charge of felony and condemned them to 12 years imprisonment.” Kellogg and an unnamed “colored lady” approached the prison’s warden and subsequently the governor for Wright’s release. Within a week of meeting with the governor, Wright received a release. This incident demonstrated the strengthened bi-racial alliance between educators and the community. It also highlighted the continued use and acceptance of using any tactics by those opposed to African American education and Reconstruction. The felony charge for political activism and the bribing of officials employed during this incident reflected the hostility existing in the city. Employment of such tactics was also not confined to Richmond. State Republican leaders reported that other “threats of violence prevented the exercise of free discussion” throughout the state. In his annual report to the Secretary of War, O. O. Howard also referenced a few Ku Klux Klan incidents occurring primarily in rural Virginia. Despite physical and economic threats, the bi-racial educational partnerships prevailed.¹⁹

Some local whites expressed enthusiasm for the creation of the public schools. The success of the Freedmen’s Schools helped change the attitudes of some white Richmonders towards education. A small but growing white minority of poor and working class whites desired to have their children receive an education. The antebellum education system had made education unattainable for many lower and working class whites because of costs for school materials, lack of schools, and class distinctions in determining eligibility for the private, tuition-based academies. Free, tax-funded public schools minimized the out-of-

¹⁹ Mary L. Kellogg to Reverend Edwin P. Smith, February 5, 1868, microfilm roll 10, AMA Papers, Virginia; Charles Howell Porter, *Address of the Republican State Convention, held in Richmond, Virginia, on the 24th and 25th of November, 1869, relative to the election in the state on the 6th of July last*, 41st Cong., 2nd Sess, S. Misc. Doc. 3, December 7, 1869, 1. Ulysses S. Grant, *Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 1868, pt. 1*, 40th Cong., 3rd Sess., H. Ex. Doc No. 1/14, 1036. Howard’s reference to Ku Klux Klan activities was included in the House of Representative Report pertaining to Ku Klux Klan activities in the South. See “Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States,” 42nd Cong., 2nd Sess., H. Rep. 22, Pt. 1, 20.

pocket expense and erased the previous class distinctions associated with education. Education now became an attainable reality for the poor and working classes. Moreover, these public schools created new economic opportunities within the impoverished, debt-ridden city. The war-ravaged city caused several native white Richmonders, mainly women, to seek jobs in the Freedmen's Schools or private school system. Public schools expanded the economic possibilities available whether as teachers, administrators, or elected school board officials. These new social and economic opportunities garnered support for the new schools among white Richmonders.²⁰

Lastly, and most significantly, some whites expressed resignation toward state-funded education. Based upon the proceedings of the convention, the adoption of a constitution, and the actions of the state legislature, Richmond officials and leaders realized that a tax-funded state educational system would soon become a reality. Rather than prolonging the inevitable, city officials instituted a free public school system for all school-age children, white and black, in 1869, one year prior to the official start of the state system. The city council, which controlled the schools, determined that the schools were to be separate. Unlike the neighboring city of Petersburg, Richmond relied upon the existing educational relationships forged by African Americans, the Freedmen's Bureau and Northern benevolent societies for the operation of the African American schools. By not requiring the end of the alliances as Petersburg had done, the Richmond city council focused its energies in the creation and early development of the public schools for white children and, at the same time, became a new partner in the city's African American educational efforts. For one year, the Richmond City Council, the Freedmen's Bureau, Northern benevolent societies and African Americans

²⁰ Dailey, 21-22; Vaughn, 42; For examples of white Richmonders seeking employment in the African American schools, see John Battleman to Major General Schoefield, April 2, 1867, microfilm roll 7, VA-BRFAL-ED and J. Peterkin to BRFAL, April 2, 1867, microfilm roll 7, VA-BRFAL-ED.

collaborated. The Freedmen's Bureau, Northern benevolent societies, and African Americans provided the school buildings, supplied teachers, and financed a portion of the teachers' salaries while the city council allocated \$15,000 for the operations of the African American schools and \$15,000 for the operation of the white schools.²¹

The new educational systems had two significant effects on the existing Freedmen's Schools in Richmond. First, white flight from the Freedmen's Schools occurred. Prior to the 1869-1870 academic year, Richmond's Freedmen's Schools educated predominantly African American students as well as a small number of white students in separate schools. The education of white children aided the Freedmen's Bureau in its defense of the school system against racial attacks. Critics could never claim that the Freedmen's Schools only addressed the educational needs of African Americans. According to the Bureau's statistical reports, the number of white students declined from 244 in June 1869 to zero by September 1869, when the city's schools officially opened. This noticeable withdrawal made the Freedmen Bureau's directed schools exclusively for black Richmonders.²²

Second, and most significantly, the free public school system competed with the independent, tuition-based African American schools. Because these new city schools were tax-supported, African Americans reassessed their educational options and domestic

²¹ In the state superintendent monthly reports, the Richmond City Council is listed as patron starting in the September 1869 reports. The council, however, is not listed as the only patron for the schools. Other patrons include the American Missionary Association, American Baptist Home Mission Society, and the American Freedmen's Union Commission. Whereas in Petersburg, once the city takes over in April 1868, the Petersburg's school board and the Freedmen's Bureau are the only patrons listed. The once dominant Northern philanthropic societies are no longer listed as patrons. Bureau officials also discussed the Petersburg plan and possible implementation elsewhere, see R. M. Manly to Reverend George Whipple, 15 July 1868, microfilm roll 10, AMA Papers, Virginia, and General O. Brown to Reverend George Whipple, 7 August 1868, microfilm roll 10, AMA Papers, Virginia; Rabinowitz, 166; Table IX: Comparative Statistics, *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools of the City Of Richmond, VA for the Scholastic Year Ending July 31st, 1893* (Richmond: C. N. Williams, City Printers, 1894), 40-41, accessed at the Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA.

²²“State Superintendent Monthly Statistical Reports, June 1869 and Sept 1869,” microfilm roll 11, VA-BRFAL-ED; For statistics, see Appendix 2.

economy. Many chose to send their children to the free schools. Amidst declining economic conditions, the free school system provided a feasible alternative to the tuition-based private schools. The once vibrant independent school system declined and some schools closed their doors.²³

Several of the independent schools that remained open adopted a class consciousness. The schools increasingly served mainly elite and middle class African American children. The independent school system also began serving African Americans at the opposite end of the class spectrum-orphans and indigent children-as middle-class African American women combined their relief work with education in addressing the needs of this population. These women regarded the city's orphanage for African American children, operated by the Pennsylvania Society of Friends, as insufficient. As public schools moved from hope to a reality, several black Richmonders established a large independent orphanage which included an on-site school for the inhabitants. This school addressed a population not addressed by the public schools. Richmond's school policy was no different from other cities in the nation. Like other orphans, African Americans were schooled within the orphanage in order to ensure their success as adults outside of the orphanage. Some talented students often attended the city's schools but orphanages remained the principal site of instruction. In addressing class interests, the private school system addressed the specific educational needs of certain members of the African American community that were not met with the new public schools.²⁴

²³“State Superintendent Monthly Statistical Reports, October 1865-July 1870,” microfilm roll 11, VA-BRFAL-ED. Prior to 1869-1870 year, the Freedmen's Bureau had reported the number of self-sustaining schools in Richmond as ranging from 6 to 22. Beginning in October 1869 until its closure, the Freedmen's Bureau notes zero self-sustaining schools existing in Richmond.

²⁴ Rabinowitz, 134-135, 143-144.

Mrs. Julia St. Johns led the initiative for the education of African American orphans. The widow made orphan education her top priority during the late 1860s. St. Johns raised the necessary funds to purchase property from within the African American community. Reverend Charles E. Hodge, a prominent African American minister whose church served as a school, donated both money and time in raising support for the project. She also approached the Freedmen's Bureau and American Missionary Association for funds through letters of correspondence and a trip to the American Missionary Association's headquarters in New York City. Meanwhile, she with the assistance of Mrs. Harris, Mrs. Charles E. Hodge, and Mrs. Mary Ward, operated the orphanage/school. Initially, R. M. Manly, Superintendent of Education for the Freedmen's Bureau in Virginia, and John B. Crenshaw, state legislator, viewed the efforts of St. Johns and her associates as "unnecessary" because of the existing Friends' orphanage. However, Manly still regarded the St. Johns' orphanage school as "very well accommodated at present in a brick dwelling house." He also remarked that the institution was well received in the community as he had "heard nothing against her or the ladies with her, and the appearances at the 'Home' are in their favor." He reluctantly gave his support for the institution. The state eventually incorporated the orphanage school into the public school system in 1872 but it maintained the school's organizational structure established by St. Johns and added a few white trustees. While incorporation caused a loss of autonomy, the bi-racial trustee board and African American administration allowed for continued African American participation.²⁵

²⁵George Whipple notes his meeting with Mrs. St. Johns at the organization's headquarters in Whipple to R. M. Manly, May 19, 1870, Unregistered Letters Received, Dec. 1869-Aug. 1870, microfilm roll 10, VA-BRFAL-ED; Reverend Charles E. Hodge to Reverend S. J. Jocelyn, May 21, 1870, microfilm roll 12, AMA Papers, Virginia; R. M. Manly to Reverend E. P. Smith, May 21, 1870, microfilm roll 12, AMA Papers, Virginia; R. M. Manly to Reverend George Whipple, May 26, 1870, microfilm roll 12, AMA Papers, Virginia; Virginia Legislature, *Acts of Assembly, 1872*, 454-456; 460-61, accessed in microfilm roll 12, AMA Papers, Virginia.

In spite of white flight and the decline of independent African American schools, the overwhelming majority of the African American schools continued without much change. Although the Bureau began phasing out its operations, the agency continued coordinating the allocation of funds for the schoolroom rental, teacher salaries, the construction of schools, and basic materials for the schools. Manly still required the teachers and remaining Freedmen's Bureau agents to submit reports and provide a high standard of education for the Freedmen. Manly also expected the students to maintain high standards of deportment and punctuality. Manly found the students meeting those expectations. He continued to praise African Americans' thirst for knowledge and the social results from the schools. According to Manly: "The schools have been the principal cause of hopefulness and patience with which the freemen have endured the hunger, the nakedness, and the unavenged wrongs of their transitional state... The schools have also developed self-respect, and a general desire for permanent homes, and the comforts and decencies of social life." Thus, the Freedmen's Bureau still regarded its previous educational efforts as a total success. The new state educational mandates rejuvenated its operations and spurred the organization's continuance of its efforts until the completion of the transition to the state bi-racial educational system.²⁶

Likewise, Northern benevolent associations embraced Richmond's School Board as a partner for several reasons. These associations had always believed that education was a responsibility of the state and needed tax revenue support. Officers of the American Missionary Association, for example, hoped that a national system of education for African Americans and Southern whites could be created so that the organization could then

²⁶ "From Manly, Richmond," *American Freedman* 3, no. 2 (May 1868): 414-415 in New England Freedmen Aid Society Records, MHS; John Cox and La Wanda Cox, "General O.O. Howard and the Misrepresented Bureau," *Journal of Southern History* 19, no. 4 (November 1953): 452; A.A. Taylor, "Solving," 385-86; "State Superintendent Monthly Statistical Reports, September 1869-July 1870," microfilm roll 11, VA-BRFAL-ED; Cox and Cox, 454.

concentrate on secondary schools and teacher training. Thus, the American Missionary Association, New England Freedmen's Aid Society, the American Freedman's Union Commission, and other Northern benevolent societies advocated for and cooperated with the local boards and state in the creation of public schools. They readily responded to Freedmen's Bureau appeals to continue their support during this transition period. For instance, Ednah Cheney, New England Freedmen's Aid Society executive, found R. M. Manly's request to continue sending teachers to the new public schools "very satisfactory." The organization commissioned six Northern teachers and two Southern teachers for Richmond. Although these societies cooperated with the local boards in the remaining years of the Freedmen's Schools, the associations did not relinquish control of the schools for African Americans in all areas. Historian Joe Richardson commented that the American Missionary Association "strongly believed that southern white teachers could not be trusted with black interests. It favored black teachers, but assumed there were still too few competent ones available." Richardson concluded that the organization "placed as many northern teachers as possible in southern public schools while blacks were being trained," and even "rented its property to local systems only with the stipulation that its teachers [were] kept."²⁷ Richmond exemplified this pattern described by Richardson. As evidenced in the monthly

²⁷ Joe M. Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 109; R. M. Manly to New England Freedmen Aid Society, July 22, 1869, file Daily Record, 1868-1869, box 1, NEFAS Records, MHS; Ednah Cheney to the New England Freedmen Aid Society, August 2, 1869, file Daily Record, 1868-1869, box 1, NEFAS Records, MHS; For the rationale of the American Freedman's Union Commission's continued commitment, see American Freedman's Union Commission, *The Results of Emancipation in the United States of America by a Committee of the American Freedman's Union Commission* (New York: American Freedman's Union Commission, 1867); Quote from Richardson, 111.

Bureau reports, the American Missionary Association, American Freedmen's Union Commission, and others continued their operations when local school boards were created.²⁸

The African American community continued their educational quest during the transition period. School attendance in Richmond remained relatively high. Schools still flourished. Lizzie Parsons, a white American Missionary Association educator, discussed her school's continued success and the lengths made by her students to attend it. Parsons' students lived in neighborhoods that were inaccessible to the majority of the Freedmen's Schools. Students still traveled great distances for an education. Parsons noted that several of her students "walk five miles to reach it" and were unable to "go to other side of the city." The distance traveled never impeded her students' attendance. She gave a specific example of one gentleman in night school "who resides five miles out in the county, yet never fails in his place." Peter Woolfolk, an African American New England Freedmen's Aid Society educator, also noted the continued success of his Channing School during this transition period. As evidenced by Parsons' and Woolfolk's reports, the transition to public schools never tempered the communal desire for education.²⁹

The transition to public schools also produced some angst within the African American community. Some feared the premature ending of the Freedmen's Schools before the implementation of public schools was complete. For instance, the students and parents in Parsons' Freedmen's School expressed this concern. The school operated by Parsons was the only Freedmen's School accessible to their neighborhood. As the only option available, the community was anxious for its continuation and appealed to Parsons to discuss the matter

²⁸ "State Superintendent Monthly Statistical Reports, Sep 1869-Jul 1870," microfilm roll 11, VA-BRFAL-ED.

²⁹ Lizzie Parsons to Reverend Edwin P. Smith, May 31, 1869, microfilm roll 11, AMA Papers, Virginia; Peter Woolfolk to the New England Freedmen's Aid Society, December 30, 1868, file Daily Record, 1868-1869, box 1, NEFAS Records, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA.

with her philanthropic sponsors. Parsons voiced their concerns and urged that the American Missionary Association continue the school for the following year and until free public schools opened. She wrote: “The colored people are very anxious to have it sustained....They come to me urging their need.” Parsons’ assessment of the African American community’s anxiety for the continuation of the Freedmen’s Schools until the implementation of public schools reflected African Americans’ desire to become a literate people. Her comments also illuminated the former school system’s inability to reach all segments of the African American population due to the insufficient number of schools accessible to neighborhoods. African Americans living near Parson’s school highly valued the school due to its proximity to their neighborhood and did not want its closure during this transition period. Parsons was not alone in noting the angst over the transition to public schools by some African Americans, but others had different explanations.³⁰

Peter Woolfolk and Amy Browne offered an alternative explanation. Woolfolk intimately understood the community’s anxiety; he assessed the source as purely economic. Harsh weather conditions during the winter of 1867 and extremely dry conditions during the following spring resulted in crop failures and incipient famine throughout Virginia. By the winter of 1868-1869, these conditions and poor economic conditions in Richmond forced the temporary transfer of several students from his school to the school operated by the Friends. He explained the transfer as the consequence of “some parents [being] influenced by the actions of the Friends’ society who charge nothing for fuel in their schools this year.” African American parents took advantage of the lower tuition rates in order to ensure the children’s continued education. With the end of winter and the additional fuel surcharge, the parents of

³⁰ Lizzie Parsons to Reverend Edwin P. Smith, May 31, 1869, microfilm roll 11, AMA Papers, Virginia.

the transferred students would most likely return to the Channing School. In this instance, it was not educational quality but educational cost guiding their decision. Amy G. Browne, a white educator for the New England Freedmen's Aid Society, shared Woolfolk's assessment. She noted that several of her students were "too poor to pay the tax or to buy books" and wished that the societies comprising the American Freedmen Union Commission "would send money to expend in books, slates etc." The trying economic times, as noted by Woolfolk and Browne, was a major source of the community's angst. State funded public schools equated to economic relief to members of the African American community. The schools would alleviate the immediate economic burden posed by monthly tuition and fuel surcharges collected by the Freedmen's Schools. The free schools would make education possible to African Americans who simply could not afford to pay.³¹

Educators still found fulfillment in their work among African Americans. Students' enthusiasm and scholastic success strengthened many educators' resolve in staying through the transition period. Some white educators continued seeing their mission as elevating African Americans from slavery to freedom. Marcia Cotton reiterated this sentiment in a letter to Reverend E. P. Smith. She explained that she tried "to teach the practice of Economy, Industry and Frugality. Then what is most important to them, the true Value of Time, both for this Life and that which is to come." Cotton recognized her mission as being unfulfilled. She remarked that the "pupils and Teachers are very far from this perfection in that last and most important branch." Her students' enthusiasm galvanized her continued efforts. African American educators, like Woolfolk, viewed their efforts in terms of racial

³¹ Peter Woolfolk to the New England Freedmen's Aid Society, December 30, 1868, file Daily Record, 1868-1869, box 1, NEFAS Records, MHS; Amy G. Browne to the New England Freedmen's Aid Society, December 23, 1868, file Daily Record, 1868-1869, box 1, NEFAS Records, MHS.

uplift and citizenship and desired to remain in the African American schools after the transition was complete.³²

The schoolhouse also remained a social center that was rivaled only by the African American church. The schools still held public exercises, exhibitions, and other programs that highlighted the students' work and intellectual progress. Many African American adults, who had been denied an education, took pride in the public exercises. Historian A.A. Taylor noted that the "public exercises of these schools and especially those closing the terms usually attracted almost everyone in the community. They were all eager to hear the essays, declamations, and recitations of these developing youths." Through this pride, the African Americans received affirmation in their quest for literacy and educational access. "So popular became education among the Negroes," Taylor explained, "that parents who kept their children at home to work were generally branded as unworthy citizens." These exercises and the schools continued to be sources of racial pride and examples of African American progress in the transition from slavery.³³

Moreover, African Americans now had more opportunities for greater participation in the Freedmen's Schools and newly formed public schools by becoming teachers, administrators and members of the city's board of education. During this transition period, the number of African American teachers increased. These teachers came from the existing class of educated Richmonders like Woolfolk, graduates of the American Freedmen's Union Commission sponsored Richmond Colored Normal School, graduates of the American

³² Marcia Cotton to Reverend E. P. Smith, January 21, 1869, AMA Papers, Virginia, microfilm roll 12; Peter Woolfolk to the New England Freedmen's Aid Society, August 14, 1869, file Daily Record, 1868-1869, box 1, NEFAS Records, MHS; R. M. Manly to the New England Freedmen's Aid Society, August 16, 1869, file Daily Record, 1868-1869, box 1, NEFAS Records, MHS.

³³ A.A. Taylor, "Progress in Mental Development," *Journal of Negro History* 11, no. 2 (Apr 1926): 399.

Baptist Home Mission Society sponsored Richmond Institute and those who had received training from the new African American colleges across the region such as Hampton Normal Institute and Fisk University. In order to expand this class, Richmond educators regularly recommended and acquired transportation for advanced students, such as Delaware Banks and Christopher Bird, to attend these schools. African Americans also attempted to obtain administrative positions in the city's school system. In addition to an increase in college-trained teachers, the transition to roles beyond students was attributable to a general communal desire for African American teachers educating students and African American administrators managing the schools. According to historian James McPherson, it would take approximately twenty-five years for African Americans to occupy the majority of the faculty and administrative positions. The transition to public schools facilitated this process.³⁴

As R.M. Manly worked with Richmond's Board of Alderman and School Board, he met with Dr. Henry Ruffner, Virginia's Superintendent of Instruction, and representatives of the state legislature. From these meetings, Virginia's uniform system of education was created. While African Americans were not always present in these meetings, their longstanding partnership with Manly had established a trust and faith that he would uphold their alliance. He did. The legislature adopted what has become known as the Ruffner's plan for the public schools which included provisions for African American education. It was implemented on July 11, 1870. Twenty days later, the Freedmen's Bureau officially shut down its operations. This closure marked the official end to the Freedmen's Schools but not an end to African American education. State funded public schools ensured financial support

³⁴“State Superintendent Monthly Statistical Reports, Oct 1865-Jul 1870,” microfilm roll 11, VA-BRFAL-ED; “Normal Schools, *American Freedman* 2, no. 8 (November 1867): 307, accessed at MHS; Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, Pamphlet, October 1868, microfilm roll 10, AMA Papers, Virginia; James McPherson, “White Liberals and Black Power in Negro Education, 1865-1915,” *The American Historical Review* 75, no. 5 (June 1970): 1357.

for African American education in Richmond. The new state school system also legitimated the rights of African Americans to become educated as citizens of Virginia and overturned antebellum white sentiments toward African American education. While African Americans lost an ally in the Freedmen's Bureau, they gained new partners in the state and Richmond government officials who were supportive of their continual desire to become an educated people. They would rely upon these alliances over the next twenty years.³⁵

Mobile: Competing Visions and Communities at Odds

While publicly funded education was not new to the city of Mobile, African American public schools, as defined by the constitution, were new. The state mandates required convincing local citizens to accept African American education as legitimate. The convention, constitution, and new educational mandates produced intense and polarized responses. Internal divisions and attitude shifts within the white, Creole, and African American communities shaped the period beginning with the convention and ending with departure of the Freedmen's Bureau. Both demonstrate that acceptance at the state level did not automatically secure local acceptance of African American education. The conservative white community, as represented by the newspapers, vehemently opposed the new constitution and its educational mandates. Their opposition, though, represented a small portion of the white community. Gradually, conservatives lost their hegemonic appeal within the white community. Some began expressing a viable, alternative vision. The Board of School Commissioners for Mobile County became an outlet for these individuals' ideas and vision. The Board actively pursued an alliance with the Freedmen's Bureau for the extension of the city's schools to African American children. The actions of the Board represented a

³⁵ Knight, 15; A.A. Taylor, "Solving," 388; Vaughn 73.

transformation toward African American education. These diametrically opposed viewpoints coexisted in the city and set the stage for the implementation of public schools. Similarly, the African American and Creole communities' responses varied. Responses included reservations about extending social divisions in the new schools, fears over white conservatives' strengthening their political power, and a sense of vindication for previous educational struggles. These varied reactions to African American education encouraged the development of yet another path toward public schools.

Mobile's conservative white community vehemently opposed the new constitution and the inclusion of African Americans in the state educational system. The new constitution embodied a postwar vision for the region which threatened their social, political, and economic hegemony. The state constitution was considered to be a document created for individuals deemed their inferior and thus, it did not represent white conservatives' self-interests. Utilizing the *Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register* (later renamed the *Mobile Daily Register* in early 1868), conservatives launched a campaign to block ratification of the state constitution. Through a barrage of articles and editorials, the newspaper encouraged its readers not to participate in the ratification election and thereby force its defeat through failure to obtain the majority of registered voters required for ratification. The newspaper publicized organizations who shared the anti-ratification sentiment. Organizations created for the sole purpose of defeating the state constitution found a forum and a willing audience with the *Mobile Daily Register*. For instance, the Constitutional Committee of Mobile, whose sole purpose was "defeating the so-called Constitution" and influencing the vote of "any true Alabamians," published its mission statement, executive members and delegates, and mobilization materials in the newspaper. This organization and others found an outlet in the

paper and a willing audience in the newspaper's readership. With the support of *Mobile Daily Register* and other conservative city newspapers, white conservatives embarked on their campaign.³⁶

White conservatives also advocated extralegal measures as a means of preventing ratification. The *Mobile Daily Register* utilized both intimidation and public humiliation. Several articles and editorials strongly suggested that economic and social repercussions would occur against any voter who gave electoral support to the constitution. In an article entitled, "The Election," the *Mobile Daily Register* made explicit threats against any African American supporters of the constitution. Targeting African Americans, the article stated: "Every colored man who votes in the election for the thing called a constitution makes his record as an enemy of his white fellow citizens." The article recommended that African Americans "keep out of the election," and not risk any detrimental consequences from the city's white citizens. For white supporters of the constitution, the newspaper employed public shame as a tactic. The newspaper published the names and occupations of the voters in "List of White Voters." Publishing the names and other similar tactics forced the targeted individuals to redeem their honor and reaffirm their Southern identity in Mobile. Two days after the initial public outing of white supporters, John Weldon appealed to the *Mobile Daily Register* readers with a letter to the editor. After reaffirming his Democratic political loyalties, Weldon expressed his desire to end military occupation as the reasons for his supporting ratification in the election and his general resignation in accepting the new postwar order. The newspaper never detailed any repercussion incurred by Weldon or other

³⁶ For articles and editorials encouraging whites to not vote, see "The Crisis," *Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register* November 13, 1867, 2, "The Proposed Constitution," *Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register* December 17, 1867, 2, and "Do Not Vote," *Mobile Daily Register* February 4, 1868, 2; "The Constitutional Executive Committee," *Mobile Daily Register* January 30, 1868, 1.

supporters of the constitution after the public outing. Still, these extralegal measures and the overall campaign proved effective in forcing some to yield to the conservatives' vision. The campaign succeeded in limiting the public discourse and discouraging electoral support throughout the state. At the time of the election, Alabama had approximately 170,000 registered voters. Only 6,700 out of the approximately 75,000 registered white voters participated in the ratification election. The campaign also convinced some but not the majority of African Americans to not participate. Of the approximately 95,000 registered African American voters, about 63,000 voted and approximately 22,000 did not participate. Results were 70,182 votes casted in favor of ratification and 1,005 cast against.³⁷

The conservatives' campaign garnered a short-term success. Although the majority of the votes approved ratification, the election failed to receive the 85,000 votes required by the Second Reconstruction Act. This technicality permitted success for the conservative white community. The city's white conservative press hailed their victory with articles, editorials, and letters to the editor. Their celebration, however, was temporary as Federal officials intervened. After a Congressional intervention, a Presidential veto, and a Congressional override, the newly created state constitution eventually received recognition and approval for readmission. Readmission made state-funded African American public schools a reality.³⁸

³⁷ "The Election," *Mobile Daily Register*, February 4, 1868, 2; "List of White Voters," *Mobile Daily Register*, February 12, 1868, 2; "A Card," *Mobile Daily Register*, February 14, 1868, 2; Statistics quoted in "Alabama Constitution of 1868-Ratification," *Alabama Constitution of 1868*, <http://www.legislature.state.al.us/misc/History/constitutions/1868/1868rat.html> Accessed March 28, 2007.

³⁸ Kimberly Bess Cantrell, "A Voice for the Freedmen: The Mobile Nationalist, 1865-1869" (master's thesis, Auburn University, 1989), 57, 67-68.

While conservatives fought its ratification battle, another viewpoint emerged and steadily gained acceptance by whites living in Mobile. This group began to accept the importance of the Freedmen's Bureau's educational vision and advocated for the creation of African American public schools in Mobile. Despite many obstacles, the Freedmen's Schools succeeded. Their success convinced some individuals that African American education was a postwar reality that they must accept on account of their defeat. This change in attitude revealed itself in a proposed alliance between the Board of School Commissioners for Mobile County and Freedmen's Bureau agents in Mobile and Montgomery. This alliance ultimately undermined conservatives' efforts.

Shortly before the Constitutional Convention, the Board of School Commissioners for Mobile County approached the Freedmen's Bureau regarding a possible partnership. In an August 1867 letter, C. A. Bradford, secretary of the Board, made the request. He wrote that a committee of the Board of School Commissioners received an inquiry from the African American community that asked "whether our system of public instruction can be extended to the colored children of Mobile, and if so, in what manner and by what means such instruction can be most efficiently accomplished." Prior to this inquiry, the Board of School Commissioners maintained a system of schools separate from the Freedmen's Schools in which only white and Creole children could attend. This inquiry questioned this policy and desired overturning it. In discussing the inquiry, the Board agreed with the petitioners and looked into the feasibility of extending its educational system to include African Americans. Funding seemed to be the main obstacle. In the course of the discussion, several school commissioners mentioned that the Bureau had funds appropriated for the creation and operation of African American schools. Bradford inquired, on behalf of the Board to

“ascertain what aid it is in the power of the Bureau to give to this object,” specifically towards school construction and teacher’s salaries. The potential alliance would serve both organizations’ needs. Access to the Bureau’s financial networks would greatly improve the Board’s overall financial situation. Having the full cooperation and support of the Board of School Commissioners would fulfill the aims of African American education for the Freedmen’s Bureau.³⁹

Bradford’s inquiry purposefully appealed to the Freedmen’s Bureau’s humanitarian aim of elevating former slaves to full citizens. In building the case for a partnership, Bradford gave a revised history of the Mobile school system. He emphasized the Board’s education of free Creoles of Color before the war. He proclaimed: “Indeed, from the re-organization of the system in 1852 to the present time, we have had a School for Creoles in the City and one in the Country, successfully conducted and operating in harmony with the schools for whites.” Bradford then reassured Buckley: “There is not the slightest reason to fear that it cannot be indefinitely extended, [if] the board is put in possession of adequate means.” These comments strongly suggested that the existence and acceptance of the Creole School would easily allow for the existing system’s adaptability toward African American education.⁴⁰

Bradford’s humanitarian depiction actually masked the racial and legal reasons for the antebellum Creole educational system in Mobile. Mobile’s society was based upon three racial categories. Whites were at the top of the racial hierarchy, and at the bottom were African Americans. Creoles of Color fell between the two traditional racial groups. This accepted racial and social group existed under Spanish and French colonial rule in Mobile.

³⁹ Bond, 84; C. A. Bradford to C. W. Buckley, August 7, 1867, microfilm roll 3, AL-BRFAL-ED.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Creoles and their descendents claimed African ancestry mixed with either French or Spanish ancestry. Colonial officials in Mobile ensured the continued existence of this group with the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and the Adams-Onis Treaty in 1819. The Adams-Onis Treaty stipulated that African Americans and their descendents who could claim French or Spanish descent would be recognized as full citizens. As full citizens, they would be guaranteed all civil and legal rights reserved for citizens. This treaty elevated this bi-racial group into a new social status, widely known as the “treaty population.” Neither white nor black, Creoles regularly evoked the treaty to ensure the continuation of their rights and “fiercely protected their identities and status.” Bradford’s depiction purposely overlooked the context that made Creole education possible in order to gain access to the Freedmen’s Bureau financial networks.⁴¹

A more accurate depiction for the school board’s support of antebellum Creole education is evident in the city’s defense of the schools to other Southerners prior to the Civil War. The creation of the Creole public schools drew sharp and immediate criticism from nearby cities outside of Alabama. Mobile officials responded by defending the schools and the Creole community. For instance, the Mobile *Daily Advertiser* responded to criticism made by the New Orleans *Bulletin* in an 1849 news article regarding the Bethel Free School. The *Bulletin* charged the city of breaking state law and starting an abolitionist movement with the “negro free school.” The *Daily Advertiser* article acknowledged the opening of the

⁴¹Amos, 185, 189-190; Fitzgerald, *Urban Emancipation*, 10-11. Berlin, 131. Ira Berlin offered an early discussion of the antebellum experience in the Gulf Region in *Slaves Without Masters*. Although his discussion primarily focused upon Louisiana, he briefly discussed Mobile’s Creoles. He concluded that Creoles in Mobile and the Gulf region were an exception in the South’s caste system. The essays by Virginia Meacham Gould Loren Schwenger in *Creoles of Color in the Gulf South*, edited by James H. Dorman (Knoxville, University of Tennessee, 1996) provided more in-depth discussion of this population and their antebellum experiences. Fitzgerald, 11-13; Virginia Meacham Gould, “Free Creoles of Color in Mobile and Pensacola,” *Creoles of Color*, 43-44.

school but corrected the assumption that the school was for free African Americans. It declared “these Creoles, for who a school has been established here, are of French and Spanish descent. They are those, and the descendents of those, who were in this city, or its vicinity, when it was transferred to the United States.” In addition, the article reaffirmed the Creoles’ non-threatening status in the society as a way to lower the anxieties of the people of New Orleans and other Southerners. “It is true that all the descendents do not mingle upon an equality with the highest class of society, neither do they with the slave population. They are neither treated nor regarded as negroes.” The article further clarified: “They are humble, unobtrusive, uniformly quiet, industrious and respectable....Our contemporaries are unnecessarily alarmed.”⁴² Mobile school officials upheld Creoles’ unique status through the extension of public schools. On the other hand, Mobile’s antebellum education system legally excluded free and enslaved African Americans on the basis of race. Though limited enforcement of the laws never fully prevented the self-educational efforts by enslaved and free African Americans, the Board maintained a racial caste system in its schools. Racism, not the lack of finances, as suggested by Bradford in his letter, guided the school board’s decision to only educate Creoles and not African Americans prior to and immediately following the Civil War.⁴³

Unaware of Mobile’s unique race relations, the Board’s apparent about-face piqued the interest of Charles W. Buckley, Alabama’s Superintendent of Education for the Freedmen’s Bureau. The proposal fulfilled a crucial aim of the Bureau’s educational efforts. The Bureau viewed its job as temporary until local and state officials adopted the postwar

⁴² “What Next?,” *Mobile Daily Register*, May 3, 1849, clipping, Black School Clippings File, Historic Mobile Preservation Society, Mobile, Alabama.

⁴³ Michael W. Fitzgerald, *Urban Emancipation: Popular Politics in Reconstruction Mobile, 1860-1890* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 10-11.

meaning of education and citizenship. The creation of a permanent public school system that educated all children, black and white would permit an end to their services for the newly freed. It would also fulfill the aims of the participants in which the Bureau had established working relationships. Bradford's partnership request, therefore, produced great enthusiasm among Buckley and other Bureau agents.

Buckley's response to Bradford exemplified the enthusiasm for the possible alliance with the Board of School Commissioners for Mobile County. He extensively quoted passages from Bradford's letter that highlighted the agency's aims. The tone of the letter and general remarks, moreover, offered reassurance that a partnership would most likely occur. He wrote that the "cooperation in its expenditure, even though your Board are without funds," would benefit the "colored element of your city." Furthermore, Buckley predicted that Mobile would serve as a model for the rest of the state for its willingness to co-operate with the Bureau and for its adoption of postwar definition of education. He wrote: "Besides your example will hasten the day when an efficient system of public instruction shall be provided for every child of the State."⁴⁴

This enthusiasm of the Board's alliance request set the tone for Buckley's correspondence to the Sub-Assistant Commissioner as well as his annual report, which was published prior to the state constitutional convention. He proclaimed in his second annual report: "The city of Mobile has already taken a long step in this direction. To efforts already put forth for the education and the elevation of the colored race must be ascribed this gratifying change in the public mind." After providing a synopsis of the correspondence

⁴⁴ C. W. Buckley, Entry of Letter to C. S. Bradford, Secretary Mobile County School Board, August 9, 1867, Register of Letters Sent, stamped page 102, Letters Sent, vol. 1, November 30, 1866-January 27, 1868, microfilm roll 1, AL-BRFAL-ED.

generated by Bradford's initial August 1867 letter, Buckley strongly argued: "There is some ground of hope then for the option that the state is willing to accept and support a system of common schools..." He further expounded that the new system would have as "its foundation upon the principle now almost universally recognized that it is the primary duty of every community to provide ample means of instruction for every child within its borders..." From this correspondence, it is evident that Buckley's elation was genuine. This alliance request cemented the manifestation of the Bureau's educational goals for Mobile, the state, and the entire region. Buckley's bold prediction regarding the Board-Bureau alliance set the tone for the November 1867 constitutional convention and the relationship between the School Board and the Freedmen's Bureau in the transition to public schools.⁴⁵

As Buckley predicted, Mobile served as the model for Alabama. The delegates from Mobile and Bureau educational officials led the campaign for a state school system at the constitutional convention. As the convention and ratification debate progressed, Buckley resigned. His successors continued the negotiations. The Freedmen's Bureau and the school board eventually cemented the details of their partnership. In his annual report, R. D. Harper, State Superintendent of Education for the Bureau, alluded to the successful partnership's transformative power on the state level in his annual report. In noting the successes in both Mobile and the state, Harper remarked: "The future is hopeful. The State, the Bureau, and Northern Associations are now combining their power and concentrating their efforts for the education and elevation of the colored race." Harper then suggested an illustrious future for public education: "Ten years hence the great mass of children of the State will have received a common school education, fitting them for the responsibilities devolving upon them and for

⁴⁵ C.W. Buckley, Second Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education, October 1867, 2-3 [handwritten pages], Reports Sent Annual, 1866-1868, microfilm roll 1, AL-BRFAL-ED.

acting will their part in all, the relations of life.”⁴⁶ Harper’s annual report and correspondence with local officials, the American Missionary Association and Bureau officials also illustrated the cooperation in the transition toward public schools with legislation and updates of progress. The school board-Bureau partnership, the new state constitution, and the failed ratification campaign further pushed the conservatives’ to the periphery and elevated the vision of moderate whites in Mobile.⁴⁷

According to the terms of the partnership, the Bureau relinquished direct control of all its schools. The organization pledged financial support for the erection of new schoolhouses and for paying rent on the existing schoolhouses. The American Missionary Association and other Northern missionary associations agreed to supply the state with qualified teachers. They were not required to relinquish any of their schools though. The state agreed to pay the teachers with monies from the state education fund via the local school boards. The partnership went into effect on January 1, 1869.⁴⁸

Schools, not affiliated with the American Missionary Association, became encompassed into the local and state educational system. The Stone Street and Zion Schools were the first transferred. Good Shepherd School followed thereafter. St. Peter’s School joined the city system during the fall of 1869. The schools transferred to the Board only provided primary education and did not offer either intermediate or advanced studies. They were located in the heart of the wards’ in which African Americans resided. These schools,

⁴⁶ White, 111; R. D. Harper, Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education to Edwin Beecher, October 1868, 1-2 [handwritten pages], Reports Sent Annual, 1866-1868, microfilm roll 1, AL-BRFAL-ED.

⁴⁷ R. D. Harper to Major General O. O. Howard, October 9, 1868, Letters Sent Ledger, stamped page 98, Press Copies of Letters Sent, September 1868-July 1870, microfilm roll 1, ALBRFAL-ED; R. D. Harper to Edwin Beecher, October 19, 1868, Press Copies of Letters Sent, September 1868-July 1870, microfilm roll 1, ALBRFAL-ED.

⁴⁸ R. D. Harper to the American Missionary Association, circular letter, September 1, 1868, microfilm roll 1, AMA Papers, Alabama.

moreover, had operated independently of Northern benevolent societies either in private homes or the various African American denominational churches. They were either fully self-sufficient or partially funded by the Bureau. The lack of Northern affiliation facilitated the ease of transfer.⁴⁹

It is difficult to ascertain whether this transfer greatly impacted the classroom activities, but one significant consequence occurred. School enrollment increased. On average, approximately 605 students per month attended the Freedmen's Schools and the Creole School prior to the new city school system from 1865 to 1868. By the end of the 1868-1869 scholastic year in June, 919 African American and Creole of Color children attended the public schools. Officials deemed the transfer a success as evidenced by Dr. Barnes Sears' annual Peabody Educational Fund report. Quoting heavily from a progress report made by the Mobile School Board dated September 14, 1869, Dr. Sears reported: "More than half of the pupils under instruction in the schools were free. All the scholars of the primary grade, which embraced the entire number of colored children, were taught free of charge for tuition." As the initial Bradford inquiry requested, the Mobile County School Board expanded the city's primary schools to include all classes and racial groups--- whites, Creoles, and African Americans. Additional funding from the Peabody Education Fund and other sources permitted the expansion to intermediate grades as well. Thus, a more moderate

⁴⁹ The January 1869 monthly reported listed Mobile city as the sole sponsor of the schools. This was the last report submitted for the Mobile Freedmen's Schools, with exception of the Emerson Institute. The 1869 city directory also includes for the first time colored schools as part of the Mobile city public school system. The Stone Street and Zion Schools officially transferred in time for the 1869 directory. The 1870 city directory reflects the completion of the transfer and Bureau-Board alliance. See "Sub-Assistant Commissioner's (or Agent's) Monthly Report, January 1869," Monthly and Other Reports, Alabama, Sept. 1865-June 1870, microfilm roll 15, BRFAL-ED; Mobile City Directory for 1869, 21 and Mobile City Directory for 1870, 284.

white citizenry's vision for Mobile's African American education proved victorious in the transition to public schools.⁵⁰

Internal class and social divisions shaped the African American community's responses to the convention, new educational mandates, and transition to public schools. Initially, reservation and mistrust characterized the political debates in the African American and Creole communities. Class sharply divided both communities. Middle class and elite African Americans and Creoles feared that public education would lower the quality of education for their children. Prior to the creation of African American public schools, these individuals relied upon the private school system. Unlike the city operated Creole School, the private school system often had Creole and African American children educated in the same classroom. The incorporation of several private schools into the public school system under the Bureau-Board alliance heightened this fear. These individuals, primary Creole, middle class and elite African Americans, would advocate the continuation of a tuition-based system. Working class and poor African Americans feared that the schools would be dominated by the elites and ultimately access for their children would be denied. Creoles wanted the continuation of the Creole School in order to maintain their children's separation from poor and working class African Americans. Reassurances that class differences would not impact access to the public schools, that the Creole School could continue, and that

⁵⁰Willis G. Clark, *History of Education in Alabama, 1702-1889* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889), 271; Peabody Education Fund, *Proceedings of the Trustees Meeting, Held at Washington, 15 February 1870* (Cambridge: Press of John Wilson and Son, 1870), 45 in File 1, Box 11, Peabody Education Fund Collection, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN. George Peabody, of Danvers, Massachusetts, was convinced that only a better standard of education would help solve the problems confronting the postwar South and build up a new and viable society. He established the Peabody Education Fund after the Civil War to "encourage the intellectual, moral, and industrial education of the destitute children of the Southern States." Upon his death, a board of trustees distributed the monies for public education and sponsored the training of teachers throughout the South. This fund had a tremendous impact on the region's financial ability to fund public schools from 1867 to 1898.

private schools could coexist with public schools permitted some acceptance of the new state educational mandates. The conservative white ratification campaign, however, made a significant difference. Overcoming internal divisions in the black and Creole communities and the development of a unified political strategy would save African American and even Creole education. While the political turmoil sometimes penetrated the classroom, a feeling of fulfillment of an educational vision permeated within the schools. The responses, inside and outside of the Freedmen's Schools, profoundly shaped the transition to public schools.

The press proved instrumental in unifying and encouraging cooperation between the Creole and African American communities. The *Nationalist* acted as an important organ for these debates. The newspaper sought to minimize class divisions among African Americans and Creoles in order to secure their approval for the convention and during the ratification process. Albert Griffin, the *Nationalist* editor, appealed to the communities prior to the convention by guaranteeing that the new constitution would include provisions for a public school system. Griffin addressed several of the pre-convention charges made by African American and Creole critics in regards to African American education. For instance, a letter to the editor leveled four charges against the newspaper. First, it argued that the newspaper did not advocate for the creation of public schools. Second, the newspaper wanted the schools, if created, to maintain class distinctions between Creole elites and non-elites. Third, the newspaper's editor would restore antebellum school commissioners under the new constitution. Fourth, the newspaper advocated separate schools and the continued racial discrimination in the city. Griffin refuted all of these charges and attempted to diminish the class factionalism. First, he argued that the newspaper fully supported public schools. Second, he argued that the new school boards would be filled with black and white

Republicans rather than Democrats. Lastly, he argued that parents, rather than the convention, would decide upon the separate school debate. He felt that parents would vote for the constitution and public schools if the constitution did not make class and racial distinctions. The newspaper published a barrage of articles and editorials dismissing these charges during its coverage of the convention and pre-ratification election. The *Nationalist* actively pursued the Creole and African American communities for their support of the new constitution.⁵¹

The newspaper then appealed to the white community for their electoral support in the ratification of the new constitution. Griffin stressed that the new educational system was a necessity for the state and did not “require both races to attend the same schools.” He also defined the racial boundaries of whiteness and blackness for the schools. He wrote: “Children *seven-eighths* white would be excluded from the black schools as white persons...[and] that in many instances the pure whites would object to their attending their schools.” Therefore, mulatto children and Creoles would not attend the same schools as white children. The newspaper’s appeal to the white community reflected the concern that African American electoral power was not sufficient alone to achieve the necessary votes for ratification. The efforts, however, were not enough. Opponents successfully blocked ratification. In blocking ratification, the white community prevented the creation of state-funded public schools.⁵²

White conservatives’ triumph during the initial ratification election forced a change in tactics as well as reception. After the failure to ratify, the *Nationalist* devoted its attentions to alleviate the internal divisions within the African American community. The newspaper felt

⁵¹ Albert Griffin, “The School Question,” *Nationalist*, October 3, 1867, 2; Cantrell, 58-60.

⁵² Cantrell, 6-7; Albert Griffin, “Address to the White People of Alabama,” *Nationalist*, January 28, 1868, 3.

that their Republican allies in Congress would approve the constitution and allow Alabama's readmission without convening another convention. Thus, the newspaper devoted little coverage to the subsequent ratification debate. The strength of the white conservatives' hegemony provoked the necessity of unity in order to have African American education and other postwar gains remain a reality.⁵³

Now, the African American and Creole communities proved receptive to the *Nationalist's* and Republican's vision for inclusivity in the state-funded public schools. Fear of conservative whites' regaining political saliency and power motivated many. Unity between and within the respective communities would prevent the overturning of Reconstruction gains as conservative Southern white Democrats regained political power. Intimidation, violence, and other extralegal measures had allowed for the restoration of Democratic Party rule and failure in the ratification election. In an open letter to Mayor Caleb Price, several members of the African American and Creole elite appealed to the white community to lessen the violence against African Americans and Republicans during the Congressional ratification debate and 1868 elections. The violent restoration attempts threatened the new educational mandates and constitution. This threat made unity a pressing need as a strategy against the aggressive political adversaries. Solidarity, as historian Michael Fitzgerald demonstrated, allowed for previous factionalism to cease in the educational and political advancements in the city. The willingness to put aside class and color differences, Fitzgerald concluded, proved to be an effective strategy for the next two decades. Although

⁵³ Alpha, "What's Next," *Nationalist*, February 27, 1868, 2; Cantrell, 64-68.

social divisions still existed, the once prevalent Creole and African American divide was minimized in the political realm shortly after the ratification debate.⁵⁴

Inside the classroom, on the other hand, participants in the Freedmen's Schools responded with hope toward the convention and new constitution. The creation of state and city educational systems validated their postwar educational efforts and their definition of citizenship in postwar Mobile. Although a coincidental school closing occurred during the convention as a result of a yellow fever epidemic, the students continued enthusiasm for education during the ratification debates. Attendance remained with approximately 400 to 780 students during the first half of the 1868-1869 scholastic year. Overall, the Freedmen's Schools thrived before the official transfer. Teachers' reports continued to praise the students' enthusiasm for education and expressed optimism for the newly created state and county public school systems.⁵⁵

The creation of public schools neither deterred African Americans nor Creoles from opening and maintaining independent schools in Mobile. As in Richmond, private schools began addressing the needs of African American orphans. For instance, the Colored Orphan School opened a few months prior to the January 1869 transfer. Sustained by the aid of the Tuscaloosa Scientific and Art Association and the Order of Love Charity, the school promised to be "a first-class school, where poor colored children can be educated free of charge." Leading African American and Creole citizens managed the school. The school administration and trustees board included Reverend Richard Butler, James Thomas, John

⁵⁴ L. S. Berry, R. D. Wiggins, John Bryant, John Carraway, and James Bragg, "Protest of the Colored People," *Nationalist* (Mobile), September 5, 1868, 2-3; Fitzgerald, 128-131. Socially, the African American and Creole communities remained divided in church affiliations, social organizations like the Creole Fire Company, and schools. Separate schools for Creole and African American children were maintained and accepted by both communities after this political truce.

⁵⁵ Monthly Superintendent of Education Reports, July 1867-July 1868, microfilm roll 15, BRFAL-ED.

Carraway, Henry Austin, B. H. Tucker, Miss Carrie Burshell, Frances Lee, Alabama Taylor and Ceanna Preston. The school employed one teacher and an assistant who educated the children excluded due to their poverty from the public schools. The school provided another alternative for African American education until the free school system inclusion of orphans became a reality. It also reinforced to African Americans and Creoles that public education could coexist with a private tuition based system. Parents had a choice in deciding upon the appropriate option for their children. Both options still permitted the fulfillment of an African American communal desire to become an educated people, allowed for Creoles to maintain their heritage through education, and alleviated the internal divisions between and within the Creole and African American communities.⁵⁶

The American Missionary Association initially viewed the constitutional convention and new state commitment toward African American education with a continued optimism and hoped for a peaceful resolution during the ratification crisis. While African Americans and the Freedmen's Bureau contributed some monies, the American Missionary Association successfully purchased property, remodeled and erected buildings, and opened Emerson Institute for African American children during the convention proceedings. The organization hoped that Emerson Institute would replace some of the deteriorating Freedmen's Schools and place the public schools on a firmer foundation after they were transferred to the city system. Centrally located in the city's former Medical College, Emerson Institute quickly became the crowning jewel of the organization's and Bureau's educational efforts in Mobile. Bvt. General James Gillette noted the immediate respect received by the school within the entire community, white and black. He commented in a monthly report that "[t]he purchase

⁵⁶ "Colored Orphan School," *The Nationalist*, October 25, 1868, 2, column 5 in *Transcriptions of The Nationalist* (1938), Mobile Municipal Archives, Mobile, AL.

of Emerson College lately by the Gov't and the American Miss. Association and its dedication to Public Schools has placed the colored school enterprise upon a basis that commands the respect of the community." Later in the same report, Gillette remarked upon Emerson Institute's transformative effects upon popular attitudes pertaining to African American public schools. With the school's opening, Gillette noted that the "community of Mobile has lately given expression of approval to efforts towards educating the ignorant; poor of all classes, and none speak openly against educating the negro now where much bitterness was manifested a year ago." From its inception as an American Missionary Association school, Emerson Institute enhanced the quality of African American education in Mobile. The school offered primary, intermediate, and advanced instruction in a multi-leveled structure and had a separate teachers' home on-site. By late April 1868, the American Missionary Association as well as Freedmen's Bureau considered the school to be a "judicious investment," and found conditions inside the school encouraging. Owing to the immediate success of Emerson Institute and the ratification debate, the organization kept an increasingly skeptical, yet still hopeful, eye to the city's and state political developments.⁵⁷

The embittered ratification debate, though, made some American Missionary Association officials question the future of African American education in Mobile. As the ratification debate prolonged, the organization became increasingly uneasy about transferring Emerson Institute to either the Mobile school board or the State due to the political actions of white conservatives. Emerson Institute's newness and the organization's financial investment in the school made the American Missionary Association demand a continued role in the

⁵⁷ W. M. Bush, Monthly Report for the State of Alabama for February 1868, Monthly and Other Reports, Alabama, Sept. 1865-June 1870, microfilm roll 15, BRFAL-ED; R. D. Harper, Monthly Report for the State of Alabama for April 1868 to Major General O. O. Howard, May 1, 1868, Monthly and Other Reports, Alabama, Sept. 1865-June 1870, microfilm roll 15, BRFAL-ED.

school's operations while trying to work within the changing nature of African American education in the state. They achieved this by securing several school board positions for local American Missionary Association administrators and trusted white and African American allies. They also sought alliances with state educational officials in order to deal with any potential threats. Yet, the organization still hoped that the ratification crisis would end in their favor and African American education would prevail.⁵⁸

Amidst the unstable political arena, American Missionary Association educators still maintained optimism as classroom activities thrived. Sara G. Stanley, an African American educator at Emerson Institute, discussed the students' continued desire for acquiring an education in a letter published in the *Nationalist*. Stanley wrote: "The enthusiasm of the children themselves was unbounded. They rushed into the building [the new school at Medical College] and around it as if they had at last come into their inheritance and meant to enjoy it to the fullest." Stanley felt as if her "heart was swelling with thanksgiving for God's mercy in changing the dark past of slavery to the luminous present." She, like other American Missionary Association educators, believed the continued enthusiasm and success of their educational efforts would permit the eventual resolution of the political crisis regarding the new state educational mandates.⁵⁹

The "changing of the dark past of slavery" through the creation of public schools, however, never changed the racial attitudes of some white American Missionary Association

⁵⁸ Correspondence regarding the purchase of Emerson Institute include George L. Putnam to Jacob R. Shipherd, copy, October 28, 1868, microfilm roll 1, AMA Papers, Alabama; Jacob R. Shipherd to Mother Whiting, January 7, 1868, microfilm roll 1, AMA Papers, Alabama; George L. Putnam to Edwin P. Smith, January 8, 1868, microfilm roll 1, AMA Papers, Alabama; General reflections of the school's success and early newspaper coverage of the school, see Sara G. Stanley, "Colored Schools of Mobile," *Nationalist*, March 26, 1868, 2 and "Mobile College," *Nationalist*, April 30, 1868, 2; Fitzgerald, 127.

⁵⁹ Stanley, "Colored Schools," 2.

teachers toward other African American teachers. As Stanley experienced her heart “swelling with thanksgiving” from her students at Emerson Institute, she continued to combat racism from her fellow teachers. Stanley’s interracial marriage to Charles A. Woodward illustrated the lack of change. Stanley was the light-complexioned African American daughter of free blacks. Her father, John Stuart Stanley, was a merchant and her mother, Frances Griffith Stanley, was a teacher in New Bern, North Carolina. Although she could pass for white, Stanley acknowledged her African American heritage and remained a part of the “colored social circle.” She attended Oberlin College during the mid-1850s. She taught in several Northern school systems prior to teaching former slaves in 1864. She served as an American Missionary Association educator in Norfolk, Virginia, St. Louis, Missouri, and Louisville, Kentucky before going to Mobile in 1868. Prior to moving to Mobile, she vehemently fought racism encountered with white American Missionary Association teachers and local whites and was quite outspoken in her beliefs. Refusing to accept racial norms, Sara G. Stanley accepted the marriage proposal of Charles A. Woodward, a younger white man who worked in the Freedman’s Savings Bank in Mobile.⁶⁰

Her pending marriage outraged George Putnam, the American Missionary Association’s Superintendent of Schools for Mobile. Putnam refused to allow her to get married at the missionary home. He felt that her defiance of racial norms would cause irreconcilable damage to the organization’s educational and missionary efforts in Mobile and the state. Local opposition often drew upon white fears of miscegenation in their opposition of African American education. Putnam felt that her proposed interracial marriage could have been used as evidence by those still opposed to the notion of African American public

⁶⁰ Ellen NicKenzie Lawson and Marlene D. Merrill, *The Three Sarahs: Documents of Antebellum Black College Women* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1994), 48-50; 54-61.

schools. Stanley provided an account of her conversation with Putnam in a letter to Reverend Jacob R. Shipherd, American Missionary Association executive. Stanley recounted Putnam stating that she “‘cannot be married at this house’ (as I very innocently suppose it to be the only proper place here, where a teacher should be married) and ‘that if such marriage is allowed to take place he will immediately resign.’” Putnam feared that white anxieties of miscegenation would impede the organization’s efforts of having white citizens accept African American public schools and African American education as legitimate. As a result, he did not want Stanley’s marriage to destroy the organization’s educational efforts in Mobile. Stanley believed that her “quiet and unostentatious marriage” would not create the scandal imagined by Putnam. She argued that Putnam’s refusal to allow her marriage in the missionary home had unduly compromised her reputation and caused injury in which she refused to “skulk away as if I were committing a crime.” In another letter, Stanley demonstrated that Putnam’s fears were unjustified. James A. Summerville and other African American leaders pledged their support of Stanley’s marriage and their refusal to discuss Putnam’s comments on the subject, if asked by others. As a result, Mobile’s white community remained ignorant of Stanley’s marriage plans. Although Stanley pledged to marry Woodward regardless of the potential scandal or official American Missionary Association support, she eventually received their support and got married. She remained a teacher at the Emerson Institute after her marriage until 1870 when she left the school for a position as principal in the St. Louis School. She served as the St. Louis School’s principal during the first years of the public school system before leaving Mobile with her husband in 1874. The episode further emphasized the successes and limitations of the creation of African

American public schools in changing racial attitudes and the continued struggles endured by the African American participants.⁶¹

In January 1869, the Board-Bureau alliance and the American Missionary Association had achieved relatively suitable arrangements for the African American schools. While the American Missionary Association retained control over the daily operations of Emerson Institute, the organization had secured one of its agents and other friends on the newly appointed Republican dominated school board for Mobile. Optimism reigned. These sentiments quickly turned to turmoil as two school boards representing the old and new political regimes competed for power and legitimacy. This struggle threatened the new public school system and had the potential to end the progress made in African American education. The crisis resurrected debates over education first echoed during the state constitutional convention and ratification process and divided the white, Creole, and African American communities. The fate of African American schools rested upon the strength of the alliances formed by African Americans and their white allies and their ability to broker a suitable resolution.

The Bureau-Board alliance quickly broke down as two school boards vied for control over Mobile County Schools and their state appropriations. The “Old” school board consisted of white conservatives, members of the antebellum school board, and individuals appointed under Mayor Gustavus W. Horton’s administration. The following individuals comprised the “old” school board: Willis G. Clark, A. G. Horton, James Baird, F. G. Bromberg, J. Carter, R. W. Coale, A. M. Granger, Charles Mohr, Albert Steine, R. L. Watkins and A. H. Ryland.

⁶¹For select correspondence of the marriage debate, see Sara G. Stanley to Jacob R. Shipherd, April 6, 1868, Sara G. Stanley to Jacob R. Shipherd, May 2, 1868, and Jacob R. Shipherd to George L. Putnam, May 7, 1868, microfilm roll 1, AMA Papers, Alabama; Lawson and Merrill, 61-63; Stanley appears in the 1871, 1873 and 1874 Mobile city directories under the name “S. S. Woodward” and is the principal for the St. Louis School. After a scandal involving her husband and the Freedmen’s Saving Bank, she leaves the city permanently.

Due to the Republican Party gains in the city and state, the Republican administration appointed new school board members. The old board, though, refused to leave office at the end of their scheduled terms and claimed the title as the legitimate board. Acting against state law, the board still collected taxes, disbursed the monies to the Mobile schools, and charged tuition in the African American schools. The “new” school board consisted of white and African American Republicans, former Bureau agents, and individuals actively involved in Mobile’s Reconstruction process. Reverend George Putnam, agent for the American Missionary Association, spearheaded the new board’s administration and acted as its Superintendent of Mobile County Schools. This board also claimed legitimacy. As the duly appointed board by the Republican administration, the “new” board denounced the actions of the “old” board. As both school boards considered themselves to be the legitimate government agency, a peaceful and timely resolution was not possible.⁶²

Dr. N. B. Cloud, Superintendent of Public Instruction for Alabama, attempted arbitration and brokered a compromise accepted by both boards and the American Missionary Association. The compromise mandated George Putnam’s appointment as the Superintendent of Colored Schools and that his orders and directions came directly from the Board of School Commissioners. Second, the compromise mandated the retention and certification of the American Missionary Association teachers and principals in the county school system. Third, Emerson Institute remained under American Missionary Association control and the Board of School Commissioners oversaw the school’s general management. The old and new Board of School Commissioners, state Superintendent of Public Instruction

⁶² N. B. Cloud, “Official Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction on the Troubles in the Mobile Free Public Schools,” in Alabama. State Board of Education, *Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Alabama to the Governor for the Year 1868-9 ending 30 September 1869* (Montgomery: John G. Stokes and Company, State Printers, 1869), 35-36.

and the American Missionary Association agreed to the terms. N. B. Cloud sent notification of the compromise through the *Nationalist*. Cloud assured the community that African American public schools were “ENTIRELY FREE, at which all the children of the City and County within the School ages ‘may go free of charge.’” By stating the schools were entirely free, Cloud reassured poorer African Americans that the tuition charged by the old board was no longer official policy. Led by A. Ryland, the old board agreed to the compromise but never fulfilled the terms. The old board actions resulted in the removal of their commissions by Dr. Cloud as school board commissioners for violating the Alabama school law in June 1869. Following their removal from office, the old school board members brought a series of lawsuits against the State and city of Mobile.⁶³

In a campaign of words and lawsuits, both boards jockeyed for control of the schools. The old board leveled slanderous attacks against Putnam and his administration in the city newspapers. Gustavus Horton, former city mayor, previously supported the American-Missionary Association-Bureau-city partnership in African American education prior to the school board debate. During the debate, he renounced his previous ties and endorsed the old board in letters to the *Congregationalist*, an American Missionary Association sponsored publication. The old board also flooded the American Missionary Association’s New York headquarters and local Bureau office with letters and petitions questioning Putnam’s character and suitability for government office. These letters openly challenged the organization’s support of the new Board as the legitimate agency. Major James Gillette, local Bureau agent, proved ineffective in finding a suitable resolution for all parties. The Freedmen’s Bureau adopted a policy that relied upon the court system to rectify the situation

⁶³ Ibid., 37, 39-47; N. B. Cloud, “Public School Notice,” May 21, 1869, 3, column 4 in *Transcriptions of the Nationalist, 1868-1869*, Mobile Municipal Archives, Mobile, AL.

as a means to “harmonize and avoid conflict of people engaged in the same work.” Putnam responded to some of the attacks to American Missionary Association executives but limited his time toward the court cases waged in the local and state courts. In October 1869, Judge Elliot offered a resolution in favor of the new board, but the old board continued its legal challenge until 1870 by appealing the Elliot decision. The *Mobile Daily Republican* also addressed rumors spread by the old board after the Elliot decision. In a published article, editors proclaimed: “It is claimed that certain Republicans of Mobile are opposed to Free Schools. This is false.” The article concluded: “The Republicans of Mobile are unanimous in their desire to have the free school in successful operation.” The rumors, lawsuits, and the public rebukes reflected the polarized nature of the debate.⁶⁴

This battle prompted a major crisis in the city’s newly created African American public schools. State funds appropriated for Mobile schools were in limbo as only board officials could access the Alabama Educational Fund. State and city funds for teacher’s salaries, school materials, and school furniture temporarily ceased for over a year in the African American schools. Teachers and administrators went unpaid. Moreover, the chain of command between teachers, administrators, and school board officials were confused. It was unclear to whom teachers and administrators should give their reports to or even their allegiance. Should they support the old or new school boards? The school board crisis offered no solution. W. Irving Squire’s letter to E. P. Smith expressed the frustration and

⁶⁴ Gustavus W. Horton to E. P. Smith, July 31, 1867, microfilm roll 1, AMA Papers, Alabama; Gustavus W. Horton to the Editors of the *Congregationalist*, September 10, 1870, microfilm roll 1, AMA Papers, Alabama; James Gillette to E. P. Smith, March 16, 1869, microfilm roll 1, AMA Papers, Alabama; Putnam’s responses to attacks, see George L. Putnam to E. P. Smith, May 29, 1869, Putnam to E. P. Smith, September 14, 1869, and Putnam to E. P. Smith, July 14, 1870, microfilm roll 1, AMA Papers, Alabama; A Republican, “The School Question and the Legislature,” *The Nationalist*, October 11, 1869, 1, columns 1 and 3 in *Transcriptions of The Nationalist*, Mobile Municipal Archives; *Mobile Daily Republican*, October 31, 1870, 2, column 3 in *Transcriptions of the Mobile Daily Republican, 1870-1872*, Mobile Municipal Archives, Mobile, Alabama.

uncertainty endured by the teachers amidst the crisis. The African American educator commented that the “teachers, some of them, are getting impatient.”⁶⁵

The situation equally divided the African American and Creole communities. Many, especially of the working and lower classes, feared repercussions from either board if one proved successful. They specifically feared that the promise of free schools would be replaced by the pay schools as suggested by the “Old” board tuition policy. These parents often supported the “New” board. Elite African Americans and Creoles who feared that public education would lower the quality of education for their children unless tuition was charged often pledged support for the Old board. Quality rather than accessibility was a longstanding concern of middle class and elite African Americans and Creoles. The ratification crisis led to the tempering of this concern for the sake of unity but the school board crisis resurrected it. Unlike in the ratification debate, the *Nationalist* maintained neutrality and drew the wrath of several members of the communities for its position on the school board question. In a letter to the editor, “Earle” questioned that paper’s position and stressed upholding the law and new state constitutional provisions. He stated that the old school board openly defied the “provisions of the constitution of Alabama.” He further commented: “If the Republican government of Alabama is to be made subservient to the county regulations, established when the country was cursed with the sin of slavery, and the legislators had not learned the A B C of Christianity and Freedom, we had as well concede to any locality the privilege of reviving what portion of the old law it pleases---slave code included.” The letter concluded that regardless of what “personal preferences may be for the members of either Board,” the precedent of trampling the law for “private ends” should not

⁶⁵ W. Irving Squire to E. P. Smith, February 21, 1869, microfilm roll 1, AMA Papers, Alabama.

be established. Overall, the African American and Creole communities waited with bated breath as evident in an unsigned *Nationalist* article: “We shall see what we shall see.” After a tense year and a half, the New Board gained legitimacy from Alabama State Supreme Court and African American education survived this major challenge.⁶⁶

The school board crisis and a court challenge from the old school board convinced the American Missionary Association not to immediately relinquish control over Emerson Institute as once hoped. This decision would have lasting consequences in African American education after 1870. Fearful over the future of African American education, the organization retained control of the school for several reasons. First, the organization contributed the majority of the monies for its construction and operations. Second, in the negotiations between the organization, the Bureau, and the African American communities, the parties agreed that the American Missionary Association would retain control over the school until the African American community could fully sustain and operate the school. At that time, according to the agreement, the organization would relinquish control and ownership. Thus, Emerson Institute remained outside of the school board’s domain. The school board challenged the organization’s possession of the school. Initial challenges began with undermining the American Missionary Association’s authority with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction but Dr. Cloud was not persuaded. Then the board initiated legal action but the courts denied their legitimacy. The failed court challenges allowed the school to

⁶⁶ Cloud, “Troubles in Mobile, 36; Earle, “The School Commissioners,” *The Nationalist*, October 4, 1869, 2, column 2 in *Transcriptions of the Nationalist*, Mobile Municipal Archives; “The School Muddle-The Big Gun Fire,” *The Nationalist*, October 1, 1869, 2, column 2 in *Transcriptions of the Nationalist*, Mobile Municipal Archives.

retain Bureau protection and support. The school's existence also justified the Bureau's continued presence in the city until its official closure in 1870.⁶⁷

Emerson Institute's independence afforded the school a unique position in the city. It was not a public school nor was it completely a private school. Its size, location, and prestige made it a wanted possession for the Board of School Commissioners for Mobile County. The organization would continue to make attempts to bring the school into its domain. Most importantly, the school would provide an alternative and affordable option for African American parents and children seeking an education other than the traditional public and private school systems after 1870.

The school board challenge also had financial repercussions. The Peabody Education Fund suspended its financial support of the Mobile schools. The organization viewed the litigation and the entire affair with disdain. Dr. Sears reported in his annual Peabody Education Fund report: "In Mobile, there has been a litigation about the jurisdiction of the State and city officers, which has had the effect to nullify the agreement previously made by us with the city School Board..." Dr. Sears deemed that future financial support, if reinstated, was contingent upon reapplication and a stable city as well as state administrative structure "to renew engagement." The loss of an important financial source placed the new free schools for African Americans in an unfavorable position.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ For promises made, see George Tracey to C. W. Buckley, January 24, 1867 and George Tracey to C. W. Buckley, March 22, 1867, Unregistered Letters, December 1865-July 1870, microfilm roll 3, AL-BRFAL-ED; Cloud, 39-47; George L. Putnam to E. P. Smith, September 14, 1869, October 4, 1869, and July 14, 1870, microfilm roll 1, AMA Papers, Alabama; Emerson Institute continued filing reports to the Bureau until the agency ceased operations. This continued partnership awarded the school federal protection.

⁶⁸ Peabody Education Fund, *Proceedings of the Trustees Meeting, Held at Philadelphia, 15 February 1871* (Cambridge: Press of John Wilson and Son, 1870), 34, file 2, box 11, Peabody Education Fund Collection, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN.

As the Freedmen's Bureau officially departed Mobile and the state in July 1870, the situation seemed bleak for African American education. The partial transfer of the Freedmen's Schools and the school board crisis produced major power struggles. The political instability sometimes entered the classroom and had the potential of destroying the new system. Funding concerns remained unresolved. Public schools for African Americans barely survived these early obstacles and entered the 1870s on a less than firm foundation. Power struggles over the operation of the new schools between the Board of Education, African American parents, and the American Missionary Association continued during the initial years of the public schools. Furthermore, the role of Emerson Institute's independence in the new struggles remained unclear. However, it was clear that the African American and Creole communities would continue to fight for education and employ all resources at their disposal. Emerson Institute's independence would serve as an important tool in their fight for teachers, better schools, and better conditions from 1870 to 1890. During this period, Emerson Institute became an effective political tool in their negotiations with the school board and made the continuation of African American education possible after the demise of the Freedmen's Schools.

Conclusion

The Reconstruction Acts of 1867 and the new state constitutions ushered in major changes in Southern education, white and black. The newly adopted state constitutions provided provisions for a tax-funded educational system for all school-aged children regardless of race and created a more precise link between education and citizenship. As a state right, the reconstructed states now had the obligation to provide a public educational system to all of its citizens, white and black. Although it took some time to design and

implement the official state system, the embrace of postwar notions of education and citizenship had broad consequences on the local level.

Acceptance of the postwar notions of African American education and citizenship did not occur immediately in Richmond and Mobile. It was a gradual process. Influenced by local conditions and constraints, Richmond and Mobile shared different experiences in the transition to public schools. The diverse experiences prevent any of these cities from being a model for understanding the local implementation of state and federal mandates. Gradual acceptance and negotiation with the partners in the Freedmen's Schools by the white community characterized Richmond's transition. During the transition period, the alliances formed by African Americans in the city expanded to include state and local officials. These new partnerships would give the public schools a firm foundation for the next twenty years. In Mobile, intense white resistance prompted the elimination of class differences within the African American community and improved African American and Creole relations during the convention and ratification process. The school board crisis threatened the existence of the newly created African American public schools. It tested existing relationships between African Americans, the Freedmen's Bureau and American Missionary Association. These relationships proved ineffective in this crisis. African Americans and their allies drew upon their relationship with state officials in order to bring a resolution to the challenge. Although a resolution was eventually reached, white opposition did not cease. Public schools emerged on a shaky foundation. African Americans and their supporters would continue to struggle against it over the next twenty years. As these cities demonstrate, local conditions and responses mediated the impact of federal and state forces. Each found alternative pathways toward public schools and the demise of the Freedmen's Schools. Without understanding

these local processes, it is impossible to fully understand the variations produced by similar conditions.

These varied experiences influenced not only the transition, but also the initial years of the public schools. Rather than signaling its demise, the new state educational mandates ushered in a new phase of African American education. The constitutions also resulted in four specific changes in African American education. First, they created new social, political, and economic opportunities for urban Southern whites and African Americans. Second, they established the state and local Boards of Education as new partners in the educational efforts. Third, they made the federal government old friends whom states could call upon if problems arose. Fourth, new challenges involved in the implementation of a new system emerged, such as the lack of teachers, funding, and defining the exact nature of the new partnerships. Within each of these significant changes, local possibilities and constraints defined the African American community's ongoing struggles for educational access and legitimacy during the post-Freedmen's Schools period. The remaining chapters will focus upon these changes in greater detail.

CHAPTER III

REDEFINING USEFULNESS IN RICHMOND AND MOBILE: THE CREATION OF A CORPS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS

At a reunion of Richmond Colored Normal graduates in the 1880s, John Mitchell, Jr. reminisced with fellow alumni about their time at the school. The *Richmond Planet* editor and former educator recalled daily fights between the white students of the Central High School and the African American students of Richmond Colored Normal. Wendell Phillip Dabney, a Richmond public school educator who graduated two years after Mitchell in 1883, disagreed on whether the afternoon fights and rock-throwing had any racial enmity. They could agree, though, upon the benefits received at the school. As the discussion moved from the fights to the quality of education received at Richmond Colored Normal, Daniel Webster Davis, class of 1878, delivered a poem whose sentiments Mitchell, Dabney and others in the audience agreed with wholeheartedly. Davis recited:

My name is still cut on the seat by the door,
I am trying to cut it much higher, you know,
But I wonder if fame can e'er give the joy,
I found at old Normal when I was a boy?

The sentiments expressed in Davis's poem and the alumni's reminiscences reflected the shared feeling of debt among the school's graduates. Richmond Colored Normal afforded them many opportunities within and outside the classroom. It helped these predominantly former slaves and children born after the end of slavery to become teachers, administrators and leaders within their communities. However, the school's reunion attended by Mitchell,

Dabney and Davis would not have been possible without the creation of state funded public schools.¹

This chapter seeks to explain how this reunion of African American normal graduates was made possible. Richmond Colored Normal and its counterpart in Mobile, Emerson Normal, represented the cities' response to a crucial question raised by the creation of public schools in the Reconstruction constitutions – Who will teach African American students in the new state system? I argue that the corps of African American teachers emerged from their respective community's interpretation of a useful education for African Americans and educational partnerships formed by African Americans. These teachers, in turn, refashioned their useful education. This refashioning benefited each African American community's struggle for educational access, legitimacy, and racial equality. The resulting corps of well-trained and qualified educators became an essential asset for African Americans and their struggle for African American public education and racial equality in Richmond and Mobile. As a result, they provided the foundation for future struggles by African American educator-activists.²

¹ Ann Field Alexander, *Race Man: The Rise and Fall of the "Fighting Editor," John Mitchell, Jr.* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 13; Richmond (VA) School Board, Sixteenth Annual Report of the Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA., for the scholastic year 1884-5 (Richmond: Walthall and Bowles, Printers, 1886), 32-33, accessed at the Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia; Daniel Webster Davis, "Old Normal," *Idle Moment: Containing Emancipation and Other Poems by D. Webster Davis. With an Introduction by Hon. John H. Smythe* (Baltimore: The Educator of Morgan College, 1895), 37, accessed at Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC. Daniel Webster Davis used his middle name as his principal name to friends, family and colleagues. On occasion, his full name was used. Hence, D. Webster Davis and Daniel Webster Davis will be used interchangeably in the dissertation.

² Historians have discussed the relationship between usefulness and African American education through their examination of the motivations, aims, and early struggles of Northern associations, government officials and African Americans involved in the Freedmen's Schools. See Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), Ronald Butchart, *Northern Teachers, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction: Freedmen Education, 1862-1875* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980); Heather Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

This chapter focuses upon Richmond Colored Normal and Emerson Normal as both complicate traditional narratives of higher education during Reconstruction. Richmond Colored Normal was not the only normal program developed during this period in Richmond or in Virginia. American Missionary Association's Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute and American Baptist Home Mission Society's Richmond Institute also received their beginning as a response to the teacher crisis. These schools' respective graduates comprised the new African American leadership and professional class of educator-activists. Unlike Hampton and Richmond Institute, Richmond Colored Normal lacked a strong Northern missionary association grip over its affairs. Both the American Missionary Association and American Baptist Home Mission Society dominated the administration and Board of Trustees at their respective schools. Richmond Colored Normal's administration and Board of Trustees represented more of a collaborative effort among the African American community, government officials and individual white educational partners in African American education. Moreover, incorporation of the school into the Richmond public school system also loosened any Northern organizational control. As a public institution developed to train African American public school teachers, Richmond Colored Normal offers new insights into postwar African American higher education.³

³ Hampton University has been discussed thoroughly by historians, most notably Luther P. Jackson, "The Origins of Hampton Institute" *Journal of Negro History* 10 (April 1925): 131-149; Robert Francis Eng, *Freedom's First Generation: Black Hampton Virginia, 1861-1890* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), and Robert Francis Eng, *Educating the Disenfranchised and Disinherited: Samuel Chapman Armstrong and Hampton Institute* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999). Historians detailing historically black colleges and universities and the educational efforts of the Baptists have also included discussions of Richmond Institute, presently named Virginia Union University. See Juan Williams and Dwayne Ashley, *I'll Find a Way or Make One* (New York, Amistad, 2001), Henry N. Drewry and Humphrey Doermann, *Stand and Prosper: Private Black Colleges and Their Students* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), American Baptist Home Mission Society, *Baptist Home Missions in North America* (New York, Baptist Home Mission Rooms, 1883), Reverend Charles H. Corey, *A History of the Richmond Theological Seminary, with Reminiscences of Thirty Year's Work Among the Colored People of the South* (Richmond: J. W. Randolph Company, 1895). Scant attention has been paid attention by historians toward Richmond Colored Normal. To date, a monograph detailing the history of the school does not exist.

Likewise, Mobile's solution, Emerson Normal, complicates traditional narratives. The school developed out of black Mobilians' struggle to obtain African American teachers in their public schools and through their continued partnership with the American Missionary Association. Initially, American Missionary Association officials never intended Emerson Normal to become a major institution. Talladega College, a institution in Northern Alabama, held the organization's interest. Emerson Normal became a priority after the insistence of a determined African American community. Their communal determination and partnership with the American Missionary Association eventually led to the development of a public normal school like Richmond Colored Normal. Emerson Normal offers new insights into the necessity of educational partnerships and perseverance in the African American community in order to ensure the future of African American public school education.⁴

Both schools also offer an understanding of the expansion and refinement of educational relationships forged by African Americans in Richmond and Mobile after 1870. These relationships served a critical role in the creation of resources for African American education after the Freedmen's Schools ended. Spurred into action by the creation of public schools, Richmond Colored Normal and Emerson Normal ensured the continuation of educational opportunities for African Americans whether as students, teachers, or administrators in the new system. Outside the classroom, the partnerships expanded beyond the education through the resulting corps of African American teachers. These men and women considered their training as preparation of middle-class leadership. They actively

⁴Like Richmond Institute, historians often discuss the history of Talladega College in single monographs, such as Maxine D. Jones, *Talladega: The First Century* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990). Scholarly works detailing the educational efforts of the American Missionary Association during Reconstruction also include discussions of Emerson Institute and Normal. For instance, see Joe M. Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986). Except for a limited number of pages in scholarly works, a monograph detailing the history of Emerson Normal does not exist.

participated in the period's racial uplift organizations and campaigns. Hence, they tailored their education accordingly. Without the training of African American teachers and the strength of the alliances formed by Africans Americans, state-funded public schools and turn-of-the-century racial uplift activism would have been greatly restricted in Richmond and Mobile.

In short, this chapter seeks to address Richmond Colored Normal and Emerson Normal as the manifestations of Richmond's and Mobile's re-interpretation of a useful education and how the schools' graduates employed their normal education in their communities. For sake of clarity, the chapter is divided into two distinct sections. The first section examines Richmond Colored Normal and its graduates refashioning of their useful education in Richmond, Virginia. The second section focuses upon the development of Emerson Normal and its graduates' employment of the education received. Both sections demonstrate how local circumstances and constraints in Richmond and Mobile shaped the city's response to outside forces. In the conclusion, I bring the narratives together in a discussion of the variations and trends in understanding the development of a corps of African American teachers during Reconstruction.

Richmond Colored Normal: Richmond's Response to the Crisis

Prior to the establishment of Richmond Colored Normal, the Freedmen's School system held the training of African American teachers as a projected goal. Richmond's African American community, Freedmen's Bureau agents, and Northern missionary association officials shared this goal but several approaches existed for making it a reality. African Americans desired the simultaneous training of teachers along with the general primary education of members of the community. Focused primarily on illiterate, newly

freed African Americans, the Freedmen's School system excluded literate and educated African Americans as recipients of a useful education. This resulted in the slow development of advanced level classes. However, the African American community viewed this educated population as useful toward the development of independent schools. Normal training would give these institutions legitimacy and longevity. Normal training would also give the community greater control over the schools and the information disseminated to their children. John W. Cromwell, future editor of the *People's Advocate*, voiced these aims in a letter to the *Anglo-African*, an African American newspaper published in New York City. Cromwell believed that schools "supported by the parents, would thrive better under the management of colored teachers, as many of the missionaries, to say nothing of qualifications, were totally indifferent to the progress of their scholars." Cromwell and others in the African American community reasoned that qualified African American teachers prevented this indifference. Thus, the African American community wanted the simultaneous training of literate and illiterate members of the community. This simultaneous approach would create a class of African Americans capable of instructing and managing a school in accordance with common school pedagogical methods. With trained teachers and administrators from their community, African Americans desired expanding educational opportunities while eliminating indifference experienced from white teachers in Richmond. Their solution involved the development of a normal school in Richmond for the benefit of the Richmond community. This simultaneous and local approach differed greatly from the intentions of some of their white allies.⁵

⁵Hannah E. Stevenson, April 9, 1865 letter, folder 15, box 5, Curtis-Stevenson Family Papers, 1775-1920, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA (MHS); Henry A. Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South: From 1619 to the Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 43; James McPherson, "White

Unlike Richmond's African American community, several white educational partners saw African American education in terms of progressive stages. To their thinking, the fulfillment of prerequisites made progress between stages possible. Teacher training could only occur after the creation of primary schools and the development of a sizeable advanced level primary students. The emergence of advanced students made the progression to teacher training possible. General Orlando Brown, Assistant-Commissioner for Bureau of Freedmen, Refugees, and Abandoned Lands for Virginia, and Reverend G. S. Stockwell expressed this model in their correspondence. Brown emphasized development of teachers would only occur after the creation of the "most promising pupils" selected from the Freedmen's Schools. His solution involved the removal and isolation of the students from their community as the "first condition towards a proper training of these youth to be good teachers of their race." Brown reasoned in his letter to General O. O. Howard for proposing such an establishment: "They have never seen colored people living respectfully by any enlightened standard. The very conception that it is their right and privilege is to live has [sic] never taken possession of their minds. Hence the necessity of removing them from these influences and placing them under such as will develop their higher social and moral qualities." Normal graduates would then educate other African Americans throughout the state, specifically the rural areas. Brown viewed their usefulness as educators outside of Richmond but within Virginia. Rural Virginia needed both schools and qualified teachers to teach African Americans. White hostility, violence, and social ostracism toward white missionaries hindered the spread of schools to the same extent as in the urban centers. Brown and others reasoned that African American teachers would not have same experience as their

Liberals and Black Power in Negro Education, 1865-1915," *American Historical Review* 64, no. 5 (September 1977): 1357; J. W. Cromwell, "Free Labor and Schools in Virginia," *Anglo-African*, September 9, 1865, 2.

white counterparts in rural Virginia. Stockwell similarly viewed the training of African American teachers in terms of stages but had a different rationale for their usefulness. After establishing schools on the outskirts of Richmond and elsewhere, Stockwell felt that the students in “these [normal] schools can be educated with the idea that they have a mission to perform and that Africa is to be the great field for them to cultivate, thousands of them will be ready to go there as teachers and missionaries.” Stockwell viewed the normal graduates’ future role as occurring outside of Richmond and the United States. The “stages model” and possible post-graduate benefits espoused by Brown and Stockwell countered the desires of the African American community. Neither option permitted the simultaneous nor grassroots approach. Nor did either option provide a concrete timetable for transition between stages.⁶

Moreover, the “stages-model” espoused by Brown and Stockwell illuminate some of the underlying racial assumptions of a useful education and the role of African Americans held by white racial moderates. Brown and Stockwell reinforced the assumption that slavery had kept all African Americans ignorant and all needed to be made into useful and productive citizens. Upon receiving an education, African Americans should view elevating their race as their principal duty. Teacher training facilitated this mission. Until the passage of the Reconstruction Acts of 1867, African Americans, according to Brown and Stockwell, had yet to receive the necessary education and moral training. As historian James McPherson has argued, many white administrators, teachers and philanthropists “were slow to believe that the ‘grown-up children’...had matured to a point of readiness for adult responsibilities” of teaching and administrating the schools. Thus, only white Northern teachers were capable

⁶ James Oliver Horton and Lois Horton, “Race, Occupation, and Literacy in Reconstruction Washington, DC,” *Free People of Color: Inside the African American Community* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993): 193; General Orlando Brown to O. O. Howard, January 22, 1867, microfilm roll 8, AMA Papers, Virginia; G. L. Stockwell to Reverend Dr. Kirk, February 23, 1867, microfilm roll 8, AMA Papers, Virginia.

of instructing African Americans initially. This worldview, though, purposely overlooked the existing African American teachers and independent schools maintained by African Americans. These racial assumptions hindered the widespread development of formal normal schools for African Americans prior to 1867.⁷

Despite the hindrances of some white allies, African Americans found encouragement in their relationships with R. M. Manly and several branches of the American Freedmen's Union Commission (AFUC). Manly and administrators of the New York and New England branch administrators of the AFUC believed in the "stages-model" espoused by Brown and Stockwell. However, they recognized rather than overlooked the presence of literate and educated African Americans in Richmond. For Manly and AFUC administrators, these individuals had achieved the level of education and moral standards necessary for the transition to the next stage for African American participation in the schools. The presence of this sizeable population of educated African American facilitated the efforts for the development of formal normal schools prior to the creation of public schools. Manly's letter of September 1866 to Lyman Abbott, president of the AFUC, epitomized this sentiment. Manly wrote: "The only remedy is, at the principal cities of intelligence and influence, to educate the better class of colored youth to be teachers of their own people." As evidence, Manly pointed toward the city's African American community. He argued: "In this city the primary and intermediate schools are rapidly bringing forward a class of intelligent and ...young people, who with a few months of good honest training, may themselves become acceptable teachers." He reasoned: "To withhold these advantages would be the worst possible economy. It would sacrifice the larger part of the fruit that the future should gather

⁷ McPherson, 1360; Williams, 89-92.

from the money and labor expended on the primary schools.” R. M. Manly then assured Abbott that the African American community supported the development of a normal school. “The intelligent colored people are deeply interested in this enterprise and will contribute money and labor to the extent of their ability,” he wrote. He convinced American Freedmen’s Union Commission officials to expand their educational operations with teacher training. The New England branch reported the expansion of its Richmond operations to members in a September 1866 meeting. Meeting minutes noted: “The general policy will be to establish Schools of higher grades...and so far as practicable influence the col’d [sic] people to aid in supporting the Schools.” The willingness of Manly and the AFUC to develop a normal school encouraged the African American community. African Americans drew upon their relationships with Manly and several branches of the American Freedmen’s Union Commission in order to realize the establishment of a formal normal school in Richmond.⁸

African Americans began working closely with Manly and the American Freedmen’s Union Commission in the development of Richmond Colored Normal. Fundraising began during the fall of 1866 but was thwarted by the white allies’ inability to move beyond the racial assumptions embedded in the “stages model” prior to the official creation of public schools. R. M. Manly appealed to Freedmen’s Bureau leadership for money. Using Bureau funds, Manly purchased the Twelfth Street lot. Located on a hill overlooking the Shockoe ravine, the proposed school would have a physical presence in the city. He also approached Northern associations who devoted funds and energies to African American for donations. “We are struggling to plan the capstone upon the educational system for the Freedmen in this

⁸ R. M. Manly to George Whipple, September 6, 1866, microfilm roll 8, AMA Papers, Virginia; Alexander, 12; R. M. Manly to Lyman Abbott, September 20, 1866, printed pages 86-88, microfilm roll 1, VA-BRFAL-ED; September 13, 1866 Meeting Minutes, Educational Commission Records, box 1, NEFAS records, MHS.

city,” Manly wrote in a letter to Reverend Grimes. “Have you not among your acquaintances and friends some good persons of our work who will esteem it a privilege to supply some one or more of these wants?” He eventually secured the funds for building materials and school apparatus. The passage of the Reconstruction Acts in early 1867 facilitated the opening of personal and organizational coffers and aided Manly’s fundraising efforts. The promise of southern Republican governments and new constitutions with provisions for African American public schools changed the attitudes of individuals wedded to the “stages- model.” According to Manly’s letter to Robert Murray, the New York and New England branches of the American Freedmen’s Union Commission secured approximately \$5,000 for the Richmond school. The African American community, as Manly wrote to Robert Murray, “by contributions of labor and money, will prepare the grounds for the foundation, will erect the outbuildings and fence the whole and I think purchase a bell.” The series of Federal legislation accelerated their fundraising efforts and initiated a change in white attitudes regarding the role of African Americans in their education. Richmond Colored Normal opened in October 1867. The most promising students in the Freedmen’s Schools and private schools filled the two-story brick building during its inaugural year.⁹

From the beginning, Richmond Colored Normal held rigorous admission standards. Strong letters of recommendations, personal character references, and prior demonstration of scholarly achievement were prerequisites. Manly, Bessie Canedy, and other school administrators selected the students. Enrolled students received a high quality education. R. M. Manly served as the school’s principal and occasional instructor of the students. Bessie

⁹ R. M. Manly to O. O. Howard, August 11, 1866, printed pages 70-71, microfilm roll 1; VA-BRFAL-ED; R. M. Manly to Rev. Mr. Grimes, August 28, 1866, printed pages 78-79, microfilm roll 1, VA-BRFAL-ED; R. M. Manly to Robert L. Murray, August 25, 1866, printed pages 75-76, microfilm roll 1, VA-BRFAL-ED; R. M. Manly to General Orlando Brown, September 10, 1866, printed page 81, microfilm roll 1, VA-BRFAL-ED.

Canedy and other leading American Freedmen's Union Commission educators taught these students the most current pedagogical methods. The curriculum included Latin, German, French, algebra, history, geography, cartography, music, government, and a non-sectarian religion course. Students had access to the best school furniture available, a modern science laboratory, and a library containing over five hundred volumes. In addition to classroom training in the evening, the curriculum included hands-on experience as assistant teachers in the Freedmen's Schools during the day. The rigorous nature of the school program convinced white cynics that African Americans were capable of being trained to become teachers. It also convinced proponents of the "stages model" that this educated corps of teachers was vital to the continuation of African American education.¹⁰

Early students demonstrated the school's utility. One such student was James Herndon Bowser. Born in 1850 to free African American parents, the Richmond native received his education in the city's Freedmen's School system. He excelled as a student. His studious nature and scholarly achievement attracted the attention of Bessie Canedy, Manly, and the New England Freedmen's Aid Society, a branch of the AFUC. As a result, he was admitted to Richmond Colored Normal's inaugural class. As a normal student, he again impressed his teachers. Canedy made Bowser her assistant in the model primary school attached to the normal school. Upon graduation, he received a formal teaching commission in his own Freedmen's School at the recommendation of Canedy. In her April 1868 report, she noted that Bowser was "teaching very successfully." The New England Freedmen's Aid Society rehired Bowser for another term. He then received a position in the Richmond public

¹⁰ Alexander, 12; "Normal Schools," *The American Freedman* 2, no. 8 (November 1867): 307; Elsa Barkley Brown, "Uncle Ned's Children: Negotiating Community and Freedom in Postemancipation Richmond, Virginia" (Ph.D. diss., Kent State University, 1994), 77-79.

school system. Bowser represented the experiences shared by the initial graduates from the school. By 1870, several normal graduates, such as Peter H. Woolfolk, received teaching employment in and outside Richmond.¹¹

Virginia accepted Richmond Colored Normal into the state education system in 1871. In addition to state funding, incorporation brought new teacher qualification requirements. These new requirements mandated the re-training of previous graduates for employment. As with the inaugural class, the new graduates proved the school's utility. Rosa L. Dixon was one of the initial graduates under the new state program. Rosa L. Dixon was born January 7, 1855 to slave parents, Henry Dixon and Augusta Hawkins Dixon in Amelia County, Virginia. Her parents relocated to Richmond at the conclusion of the Civil War for employment and educational opportunities for their daughter. Dixon, like the majority of the initial graduates, passed through the grades of the Richmond Freedmen's Schools and later public schools. While at Richmond Colored Normal, Dixon impressed her instructors, including Principal R. M. Manly. She received special training from R. M. Manly in the higher mathematics and Latin. Rosa Dixon, and fourteen other students graduated from the new state program at the conclusion of the 1872/1873 academic year.¹²

¹¹J. W. Cromwell, "In Memoriam (James H. Bowser), *People's Advocate*, April 30, 1881, 3; "Obituary", *Virginia Star*, April 30, 1881; Letter from Bessie Canedy, March 11, 1868 entry, *Daily Record, 1868-1869*, NEFAS records, MHS; Letter from Bessie Canedy, April 13, 1868 entry, *Daily Record, 1868-1869*, NEFAS records, MHS; Letter to R. M. Manly, September 24, 1868 entry, *Daily Record, 1868-1869*, NEFAS records, MHS; Howard N. Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890* (1978; Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 161. According to Rabinowitz, Peter H. Woolfolk graduated from Richmond Colored Normal in 1868, one year after the school began. Woolfolk was one of several who graduated before the state maintained official records of school enrollments and graduates in the early 1870s. It is not clear from the historical record exactly how many as well as the names of those who attended and graduated between 1867 and 1871.

¹² Virginia Department of Education, *Virginia School Report, 1871: First Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, for the year ending August 31, 1871* (Richmond: C. A. Schaeffter, Superintendent Public Printing, 1871), 20; Nicole Johnson, "Rosa L. Dixon Bowser," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, February 9, 2009; "Rosa L. Dixon Bowser," *Dictionary of Virginia Biography*, volume 2 (Richmond: Library of Virginia, 2001), 160-162; Daniel Wallace Culp, "Mrs. Rosa D. Bowser," *Twentieth Century Negro Literature, or a Cyclopaedia*

R. M. Manly recognized that the school and its graduates had to convince state officials of its benefits for its continuation. The future of Richmond public schools and the state system was contingent upon the school's ability to train African American educators. The re-training of former graduates, like Bowser, never deterred Manly. He viewed it as necessary in gaining public financial support as "Northern funding began to grow scarce" and for the future of African American education. In response to a series of questions posed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Manly shared his views on the importance of training African American teachers at Richmond Colored Normal and other normal schools. "Schools are what we make them. 'As is the teacher, so is the school,' is as true of these schools as of any other," Manly wrote. "I am more than satisfied. I am certain that colored normal schools, properly conducted, will turn out teachers with the scholarship and all other qualifications necessary for first rate success in the profession." To achieve "first rate success," Manly first modified the school's organization. Richmond Colored Normal expanded to three grades of approximately thirty students per grade. The new organization now mirrored the organization used in the city's white normal school. Second, he maintained a curriculum that followed the pedagogical and instructional offerings of any reputable teaching college of the period. According to the First Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for Virginia, Richmond Colored Normal's curriculum embraced the common school branches, vocal music, calisthenics, linear drawing, map drawing, object teaching, physiology, civil government, physical geography, botany, natural philosophy, algebra, and the history and philosophy of education. Senior students also continued

of thought on the vital topics relating to the American Negro, by one hundred of America's greatest Negroes, edited and arranged by D. W. Culp (Naperville, IL: J. L. Nichols and Co., 1902), insert between 176 and 177; Richmond (VA) School Board, Nineteenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of the Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA., for the scholastic year ending July 31st, 1888. (Richmond: Everett Waddey, City Printers, 1889), 30-33.

receiving hands-on training in the model primary school attached to the Normal school. This school gave students “their first discipline as teachers under the supervision and criticism of their own teachers.” Third, Manly continued a highly selective admission process for the tuition free school. Only the best students from the public schools gained admission to the school. Dr. Sears, Peabody Education Fund agent, noted the existence of a lengthy waitlist for admission to the illustrious school in his annual report. Through the retraining of former graduates, the curriculum offered, and the selective admission process, Manly created an image of respectability.¹³

R. M. Manly cultivated the school’s image over the next several years. Manly, Miss E. J. Hadley, Mary Elizabeth Knowles, Mary Patterson carefully trained the first generation of teachers under the state system. Under their instruction, they also sought to train “model citizens” who would be seen and accepted as the best representatives of their race. These citizens would then create the leadership which would promote industry, thrift, and moral character in their community. Admission did not guarantee completion for these early students, but students who met the high standards received praise. For instance, Mary Patterson Manly praised James Hugo Johnston in a 1933 letter to his daughter. She wrote: “But first let me say that your father as a Normal School student was one of the finest pupils I have ever had in my long teaching experience. His able mind and his steadfast purpose combined to make him what he became --- a power in his educational world.” She also shared her recollections of other praise bestowed upon Johnston by her husband, R. M.

¹³ Alexander, 12; “Letter from Rev. R. M. Manly Concerning the Aptness of the Colored People to Learn,” *Virginia Annual School Report of 1871*, 204-205; The curriculum remained consistent from 1871-1895 as evident in the city and state annual reports by the superintendents of public instruction; Peabody Education Fund, *Proceedings of the Trustees Meeting, Held at Philadelphia 15 February 1871* (Cambridge: Press of John Wilson and Sons, 1871, 18, file 2, Peabody Education Fund Collection, Jean and Alexander Heard Library, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN.

Manly and Margaret Stratton, vice principal. Praise did not come easily, though. Many fell short of the high intellectual and moral standards held by the school's educators and principal, as noted by Mary Patterson Manly. Those unable to meet the moral and educational expectations did not complete the program. Attrition rates are unavailable, but from comparing the graduates per year to the average thirty enrolled students per grade listed in the annual reports, it is evident that not everyone completed the program. As the school was a part of the high school, these students simply received a high school diploma.¹⁴

Manly's efforts succeeded. W. H. Ruffner and city officials offered early praise of the school. W. H. Ruffner, the state's first Superintendent of Public Instruction, praised the school in his annual reports. In discussing the training of African American elementary teachers, Ruffner specifically mentioned Richmond Colored Normal as exemplar: "There are two excellent colored normal schools in Virginia, which I have often mentioned. The one is in Richmond, and is conducted in a twenty thousand dollar building." By singling out Richmond Colored Normal, Ruffner recognized the school's importance for the State. "These institutions are supplied with a high order of trained teachers, who are giving to over three hundred colored pupils the very best education they are capable of receiving. Their graduates are scattering over the State and winning favorable opinions." Others shared Ruffner's assessment. In a conversation with Reverend Bagby, James H. Binford, Superintendent of Public Schools for Richmond from 1871 to 1876, commented that the school's students demonstrated that racial improvement was possible. Even the conservative *Richmond Dispatch* conceded that the Richmond Colored Normal benefited Richmond and the state. In

¹⁴ Mary Patterson Manly to Virginius Douglas Johnston, May 12, 1933, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA (VHS). Mary Patterson married R. M. Manly. She was his second wife and became his widow in 1897; For list of graduates from 1872/1873 to 1890, see Appendix 6.

1871, the newspaper acknowledged the school's closing exercises with a brief article on its front page. The newspaper could not find fault with the exercises or the school's success in the "professional training of young colored people as teachers for our public schools." The newspaper proclaimed that "the attendance of influential citizens...as well as parents and friends of the pupils" demonstrated the school's value to the state's educational program. In 1873, the newspaper featured an article acknowledging that there was "no colored school of higher grade...in the State, and we venture to assert there is no school where more pains are taken with instruction than this." As noted by Ruffner, Binford, and the white Richmond press, Richmond Colored Normal addressed the statewide crisis by creating a corps of well-trained African American teachers.¹⁵

In June 1876, Richmond Colored Normal officially became a part of the Richmond Public School system. During the first half of the decade, Manly had attempted negotiations for the sale of the school to the city on behalf of the Richmond Educational Association. However, the city's financial difficulties prevented the sale. Undeterred, Manly did the unthinkable. As president of the Richmond Educational Association, he donated the entire property, the brick building, lot, furniture, and school apparatus valued at \$25,000 to the city. His only condition was the school's continuation as a normal school for African Americans. The city accepted the generous gift and abided by Manly's conditions. This donation firmly

¹⁵ *Virginia School Report, 1871*, 204; Virginia Department of Education, *Virginia School Report, 1872: Second Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, for the year ending August 31, 1872* (Richmond: R. F. Walker, City Printer, 1872), 2-3; Virginia Department of Education, *Virginia School Report, 1874: Fourth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, for the year ending August 31, 1874 with reports of the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College, and Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute* (Richmond: R. F. Walker, Superintendent Public Printing, 1874), 135-136; Reverend Babgy, "The Negro, 1875, scrapbook, item 4,085, Bagby Family papers, VHS; "Colored Normal and High School," *Richmond Dispatch*, June 29, 1871, 1; Quoted in Alexander, 12.

cemented the school's legitimacy and continuation.¹⁶

The resulting teaching corps, though, illuminated the divergent expectations for the graduates by white government officials and black Richmonders. State officials saw this group as essential in spreading the state educational system to African Americans living in the countryside. Rural Virginia lacked adequate schools. Ruffner found clear discrepancies between the rural schools and the urban schools. Ruffner attributed the discrepancies in the initial reports to the lack of qualified African American teachers and individuals willing to teach in the African American schools if an African American teacher was not possible. State government officials, local school board commissioners, and the school administrators expected graduates to primarily serve rural Virginia and not urban public schools during the 1870s and early 1880s. Richmond School Board's hiring practices reinforced this expectation. Instead of drawing upon Richmond Colored Normal graduates for the African American schools, Richmond school officials placed white teachers whose examinations scores disqualified them for placement in the white schools. As a result, few Richmond Colored Normal graduates found employment as teachers in Richmond from 1870 to 1883. Margaret (Maggie) F. Woolfolk, and Rosa L. Dixon received two of the few coveted teaching positions in Richmond during this period.¹⁷

¹⁶ "Eighth Annual Report of the School Board and Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA., for the Scholastic Year 1875-1876," *Annual Message and Accompanying Documents of the Mayor of Richmond to the City Council for the Fiscal Year Ending January 31, 1877* (Richmond: C. C. Baughman, City Printer, 1877), 30; Eighth Annual Report of the School Board and Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA., for the Scholastic Year 1876-1877," *Annual Message and Accompanying Documents of the Mayor of Richmond to the City Council for the Fiscal Year Ending January 31, 1878* (Richmond: C. C. Baughman, City Printer, 1878), 222-223. [Due to a printing error, there are eighth annual reports.]

¹⁷ *Virginia School Report, 1871*, 15, 19, 106-123; *Virginia School Report, 1874*, 116-117; For city hiring practices, see Rabinowitz, 173-174; Richmond School Board, *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Superintendent of the Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA., for the scholastic year ending 1893* (Richmond: C. N. Williams, City Printer, 1894), 40-41. Table XI provided comparative statistics of the school population, schools, teachers, enrollment, and funding sources from the 1869-1870 to 1892-1893 academic years. The number of African American teachers in Richmond increased dramatically. This increase

These racially motivated expectations and hiring practices countered the desires of the African American community. Richmond's African American community wanted African American teachers in the city schools. Richmond Colored Normal graduates joined the community in their struggle with petitions and newspaper articles for African American public teachers in Richmond. Initially, success was limited to a few schools. From its inception as a public school in 1869 to the 1882-1883 academic year, the Navy Hill School had an all-African American faculty with a white principal. By the 1882-1883 academic year, Richmond Colored Normal graduates filled all fourteen teacher positions available. Navy Hill School's success instilled hope for the attainment of African American faculties at all African American public schools. The East End School, a newer public school, also featured an all-African American faculty with a white principal that academic year. Likewise, Richmond Colored Normal graduates comprised the entire teaching staff. Both schools evoked a sense of hope in the African American community that school officials would "see that it is best for all concerned to appoint colored teachers for all of our colored schools." Despite the divergent expectations, Richmond Colored Normal graduates taught, albeit not always in Richmond. As a result, African Americans found a new ally in the public schools.¹⁸

Divergent expectations of the graduates neither diminished interest nor enrollment at Richmond Colored Normal. The school's existence inspired Richmond public school students to become teachers during the late 1870s and 1880s. As students in the Richmond school system, they desired to teach future generations. For instance, the white and few

corresponded with the shift in ideology regarding African American teachers. From the teachers roster and lists of the schools graduates from the corresponding period reinforces this shift in thought. See Appendix 4 for the chart.

¹⁸ "Navy Hill School," *Virginia Star*, November 18, 1882, 4; Rabinowitz, 174; "East End School," *Virginia Star*, December 23, 1882, 4.

African American Richmond public school teachers greatly impressed Daniel Webster Davis. He decided at an early age to become an educator and to follow in the steps of his mentors. In his poetry, lectures, and public speaking engagements, Davis often later recalled the lasting impressions made by his teachers. In a 1902 lecture for the Summer Institute at Hampton Institute, Davis instructed the educators to have role models and use them as guides to live their lives. Davis' role models came directly from his normal teachers. "Let your own life and character be an ideal. I remember Miss Stratton, Miss Patterson, Miss Hadley, Mr. Manly. They were my ideals of what men and women should be," Davis told his audience of teachers. Davis enrolled in the Richmond Colored Normal, excelled, and graduated at the age of sixteen. Too young to teach in the Richmond and state school system, an early biography noted that he held a series of menial jobs until he reached eighteen, the city's minimum age requirement for teachers. With Manly's assistance, Davis readily received a Richmond public school position in 1880 where he remained until his death in 1913. Davis was one of the two hundred and eighty who graduated from the incorporated state program between 1873 and 1890. Like Davis, the majority of these later graduates had attended the lower grades of the Richmond public schools. The lack of employment in the Richmond schools never deterred these students from aspiring to become teachers nor attending Richmond Colored Normal.¹⁹

Unlike Davis, most Richmond Colored Normal graduates found teaching employment outside of Richmond or in other fields during the late 1870s and 1880s. Hiring practices prevented many from acquiring jobs in Richmond. Graduates, such as Marietta Chiles, John Mitchell, Jr, and Wendell Phillip Dabney received positions initially in nearby cities and

¹⁹ Daniel Webster Davis, *The Family (Domestic) Ideals*, lecture, p. 3, section 1, Daniel Webster Davis Papers, VHS; "Daniel Webster Davis," section 8, Daniel Webster Davis Papers, VHS; Brown, 13; Alexander, 15-17, 21-23; For a list of graduates, see Appendix 6.

counties including Fredricksburg, Petersburg, and Louisa County before receiving a position in the Richmond public schools. Others taught primarily in rural Virginia. Others pursued non-teaching careers in the post office as clerks, merchants, and other professions. In 1883, the Readjusters administration proved receptive to demands made by graduates and parents and created all-black faculties. After 1883, the acceptance of all-black faculties as the norm made it easier for graduates to find positions in Richmond public schools. This shift made admittance in the school's program for professional teaching careers even more desirable. However, a glut of Richmond Colored Normal trained teachers and few positions available still made it difficult for all graduates to find a job in Richmond.²⁰

Beyond the classroom, the newly trained educators refashioned their useful education in their work for racial uplift. The Richmond Colored Normal trained educator-activists challenged racism experienced in their communities through educational related organizations and activities. Specifically, Richmond Colored Normal alumni activities can be divided into four categories: teacher training, contributions to the African American press, literary societies, and racial uplift organizations.

Richmond Colored Normal graduates assisted with the training of other educators. The state and city school system required continuous education for its teachers. Weekly teachers' meetings kept existing teachers abreast of the most current pedagogical and

²⁰ Jane Dailey, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2000), 70; *Richmond Annual School Report, 1892-1893*, 40-41; Peter Rachleff, *Black Labor in Richmond, 1865-1890* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 103-104. The Readjuster Party was a political coalition of urban African American and white immigrant workers, black tenant farmers and landowners in heavily African American eastern counties, and white Western landowners. The party governed the state from 1879 to 1883 and employed patronage and policies that benefited its African American constituents. Violence, intimidation, and a realignment of racial politics led to the downfall of this party. The road to segregation though was not inevitable as Jane Dailey's study reminds us. African Americans and old Readjuster constituents actively fought the new systems of racial discrimination. The Readjusters, African American parents' activism and Richmond schools will be discussed in greater detail in the chapter on African American public schools during the 1880s.

teaching methods. James Binford, Richmond Superintendent of Public Instruction, implemented Saturday Teacher's Meetings for all Richmond public school educators in 1871. These two-hour meetings served two purposes. First, they kept educators informed of events occurring in the school, such as student suspensions and observations from the superintendent's visits. Second, the meetings provided for the continuous training of the educators. Each meeting focused upon methods of teaching phonetics, penmanship, and special subjects assigned for the day, such as the methods of teaching orthography, reading, object teaching, map drawing, history, and vocal music. As the number of Richmond Colored Normal graduates who became educators in Richmond increased, these educators actively participated in the separate meetings for African Americans. They discussed their teaching strategies and eventually taught some of the special subjects assigned for the meeting. In 1882, Richmond's African American educators organized with county educators and established the Henrico Teachers' Association of Virginia State Teachers' Association. This organization with the assistance of the respective schools' principals took over the administration of the Saturday Teachers' Meetings. Through their participation, graduates demonstrated that African Americans teachers were equal to their white counterparts in terms of their ability to teach and understand pedagogy.²¹

In addition to the Saturday Teachers' Meetings, Virginia sponsored several segregated summer teaching institutes throughout the state for existing educators. Subsidized primarily by Peabody Educational Fund monies, leading African American educators, North and South, led these six-week summer institutes. In 1880, Mr. and Mrs. Henry P.

²¹Virginia Department of Education, *Virginia School Report, 1873: Third Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the year ending August 31, 1873* (Richmond: R. F. Walker, 1873), 4-5; "Untitled," *Virginia Star*, December 23, 1882, 4.

Montgomery, African American educators from Washington, DC, instructed the participants at the Lynchburg session “in school organization and discipline, and also in the primary branches as to their subject matter and the best methods of teaching them.” The 240 enrolled teachers also learned vocal music, calisthenics, and elocution. Hands on training occurred as well with “Model Lessons.” Instructors and participants conducted these model lessons in an adjoining primary school. In addition to the classroom training, special lectures were given by the United States Commissioner of Education, Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction and representatives of the Peabody Educational Fund. By the late 1880s, Richmond Colored Normal graduates served as the principal instructors for these institutes. Albert V. Norrell provided the primary instruction with Professor R. L. Mitchell at an 1888 summer institute in Roanoke, Virginia. Daniel Webster Davis led the 1888 and 1889 institutes held at Richmond. James Hugo Johnston led a full corps of instructors including Rosa Dixon Bowser at the session held at the Lynchburg Institute in 1887 and at Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute from 1888 to 1890. In his 1888 report to the state superintendent, Johnston recommended the expansion of the summer institute program into a three year program for African American teachers who never graduated from a formal normal program. He felt that such a program would “result in great improvement to the present teachers of our State.” These summer institutes ensured that African American educators remained highly qualified for their teaching positions in the public school system. As a result, the African American public schools benefited.²²

²² “The State Colored Normal School,” *Virginia Star*, March 27, 1880, 2; “The Colored Normal School at Lynchburg,” *Virginia Star*, March 27, 1880, 2; Virginia Department of Education, *Virginia School Report, 1880, Tenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, for the Year Ending July 31, 1880* (Richmond: R. F. Walker, Superintendent of Public Printing, 1880), 106-107; L.A. Scruggs, *Women of Distinction: Remarkable in Works and Invincible in Character* (Raleigh: L. A. Scruggs, 1893), 286; Maggie N. Taylor, “Untitled,” *Richmond Planet*, August 25, 1888; Virginia Department of Education, *Virginia School Report, 1888: Eighteenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of*

Richmond Colored Normal graduates' capable administration of the summer institutes aided the community's struggle for all black teaching and administrative staffs at Richmond's African American public schools. The quality of education provided by white faculties concerned African American parents and leaders. This concern precipitated their struggle for African American faculties in the Richmond schools. Thwarted by state and city school officials, African American parents and community leaders wanted to shift the usefulness of the Richmond Colored Normal graduates from rural schools to Richmond. The summer institutes bolstered their arguments made to Richmond school officials. African Americans, including Richmond Colored Normal graduates, successfully conducted these summer institutes. Like their white counterparts, they demonstrated their qualification for teaching and administering the African American public schools as the *Virginia Star*, *People's Advocate*, and community leaders had argued. R. L. Mitchell, correspondent for the *People's Advocate*, responded to disparaging remarks made by George M. Childs in regards to African American normal schools and their goal of African American faculties in the public schools. He proclaimed in a March 1882 news article: "Yes, Mr. Childs, we will have colored professors, colored teachers, and a colored Board of Visitors for the state Normal and Collegiate Institute. The superior race have managed for us and have failed. We can at least do not worse than they." The summer institutes' successful administration increasingly

Virginia with Accompanying Documents, School Year ending July 31, 1888 (Richmond: J. H. O'Bannon, Superintendent of Public Printing, 1888), 66-75, 79-83. In 1889 and 1890, Richmond Colored Normal graduates served as principal instructors and guest lecturers at the various summer institutes held throughout the state. For more information, see Virginia Department of Education, *Virginia School Report, 1889: Nineteenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia with Accompanying Documents, School Year Ending July 31, 1889* (Richmond: J. H. O'Bannon, Superintendent of Public Printing, 1889), 51-73 and Virginia Department of Education, *Virginia School Report, 1890: Twentieth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia with Accompanying Documents, School Year Ending July 31, 1890* (Richmond: J. H. O'Bannon, Superintendent of Public Printing, 1891), 142-150.

invalidated claims, such as the ones made by Childs. As a result, the community gained more fruitful arguments in their struggle for African American faculties.²³

Interestingly, the African American community never argued for African American teachers at Richmond Colored Normal. With the exception of three positions from 1870 to 1890, the school's staff remained overwhelmingly white. Historian Howard Rabinowitz noted this phenomenon in his comparative study of the urban South. He reasoned that the School Board's absolute power over the schools prevented any substantive reform to the school's teaching staff.²⁴

By focusing upon the relationships between the Richmond Colored Normal staff, graduates, and community, I would like to put forth another explanation. First, R. M. Manly, Mary Elizabeth Knowles, Mary Stratton and others had been devoted to the school and African American education in Richmond since its inception. As strong proponents for the school, they actively defended it. They also served as mentors to the graduates. Daniel Webster Davis referenced their valuable mentorship in his 1902 lecture on the importance of role models. Daniel B. Williams also pursued advanced studies at Worcester Academy and then Brown University at the suggestion of R. M. Manly and Mary Elizabeth Knowles. Second and most significantly, Richmond Colored Normal educators provided necessary letters of recommendations for teaching employment in and outside Richmond. For instance, R. M. Manly wrote a glowing recommendation for Rosa Dixon Bowser when she left the Richmond schools upon her marriage to James H. Bowser. In his recommendation, Manly described Bowser as "a studious, faithful and intelligent scholar, her character always above

²³ Navy Hill School," *Virginia Star*, November 18, 1882, p. 4; "Colored Teachers for Colored Schools," *Virginia Star*, December 9, 1882, p. 1; "From the People," letter to the editor, *Virginia Star*, December 16, 1882, p. 1; R. L. Mitchell, "Colored Normal and Collegiate Institute," *People's Advocate*, March 25, 1882, p.1.

²⁴ Rabinowitz, 177.

criticism, and her deportment marked by a dignity, sobriety and respectfulness not common with girls of her age.” Due to her success as a teacher, Manly recommended her for re-employment, if necessary, “with entire confidence that she would do her work not only faithfully, but wisely and with approval of yourself and School Board.” Indeed, she used the letter in her return to the Richmond schools after her husband’s death. As these examples suggest, claims by graduates, parents, and community leaders proved harder to make as indifference. It was not their experience with the white Richmond Colored Normal faculty. In fact, relationships with these key white allies remained essential to the future of the school and its graduates. Thus, challenging the continued presence of white educators at Richmond Colored Normal would have proved detrimental to African American education. As a result, graduates and the African American community remained silent on the issue. Instead, the community argued for African American educators in the Richmond public schools and the creation of a “Normal School where our young people may be instructed by those who have their interests at heart” in the state. Advances made in these two areas between 1883 and 1888 reinforced the community’s silence on the predominantly white faculty at Richmond Colored Normal.²⁵

Between 1883 and 1888, parents, community leaders, and Richmond Colored Normal graduates achieved two major victories in the fight for African American faculties in the Richmond public schools. First, state Readjusters broke the stalemate on the Richmond School Board which paved the way for African American teaching staffs in all of the city’s African American public schools, except for Richmond Colored Normal during the 1883-

²⁵ Davis, “The Family (Domestic) Ideals,” lecture, 3; section 1, Daniel Webster Davis Papers, VHS; Daniel Williams, *Freedom and Progress and other Choice Addresses on Practical, Scientific, Educational, Philosophic, Historic and Religious Subjects* (Petersburg: Daniel B. Williams, 1890), 8; Quoted in Scruggs, 285-286; “Untitled,” *Virginia Star*, November 18, 1882, 1.

1884 academic year. The Richmond School Board also promoted three Richmond Colored Normal graduates to become principals of three city school schools that same academic year. Albert V. Norrell, James H. Hayes, and James Hugo Johnston became the principals of Navy Hill, Valley, and Baker schools, respectively. Hubbard G. Carlton, a displaced white principal, bitterly recalled this event in a 1925 address: “The principals of Baker, Valley, and Navy Hill of which I was principal, were removed and three of my male teachers, colored elected principals; all of the white teachers in the colored schools were turned out and colored ones appointed....” Although African Americans retained the principal positions for only one year, African American teachers remained. The monopoly of white teachers ceased as the Richmond School Board rejected a petition of displaced white teachers and white community leaders for their re-employment during the 1884-1885 academic year. After the Readjuster revolution, whites only served in African Americans schools as principals and/or faculty members at Richmond Colored Normal.²⁶

The second victory occurred in normal education. In addition to changes in the Richmond public schools, the Readjuster regime established a state normal school for African Americans located at Petersburg in 1882. After a lawsuit, the school opened for students in 1883 with John Mercer Langston as its first president. When Virginia needed a new president for the state normal school for African Americans, state officials turned to a Richmond Colored Normal graduate for the position. James Hugo Johnston, class of 1876, served as the second president of Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute for Colored Persons in nearby Petersburg from 1888 until his death in 1914. In addition to his presidential

²⁶ Rachleff, 103-104; Dailey, 70; ; H. G. Carlton, “The Evolution of the Richmond Public Schools with Reminiscences,” paper read at the Principals’ Conference, June 3, 1925, 11-12, Special Collections, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA. For lists of principals and teachers, see Virginia Dept of Education, *Virginia School Report: Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Published annually from 1871-1891), LVA; Richmond City Directory, 1883-1884 and Richmond School Report, 1886-1887.

duties, he taught mental and moral philosophy. Johnston's administration received continuous praise from state officials. His reports held a prominent place in the annual state superintendent reports. The African American community regarded Johnston's employment as a victory for African American education but also the race.²⁷

Johnston's hiring and the graduates' refashioning of their Richmond Colored Normal education eased the way for all-African American faculties and administrators throughout Virginia. Consequently, the African American community and Richmond Colored Normal administrators praised his administration. Through attendance and active training of teachers, the graduates refashioned their useful education for the betterment of the African American schools and community. These successes, though, fostered the community's continued silence on the hiring practices at Richmond Colored Normal.

Richmond Colored Normal graduates also actively participated in the burgeoning African American press. Graduates served as regular correspondents and occasional contributors to the local press. John Mitchell, Jr. was the Virginia correspondent to T. Thomas Fortune's *New York Globe* prior to his employment as editor of the *Richmond Planet*. Margaret F. Woolfolk and Josephine Turpin regularly contributed poetry, short stories, and news articles to the *Virginia Star*, a Richmond newspaper co-owned and co-edited by former educator, Peter H. Woolfolk. Josephine J. Turpin supplemented her teacher salary from the Richmond Theological Seminary with her contributions to print publications. She continued her writing career after her marriage to Dr. Samuel S. H. Washington in 1888. From her first article in 1877 to 1893, Turpin's work appeared in the *Richmond Planet*, *New*

²⁷ *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1888*, 109-117; *Nineteenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1889*, 119-129; Mary Patterson Manly to Virginius Johnston, May 12, 1933, letter, VHS.

York Globe, Industrial Herald, New York Freeman, Christian Recorder and the *A.M.E. Church Review*. These graduates addressed topics that extended beyond education and their publications' tone often employed the rhetoric of racial progress and uplift. Through their contributions to the African American press, these educator-activists developed a public persona within Richmond and beyond.²⁸

Richmond Colored Normal graduates also filled the ranks of literary societies. The Acme Literary Association and Virginia Educational and Historical Society were extremely popular organizations among graduates, including James H. Bowser, Rose L. Dixon, Albert V. Norrell, and Margaret F. Woolfolk. These organizations were similar to other postwar African American literary societies. Historian Elizabeth McHenry characterized postbellum literary societies as having several aims. First, literary societies promoted literary study that better prepared African Americans for the demands of citizenship and challenges posed by the postwar world. Second, they promoted a new literate identity that was distinct from the antebellum identity. Third, literary societies sought to transform racist stereotypes regarding African American intellect by demonstrating a capacity for learning and improving. Fourth, they promoted a new type of literacy that sought “effective avenues of public access and ways to voice their demands for full citizenship” and equality.²⁹

The Acme Literary Association and Virginia Educational and Historical Society

²⁸ Alexander, 24-25; *Virginia Star*, 1877-1882; Josephine J. Turpin received an assistant teacher position at the Richmond Institute upon her graduation from Richmond Colored Normal. She held the position until 1883. She then enrolled and graduated from Howard University, 1883-1886. Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1984), 108-109; Scruggs, 91-92; Daniel Lamb Smith, editor, Howard University. School of Medicine, *Howard University Medical Department, Washington, D.C.: A Historical Biographical and Statistical Souvenir*. Reprint of 1900 ed. (Freeport: Ayers Publishing Company, 1971), 227.

²⁹ “Minutes of the Virginia Educational and Historical Society,” *People’s Advocate*, August 26, 1876, 2-3; Elizabeth McHenry, *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 141-142.

achieved these aims through regular meetings held in prominent African American churches. The organizations published notices and minutes from meetings in the press. These meetings typically included musical selections, oratory selections such as poetry and dramatic readings of theatrical scenes, and a formal paper on a specific literary work, historical topic, and/or current affair topic. The Virginia Educational and Historical Society tended to discuss topics more focused upon educational concerns, such as the role of music in public schools and industrial education as offered by the Moore Street Industrial School in Richmond. The organization often discussed topics beyond the public schools. For instance, the August 1880 meeting program featured discussions of the Virginia public debt and public schools as well as the organization and maintenance of literary and debating societies. The Acme Literary Association used their meetings “to consider questions of vital importance to our people, so that the masses of them may be drawn out to be entertained, enlightened, and instructed thereby.” Questions of vital importance included communism as was evident in a February 1885 meeting which featured a paper on the subject delivered by Professor D. N. Vassar, an African American educator at the Richmond Institute. Vassar’s paper, according to the *Richmond Planet*, prompted a lively discussion. These meetings were open to the public and were well-attended by society members, current and former educators, and members of the African American community. The formality and sophistication of the meetings fulfilled several of the postbellum literary societies’ aims described by McHenry.³⁰

The Acme Literary Association and Virginia Educational and Historical Society also promoted a new literate identity. The organizations combined their resources and sponsored a

³⁰ “Virginia Educational and Historical Association,” *People’s Advocate*, June 17, 1876, 2; “To the Public,” *People’s Advocate*, August 21, 1880, 3; Quoted in Rachleff, 95; “Acme Literary Association,” *Richmond Planet*, February 21, 1885, 1.

library. The library boasted “full sets of encyclopedias, works of Burke, Gibbon’s Rome, Primitive Man, and a very choice selection of poetry and lighter reading; and a good assortment of books of a solid character.” Based upon the volumes contained in the shared library, it is clear that the organizations carefully selected and made available literary works deemed appropriate reading for a new literate African American identity distinct from slavery. These works would make a well-rounded person who was prepared for the challenges of the postwar world. Margaret F. Woolfolk served as the librarian. Members had open access to the library. Non-members could access the library during special weekly hours. The Virginia Educational and Historical Society also sponsored annual scholarships to the Richmond Institute, a seminary and normal school operated by the American Baptist Home Mission Society in Richmond. In addition, the organization sponsored scholarships to Hampton Institute and other black colleges. Both the library and scholarship program aided the promotion of a new literate identity distinct from slavery. They also permitted the development of intellectual skills necessary for the postbellum world through reading and obtaining a higher education.³¹

Normal alumni, especially African American female graduates, played an integral role in racial uplift organizations. Their activism reflected the intersections of race and gender as the organizations addressed the plight of African American women and the entire race more broadly, as described by historians Glenda Gilmore and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham. Their role as educators afforded them some leverage in their community activism. Most notably, Maggie Lena Mitchell worked for the betterment of working women. Upon graduating Richmond Colored Normal in 1883, she taught in the Richmond public

³¹ “Untitled,” *Virginia Star*, December 23, 1882, 4; “The Educational and Historical Society,” *People’s Advocate*, July 12, 1879, 2; “Explanation Wanted,” *People’s Advocate*, August 9, 1879, 2.

school system at the Valley School for several years. While an educator, she participated in local racial uplift organizations. After to her marriage to fellow Richmond Colored Normal alumnus, Armstead Walker, she left her position in the school system and devoted her full energies toward racial uplift with the Independent Order of St. Luke. She, however, remained devoted to African American education through membership and contributions to local organizations.³²

Rosa Dixon Bowser's activism also centered upon issues relating to education, African American women and race. She was an active member of the Virginia Educational and Historical Society. Like Walker, her marriage never impinged upon her activism. In 1887, she founded the Virginia Teachers' Reading Circle in which African American teachers shared and discussed ideas and teaching styles. This organization was one of the first state organizations for African American teachers. As noted in the introduction to her essay in *Twentieth Century Negro Literature*, Bowser founded the Woman's League. She served as President of the Richmond's Mother's Club and the Woman's Department of the Negro Reformatory Association of Virginia. She also served on the executive board for the Southern Federation of Colored Women; Women's Educational and Missionary Association of Virginia; and Committee of Domestic Economy, for the Hampton Conference. The

³²Many scholars have focused upon the activism of middle class women from 1880 to 1920. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham's seminal work, *Righteous Discontent*, focuses upon African American women's activism within the National Baptist Convention. Glenda Gilmore's seminal work, *Gender and Jim Crow*, focuses upon African American women in North Carolina during the period. African American women used their race, class, and gender to enter the public sphere for racial uplift. Likewise, the Richmond female educators' activism followed the model presented in these histories. "Maggie Lena Walker," editors, Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, *Africana* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), 1955; Richmond School Board, *Sixteenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools for the City of Richmond, Va., for the scholastic year, 1884-1885* (Richmond: Walthall and Bowles, Printers, 1886), 33,44; Richmond School Board, *Seventeenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools for the City of Richmond, Va., for the scholastic year, 1885-1886* (Richmond: Everett Waddey, City Printers, 1887), 45; Richmond School Board, *Nineteenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools for the City of Richmond, Va., for the scholastic year ending 1888* (Richmond: Everett Waddey, City Printer, 1889), 44; Elsa Barkley-Brown, "Constructing a Life and a Community: A Partial Story of Maggie Lena Walker," *OAH Magazine of History* 7, no. 4 (Summer 1993): 29.

African American community considered Rosa Dixon Bowser as one of “the most conspicuous members of many benevolent organizations in Richmond.”³³

As evident in her publications, Rosa Dixon Bowser believed that educated African American women, like herself, had a specific role in racial uplift. In her 1902 essay, “What Role is the Educated Negro Woman to Play in the Uplifting of Her Race,” Bowser called upon educated African American women to become involved in racial uplift. In the essay, she specifically employed the rhetoric of the domestic sphere in justifying their participation against male skeptics. She asked readers:

Who can better perform this duty than the unselfish, humane, intelligent Negro woman? Who can better feel the touch of sympathy and get out of self to help by lifting as she climbs? Who can better see the need than one who is interested in the lowly of her own household? Who but the educated Negro woman will feel more keenly the stigma of the depravity of her weak sister who has wearied of the struggle for a higher plane of living? To whom is the call to this duty more urgent? Will she answer?³⁴

In answering these questions, Bowser deemed the educated African American woman as the most logical choice in uplifting the race. She argued:

She must do so. Her advantages, intellectually and socially, demand that she should take a front rank in the crusade against ignorance, vice and crime. She is the lighthouse, giving warning of the hidden shoals and guiding away from the rocks which are wrecking the lives of many capable young men and women. These young people are anxious in many cases to be led into paths of purer man and womanhood.... They must and will follow leaders. But they require of leadership a reflection of their ideals. In other words, they require them to be as leaders all that they would admonish others to become—models of true, intelligent, morally pure women and men.... Not only must these upright Negro women take their role as counselors and teachers, but it is highly essential that they be WITH the element to be uplifted, yet, certainly NOT OF it... It rather increases her influence; for they know

³³ “Minutes of the Virginia Educational and Historical Society,” *People’s Advocate*, August 26, 1876, p. 2-3; Nicole Johnson, “Rosa L. Dixon Bowser,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, February 9, 2009; Culp, “Mrs. Rosa D. Bowser,” *Twentieth Century Negro Literature*, insert between 176 and 177.

³⁴ Rosa D. Bowser, “What Role is the Educated Woman to Play in Uplifting of Her Race?” *Twentieth Century Negro Literature*, 179.

she is NOT OF them, but WITH them in their efforts to improve.³⁵

Bowser then addressed African American women. She did not want them to feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of the work and not actively participate as a consequence. “The magnitude of the work may sometimes cause one to shrink, when the progress seems slow,” Bowser asserted. “But all reforms require deliberation, endurance, and perseverance. Occasionally we get an encouraging comment which comes like a calm after storms of criticisms and abuse...” In short, Bowser simply deemed racial uplift as the duty of educated women. This sense of duty and obligation guided Bowser in her then twenty-five year commitment to education and racial uplift as a Richmond educator-activist.³⁶

Despite the visible activism of graduates, city and state officials continued praising the school during the late 1870s and 1880s. Richmond Colored Normal provided a reliable stream of qualified teachers. The governor and Richmond School Board members attended the commencement exercises as noted in by the local report of the 1886-1887 scholastic year. Richmond Superintendent of Public Instruction’s Annual Reports proudly featured the commencement program, course of study, student award winners, and a complete listing of the school’s graduates. At the school’s twentieth anniversary celebration, the Governor, local dignitaries, and illustrious graduates participated as speakers and presenters. The ceremony was widely attended by the African American community, government officials, alumni, and proponents of African American education. Indeed, Richmond Colored Normal represented an integral component of the Richmond Public School system.³⁷

³⁵Ibid., 179-180.

³⁶ Ibid., 180.

³⁷ *Sixteenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools for the City of Richmond, Va., 1884-1885*, 9, 20; Richmond School Board, *Seventeenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools for the City of Richmond, Va., for the scholastic year, 1885-1886*, 8, 20, 32-34; *Eighteenth Annual Report of the*

While state and local officials recognized the school's importance, some whites, like the Reverend Hoge, privately and later publicly complained that the school's graduates made them unfit for labor and race relations. Reverend Hoge argued that Richmond Colored Normal and High School produced a glut of teachers and other professionals who refused to perform agricultural and industrial labor. As a result, he felt that the "liberal education" as taught in the current system had been a failed experiment and that industrial education was more beneficial. He called upon the public schools to establish the necessary foundation for African Americans to continue as laborers by changing the curriculum to an industrial educational focus. For Hoge, this would be most beneficial to race relations in Virginia and the South. Critics, like Reverend Hoge, increasingly gained currency in the public discourse over Richmond Colored Normal during the turn of the century.³⁸

The African American community continued embracing Richmond Colored Normal. Parents wanted their children to attend the school. The African American press regularly featured news articles detailing lectures, musicals, commencements, and other exercises held at the school. The communal embrace contributed to the development of a distinct collective memory of the school by the African American community. Like the emancipation collective memory described by David Blight, the collective memory of Richmond Colored Normal had a specific function within the African American community. The celebratory mode of this collective memory served as a political statement which legitimated both African American teachers and African American education against critics, such as Reverend Hoge, a

Superintendent of Public Schools for the City of Richmond, Va., 1886-1887, 9-10; 18-20; Richmond School Board, *Nineteenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools for the City of Richmond, Va., 1888*, 10-11, 21, 30-33; *Richmond Normal School: Twentieth Anniversary* (N. V. Randolph, City Stationer, 1887), accessed at VHS.

³⁸ Reverend Hoge, *Negro Education in the City [of Richmond] Public Schools*, 1905, section 46, Hoge Family Papers, VHS.

prominent white Richmond minister. Moreover, the collective memory also gave the African American community a sense of encouragement for a better future despite the despair faced at the turn of the century.³⁹

Public commemoration, in the form of reunions, sustained the Richmond Colored Normal's collective memory in the African American community. Reunions were well-organized events. Richmond Colored Normal Alumni Association members organized and sponsored fundraising events like literary and musical concerts in Richmond. Advertisements for the events and reunions filled black newspapers such as the *Richmond Planet*. The money raised contributed directly to the reunion. Reunions provided the opportunity for graduates to reminisce upon their school days and reflect upon the shared opportunities and experiences afforded by their graduation from the school. As shown in the opening vignette, discussions ranged from playful arguments over the daily fights between the white students of the Central High School and the students of Richmond Colored Normal to serious discussions of the hiring practices of local and state authorities. Fine dining, music, poetry, and other amusements accompanied the reminiscences. Richmond Colored Normal reunions, in essence, publicly celebrated the growth of African American education, intellectual achievement, and racial progress made since emancipation. They, like the Emancipation Day celebrations discussed by David Blight, reflected a worldview held by African Americans to "embrace a long view, a faith that at least since 1863 time, God, and the weight of history might be on their side." This worldview aided in their struggle against short-term despair

³⁹ "Minister Langston in Richmond," *People's Advocate*, September 27, 1879, 2; "Richmond Items," *People's Advocate*, April 20, 1881, 3; "Personal," *People's Advocate*, June 25, 1881, 3; David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2001), 1-5; 300-301. In his discussion of the role of emancipation memory at the turn of the century African American community, Blight argued that the Civil War memory overlapped with other attitudes toward the past and progress of race the race rhetoric. In total, these strains reflected African Americans determination to forge identities in a society committed to sectional reconciliation and forgetting the claims of legacy and citizenship by African Americans.

derived from the racial climate. In short, these reunions shored up the school's collective memory while promoting confidence to fight for racial progress and intellectual advancement throughout Richmond, the state of Virginia, the South, and the nation.⁴⁰

Memorials for the dead also played an important role in sustaining the collective memory of Richmond Colored Normal. The death of normal graduates, students, teachers and administrators brought alumni and the community together. City and regional African-American newspapers noted their passing by recognizing their achievement in and outside of the classroom and praising their commitment toward African-American education. The death of more illustrious graduates and faculty received more elaborate forms of commemoration with memorial services. James H. Bowser and R. M. Manly are two examples.⁴¹

James H. Bowser attended the school during its inaugural year. He briefly taught in the city's schools for African American children before becoming a postal clerk in Richmond. Although he left the public schools for a position in the post office, he remained committed to African American education through his church involvement and service in the Virginia Educational and Historical Association. His death from consumption at the age of thirty-one shocked the Richmond community in 1881. The African American community commemorated his legacy as an early graduate and community activism.⁴²

The African American press bestowed Bowser with coverage of his death and legacy commonly associated with prominent community members and leaders. John W. Cromwell,

⁴⁰ "Have You Forgotten," *Richmond Planet*, June 12, 1885, 1; Alexander, 13; Blight, 304.

⁴¹ For examples, see "Death of Miss Carrie Griffin," *Industrial Herald*, July 20, 1883, 3 and Death of Edward Jones, *Industrial Herald*, July 20, 1883, 3, accessed in the James Hugo Johnston, Sr. Papers, 1865-1914, Special Collection & University Archives, Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA.

⁴² J. W. Cromwell, "In Memoriam (James H. Bowser)," *People's Advocate*, April 30, 1881, 3.

editor of the *People's Advocate*, former colleague at the Richmond Public Schools and friend of Bowser, memorialized him in a special article in the newspaper. Cromwell's tribute focused upon his free parentage under slavery, education, and pioneer service in the Richmond public schools and Richmond post office. While acknowledging Bowser's departure from the public schools, Cromwell reminded readers of Bowser's continued devotion to African American education. "Notwithstanding his acceptance of the duties in the postal service, his devotion to the educational interests of his race never flagged," Cromwell explained. "He was one of the foremost in the organization of the Richmond Literary Society, organizer of the Lincoln Lyceum, and afterward of the Virginia Educational and Historical Association of which he was at the time of his death Corresponding Secretary and chairman of the literary and Scholarship committees." Similarly, Peter Woolfolk, editor of the *Virginia Star* and former colleague of Bowser, noted his passing with a front-page editorial, obituary, and coverage of his funeral. Likewise, Woolfolk noted Bowser's high level of education, service as an educator, and continued service to the Richmond community through his religious and secular organizational work. The *Virginia Star* also published glowing tributes sent to the paper by readers, mainly Richmond Colored Normal graduates. For instance, the newspaper published Robert J. Chiles' poem entitled "Cry of the Loser," and a special obituary written by a "Friend" in reaction to Bowser's death. The extensive newspaper coverage reflected the high regard held for Bowser within and outside Richmond. His service on behalf of African American education and racial uplift elevated him to prominence.⁴³

⁴³J. W. Cromwell, "In Memoriam (James H. Bowser), April 20, 1881, 3; "Death of James H. Bowser," *Virginia Star*, April 30, 1881, 1; "Funeral of James H. Bowser," *Virginia Star*, April 30, 1881, 4; Robert J. Chiles, "The Cry of the Loser," *Virginia Star*, April 30, 1881, 4; A Friend, "Obituary," *Virginia Star*, April 30, 1881, 4.

In addition, African-Americans held a memorial service for Bowser in Richmond. The service was held at the First African Baptist Church, where Bowser had been a member. Reverend R. Peel Brooks, Charles J. Malord, and George M. Arnold, Esq., and other prominent African-American leaders shared recollections and eulogized Bowser in front of a “large and select audience of cultivated people.” As evidenced by the newspaper coverage, the African American community never saw his memorial service as undeserving or ostentatious. They viewed Bowser as a pioneer in African-American education because of his connections to the school and employment in the city’s public schools. They also regarded him as a “prominent citizen” who combated racial injustice for the benefit of African-Americans with his service in the post office and racial uplift organizations. Hence, the memorial service and the “large and select audience of cultivated people” demonstrated Bowser’s prominent status.⁴⁴

R. M. Manly also received an elaborate memorial service upon his death in 1897. The white Vermonter’s legacy as the Superintendent of Education for Virginia’s Freedmen’s Bureau, Richmond School Board member, educator, the principal of Richmond Colored Normal sparked many emotions and warm memories. As noted by Manly’s widow in 1933, “scores and scores of letters poured in upon me from his old pupils (many of them mine too) expressing their deep appreciation of what he had done for their people.” Former graduates and current students organized a special committee in order to devise a memorial service program and develop a plan for future commemorations in the school of their beloved former principal. The committee adopted a series of resolutions detailing how the school would remember Manly. Manly’s memory would be invoked continually in the training of future teachers as a model “to follow by example and precept the lesson of his pure and noble life.”

⁴⁴ “Richmond Items,” *People’s Advocate*, May 21, 1881, 2.

In addition, the committee commissioned a life-size portrait of Manly to suspend from the walls of Richmond Colored Normal. Recognizing the importance of Manly's legacy to Richmond Colored Normal, these resolutions ensured that Manly would forever be linked with Richmond Colored Normal until the school's closure as well as beyond. As a result of the commemorators' efforts, subsequent commemorations of the school would inadvertently include celebrations of the school's first principal.⁴⁵

Daniel Webster Davis delivered a poem in Manly's honor at the memorial service. His poem demonstrated the deep regard that former students held for Manly. Manly's efforts at the normal school opened many opportunities for the graduates and resulted in the devotion of Davis and others. The third verse exemplified the degree of the esteem held by normal graduates. Davis exclaimed:

He cannot die while yet a single one
Of dear old Normal lives to tell of years
Of labor great, but greater vict'ries won,
And fruits of seeds so sadly sown in tears,
That gentle, patient voice, though hushed in death,
Still speaks to grateful hearts in tones sublime,...

Davis also recognized Manly's service and unyielding faith in African American education. His legacy was far-reaching as evident in the next verse.

Far from thy Northern home, that thou didst leave
In years long past, to aid the freedman's child
Whose children's children now thy loss doth grieve.

From his service as the Superintendent of Education for Virginia's Freedmen Bureau to his position on Richmond's School Board to his position as principal of Richmond Colored Normal, Manly worked tirelessly for the cause of African-American education which yielded

⁴⁵Mary Patterson Manly to Virginius Johnson, May 12, 1933, letter, VHS; *In memoriam: Ralza Morse Manly, born January 16th, 1822, died, September 16th, 1897. "Requiscat in pace." First Baptist Church, Wednesday evening, November 24, 1897, eight o'clock* (Richmond: Grand Fountain Press, 1897), accessed at VHS.

success for Davis and countless others. This fact was neither lost upon Davis nor the attendees of the memorial service. As Davis's poem suggested, graduates and the broader African-American community lost a major advocate in their struggle to become a literate people.⁴⁶

Both Bowser's and Manly's memorial services reflected the collective memory of Richmond Colored Normal by the broader African-American community. The services epitomized the community's commitment and value placed upon education for racial uplift. Both events occurred in a prominent African-American church that often hosted graduation ceremonies and other events commemorating Richmond Colored Normal. In both services, commemorators depicted a particular image of the men as well as the school. Bowser's collective memory was of a pioneer to be remembered by future generations. Although he had left the teaching profession, the community highlighted his continued and unwavering commitment toward education with his club work. Likewise, commemorators downplayed Manly's flaws in favor of his work in African-American education. As noted in his memorial service, attendees considered Manly a friend, a mentor, and an ardent promoter of African-American education. They made no mention of his donation of the school to the city instead of establishing a trusteeship among members of the African-American community.

The minimization of Bowser's and Manly's flaws illustrates the relationship between remembering and forgetting essential to the development and maintenance of a collective memory. In discussing the relationship between remembrance and forgetting, Marita Sturken argued that "memories are created in tandem with forgetting; to remember everything would amount to being overwhelmed by memory. Forgetting is a necessary component in the

⁴⁶ Daniel Webster Davis, "In Memoriam," *In memoriam*, VHS.

construction of memory.” Memory construction and forgetting, therefore, are intrinsically linked. She further expounded that the act of forgetting is strategic and often an expression of power by those with the authority to shape the meaning of an event. Memory construction and remembrance of traumatic events also illustrate the power relations and the “stakes held by individuals and institutions attributing meaning to the past.” Stuken’s explanation of the connection between memory, forgetting, and power reflects African-Americans’ use of collective memory in the Bowser and Manly memorial services.⁴⁷

In 1881 and in 1897, African-American education faced a crisis. In 1881, Virginia’s bleak financial situation, uncertainty over the Readjuster political regime, community activism for all-African-American school faculties, and debates over industrial and classical education threatened the African-American public and secondary schools. 1897 saw worsening racial conditions and the Democrats’ unsuccessful attempts to overturn the 1868 state constitution that would lead to Jim Crow segregation in Virginia. Moreover, white Richmonders were also conducting a memory project devoted to the Lost Cause and removal of African-Americans from the city’s public spaces. Thus, commemorators deemed it necessary to remember Bowser’s and Manly’s achievement and to forget Bowser’s departure from the public schools and Manly’s flaws.⁴⁸

To be sure, a memorial service might not be an appropriate venue for discussions of one’s flaws, but the commemorators’ silences are revealing. Collective memories rely upon oral transmissions from generation to generation. Silences can become permanent based upon

⁴⁷ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, The AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 7-9.

⁴⁸ Dailey, 65-72, 162; J. Douglas Smith, *Managing White Supremacy: Race, Politics, and Citizenship in Jim Crow Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 23-29; Karen L. Cox, *Dixie Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 5, 49-72.

subsequent retellings to new generations. In both Bowser's and Manly's memorial services, the public remembrance and conscious forgetting reaffirmed graduates and community members' past and future commitment to education during the crisis period and provided a strategy to combat any detractors. These services also voiced an alternative memory that recognized African-American achievement and the benefits of Reconstruction. This alternative memory directly countered the memory project that romanticized the Confederacy and the "Lost Cause" while disparaging Reconstruction. Thus, subsequent reunions, memorial services, and other forms of commemoration focused upon Manly's image as the "father of negro education" and Bowser's pioneer status rather than their flaws. Hence, the conscious forgetting of certain aspects of the school's history and the experiences of the students, teachers, and administrators served an important function but it has allowed for the existence of major silences. Thus, reunions, memorial services, letters to Manly's widow for images and information, and other forms of commemoration found resonance well into the twentieth century as African American schools and teachers came under increasing attack by whites like Reverend Hoge in 1905. The collective memory of Richmond Colored Normal helped in the struggle for African American education during and after Educational Reconstruction. The conscious forgetting of certain aspects of the school's history and the experiences of the students, teachers, and administrators aided their struggle against critics.⁴⁹

Richmond Colored Normal addressed a crucial question raised by the creation of public schools in the Reconstruction constitutions – Who will teach African American

⁴⁹ Jane Dailey, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2000), 65-72, 162; J. Douglas Smith, *Managing White Supremacy: Race, Politics, and Citizenship in Jim Crow Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 23-29; Mary Patterson Manly to Virginius Johnson, May 12, 1933, letter, VHS; "In Memoriam: Dr. Daniel Webster Davis," section 7, Daniel Webster Davis Papers, VHS; Reverend Hoge, "Negro Education in the City [of Richmond] Public Schools," section 46 Hoge family papers, VHS.

students in the new state system? It fulfilled the need by training African Americans educators that served primarily rural Virginia and limited opportunities in Richmond itself during the 1870s. As the decade progressed, a shift from training teachers for rural Virginia to Richmond public school occurred only at the insistence of former graduates, the African American community demands for African American teachers in their schools, and the cooperation of Richmond School Board officials. Outside of the classroom, normal graduates participated in the racial uplift organizations that sought improvement of African American education and secured its continuation. Moreover, African Americans took an active role in training other teachers. As the national and local race relations worsened in the 1880s, graduates and the community promoted a particular memory of the school through reunions, memorial services, lectures and other forums. Richmond Colored Normal and its collective memory later served an important function in Richmond and Virginia during the early Jim Crow period. The school continued producing educators until it closed in 1909. Armstrong High School continued the work started by Richmond Colored Normal. These educator-activists permitted the African American community's continual participation in the decisions of their schools. Their broader activism worked alongside other community activism for racial uplift and civil rights.⁵⁰

Emerson Institute: Fulfilling Mobile's Needs

Acceptance by the Richmond community characterized the development of Richmond Colored Normal. On the other hand, white hostility, distrust, and struggle marked Mobile's experiences. Emerson Normal represented a community's resolve to have African

⁵⁰ "Richmond Colored High and Normal School (Armstrong)," *RPS: A Mini History: Bits & Pieces* (Richmond: Richmond Public School System, n.d.), <http://www.richmond.k12.va.us/indexnew/sub/history/armstrong.cfm>, accessed March 22, 2009.

American teachers in the city's African American public schools. Racial assumptions and white resistance toward African American education posed the primary obstacles to their aim. African Americans drew upon their relationships with the American Missionary Association and developed Emerson Normal. This school fulfilled their needs by creating a corps of qualified teachers. As a result, the African American community overcame a major obstacle in its fight for African American public school teachers. Slow and arduous, African American community's activism directly influenced Mobile's response to the teachers' crisis.

Racial assumptions thwarted teacher training during the initial years of the Freedmen's Schools. As in Richmond, influential white educational partners often viewed the African American educators in the independent Freedmen's Schools as incompetent and inexperienced. Charles W. Buckley, Superintendent of Education for the Freedmen's Bureau in Alabama, voiced this opinion in a report to Major General Wager Swayne. He wrote: "There are in Mobile several colored schools taught mostly by colored teachers. Some of these teachers are not competent for the position they fill. They need suggestions from experienced teachers...and thus bring those of the same degree of advancement into the same school." In the same report, Buckley noted that the school operated by E. C. Branch, a white educator, as "flourishing" and had "done a great work for the colored people of the city." For Buckley and other white racial moderates, the existing educated class of African Americans was inadequate for the work at hand. Like his Richmond counterparts, Buckley could not overcome the racial assumptions regarding slavery or the "stages-model." He accepted that slavery had prevented this class from attaining the experience and education necessary for teaching. Hence, Buckley viewed guidance and supervision by experienced white educators, like Branch, as necessary until a sizeable number of African Americans reached the

educational achievement for progression to normal training. He also discouraged independent schools with African American faculties and encouraged schools operated and administered by white Northern missionary associations.⁵¹

The Reconstruction Acts of 1867, the purchase of Emerson Institute by the American Missionary Association from the Freedmen's Bureau, and the establishment of public schools in Mobile facilitated a shift in racial attitudes toward African American teacher training. White educational partners who once opposed teacher training now deemed competent African American educators as essential for the future of African American education. R. D. Harper, Alabama's Superintendent of Education for the Freedmen's Bureau, remarked in a May 1868 report to O. O. Howard that "obtaining competent teachers" was one of the "chief obstacles to our work." Harper, though, viewed Emerson Institute as a solution to this problem for Mobile and its county. He found the American Missionary Association's implementation of a normal program among its most advanced students at Emerson Institute by its current teachers encouraging. According to Harper, the principal selected ten of the "more advanced students, male and female," and met with them privately regarding "the importance of qualifying themselves for teaching." These selected students accepted and entered the program. Harper reported that school officials hoped to train additional teachers "who will be well qualified for the work of teaching the people of their own color or indeed of any color. This it seems to me is the way and the only way in which the freedpeople of the South can be educated..." The school board challenge of the late 1860s and early 1870s

⁵¹ C. W. Buckley, Draft Report Made to Major General Swayne Relative to Colored Schools, March 30, 1866, microfilm roll 1, AL-BRFAL-ED.

stopped the nascent program.⁵²

Resolution of the dual school board challenge in the early 1870s, though, never addressed the teacher crisis. The Mobile County Board of School Commissioners still faced tremendous pressure to adequately staff the white, African American and Creole schools with personnel, specifically teachers. Political partisanship prevented the state from providing assistance. In making their decision, the Mobile County Board of School Commissioners could have drawn upon several sources for teachers in the African American and Creole schools. First, they could have drawn upon the growing class of black Southern teachers who were educated in Northern colleges or in normal programs created under the Freedmen's Bureau. Graduates of Talladega College, Fisk University, Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute and other schools availed themselves upon Southern public school systems for employment. In 1870, John Alvord reported the existence of 74 advanced schools and colleges for African Americans in the South with over 8,000 students enrolled. Alabama, according to Alvord's report, had five schools and 314 enrolled students. The Mobile County Board of School Commissioners, though, found this option unacceptable during the initial years of its public schools.⁵³

Second, the Board could have continued the practice of hiring Northern missionaries and teachers for the African American schools. As discussed in the previous chapter, the

⁵² R. D. Harper, Report to O. O. Howard, April 15, 1868, roll 1, AL-BRFAL-ED; Harper replaced Buckley in late 1867. Chapter two goes into greater detail on the school board debate in which two school boards competed for legitimacy and control over the Mobile city and county schools.

⁵³ Horace Mann Bond, *Negro Education in Alabama* (1939; Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994), 96-97; George Sisk, "Negro Education in the Alabama Black Belt, 1875-1900," *Journal of Negro Education* 22, no. 2 (Spring 1953): 126-128; Henry N. Drewry and Humphrey Doermann, *Stand and Prosper: Private Black Colleges and Their Students* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 45-48; John Alvord, *Tenth Semi-Annual Report on Schools for Freedmen, July 1, 1870* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1870), 5-7 in *Freedmen's Schools and Textbooks* Robert C. Morris, editor (New York: AMS Press, Inc, 1980); Joe M. Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 118.

American Missionary Association maintained its operation and control of the Emerson Institute after the Freedmen's Bureau schools officially ended and city-operated schools began. The Board decided against maintaining an alliance with the American Missionary Association. Board members determined that schools independent of the Northern society for black and Creole children better suited their needs. They based their decision on complaints, often mentioned in the white press during the early years of Reconstruction, pertaining to the invasion of Northern outsiders who forced African American education, morals, and notions of freedom and citizenship onto the community. These invaders created a hostile environment in Mobile over the clash of ideas and visions for the postwar city. The departure of the Freedmen's Bureau and regulation of the American Missionary Association school to a private school status gave the Board of School Commissioners full power and control over the African American public schools. The Board controlled the materials taught, distribution of financial resources, and the hiring of teachers. To ensure their power, the Board of School Commissioners adopted a policy of hiring white teachers as the principal educators in the African American and Creole Schools. To be sure, a few Freedmen's School educators not associated with the American Missionary Association received positions. Howard Hall remained in Mobile and became a resident. His relocation and loyalty to the Board allowed for his employment from 1871 to 1887. The Board rarely hired African American and Creole teachers. If hired, the teachers often served as assistant teachers, aides or supernumeraries in the schools and not in the capacity of principal instructors. Sara Stanley Woodward was an exception. The former Emerson Institute teacher found employment as the principal of the St. Louis School from 1871 to 1874. It is likely that School Commissioners were unaware of her racial background and inter-racial marriage to Freedmen's Saving Bank administrator,

Charles Woodward. City directories often mistakenly noted her race as white although Woodward publicly proclaimed race as African American. This lack of awareness permitted her to avoid the fate of other African Americans in the public schools.⁵⁴

The African American and Creole communities attacked these hiring practices by pursuing several options independently. The private and parochial school system was one option. M. H. Leatherman cited the poor quality of the public schools and the teachers as the reason for her and others decision to send their children to private schools. According to her letter to the American Missionary Association, “There are a great many free schools about the city but as they do not amount to much, the people do not care to send their children, so long as there is any alternative.” Withdrawal from the public schools often gave African American and Creole parents more control over who instructed their children. Only a small percentage pursued this option. Demographically, these families belonged to the elite and middle classes in the community or had steady employment to cover the tuition costs. Creoles of Color utilized the parochial schools created and maintained for the Creole parishioners by the Mobile Archdiocese and Catholic charitable organizations. Creoles as well as African Americans utilized the private schools that individual educated members of their community operated often out of their homes. Tuition and other expenses made this

⁵⁴Mobile’s conservative white newspapers disparaged the Northern white educators whenever possible. For examples, see “Riotous,” *Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register*, September 8, 1865, “Southern Education,” *Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register*, February 18, 1866, 2 and “A Lecture,” *Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register*, July 1, 1871, 2; “Poisonous Doctrines,” *Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register*, May 5, 1867, 2; Walter Fleming and other Dunning School trained historians perpetuated this depiction of the Northern teachers espoused in the Mobile’s white conservative press in their effort to dismiss Reconstruction in Alabama. Horace Mann Bond’s dissertation and later published as *Negro Education in Alabama* was an earliest revisionist account of the Dunning scholarship. Beginning with the works of Robert Morris, Jacqueline Jones, and Ronald Butchart provided a model that successfully overturned the Dunning School interpretations. Richardson, 112-113; Mobile City Directories, 1871-1874; Ellen NicKenzie Lawson and Marlene D. Merrill, *The Three Sarahs: Documents of Antebellum Black College Women* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1994), 48-50, 54-63. As noted in a previous chapter, Sarah Stanley was light-skinned African American proud of her racial heritage. She continually challenged the racism within the American Missionary Association with her outspokenness of organizational policies and through her marriage to Charles Woodward; Mobile City Directories, 1870-1887.

option unattainable for the majority of families and children in the city's public schools. This option, furthermore, never adequately addressed the lack of African American educators in the schools.⁵⁵

African Americans directly appealed to the Board of School Commissioners as another option. They held special mass meetings in which they developed a course of action of petitioning and later providing the school board with qualified applicants. Petitioning had been a longstanding tactic employed by the community in dealing with the school board. According to historian Horace Mann Bond, the Colored Mass Convention of the State of Alabama held at the Stone Street Church in Mobile adopted a series of resolutions on May 2, 1867. One resolution called for the expansion of the Mobile schools and the state system to include African Americans. While the white conservative press viewed these resolutions as "poisonous doctrines," the Mobile County Board of School Commissioners response to this demand led to C. S. Bradford's proposal of partnership with the Freedmen's Bureau in August 1867. As a result, the African American community felt that petitioning was an appropriate tactic in their campaign for teachers.⁵⁶

The community also launched a campaign of having educated members of their community apply directly to the Board of School Commissioners. These candidates had attained an advanced education and the majority had completed a normal school curriculum

⁵⁵M. H. Leatherman to E. M. Cravath, October 15, 1872, microfilm roll 3, AMA Papers, Alabama; Mobile City Directories, 1870-1890.

⁵⁶ Bond, 84; "Colored Mass Convention of the State of Alabama," *Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register*, May 4, 1867, 2; "Poisonous Doctrines," *Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register*, May 5, 1867, p. 2; As noted in chapter two, Bradford's inquiry to the Freedmen's Bureau agents led a partnership between the board of school commissioners, Bureau and American Missionary Association. This resulted in the city opening its public schools to the African American community. Bradford's initial letter failed mentioning the May 2, 1867 mass meeting. He instead stated that the Board received an "inquiry". This inquiry was the petition developed at the meeting discussed by Bond. For the initial inquiry, see C. S. Bradford to C. W. Buckley, August 7, 1867, roll 1, AL-BRFAL-ED.

at a reputable institution. On paper, these individuals met the stringent state teaching requirements and were suitable candidates for a teaching position in the school system. However, commissioners either rejected or hired the qualified candidates as assistant teachers, aides, or supernumeraries. According to the meeting minutes, the Board of School Commissioners stated that it considered all applicants equally and based their decision on the applicant's meeting the stringent Alabama qualifications, prior teaching experience, and letters of recommendation. In response to complaints received, the Board argued that they found the white candidates often more qualified than the non-white applicants. Hence, the few non-white applicants hired met their standards. Despite its limited success, Reverend E. D. Taylor and other community leaders continued this course of action.⁵⁷

After several consecutive teaching cycles, the African American community sought another course of action. Faced with a reluctant school board, a third option emerged. African American parents turned to the American Missionary Association for assistance. This decision, though, was not made hastily. The society continued its operations of the Emerson Institute which offered primary, intermediate, and advanced classes. Students who withdrew from the public schools often flocked to this affordable private school as noted by the school's principal, Maria Waterbury, and parents such as M. L. Leatherman. Yet, the organization's handling of the dual School Board debate left many in the community weary. After this affair, American Missionary Association administrators debated remaining in the city. Their contemplation resulted in the inadequate administration of the school and associated church and a revolving door of American Missionary Association missionaries

⁵⁷ *Records of the Board of School Commissioners for Mobile County, Minutes, 1871-1887*, Mobile County Public Schools, Barton Academy, Mobile, Alabama; For the common response to questioning of its practices, see "Public Schools," *Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register*, July 4, 1871, 3; and September 18, 1878 Meeting Minutes, *Records of the Board of School Commissioners for Mobile County, Minutes, 1871-1887*, MCPSS; Mobile County City Directory, 1878.

and agents. As a result, the African American community lost confidence in the organization. Aware of the community's frustration, Reverend Edward P. Lord wrote his supervisors: "If anything is ever going to be done in Mobile, Emerson Inst. ought never to deceive the Cold'd people again. We have had uphill work all this year in gaining back the confidence which the Inst. had forfeited." The Board of School Commissioner's reluctance caused African Americans to overlook any previous frustration and disappointment in their relationship with the organization.⁵⁸

Parents and community leaders approached the organization regarding expanding their existing curriculum to include normal school instruction. They hoped that the proposed program would meet the stringent state teacher's certification standards. Program graduates would then provide a pool of qualified applicants for the city to draw upon and block any arguments made upon a lack of credentials. Moreover, the location of the school in Mobile would lessen the expenses incurred if the student undertook a program at another institution in the state or region. Indeed, a normal school instruction program would better the chances of achieving the communities' desire for black public school teachers. The community had every reason to believe that a normal program would result from their appeals. Enrolled students and their parents previously made requests for additions to the curriculum with much success. As a result of student requests, the curriculum expanded to include Latin, French, vocal music, instrumental music, and courses in higher mathematics. The

⁵⁸ Maria Waterbury to E. M. Cravath, November 6, 1871, microfilm roll 2, AMA Papers, Alabama; Maria Waterbury to E. M. Cravath, November 21, 1871, microfilm roll 2, AMA Papers, Alabama; M. H. Leatherman to E. M. Cravath, October 15, 1872, microfilm roll 3, AMA Papers, Alabama; E. P. Lord to E. M. Cravath, June 13, 1873, microfilm roll 3, AMA Papers, Alabama. AMA missionaries frequently noted in their correspondence that the organization's indecision and poor administration of the Mobile affairs resulted in a "loss of confidence" and their progress in regaining it. For examples, see W. J. Squire to E. M. Cravath, July 31, 1872, microfilm roll 2, AMA Papers, Alabama, E. P. Lord to E. M. Cravath, January 11, 1873, microfilm roll 3, AMA Papers, Alabama, E. P. Lord to E. M. Cravath, May 28, 1873, microfilm roll 3, AMA Papers, Alabama.

organization yielded to these requests in order to ensure enrollment and tuition revenues. Although the historical record is silent on the specific requests made for the normal program, it is evident by the principal's correspondence to AMA headquarters that community pressure led to development of Emerson Normal. Moreover, Ralph Emerson, Jr. infused additional financial support in 1872 in order to fund a normal program. Without communal pressure, the organization would not have embarked upon fundraising efforts for a school considered to be a preparatory school for Talladega College, a theological and normal school operated by the American Missionary Association in Alabama. The presence of Reverend Edward P. Lord, the new energetic principal of Emerson Institute, also aided their struggle. Lord was determined to make a viable normal program at Emerson Institute. In Lord, the Mobile community found a strong advocate. By the 1873-1874 academic year, Emerson Normal had been organized and was in full operation.⁵⁹

Emerson Normal reinvigorated the African American community's relationship with the American Missionary Association in Mobile. Emerson Normal transformed the nature of Emerson Institute from merely a feeder school for Talladega College to a normal and preparatory school. African Americans now had access to a program in the city that could aid their quest for African American teachers in the public schools. Advertisements announcing the opening of the 1873-1874 academic year proudly publicized this new focus: "Special attention given to those who wish to Teach, and those preparing for the Ministry." In order to provide the "best Normal and Academic Institutions in the South," the school's curriculum

⁵⁹ School principals frequently cited student requests as reasons for the addition of new courses or teachers at Emerson Institute. For examples of students requesting additional courses, see Maria Waterbury to E. M. Cravath, November 6, 1871, microfilm roll 2, AMA Papers, Alabama; Maria Waterbury to E. M. Cravath, November 20, 1871, microfilm roll 2, AMA Papers, Alabama; Maria Waterbury to E. M. Cravath, February 17, 1872, microfilm roll 2, AMA Papers, Alabama and E. P. Lord to E. M. Cravath, January 22, 1873, microfilm roll 3, AMA Papers, Alabama; Willis Clark, *History of Education in Alabama, 1702-1889* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889), 280; Richardson, 119.

included courses typically taught in the public school system and other normal programs such as Latin, Geometry, Natural Philosophy, and Physiology. The curriculum also included hands-on training in the primary and intermediate classes conducted at Emerson Institute. Principals strove to “draw the young people into the earnest Christian influence which we strive to exact upon all of our scholars and send them out again as Christian teachers.” As with other normal programs of the period, school administrators considered hands-on training invaluable. As a result, the school found summer teaching employment for several promising students beginning with the summer of 1874. In addition to the traditional normal program curriculum, the donation of a printing press permitted advanced Emerson Normal students to learn the operation of printing presses. Students then employed this skill in the publication of the school’s newspaper and materials for the Sabbath Schools. Emerson Normal students, including William A. Caldwell, Mary Europe, and Artemesia Europe, also served on the editorial board for the school’s newspaper. The robust curriculum made the initial students qualified for both teaching and administering a student newspaper within their future schools upon graduation. By 1876, E. P. Lord, school principal reported approximately 100 students attending the normal program with the possibility of four students graduating from the program.⁶⁰

In the spring of 1876, Emerson Normal held its first graduation exercises. Former slaves comprised the graduating class. The Europe sisters, Artemesia and Mary, received their entire education from primary to normal solely at Emerson Institute. Both sisters

⁶⁰ “Announcement – Opening of Emerson Institute,” enclosed in E. P. Lord to E. M. Cravath, September 29, 1873, microfilm roll 3, AMA Papers, Alabama; For curriculum offered, see D. L. Hickok to M.E. Strieby, December 10, 1878, microfilm roll 7, AMA Papers, Alabama; E. P. Lord to E. M. Cravath, April 10, 1874, microfilm roll 3, AMA Papers, Alabama; E. P. Lord to M. E. Strieby, January 11, 1876, microfilm roll 5, AMA Papers, Alabama; E. P. Lord to M. E. Strieby, February 14, 1876, microfilm roll 5, AMA Papers, Alabama; E. P. Lord to M. E. Strieby, May 11, 1876, microfilm roll 5, AMA Papers, Alabama; E. P. Lord to M. E. Strieby, January 11, 1876, microfilm roll 5, AMA Papers, Alabama.

initially received appointments as educators and administrators initially in the city's private school systems. Mary Europe Jones, the elder sister, eventually left the private school system and devoted her energies to motherhood. She occasionally operated a private school out of her home in order to supplement her family's income. Artemesia Europe eventually received a teaching position in the Mobile County public school system when the Board of School commissioners began hiring African American teachers in earnest.⁶¹

William Aymar (W. Aymar) Caldwell graduated alongside the Europe sisters. Born on September 22, 1859, Caldwell pursued normal training and Congregationalism against the advice of young African American men living in his neighborhood. According to a letter written by his normal school teacher, Kate A. Lord, the youth regarded Caldwell's decision as "sinning against the Holy Ghost." Caldwell dismissed this advice and pursued both. As his instructor recounted, Caldwell knew that his reward would "be everlasting life." Caldwell's drive and academic success garnered the praise and support from his instructors. Like the Europe sisters, Caldwell did not receive a teaching position in the Mobile schools upon graduation. Instead, he enrolled and graduated from Talladega College. As a student at Talladega, he remained involved in the community by actively participating in the community's challenges to the county's hiring practices.⁶²

⁶¹ American Missionary Association, *Catalog of the Teachers and Student, Course of Study, Etc., of Emerson Normal Institute, Mobile, Alabama, 1900-1901* (Mobile: A. N. Johnson, 1901), pp. 6-9; "Population Schedule for City of Mobile, Alabama," *Population Schedules of the Ninth Census of the United States, 1870*, microfilm roll 31, National Archives Microfilm Publication M593 (Washington : National Archives, National Archives and Records Service, General Services Administration, [196-]). Population Schedules in the 1870 Census reported Mary and Artemesia Europe as being 17 and 15 years old respectively. By 1876, the sisters were approximately 23 and 21 years old. For a complete list of Emerson Normal graduates, see Appendix 7.

⁶² Paulette Davis-Horton, *The Avenue: The Place, The People, The Memories* (Mobile: Horton, Inc., 1991), 24; Kate A. Lord to E. M. Cravath, July 2, 1874, microfilm roll 4, AMA Papers, Alabama; Friends and close acquaintances referred to the William A. Caldwell by his middle name, Aymar, rather than his first name. Caldwell also often signed his name W. Aymar Caldwell. Thus, both William A. Caldwell and W. Aymar Caldwell appeared interchangeably in the historical record.

As Emerson Normal held its first graduation, arsonists struck. The resulting fire destroyed Emerson Institute in April 1876. The school's destruction, though, did not result in the effects desired by the arsonists. The African American community and American Missionary Association relationship strengthened rather than weakened. African Americans, in particular, evoked the memory of the destroyed building in their activism. "Remember Old Blue" and "Remember Blue College" became their rallying cry as "Remember the Alamo" had been for the Texans during its war for independence. The community participated at the ground-breaking ceremony at the school's new location in December 1877. At this ceremony, Reverends William Ash, Albert F. Owens, and E. D. Taylor delivered addresses. These African American ministers, specifically Owens and Taylor, commended the partnership while stressing a message of racial uplift through education. Owens' address praised the American Missionary Association for its continued participation in the city's educational efforts. The *American Missionary* noted that Owens "said that ignorance was our greatest enemy, and that the building which was to be erected might be regarded as a fort, from which guns were to be aimed at this inveterate foe, and exhorted the people to sustain the teachers who were leading them in their intellectual and moral warfare." Taylor's remarks focused upon the educational achievement of the race while commending the rebuilding efforts. In an anecdotal style, the elder minister remarked that "he had been taught that the negro race could not be educated---that his brains lay in his heels, etc; but he was glad to see proof to the contrary in the speeches that had just been made by Mr. Ash and Mr. Owen[s]." In both addresses, Owens and Taylor pointed to the mental and intellectual skills achieved through the useful education. These skills, according to the men, justified the continued partnership in the "warfare" against white resistance. The partnership and

rebuilding efforts affirmed their resolve and activism. Thus, normal and primary classes continued in a rented, ill-suited, old store building in the city while construction at the new Holley Garden location occurred. Construction completed in late April 1878.⁶³

Reverend E. D. Taylor's address featured prominently at the school's dedication ceremony in May 1878. His remarks encapsulated the feelings of the African American community. "I have cautiously watched the movements of these teachers and their school work, and I am convinced that they are here for the lifting up of my race, and as I go down the steps of life," Taylor told the audience. He proclaimed: "I look back upon this school, and these teachers, with a great deal of pleasure knowing that they are leading my people out from a bondage worse than slavery. I thank God that we have these friends to help us." Taylor's comments illustrated the importance of the educational partnerships formed. In this example, the partnership worked. While the partnership brought frustration sometimes, Taylor reminded the overwhelming African American audience that the partnership also produced fruitful results. Hence, Emerson Normal and the partnership endured. Neither fell apart after the fire. Perseverance and overcoming obstacles had defined the community's long struggle for African American teachers. The fire was one of many obstacles faced. The school's rededication, as Taylor's comments suggest, validated their struggle and enabled their perseverance against adversity. Hence, the destruction of "Blue College" never deterred

⁶³ The American Missionary Association transferred Reverend E. P. Lord from Mobile to Talladega shortly after the fire. Albert Irwin acted as school's principal and occasional instructor during the relocation and rebuilding process from 1876 to 1877. Irwin transferred to Talladega College at the end of the 1876-1877 academic year. Miss B. F. Koons replaced him during the 1877-1878 academic year and was principal when the school reopened. Avenue, 24; Professor T. N. Chase, "Alabama: Breaking Ground for New Emerson Institute," *The American Missionary* 32, no. 3 (March 1878): 78, VF-Emerson Institute, University of South Alabama Archives, Mobile, AL (USA Archives); B. F. Koons, "Alabama: Dedication of Emerson Institute," *The American Missionary* 32, no. 7 (July 1878): 212, VF-Emerson Institute, USA Archives.

them from fulfilling their goal.⁶⁴

Despite its relocation, arson plagued the school again during the winter of 1881-1882. This fiery attempt to permanently close the school initially caused sadness. Emerson principal, Emma Caughey, bemoaned the school's destruction:

Emerson Institute is lying in ruins. For the second time in her history she is smoldering in ashes, and we are in mourning for the destruction of our little church, made dear by so many sacred and hallowed associations, and our beautiful school building in which so many happy hours of toil have been spent and labors of love performed.... the enemy approaches again and applies the torch---this time with marvelous success.

While Caughey mourned the destroyed building, the African American community jumped immediately into action by evoking the memory of "Old Blue College." Reverend Albert F. Owens, pastor of the Third Baptist Church, made his church's basement available. Other ministers followed Owens' lead. As a result of the community's initiative and resolve, classes resumed within days of the fire. In an article to the *American Missionary*, Caughey reported that the school reopened "on Monday, Jan. 30, with three departments, at the Third Baptist Church, about one mile from the 'Home' and two departments in the basement of the Little Zion Church, about three blocks distant from the Home..." Moreover, the rebuilding process occurred faster than after the first fire. Emerson Normal and Emerson Institute reopened in October, 1882. Normal graduation rates suffered as a result of the arson, poverty of the students, and a major yellow fever epidemic. However, the school continued supplying qualified African American teachers to the city's schools. After the initial graduation, the next graduation did not occur until 1880 in which two graduated. Two graduated in 1884,

⁶⁴ Koons, "Alabama: Dedication of Emerson Institute," 212.

nine in 1887, five in 1889 and two in 1890. Arson and extreme acts of violence to the physical structure of the school declined in response to the resiliency of the American Missionary Association and African American community's relationship.⁶⁵

Evoking the memory of "Blue College" also resulted in the shift in the African American community's struggle for African American public school teachers. After the first normal class graduated, hopes for the employment of African American teachers and all African American teaching staffs were quickly dashed. The Mobile County Board of School Commissioners refused to hire the graduates from the inaugural class. The Board's continued resistance dismayed the African American community. In 1878, Reverend E. D. Taylor, the pastor of the Good Hope and Mount Moriah Methodist churches, Reverend Albert F. Owens, and several African American leaders petitioned the Board regarding its hiring practices. Petitioners questioned the Board's decision in not hiring qualified African American teachers. They demanded transparency by inquiring how the board made its decision before insisting upon the hiring of black teachers in the future. The Board responded to the petition in their September 18, 1878 meeting. Swayed by their activism and the existence of Emerson Normal, the Mobile County Board of School Commissioners adopted the following resolution:

The Board of School Commissioners have given our weight to the regard of the petitioners and agree that other things being equal, it would be reasonable to prefer Colored teachers for Colored schools. But in the organization of [them] be found capable of managing them and it [is] the Established policy of this Board to make

⁶⁵ Emma Caughey, "Emerson Institute, Mobile, Ala., Burned," *The American Missionary*, 36, no. 3 (March 1882): 80-81, VF-Emerson Institute, USA Archives; Emma Caughey, "Emerson Institute," *The American Missionary*, 37, no. 6 (June 1883): 172, VF-Emerson Institute, USA Archives; Clark, 280; Catalog, 7-8; Reverend D. L. Hickok noted the role of poverty in preventing many Normal students from continuing their studies but he was not dismayed. See, "Opening of Schools: Emerson Institute, Mobile, Ala., *The American Missionary* 35, no. 11 (November 1881): 332-333, VF-Emerson Institute, USA Archives; See Appendix 7 for a complete list of graduates.

places for others whether white or Colored, when new Schools are Established or vacancies occur in the Colored Schools, The Claims of Colored applicants to fill the same will receive consideration and when equally competent in Scholarship and ability to govern will have the preference in selection.

After this resolution, William A. Caldwell found employment as the principal of the Good Hope School during the 1878-1879 academic year and then from 1881 to 1887.⁶⁶

Caldwell's hiring made possible the employment of other Emerson Normal graduates. The African American community deemed Caldwell's hiring as a victory and continued pressuring the Board of School Commissioners for additional teachers. The community submitted qualified applicants for the Board's consideration, petitioned the Board directly and even threatened a boycott of the public schools. Community pressure, the success of Caldwell, and the presence of Emerson Normal eventually led to an increase in the number of African Americans teachers employed by the mid-1880s. Artemesia Europe permanently moved from the private to public school system in 1887 after taking a mid-year appointment in 1885. Non-Emerson Normal graduates also received teaching positions, especially those who had attended Emerson Institute as students. For instance, William R. Gleason began his normal training at Emerson Normal but completed it elsewhere. Upon graduation, Gleason worked diligently alongside William A. Caldwell as a teacher at the Good Hope School from 1884 to 1887. Other Emerson Institute graduates, including Annie Ewing, Mattie Ewing, and Theresa Page, received teaching positions during the 1880s. Without the presence of these local schools and continued community pressure, the struggle for teachers and better conditions may have continued much longer.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ September 18, 1878 Meeting Minutes, *Records of the Board of School Commissioners for Mobile County, Minutes, 1871-1887*, MCPSS; Mobile County City Directory, 1878-1890.

⁶⁷ *Records of the Board of School Commissioners for Mobile County, Minutes, 1871-1887*, MCPSS; Mobile City Directories, 1879-1890; Fitzgerald, 264-265; *Catalog of Teachers and Students*, 6-9, 24-28; Davis-Horton, 235.

Emerson Normal graduates also challenged the racism within the American Missionary Association. William A. Caldwell addressed this cause when the organization removed Reverend William H. Ash, an African American minister, in 1878. Caldwell was an active member of the First Congregational Church, the church sponsored by the American Missionary Association. He and other members questioned the organization's lack of hiring African American educators and ministers who had graduated from their higher educational institutions. They voiced their concerns in several conversations with J. D. Smith. American Missionary Association officials hired this advanced theological student at Talladega College for its religious efforts while the regular ministry vacationed during the Summer of 1877. In a letter to American Missionary Association administrators, Smith outlined their demands: "I have had men say to me, "Smith if a colored minister would come here and show to the people that he is true to his principles; not suffering himself to be led astray in five or six months, he would soon be the means of leading the more intelligent class without much difficulty." He concurred with their reasoning and recommended, on their behalf, the hiring of the "young men...being trained up in our Schools and Colleges." Congregation members had valid concerns. While the organization hired advanced students from Talladega and other American Missionary Association colleges during the summer months, the organization relied predominantly upon white Northern missionaries as educators at Emerson Normal and Institute and at the First Congregational Church during the academic year. American Missionary Association officials addressed this questioning by transferring Reverend William H. Ash from Providence, Rhode Island, to Mobile in 1878.⁶⁸

The African American church community, including Caldwell, considered the hiring

⁶⁸ J. D. Smith to M. E. Strieby, September 18, 1877, microfilm roll 6, AMA Papers-Alabama.

of Reverend William H. Ash a victory. Ash's hiring signaled to them a possible change in the organization's hiring practices that had the potential of extending to Emerson Normal and Institute. Caldwell drafted an appreciative letter to the AMA on behalf of the congregants. The letter opened: "Dear sir, we the undersigned members of the 1st Congregation Church of Mobile Alabama take this method of showing you our appreciation of our worthy pastor Rev. W. H. Ash, whom you have sent amongst us." Caldwell and the eight other signers felt that Ash exerted "a powerful influence for good in our community." Caldwell and the other petitioners reasoned: "He is just man the colored people of Mobile need." In detailing their appreciation, church members noted the early results. Results included increased membership among young people and the educated middle class and elevating the public opinion in regards to Congregationalism. William H. Ash's transfer sparked much enthusiasm in Mobile.⁶⁹

Ash's actions as a minister justified their enthusiasm. Ash implemented new programs which addressed the concerns of the congregants and African American community. The Aristotle Literary Club was one such program. This literary society attracted church members, Emerson Normal graduates, African American educators, and members of the middle class. Ash reported that the club's members included "the true representatives---or rather, the best representatives---of the colored population in our city." The club organized public programs consisting of literary discussions, musical entertainment, and debates. Like other period literary societies, the Aristotle Literary Club promoted a new literate identity which highlighted educational achievement since the end of the Civil War. As a result of the implementation of new programs, church enrollment increased. Ash recognized the success

⁶⁹ W. Aymar Caldwell to M. E. Strieby, May 31, 1878, microfilm roll 6, AMA Papers-Alabama.

of his efforts resulted from “his peculiar relation and identification with my race [which gave him an] advantage over them [the white Emerson teachers].” Unlike his white predecessors and other white AMA missionaries, Ash achieved a status within the African American community because he better integrated himself into the community. As result, the African American community found an ally to combat the racism within the organization. Ash recommended the hiring of African American teachers for Emerson Normal and Institute as a means to increase the community’s faith in the organization and the school. His recommendation reflected the community’s desire to breakdown the racism within the Mobile County Board of School Commissioners and the American Missionary Association.⁷⁰

Racism within the American Missionary Association provoked Ash’s removal. Ash often complained that Emerson Normal and Institute administrators purposely kept him uninformed of school happenings. In his complaints, he alluded to racism as the reason. For instance, principal B. F. Koons never informed Ash or church congregants of the school’s ground breaking ceremony. Happenstance, according to Ash in a letter to C. L. Woodward, made him aware of the event. He confronted Koons and insisted that he and other African American ministers be added to the ceremony which only featured white participants. Ash’s complaints proved valid. Emerson Institute missionaries purposely excluded Ash from the educational efforts. Indeed, B. F. Koons’ negative appraisals of Ash led to his removal. She claimed that Ash lacked the knowledge of properly leading a Sabbath School and a church. She also claimed that the “colored population” had more faith in her, a Northern white missionary, than Ash, an African American. Koons’ assessment convinced American

⁷⁰ William H. Ash, “The Church and the Literary Club,” *American Missionary* 32, no. 7 (July 1878): 213, VF-Emerson Institute, USA Archives; McHenry, 141-142; William H. Ash to M. E. Strieby, February 26, 1878, microfilm roll 6, AMA Papers, Alabama; William H. Ash to M. E. Strieby, March 13, 1878, microfilm roll 6, AMA Papers, Alabama.

Missionary Association administrators to contemplate and eventually remove Reverend Ash for another field.⁷¹

The decision shocked and dismayed the African American community. They had previously voiced their approval of Ash's hiring to the organization and could not understand the organization's decision. Caldwell actively participated in the special meetings for the organization's reconsideration of Ash's removal. Meeting participants employed petitioning as their course of action. Caldwell drafted one of the numerous petitions and letters sent to the organization's New York headquarters. Interestingly, Caldwell began the petition by citing the uniqueness of Mobile as a urban center and its large number of educated African Americans in relation to other areas in the state. Caldwell noted:

Mobile being the metropolis of Alabama, we have here a large representation of the intelligent element of the colored people than can be found in other place in the state. We also have a better class of colored citizens to whom the above facts in relation to the moral and religious condition of a people have for a long time been painfully evident.

Caldwell regarded Ash's ability to attract and sustain the interests of the educated middle class and not simply the masses as a reason for him to remain in the city. He reasoned: "The hearts of this class have been made to rejoice and thank God that such a man as Rev. Ashe [sic] has been sent in our midst." This population had always been a target of the American Missionary Association in developing an African American leadership in the postwar period. Caldwell recognized this and employed it as an explanation for the organization's reconsideration of Ash's removal.⁷²

⁷¹ William H. Ash to C. L. Woodward, June 10, 1878, microfilm roll 6, AMA Papers, Alabama; B. F. Koons to M. E. Strieby, April 13, 1878, microfilm roll 6, AMA Papers, Alabama.

⁷² W. Aymar Caldwell, et. tal. to George Harris, June 18, 1878, microfilm roll 6, AMA Papers-Alabama. In addition to the Caldwell petition, the community sent several petitions and letters. See Isaac Goddard, et. tal. to M. E. Strieby, June 18, 1878, microfilm roll 6, AMA-Papers, Alabama, R. W. Jammitte to Pastor, June 25, 1878, microfilm roll 6, AMA-Papers, Alabama, Congregational Church to M. E. Strieby, n.d. June 1878,

Caldwell then argued for retaining Ash on the basis of his position as an educational and moral leader in Mobile. The American Missionary Association regarded the development of African American leadership as a major organizational aim. Missionaries prepared their students for entry into the middle class and for becoming moral leaders in their respective communities. As an Emerson Normal graduate, Caldwell appealed to this fundamental organizational aim. He wrote:

Since he has been here, he has accomplished a great amount of good by his influence and example both for the church and the community. His ability as a scholar and his model deportment as a minister of the gospel has won for him the respect and admiration of both white and colored in our city. He has certainly rendered faithful and efficient service in the cause of education and Christianity.

By citing Ash's personal character and leadership abilities, Caldwell hoped to show that he lived and instilled the values promoted by organization at Emerson Normal and the church. Through his example, Ash inspired others.⁷³

Lastly, Caldwell pointed toward the educational programs implemented under Ash's administration. Since 1865, the American Missionary Association had stressed religion and education as the best means to achieve the transition from slavery to freedom in Mobile. The moral and intellectual development of African Americans guided their missionary efforts as an organization. As an educated, African American minister, Ash instilled these values through the programs established under his administration. "He has especially interested himself in the young people here, and one grand result of his efforts in that direction may be seen in the 'Aristotle Literary Club,' the only successful organization of its kind ever before established among our people here," Caldwell reminded AMA officials. Through this

microfilm roll 6, AMA-Papers, Alabama, Marten Gladen, et. tal to M. E. Strieby, July 15, 1878, microfilm roll 6, AMA Papers, Alabama, and A. F. Owens, et. tal to M. E. Strieby, July 17, 1878, microfilm roll 6, AMA Papers, Alabama.

⁷³ Ibid.

organization, Caldwell argued that “[a] greater thirst for knowledge and improvement has been created among them than has ever been seen before.” After outlining the community’s arguments, Caldwell concluded the petition with a demand. He wrote: “Hence we feel that his removal from here just now would be really detrimental to the cause of religion, morality and education. Impelled by the highest motives and a deep solicitude for the welfare of my people I pen you these few lines...” Caldwell’s and the other petitions, however, never swayed administrators whom were committed to Ash’s removal. The organization’s explanation of Ash’s removal never satisfied Caldwell. He offered a rebuttal. Despite the arguments made by Reverend M. E. Strieby, Caldwell still advocated for Rev. Ash to remain in the city. In this instance, Caldwell’s efforts failed.⁷⁴

While Emerson Normal graduates continued questioning the organization’s practices, they remained devoted to the school. Internal questioning and reform efforts never overshadowed the broader struggle for teacher training and African American teaching faculties. Graduates understood the limits of the partnership. Undaunted by failure, graduates refashioned their useful education in a way that allowed them to sustain the partnership. Their Emerson Normal training and their sense of obligation to the African American community drove their activism within and outside the classroom for the benefit of the entire community.

The resiliency of the African American educational relationships and the sheer determination of the community made the Mobile County Board of School Commissioners reconsider their position regarding African American teacher training. The county opened Broad Street Academy, a public normal school, in 1887. The school drew upon Mobile’s

⁷⁴ Ibid.; W. Aymar Caldwell to M. E. Strieby, July 10, 1878, microfilm roll 6, AMA-Papers, Alabama.

educated African American ministry, Emerson Normal graduates, and Emerson Institute graduates for its all-black faculty. School commissioners appointed William A. Caldwell for the position of principal. Artmesia Europe represented the other Emerson Normal alumni hired. In addition to Europe and Caldwell, the faculty featured William R. Gleason, Miss Mattie Ewing, Reverend Albert F. Owens, Theresa E. Page as teachers and Kate Parkis and Luella B. Thomas as assistants. The curriculum, like Emerson Normal and other normal schools, included classroom and hands-on training in the model school attached to the program. Emerson Normal graduates and other educators refashioned the education received in the training of future African American teachers. Caldwell, Europe, and others instilled racial pride and the rhetoric of racial progress through education to their students through their lessons and continued activism within Mobile. As a former student recalled, Caldwell “ran the school with discipline and never tolerated any foolishness of any kind on campus. If there was ever any kind of trouble with a pupil it would be dealt with that day with the parents’ involvement.” The school’s inaugural graduating class had thirteen students, two male and eleven female. Henry Europe Jones graduated in this class. He was related to two members of Emerson Normal’s first graduates: Mary Europe Jones and Artmesia Europe. The Europe family proved to be important pioneers in the development of trained African American educators in Mobile. Without perseverance and community activism, Broad Street Academy would not have been made possible.⁷⁵

Broad Street Academy coexisted with Emerson Normal. Both schools provided a normal education and represented major victories for the African American community. The schools’ respective graduates built up a corps of African American teachers in which Mobile,

⁷⁵ Mobile City Directories, 1888-1890; Davis-Horton, 24-25, quoted on 39.

Mobile County, and the surrounding Gulf region could draw upon for their public schools. Each school resulted from the continued activism and collective determination of the African American community to fulfill their communal desire to become an educated and literate people. Broad Street Academy, though, permitted the training of African American teachers by African American teachers using public funds. Thus, the school's existence marked a major achievement in racial progress through education. Until the school's closure due to a suspicious fire in 1947, Broad Street Academy remained a source of pride in the African American community.⁷⁶

Emerson Normal reflected the communal desire and determination for the training and hiring of African American teachers in Mobile. Relying upon their diverse educational relationships, Mobile's African American community achieved success. By 1890, two normal schools existed, one public and one private. The corps of teachers established by the schools filled faculties of the African American public schools. In the public normal school, Emerson Normal graduates trained future generations of African American teachers. The long and arduous struggle reinforced the need for perseverance and alliances in the minds of the African American community. Both proved essential to the future of African American education in Mobile.

Conclusion

While new state constitutions included provisions for a tax-funded educational system for all school-aged children regardless of race, the system never addressed the teaching resources required for such an undertaking. As a result, a crisis emerged for officials in Richmond and Mobile as they complied with the new state mandates. African Americans,

⁷⁶ Davis-Horton, 39.

the American Missionary Association, several branches of the American Freedmen's Union Commission, and city officials developed solutions to the problem in their respective cities. At the insistence of the African American community, the proposed solutions contemplated the role of African Americans. Thus, each solution expanded the definition of a useful education for African Americans to include teacher training. Recognizing the redefinition of usefulness and education by their white educational partners, African Americans shifted their struggle for greater participation in the decision made regarding the public schools. They drew upon their relationships with existing and new partners in formulating a feasible program. Yet, different solutions emerged.

The histories of both cities' solutions reflected each city's embrace, ambivalence, and/or resistance toward African American education. Richmond officials embraced a normal school established under the Freedmen's Bureau in the early 1870s as a public school. Government support and funding afforded the African American community an early victory. Two hundred and eighty trained educators emerged by 1890. With this corps of African American public teachers, black Richmonders shifted their struggle to the employment of the teachers in the city schools and not simply in the rural communities. Mobile officials' racial assumptions and intense white resistance prevented the early adoption of a solution similar to Richmond. African Americans in Mobile looked toward an earlier partner for their struggle. The African American community and American Missionary Association partnership permitted the development of Emerson Normal. Despite many obstacles, the existence of the private school and continued community activism eventually led to a public school option in the late 1880s. While Emerson Normal contributed a small number of trained teachers, this corps facilitated a change in the Mobile County

public school system's hiring practices and an overturning of racial assumptions in regards to African American public school teachers.

The divergent experiences, though, must not overshadow three important similarities. First, educational alliances were essential to the creation of a corps of African American teachers. In each case study, the respective African American communities drew upon their relationships with other proponents of African American education. The relationships with government officials proved especially critical. Government support provided access to money and other resources. While not ideal, these relationships aided in legitimizing and making a reality the communal desire for African American teachers in the public schools. With the creation of a corps of African American public school teachers, the respective communities had an important ally within the school system. These educators strove for the betterment of the schools and greater access to an education in their communities.

Second, the initial generation trained subsequent generations through the summer institutes operated by the Peabody Education Fund and government funded normal schools. The capable administration of these programs and schools legitimized the African American struggle for teachers and administrators. It proved that African Americans were as capable if not better than their white counterparts in the administration of the African American public schools. Therefore, arguments made against African American administrators and teachers increasingly were invalidated.

Third, this corps of teachers served an important role beyond the classroom in the fight for racial uplift. The educators challenged the racism in their community from the discriminatory hiring practices in the public schools to the racism within local institutions. Their participation, as evident in petitions, publications, and racial uplift organizations,

evoked and sustained a particular collective memory of their normal school. This memory proved essential in broader civil rights struggle against the many obstacles faced by inspiring hope and perseverance.

Thus, Richmond Colored Normal and Emerson Normal represented a major victory in African American education. This victory resulted from a communal desire to become a literate people in the postwar urban South. The schools' collective memory and respective graduates continued to galvanize the struggle for African American education during and after Educational Reconstruction.

CHAPTER IV

SHIFTING STRATEGIES: THE QUALITY CAMPAIGNS AND THE AFRICAN AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 1870S

On July 19, 1870, the white citizens of Mobile celebrated the departure of the Freedmen's Bureau with discussions of its legacy for their city, state, and region. The *Mobile Daily Register* summed up the discussions with the following conclusion: "The Freedman's Bureau has finished its work, and passes into history. No institution was ever more bitterly opposed, and at the same time, more warmly defended. No act of legislature in the history of the work, has resulted in so much good, to so great a number, in so short a time, and at so little cost as that which gave existence to the 'Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands.'" In focusing upon the agency's educational legacy on the city's African American population, the unknown author hoped that "the Freedmen learned these lessons and learned them well, thousands of school houses, and the general law and order which prevail in the south, wherever the white law and order which prevail in the south, wherever the white Democratic Ku Klux do not disturb them, prove conclusively." While the Bureau's educational legacy left an indelible mark upon the white citizens of Mobile as well as in Richmond, it was unclear for African Americans in both cities whether local school officials would continue to build upon the educational progress achieved under the Freedmen's Schools.¹

¹ "Gen. Howard and the Freedman's Bureau," *Mobile Daily Register*, July 17, 1870, 2, column 1, *Interesting Transcriptions Of Mobile Daily Newspapers, 1860-1901 with Appropriate Index. Prepared from original data*

The first decade of public schools inaugurated a change in urban African Americans' quest for educational access and legitimacy. Public schools represented a major victory. But, it was a victory that came at the expense of the departure of several educational partners. The Freedmen's Bureau ceased to exist. The majority of Northern benevolent societies abandoned their primary educational pursuits and concentrated their efforts in the development of higher education. New partners emerged. State and city school officials and local governments now played a role in African American education. These new partners recognized the validity of African Americans claims to freedom and citizenship through education. Their racial attitudes, however, prevented them to accept African Americans as full partners in the enterprise. New partners and new challenges, therefore, required adaptation and shifting strategies by African Americans living in Richmond, Virginia and Mobile, Alabama.

African Americans shifted their activism with a series of campaigns centered upon improving the overall quality of the schools. This multi-pronged struggle encompassed four objectives. The first objective entailed electoral politics and securing local government positions, whether as school board members or as aldermen. This objective ensured that African Americans had a voice in the decisions made regarding the schools. Second, African Americans sought the expansion of the school system while maintaining high standards in the schools' physical and material conditions. Third, African Americans insisted upon the employment of African American teachers as a means of ensuring high levels of instruction to their community's children. Fourth, African Americans fought for adequate and equitable school funding. Through these objectives, African Americans made quality public schools

by the Municipal and Court Records Project of the Works Progress Administration (1939), Mobile Municipal Archives, Mobile, Alabama.

their top priority.

The central question guiding this chapter explores the ways in which urban African Americans' activism shaped the development of the public schools during the 1870s. Answering this question permits an assessment of the ability of African American educational networks to cope with new partners and new challenges resulting from local, national, and transnational debates. Furthermore, it allows for discussions of the continuities and discontinuities between the Freedmen's Schools and the public schools. This chapter argues that African Americans embarked upon the quality campaigns for a variety of reasons in Richmond and Mobile. Over the course of the decade, they achieved success in some areas while encountering setbacks in others. However, African Americans never lost sight of their mission for educational access and legitimacy that began in 1865. Their struggle now focused upon making the public schools into enduring institutions instrumental in sustaining African American citizenship.

Richmond: Struggle for Quality Public Schools and a Unified Campaign

Richmond's African American community entered the first decade of public schools on a high note. The departure of the Freedmen's Bureau occurred without much fanfare as the transition period went smoothly. In accordance with state mandates, city officials pledged to sustain the public schools after the Bureau's departure. As a result, African Americans transformed their educational networks in order to accommodate the new partners and established new roles for old partners. Thus, the networks remained viable. Moreover, local officials and the broader Richmond community recognized the validity of African American claims to citizenship and freedom through education. By the end of the transition to public schools, African American public schools had become an essential part of the Richmond

public school system. Thus, a sense of vindication permeated the African American community.

Neither this feeling of vindication nor the benefits of public education was shared equally by all. The schools were far from perfect. Several school issues, specifically school accommodations and teachers, plagued only certain neighborhoods. While other issues, such as School Board representation and funding, affected the entire African American community. As a result, several of Richmond's quality campaigns began as a struggle in resolving local neighborhood concerns before transforming into larger community concerns. While for other issues, the quality campaigns began as a larger community struggle. Over the course of the decade, the various quality campaigns coalesced into a unified struggle for the overall improvement of the African American public schools. With these campaigns, African Americans sought quality public schools that would survive for future generations. In other words, they sought perfection and would be satisfied with nothing less.

The departure of the Freedmen's Bureau and the majority of Northern benevolent societies prompted some feelings of uncertainty among African Americans in regards to their new educational partners. While city and state officials pledged their support of African American public schools, it still remained unclear whether they would rescind their support after the return of local rule. It was also uncertain whether or not these educational partners would address the community's educational interests and view them as equal partners in making decisions in regards to the schools. Hence, the 1870-1871 academic year was an important one as the events of that year set the tone for the various quality campaigns undertaken in Richmond.

City school officials remained committed to the African American education.

Superintendent James Binford gave his overwhelming support to the African American schools because he viewed them as models for the state. Binford and other school officials made regular inspections of African American as well as white schools. Binford used the information gathered during these unannounced visits as evidence in a public relation campaign designed to convince white Richmonders of the merits of African American public schools.²

In addition to convincing white Richmonders, Binford's public relations campaign convinced outsiders. Binford actively promoted the Richmond schools as a model system for the entire urban South. He regularly invited and hosted visitors from across the region, North, and foreign countries. In November 1870, Binford hosted Maryland's Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Superintendent of the Baltimore Public Schools. During this visit, the Maryland delegation only viewed the African American schools conducted by African American teachers. Like earlier visitors to the Freedmen's Schools, the Maryland visitors as well as representatives of the Richmond press were impressed by what they saw. They first visited the schools conducted by Otway M. Stewart and Miss Frances E. Clark on 17th Street. As a result of "competent instructors and thorough discipline," the visitors noted that the students "answered every question promptly, and gave abundant evidence of their acquaintance with the lessons upon which they were engaged." For the guests, Binford's claims had revealed as possibly having some merit.³

The Maryland delegation then toured three schools conducted at the Dill's Bakery. While in John W. Cromwell's school, they were "amused" by the students' "stentorian yet accurate recital of the list of capitals of the United States, with the rivers upon which they

² For an example, see "Meeting of the City School Board," *Richmond Dispatch*, June 19, 1871, 1.

³ "Our Baltimore Visitors---The Public Schools Inspected," *Richmond Dispatch*, November 17, 1870, 1.

stand, sung to familiar tunes.” They felt that Cromwell had effectively instructed them “in every department in [which] they are examined.” The group then questioned the students of Elizabeth V. Dixon to their satisfaction before concluding their visit to the intermediate and primary schools conducted by Peter H. Woolfolk and his sister Margaret Woolfolk. These schools left an indelible mark upon the group. “Here half an hour was pleasantly spent, and some very intelligent colored boys and girls were made to show their progress in the pursuit of knowledge,” according to the report in the *Richmond Dispatch*. “They showed that they not only knew their lessons by heart, but were well informed as to *principles*.” Overall, Binford’s claims had proven true as the visitors remarked upon their tour at the dinner held for them that evening. They left believing that Richmond could be viewed as a model school system for African American children across the urban South.⁴

The impressions made by the African American students and teachers upon the regional, international, and local visitors assisted in broadening public support for the schools. The competency and intellectual capabilities displayed by African American teachers and students mystified curious visitors. While it may have been degrading to the students, these visitations exemplified city school officials’ support of the schools and their willingness to convince skeptics of the merits of African American education. In 1872, several School Board members remarked that their inspections of Richmond Colored Normal and other schools allowed guests to witness “a sight which will wholly relieve any [unsure] case of skepticism in regard to the susceptibility of the negro to receive a good education.” Indeed, these visits from Southerners as well as “distinguished persons from the North and from foreign countries” had created a “sensation.” This sensation resulted in increased local interest and support of the schools by all classes in Richmond, white and black. Within a

⁴ Ibid.

short period, many, white and black, viewed the city's African American public schools as a model system and worthy of their support.⁵

As a result of Binford's public relation efforts, Richmond newspaper editors reversed its policy in regard to the African American public schools. Under the Freedmen's School system, newspaper editors refused to print articles that recognized specific details of the schools and the existence of a growing educated African American community. With the return of local rule and Binford's efforts, newspaper editors began recognizing the schools and offering praise of them. Discussions of "our schools" now included the African American public schools. The *Richmond Dispatch* regularly featured articles ranging from the hiring of teachers to visits by state officials and outsiders. But, the newspaper's coverage of the annual end-of-the-year examinations and closing exercises best exemplified the newspaper's reversal of its previous policy. The newspaper featured front-page articles noting specific details of the ceremonies and listing the names of the students by teacher and grade who had received scholastic and attendance awards. The newspaper even extended its coverage to the exercises of Richmond Colored Normal, a private school until 1876. Furthermore, the newspaper listed the names of the African American children who were promoted alongside the names of white children who were promoted. This extensive media coverage had previously been exclusive to the white schools. Now, as a result of the return to local rule and Binford's efforts, major city newspapers fully embraced the African American

⁵ "School Officers Visiting Richmond," circa January 1872, in Virginia. State Board of Education, *Official Orders of Supt of Public Instruction, 1870-1879: Extracted from Educational Journal of Virginia*. v. 1(Richmond: Educational Publishing House, 1870-1879), 117, accessed at the Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia; Hubbard G. Carlton, "The Evolution of the Richmond Public Schools with Reminiscences" (Paper Presented at the Principals' Conference, June 3, 1925), 5, accessed at the Special Collections, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia.

public schools as “our schools.”⁶

Through African Americans’ strategic partnership with Binford, they also secured the support of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. William H. Ruffner viewed the city’s public schools favorably. He based his opinions upon the reports received from Binford’s as well as personal observation. In his first annual report, Ruffner devoted a special section to the history of the Richmond school system and praised the city’s foresight for developing its school system prior to the creation of the state system. He also ensured that the city received its share of the state school funds. Thus, the financial and non-financial rewards of the recognition permitted the shoring up of African American education for its continuation during the 1870s.⁷

However, white recognition of the African American public schools affected the development of the quality campaigns in Richmond. African Americans had to tread carefully in making their demands for improving the public schools. They wanted to maintain white recognition as well as city appropriations. Hence, African Americans adopted less aggressive strategies and tactics. They resorted to petitions and meetings with school officials rather than boycotts. Moreover, the tone of their appeals employed a specific form. Petitions and meetings started with elaborate statements in which individuals thanked the school officials for their generosity in sustaining the public schools before listing their demands. Whether addressing the issue of teachers or school accommodations, they could not risk alienating of their white allies. They deemed patience as prudent. As a result, more

⁶ “Board of Education-Selection of Teachers For Examination,” *Richmond Dispatch*, September 1, 1870, 1; “Our Baltimore Visitors---The Public Schools Inspected,” *Richmond Dispatch*, November 17, 1870, 1; “Colored Normal and High School,” *Richmond Dispatch*, June 29, 1871, 1; “Promotion in the Public Schools,” *Richmond Dispatch*, July 4, 1871, 1.

⁷ Virginia Department of Education, *Virginia school report, 1871: First Annual report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, For the Year Ending August 31, 1871* (Richmond: C. A. Schaeffter, Superintendent Public Printing, 1871), 19-20; 106-123.

aggressive strategies and increased militancy for better school conditions would not occur until the 1880s. In limiting public discourse, favorable white recognition of the schools affected the development of a unified campaign for quality public schools.⁸

Furthermore, white recognition provides an explanation of why the various campaigns for school board representation, school accommodations, teachers, and funding took particular paths before coalescing into a unified campaign for quality public schools. As certain issues only affected a segment of African Americans living within the city, these campaigns had to make sure that their demands for better conditions did not result in retaliation upon the other schools. Therefore, white recognition, while embedding African American education as an essential component of the city school system, had adverse consequences for the quality campaigns. The next sections will discuss each campaign in greater detail.

School Board representation was one concern addressed by the quality campaigns. During the 1870s, the issue of School Board representation involved the entire community in a struggle for the right to shape any decisions pertaining to the schools. As African Americans lacked direct representation, they heavily relied upon their networks with white allies during the course of the decade. Through these relationships, African Americans secured a voice in shaping decisions pertaining to school operations. Yet, they still sought more agency.

In addition to James Binford, African Americans benefitted from having R. M. Manly as an ally on the Richmond School Board. The former Superintendent of Education for the state's Freedmen's Bureau had been a longtime supporter of African American education. He made it his mission to sustain the African American public schools under the new order. As a

⁸ Rabinowitz, 173.

liaison between the community and the School Board, Manly ensured that their concerns and petitions received the Board's full attention rather than being dismissed outright. Manly also attended the majority of the functions held at or on behalf of the African American schools. Lastly, Manly served as the principal of Richmond Colored Normal. Using his reputation, he elevated the school from a private school to a Richmond public school by donating the entire property worth approximately \$25,000 to city officials in 1876. His actions, while controversial, secured city appropriations and established the option of a normal school as well as a high school for future generations of African American children. Manly's departure from the School Board for the City Council was equally bemoaned by African Americans as well as white supporters of the public schools.⁹

While African Americans had the support of Binford, Manly, and other school officials, they never remained complacent in having their interests met. They held school officials accountable for their decisions. Through petitions and letters to the editors in the *Richmond Dispatch*, African Americans made known their objections to unpopular decisions. For instance, several African American religious leaders openly challenged the School Board's decision to not have representatives from the city's African American churches on a special committee deciding upon the use of the Bible in the public schools. As a result of the

⁹ Brooks Smith and Wayne Dementi. *Facts and Legends of the Hills of Richmond* (Manakin-Sabot, Virginia: Dement Publishing, 2008), 18-20; For media coverage of Manly's attendance at school functions, see "Colored Normal and High School," *Richmond Dispatch*, June 29, 1871, 1, "The City Public Schools: Closing Exercises and Distribution of Awards in the Colored Schools," *Richmond Dispatch*, June 28, 1872, 1, and "The Public Schools: Closing Exercises and Distribution of Medals and Diplomas in the Valley and Navy Hill Colored Schools-Interesting Exercises-Addresses Made From Mayor Keiley and Rec. Dr. Dickinson-To-Day's Programme," *Richmond Dispatch*, June 12, 1876, 1; For the donation of Richmond Colored Normal, see Eighth Annual Report of the School Board and Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA., for the Scholastic Year 1875-1876," *Annual Message and Accompanying Documents of the Mayor of Richmond to the City Council for the Fiscal Year Ending January 31, 1877* (Richmond: C. C. Baughman, City Printer, 1877), 30 and "Eighth Annual Report of the School Board and Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA., for the Scholastic Year 1876-1877," *Annual Message and Accompanying Documents of the Mayor of Richmond to the City Council for the Fiscal Year Ending January 31, 1878* (Richmond: C. C. Baughman, City Printer, 1878), 222-223. [Due to a printing error, there are eighth annual reports.]

“peculiar composition of the Board,” one letter to the editors of the *Richmond Dispatch* contended that the “rights and wishes of twenty thousand people are about to be overridden and left to the mercies of three thousand whose opinions and principles are not only opposed abut absolutely hostile to what they entertain and live for.” Hence, the unsigned letter demanded that one or more additional committee members representing the African American congregations be added to the Board’s discussions of excluding the “Bible from our schools.” The anonymous author reasoned that the city’s African American population had the right to be a part of the any decision making being made in regards to their schools and suggested that their white allies could not adequately address their interests. In representing the “views of a large majority of the people of Richmond,” the letter’s author argued: “We have a right to demand that this evil be corrected. We have a right to demand of the Council that the Board be entirely reorganized, and that our people, and our whole people, be fairly represented in it, as they should be.” If the not, the letter warned that the School Board would be “held severely answerable in the future.” In this instance, school officials took their concerns seriously and solicited the advice from African American religious leaders. But, the lack of direct representation hindered the community’s efforts to shape the decisions made affecting the public schools.¹⁰

Overall, African Americans proved less successful in obtaining School Board positions. While African Americans regularly sought appointments to the School Board, racial fears blocked any other their efforts. For white Richmonders, it proved too much to have African Americans in control over decisions pertaining to the education of white children, the employment of white teachers, and the distribution of white taxpayers’ contributions to public schools. As a result, African Americans were forced to rely upon their

¹⁰ “African Congregations,” *Richmond Dispatch*, July 5, 1872, 1.

white allies on the School Board and petitioning. Furthermore, they used their vote to secure more racially progressive school officials until political conditions proved more advantageous. Unfortunately, gains would not be made until the 1880s.¹¹

School accommodations represented another quality campaign objective. The campaign centered upon several realities. First, the system lacked a sufficient number of schools to accommodate the city's African American school-aged population. During the 1870-1871 academic year, 1,573 African Americans enrolled in the city schools and the schools had an average attendance of 1,330. This number was much lower than the number of school-aged children living in Richmond. While Richmond lacked a school census until the 1872-1873 academic year, the 1870 Federal Census reported 3,665 African Americans between the ages of 10 and 21 years who could not write. Since these individuals were unable to write, theoretically they did not attend the public schools. Throughout the decade, average school attendance reflected on average 17% of school census population and by the end of the decade, 21%. While some parents enrolled their children into private schools, the city's existing African American public schools simply could not handle the school census population.¹²

To be sure, private schools offered an alternative to the public schools. During the 1870s, ministers, married female educators, and even public school teachers wishing to supplement their household incomes operated schools out of their homes or local churches. The schools operated by Reverend Anthony Binga, Jr., Rosa Dixon Bowser, Daniel Barclay

¹¹ Jane Dailey, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 97-98.

¹² United States. Census Bureau, *Ninth Census, Volume 1: The Statistics of the Population of the United States, June 1, 1870* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), 443; Table IX, *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA for the Scholastic Year Ending July 31st, 1893* (Richmond: C. N. Williams, City Printers, 1894), 40-41.

Williams and others thrived as parents sought less crowded school accommodations and African American teachers. Tuition costs, though, hindered many from utilizing this option, as evidenced by an 1876 city superintendent report. Binford reported 449 (226 male and 223 female) students enrolled in private primary schools and 31 (6 male and 25 female) students attending a private high school. He reported a total of 21 teachers who instructed these students. As these figures suggest, private school attendance represented a small percentage of the number of students not attending the public schools. Thus, private schools remained inaccessible to the majority of African Americans not enrolled in the public schools.¹³

Parents and individuals such as John W. Cromwell recognized the limits of private schools in addressing the school accommodation issue. Private schools could not address the needs of the majority. Instead, they pointed to these schools as indicative of the city's negligence in providing school accommodations. If the city provided a sufficient number of schools, they reasoned that the private schools would no longer be viewed as a necessity and public school enrollment would increase. Rather than thwarting their efforts, African Americans used the private schools in their arguments for expanding and improving the

¹³ Michael B. Chesson, *Richmond After the War, 1865-1890* (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1981), 166-167; Ann Field Alexander, *Race Man: The Rise and Fall of the "Fighting Editor," John Mitchell, Jr.* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 11; Nicole Johnson, "Rosa Dixon Bowser," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, February 9, 2009. Upon marriage, school regulations required female educators to resign. Dixon's marriage to James Herndon Bowser forced her to resign in 1879. Dixon and countless other female public school educators regularly opened private schools for primary, secondary, and even music instruction upon their marriage. Daniel Barclay Williams, *Freedom and Progress and Other Choice Addresses on Practical, Scientific, Educational, Philosophic, Historic, and Religious Subjects* (Petersburg: Daniel B. Williams, 1890), 8. While a Richmond Public School teacher and pursuing his degree at Brown University, Williams, according to his friend, John Mitchell, Jr. supplemented his income by conducting a private school; "Seventh Annual Report of the School Board and Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA., for the Scholastic Year 1874-1875," *Annual Message and Accompanying Documents of the Mayor of Richmond to the City Council for the Fiscal Year Ending January 31, 1876* (Richmond: C. C. Baughman, City Printer, 1876), 261.

overall conditions of the public schools.¹⁴

Second, School Board policies influenced the campaign. To be sure, school officials attempted to address the lack of school accommodations. By the 1871-1872 academic year, school officials phased out the use of African American churches as public schools. Ebenezer Church, Asbury Chapel, and other churches ceased serving as the sites of public school education. Instead of renting these churches, school officials converted older school buildings that had been formerly used for the education of white children for African American children. For instance, the Lancasterian School became the Valley School for African American children in October 1871. They also constructed the Baker School which opened December 1, 1871. Baker would be the first school built by the city of Richmond for African American children. School officials also rented before purchasing the buildings that comprised the Navy Hill School from the Richmond Educational Association during the early 1870s. In 1876, the public schools expanded with the incorporation of Richmond Colored Normal. This school elevated Richmond into a class over other Southern cities. Few Southern cities and towns offered a public high school for African Americans. With the addition of Richmond Colored Normal, Richmond now had both a high school and a normal school within its public school offerings for African Americans. As a result, African Americans greatly benefited from the curriculum offered. However, these School Board's efforts never alleviated the problem. Classrooms overflowed with students as existing buildings barely accommodated the African American students who regularly attended. This reality forced administrators to turn away new students due to the lack of suitable

¹⁴ "The Necessity of Organization to Promote Our Educational Interest---An Address Delivered Before the Virginia Educational and Historical Association by its President J.W. Cromwell," *People's Advocate*, September 2, 1876, 2-3.

accommodations.¹⁵

Furthermore, the use of older accommodations posed several problems. Older facilities were located in pre-existing neighborhoods that were not always accessible to the targeted populations. The buildings also had a set limit on the number of students who could possibly enroll. The problems associated with the use of older accommodations influenced the activism of African Americans living in the Moore Street neighborhood, the East End neighborhoods, and the neighborhoods accessible to the Valley School.

At the start of the decade, residents of the Moore Street neighborhood lacked a public school. The lack of an accessible school forced interested students to travel great distances. However, for most residents, the distance proved too great. These individuals either used the private school system or went uneducated. As a result, residents began petitioning the School Board for a school established within or easily accessible to their neighborhood. When their petitions went unfulfilled, residents established a school that was sustained by tuition and community funds.¹⁶

John Oliver spearheaded the Moore Street school movement. Residents considered him to be natural leader for the movement. The Virginia native returned to Richmond from

¹⁵ “Fourth Annual Report of the School Board and the Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA, for the Scholastic Year 1871-1872,” *Annual Message and Accompanying Documents of the Mayor of Richmond to the City Council for the Fiscal Year Ending January 31, 1873* (Richmond: C. C. Baughman, City Printer, 1873), 121-123; Martha Owens, “The Development of Public Schools for Negroes in Richmond, Virginia,” M.S. thesis, Virginia State College, 1947, 23-24; Rebekah Sharp, “A History of the Richmond Public School System, 1869-1958,” M.S. Thesis, University of Richmond, 1958, 26; For the addition of Richmond Colored Normal, see “Eighth Annual Report of the School Board and Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA., for the Scholastic Year 1875-1876,” *Annual Message and Accompanying Documents of the Mayor of Richmond to the City Council for the Fiscal Year Ending January 31, 1877* (Richmond: C. C. Baughman, City Printer, 1877), 30-31 and “Eighth Annual Report of the School Board and Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA., for the Scholastic Year 1876-1877,” *Annual Message and Accompanying Documents of the Mayor of Richmond to the City Council for the Fiscal Year Ending January 31, 1878* (Richmond: C. C. Baughman, City Printer, 1878), 222-223. [Due to a printing error, there are eighth annual reports.]

¹⁶ Sharp, 26; Rabinowitz, 172.

Boston in 1865 as an observer of postwar conditions but remained in order to organize African American workers. In Spring 1875, the former president of the Colored National Labor Union mobilized the residents into purchasing land to be held in trust by the Moore Street Industrial Society. The society's purpose was to "promote the instruction of colored youth in practiced and useful trades," and raise monies for appropriate equipment. The society maintained a fund in which Moore St. residents as well other residents of Richmond donated money via subscription. Oliver also fundraised in Philadelphia and other Northern financial circles for the society. During his fundraising campaign, he also promoted the importance of a vocational education. Before an audience attending an 1877 Educational Convention in Charlottesville, Virginia, Oliver professed his firm belief in vocational training. "Our children, therefore, must not only have the education which books afford, but their hands must be educated also," Oliver argued. "Parents should observe the bent of their children's mind and have them learn trades for which they are fitted; for it is evident you cannot make a silver-smith out of a boy who is inclined to be a huckster; nor can you make a successful farmer out of a boy who was born to follow the sea." Through these efforts, Moore Street residents received a school.¹⁷

The Moore Street community-based school began in earnest during the late 1870s. Moore Street Baptist Mission began offering afternoon classes in printing and carpentry for boys and sewing for girls from 1876 to 1877. These afternoon classes quickly expanded into a full day program of vocational and common school classes. Moore Street Industrial School officially opened in 1878. John Oliver, Temple A. Miles, Reverend Richard C. Hobson and other residents served as teachers at the school. School trustees also drew upon the

¹⁷ Rachleff, 36, 57-65; "Remarks of John Oliver, Esq., at the Educational Convention Held in Charlottesville, August 1877," *Virginia Star*, May 11, 1878, 2.

neighborhood residents. In addition to John Oliver, school trustees included: Reverend Richard C. Hobson, a cupper and leecher; James Hugo Johnston, a public school teacher; Mortimer Bowler, a shoemaker; Temple A. Miles, a teacher and Richmond Colored Normal graduate; and William H. Carter, a shoemaker. Hence, the school, its teachers, its trustees, and its curriculum addressed the needs espoused by the residents. The Moore Street neighborhood now had a school that was sustained by community funds, taught by community members, and provided an education deemed as beneficial to the residents.¹⁸

Middle-class African Americans commended the Moore Street residents' initiative. For these individuals, the Moore Street Industrial School represented a victory in terms of educational access for all segments of the city's African American population but also a victory for industrial education. In June 1876, the Virginia Educational and Historical Society, a racial uplift organization comprised of teachers, ministers, lawyers, and businessmen, discussed the issue of industrial education at its second meeting as an organization. John W. Cromwell and other society members felt that the Moore Street residents fit within the organization's larger aim of reforming the state's African American public schools. The school's curriculum addressed the education of a growing class of uneducated, working-class African Americans who were "poorly prepared to instruct the youth who are now coming out of the schools and into manhood." Thus, the society passed a resolution praising the Moore Street Industrial School. "Looking to the demands of the industrial future and the up building of our people so far as our humble efforts can be

¹⁸ Chesson, 97, 160, 194-195; "Clarke et. al. v. Oliver et. al.," *The Southeastern Reporter, volume 22 containing all the decisions of the Supreme Courts of Appeals of Virginia and West Virginia, and Supreme Courts of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia. Permanent Edition. June 18-October 22, 1895* (St. Paul: West Publishing Co, 1895), 175-176; Richmond City Directory, 1877, 1879-1880, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia; "An Act to Incorporate Moore Street Industrial Institution, of the city of Richmond, Approved March 6, 1882," *Acts and Joint Resolutions Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Virginia During the Session of 1881-82* (Richmond: R. F. Walker, Superintendent Public Printing, 1882), 279-281.

conducted to that end, we, your committee on Trades beg to recommend to the favorable consideration of the friends of the youth of the Moore Street Industrial School,” the resolution read. “Therefore, resolved that we commend the Moore Street Industrial Society to the confidence of the community as affording an opportunity of training the idle youth of this community in trades, mechanical, and manufacturing pursuits. That the public who are interested in skilled labor for the colored race should rally to the support of this enterprise...” With the support of the Virginia Educational and Historical Society, the Moore Street residents moved their plight from a neighborhood struggle to a larger African American community struggle. Residents now employed the society’s resources including John W. Cromwell’s newspaper, the *People’s Advocate*, for assistance. As children attended the neighborhood-supported school, Moore Street residents continued to pressure the Richmond School Board to either establish a public school or incorporate the Moore Street Industrial School into the city’s public school system.¹⁹

The plight of the Moore Street residents also found support from African Americans living in the East End section of Richmond. East End residents shared a common struggle with the Moore Street neighborhood. They lacked public school accommodations but proved unsuccessful in creating a community-sponsored school. Instead they relied upon petitions and making public appeals before the School Board to similar results as the Moore Street residents. Representatives from the East End neighborhood appeared before the School Board at the meeting held on February 28, 1878. Otway M. Stewart, H.R. Macklin, Thomas Nelson, and Reverend Scott Gwathmey presented the School Board with a petition signed by over 200 residents requesting accommodations for a public school. After the delegation left,

¹⁹ “Minutes of the Virginia Educational and Historical Society,” *People’s Advocate*, August 26, 1876, 2-3; Sharp, 26.

the School Board tabled the petition on account of a lack of funds for such an enterprise. Instead, Anthony M. Keiley recommended the possibility of supplying a teacher if the residents supplied their school accommodations as a solution. Apparently, Keiley and the School Board members did not truly listen to the prior demands of the Moore Street residents. They had created their own neighborhood school yet the School Board never supplied them with a teacher. In recommending that the East End residents supply their own school, the School Board effectively dismissed their demands as they had no intentions of supplying the East End residents with school accommodations. If they had, the Moore Street Industrial School would have been supplied with a teacher and incorporated into the city system. But neither the extension of school accommodations nor the Board's supplying public school teachers occurred. The lack of meaningful results never deterred the Moore Street residents and by the latter half of the decade, East End residents. They continued their struggle for accessible school accommodations.²⁰

Residents served by the Valley School also embarked on a school accommodation campaign but for different reasons. Unlike the Moore Street and East End residents, they had an accessible school. While remodeled and refitted, the former Lancasterian School proved too small from its inception as an African American public school. In his 1871-1872 annual report, Binford noted that a "much larger number of scholars applied for admission into the primary grades of this group than could be accommodated." He recommended that the school be enlarged "by extending the wing and removing the partitions in the basement." But, even

²⁰ "The Public Schools," *Richmond Dispatch*, March 1, 1878, 1; Rabinowitz for East End petition, O. M. Stewart taught in the Richmond Public Schools from 1869 to 1873. Reverend Scott Gwalthmey had served as a Freedmen's School educator at the Chimborazo School in Richmond, Virginia. In 1865, he and his congregation constructed the Fourth Baptist Church using the lumber from Union Army barracks. At the time of the petition, he still served as the minister of the Fourth Baptist Church; Rachleff, 103-104, Rabinowitz, 179. Richmond Public Schools would not incorporate the Moore Street Industrial School until 1883. East End residents received a school in late 1882.

after these repairs, Valley remained unable to accommodate all of the interested students living in the surrounding neighborhoods. Consequently, school officials regularly had to turn away students; enrolled students endured overcrowded conditions. While some turned to new private schools established in the area, many students traveled great distances which were made nearly impossible during the winter months. Under these conditions, parents and community leaders began petitioning the School Board for the expansion of Valley in order to ease overcrowding. They also wanted to ensure that interested individuals could access a public education without being turned away on account of a lack of space. Their demands made Valley's overcrowding into a pressing concern for the School Board.²¹

School Board officials responded to their demands but not satisfactorily. In 1875, officials expanded Valley by merging it with the Twelfth and Leigh Street and Springfield Hall schools. This expansion, though, could not keep up with demand, and the school quickly became overcrowded. By 1878, African Americans began petitioning the School Board for the construction of new schools in the Church Hill and Rocketts neighborhoods. They felt that this would alleviate the continual problem at Valley. Unfortunately, the city's financial situation hindered the Board's response. The Board tabled their petitions. As the community demands continued, the Board promised another expansion of Valley. This proposal prompted a flood of petitions that were critical of the Board's decision and much discussion at the School Board meetings in March 1880, June 1880, September 1880, and October 1880.

²¹ "Fourth Annual Report of the School Board and the Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA, for the Scholastic Year 1871-1872," *Annual Message and Accompanying Documents of the Mayor of Richmond to the City Council for the Fiscal Year Ending January 31, 1873* (Richmond: C. C. Baughman, City Printer, 1873), 123; "Sixth Annual Report of the School Board and the Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA, for the Scholastic Year 1873-1874," *Annual Message and Accompanying Documents of the Mayor of Richmond to the City Council for the Fiscal Year Ending January 31, 1875* (Richmond: C. C. Baughman, City Printer, 1875), 366-367; "New Private Schools to be Established," *Virginia Star*, September 8, 1877, 3; Rabinowitz, 172.

As previous enlargements never resolved the problem, petitioners stated their case for new schools. Unfortunately, the city's financial situation prevented any resolution. Residents would not achieve any meaningful success until the start of the 1881-1882 academic year.²²

Initially, the struggle for school accommodations was limited to specific neighborhoods, such as the Moore Street, East End, and Valley School district. The national financial crisis resulted in the transformation of the campaign from neighborhood struggles to a larger community one. The city of Richmond's population increased in a response to the national financial crisis. Seeking jobs, social services, and schools, African American migrated to Richmond. The population influx as well as parents' inability to send their children to private schools resulted in an increase in school enrollment. Already overcrowded, the existing schools could not sustain the increase.²³

The School Board enacted a policy that restricted enrollment of new students for all schools. This Board's decision prompted a community outcry for the construction and/or purchase of new facilities. Other neighborhoods joined the residents of Moore Street, East End and Valley in their struggle for school accommodations. New schools would end the restrictive enrollment policy. The issue of school accommodations now affected the entire school system. While the city superintendent regularly recommended additional school accommodations, financial difficulties prevented the Board from constructing new

²² Owens, 23; Rabinowitz, 172; "Twelfth Annual Report of the School Board and the Superintendent of Public Schools for the Session 1881-82," *Annual Message and Accompanying Documents of the Mayor of Richmond to the City Council for the Fiscal Year Ending January 31, 1872* (Richmond: N. V. Randolph, City Printer, 1882), 60.

²³ "Ninth Annual Report of the School Board and Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA., for the Scholastic Year 1877-1878," *Annual Message and Accompanying Documents of the Mayor of Richmond to the City Council for the Fiscal Year Ending January 31, 1879* (Richmond: N. V. Randolph, City Printer, 1879), 54-55; Chesson, 118; A 1878 letter to the editor of the *Richmond Dispatch* signed by "S" cited access to an extensive school system as the reason for the influx of white and African American migrants. For this reason, the unknown author proposed the funding of the schools. See, S, "Public Schools in Danger," *Richmond Dispatch*, April 3, 1878, 2.

accommodations. Instead of newly constructed schools, they received promises for the addition of buildings formerly occupied by the white schools while the white schools received new buildings.²⁴

The School Board also enacted a controversial policy in response to community outrage. They mandated half-day sessions for the entire school system. This measure emerged directly out from community pressure for additional school accommodations. “For the past two years we have not been able to accommodate all that have applied for admission into the schools; in fact, quite a large number have been refused for want of seats,” Superintendent Peay explained in his annual report. “I have assigned each teacher as many pupils as she could possibly teach with the hope of success....Last session there were 300 applicants that could not be received, and I feel quite certain that the number will be at least 1000 at the opening of the next session.” As a direct result of the lack of accommodations for the interested and existing students, the School Board shortened the overall grading system by one year and created two sections per grade. The school system now consisted of seven grades in the Primary and Grammar schools, and three in the High School. According to the changed course of study, each grade was “divided into two half sessions named respectively A and B sections, the work of one section being a half session in advance of the work of the other.” Superintendent Peay and other school board members justified the new organization by making the system more effective and as aiding student promotions.²⁵

While Superintendent Peay found the new organization “well arranged and working smoothly,” half-day sessions further pushed the issue of school accommodations into a

²⁴For African American responses, see “New Private Schools to be Established,” *Virginia Star*, September 8, 1877, 3; “The City School Board and Marshall Ward,” *Virginia Star*, September 8, 1877, 3; “Navy Hill School,” *Virginia Star*, September 8, 1877, 3.

²⁵ *Ninth Annual City Report*, 54-55.

broader community concern. The solution affected all students enrolled in the city's public schools. To be sure, it allowed more students the opportunity to secure an education, but the changed curriculum never addressed inadequate number of African American public schools. Moore Street and East End residents still lacked public school accommodations. The capacity of Valley and other schools remained inadequate. Enrolled public school students continued to endure overcrowded conditions, and now a shortened school day. Hence, African Americans across the city remained unsatisfied. They would continue their fight for school accommodations as a unified rather than a neighborhood specific struggle.²⁶

The employment of African American teachers represented a third issue addressed by the quality campaigns. This issue arose out of the city's hiring practices initiated during the second year of public schools. Starting with the 1870-1871 academic year, the School Board required that all applicants, regardless of race, take a placement exam. Instead of hiring qualified African Americans, the Board filled the majority of the schools with white applicants whose test scores disqualified them for a position in a white public school. Qualified African Americans then competed for a few positions at Navy Hill. The amended policy made race and not testing aptitude the main prerequisite for teaching in the public schools. While African Americans educators were regularly praised by the Superintendent and *Richmond Dispatch* as valued employees, their service never swayed the Board in changing its hiring practices. The School Board also maintained a degree of transparency of the process. The Board published announcements regarding the annual examinations, lists of the candidates selected, and the final appointments in the city's newspapers. Hence, the

²⁶ *Ninth Annual City Report*, 55.

School Board never hid its hiring practices.²⁷

This policy had several consequences. The city employed less African American educators during the decade than it had during the transition year to public schools. African Americans represented 36.3% of the positions in the African American public schools in the year immediately following the departure of the Freedmen's Bureau. After this year, African Americans represented on average 25% of the teachers employed during the decade. This figure slightly increased to 30.3% during the 1873-1874 and decreased to a low of 22.8% during the 1875-1876 academic year. Many of the early African American teachers lost their jobs due to the employment restrictions. Since the School Board rehired former employees without examination, openings rarely occurred. Death, the marriage of female educators, or voluntary resignations during and at the end of the school year yielded some opportunities for the hiring of additional African American teachers. For instance, the deaths of Ann F. Smith and Amy Dotson in 1877, the marriage of Rosa Dixon in 1879 and the poor health and subsequent death of Alberta M. Brooks created openings for several African Americans, including Victoria Pollard, James H. Johnston, and James Hayes. For the majority of African American children attending the public schools, these hiring practices meant that they were more likely to be educated by a white teacher than an African American teacher.²⁸

²⁷ Rabinowitz, 173; Superintendent Binford and Peay regular praised the work performed by African American educators in their annual reports. The *Richmond Dispatch*, in its coverage of the annual examinations for Navy Hill, also offered words of praise for the educators. For an example, see Richmond (Va.). School Board, *Statistical report of the Richmond Public Schools, 1870-1879*, Richmond Public Library, Richmond, Virginia and *Richmond Dispatch*, For an example of the hiring process, see "Meeting of the City School Board: Interesting Report of the Committee on Teachers and Schools, List of Teachers Elected," *Richmond Dispatch*, September 6, 1871, 1.

²⁸ Table IX, *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report*, 40-41; For the re-hiring of former teachers, see "The City School Board," *Richmond Dispatch*, June 25, 1875, 1 and "Applicants for Positions as Teachers in the Public Schools," *Richmond Dispatch*, June 13, 1876, 1; The death of Ann F. Smith and Amy Dotson received a special mention in Superintendent James H. Peay's annual report. See "Eighth Annual Report of the School Board and Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA., for the Scholastic Year 1876-1877," *Annual Message and Accompanying Documents of the Mayor of Richmond to the City Council for the Fiscal Year*

Moreover, School Board policy influenced public discourse among African Americans. Activism was initially restricted to specific schools and neighborhoods and then expanded to a larger community struggle. For the neighborhoods served by Navy Hill, parents and community leaders had few complaints. The children attending the school had Mary Elizabeth Knowles as their principal. The Worcester, Massachusetts native was a respected white woman who had served as a Freedmen's School educator in the city since 1865. Children also had access to African American educators. These educators often instilled racial pride in their students. Between 1870 and 1877, the neighborhoods surrounding the Navy Hill School had little complaints in regard to the city's hiring practices.²⁹

In some schools, the placement of white teachers did not immediately draw the ire of parents and community leaders. Some of the white educators proved to be effective teachers. While these individuals may not have been racial progressives, they took their job seriously in order to obtain subsequent placement in a white public school. For instance, Maggie Lena Walker attended Valley for the majority of her primary education. She also attended the Navy Hill school for two years before entering Richmond Colored Normal. As her only exposure to African American teachers occurred at Navy Hill, Walker later praised both her white teachers at Valley and Richmond Colored Normal as well as her African American

Ending January 31, 1878 (Richmond: C. C. Baughman, City Printer, 1878), 232; For the marriage of Rosa L. Dixon, see L.A. Scruggs, *Women of Distinction: Remarkable in Works and Invincible in Character*. Introduction by Mrs. Josephine Turpin Washington. (Raleigh: L.A. Scruggs, 1893), 285-286 and Nicole Johnson, "Rosa Dixon Bowser," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, February 9, 2009, accessed at http://www.timesdispatch.com/rtd/news/special_report/black_history/article/rosa_l_dixon_bowser/201875/; For the death of Alberta Brooks and hiring of Victoria Pollard, see "The Public Schools," *Richmond Dispatch*, March 1, 1878. Victoria Pollard replaced Alberta M. Brooks as a mid-year replacement at the Navy Hill school in February 1878. Brooks died shortly after her resignation.

²⁹ Richmond, Virginia, *Annual Statistical Reports of the City of Richmond, 1872-1877*, Richmond Public Library, Richmond, Virginia.

teachers at Navy Hill. While she never found her education to be lacking at Valley or Richmond Colored Normal, Walker fondly recalled Otway M. Stewart and other Navy Hill faculty who “guided our childish feet, trained our restless hands, and created within our youthful souls an unquenchable search for knowledge, an undying ambition to be something, and to do something...” These students, parents, and community leaders had few complaints over the city’s hiring practices but they still desired African American teachers.³⁰

But for several neighborhoods and schools, children, parents, and community leaders were not as fortunate. They endured inferior teachers, such as M. C. S. Bennett. She successfully petitioned the School Board for a position in the African American public schools in 1876 after her test scores failed to gain her a position in the white public schools. The Board complied by giving her a position at Valley. The employment of such teachers affected test scores as well as promotion rates for the schools. Navy Hill students, under the tutelage of African American teachers, typically performed better during the annual examinations than the other schools. They also were promoted at a higher percentage. During the year in which Bennett found employment, though, Valley outperformed the other schools on the semi-annual exams but Navy Hill still maintained a higher percentage of students promoted. Employment of inferior white teachers, such as Bennett, made parents and community leaders desire African American public school teachers.³¹

³⁰ Getrude Woodruff Marlowe, *A Right Worthy Grand Mission: Maggie Lena Walker and the Quest for Black Economic Empowerment* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 2003), 5-7.

³¹ Rabinowitz, 173-174; “Fourth Annual Report of the School Board and the Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA, for the Scholastic Year 1871-1872,” *Annual Message and Accompanying Documents of the Mayor of Richmond to the City Council for the Fiscal Year Ending January 31, 1873* (Richmond: C. C. Baughman, City Printer, 1873), 127-128; “Sixth Annual Report of the School Board and the Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA, for the Scholastic Year 1873-1874,” *Annual Message and Accompanying Documents of the Mayor of Richmond to the City Council for the Fiscal Year Ending January 31, 1875* (Richmond: C. C. Baughman, City Printer, 1875), 386-389; “Seventh Annual Report of the School Board and the Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA, for the Scholastic

Students and parents also experienced individuals like Hubbard G. Carlton who deemed their employment in the African American public schools as degrading. Carlton's employment also sheds light on how School Board policies eventually affected Navy Hill. After receiving the principal position at Richmond Colored Normal, Carlton replaced Mary E. Knowles during the 1876-1877 academic year. As he was "not relishing the prospect of a colored school," Carlton switched with the principal of the Clay Street School "with the consent of the Superintendent." When his replacement was dismissed in May 1877, Superintendent Peay forced Carlton to take over his original position at Navy Hill "with the promise of the first vacancy in a white school." After taking charge, Carlton's racial attitudes never changed. At a 1925 conference, he could not recall any remarkable event, person, and/or experience from his time as principal at Navy Hill from 1877 to 1880. He simply noted that "there was little of interest to note." Unfortunately, for students, parents, and teachers at Navy Hill, Carlton remained in this position, with one brief interruption, for ten years. As Carlton recalled, his transfer "was a long, long time coming." Carlton's employment as well as Bennett's warranted complaints from the parents and community leaders. Their complaints provided the basis for the campaign for African American teachers.³²

An initial campaign goal was the eradication of inferior teachers within certain schools but not the entire system. The School Board's refusal to have integrated teaching staffs meant that the Board filled the majority of the African American public schools with

Year 1874-1875," *Annual Message and Accompanying Documents of the Mayor of Richmond to the City Council for the Fiscal Year Ending January 31, 1876* (Richmond: C. C. Baughman, City Printer, 1876), 291-295; "Eighth Annual Report of the School Board and the Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA, for the Scholastic Year 1876-1877," *Annual Message and Accompanying Documents of the Mayor of Richmond to the City Council for the Fiscal Year Ending January 31, 1878* (Richmond: C. C. Baughman, City Printer, 1878), 226.

³² Carlton, 5, 9.

individuals “whose standard was lower than heretofore enumerated.” During the 1870s, many incompetent white teachers found employment over better qualified African American applicants. Initially, parents outside of Navy Hill had valid reasons to complain over the quality of teachers in their schools. In 1875, African Americans held a mass meeting in which they elected Reverend James Holmes, Reverend John W. Dungee and two other men to state their case for African American public school teachers. These men appeared before the Board and presented them with a petition signed by attendees at a June 1875 mass meeting. In their petition and appeal, the four men began by “profusely thanking the board for maintaining public schools” and then demanded “more colored teachers in the colored schools.” They stated “of the thirty-three colored schools [classes] of the city of Richmond only seven are instructed by colored teachers while there is not one colored principle [sic] in the entire city.” They concluded: “It does not appear to us that there is any valid reason for this small proportion of colored teachers in colored schools, we, therefore kindly petition you, as a matter of justice to us, as citizens of this Commonwealth to give us a more equitable proportion of teachers and principals in the colored schools of the city of Richmond.” Their pleas went unheard. By 1876, these individuals found the support of the Virginia Education and Historical Association. Together, this organization and African Americans throughout the city argued that the employment of the inferior quality teachers resulted in poor enrollment, lower test scores, and a feeling that education was not a necessity. However, the School Board remained obstinate. They refused acquiescing to parents demands, as Rabinowitz has shown, on the “unsupported ground that most of the black parents preferred white teachers and that acquiescence would serve only to further extend the color line in race relations.”³³

³³ Rabinowitz, 174-175; Quoted in Howard Rabinowitz, “Half a Loaf: The Shift from White to Black Teachers

Richmond Colored Normal aided their activism. Established 1867, the school had trained African Americans to become primary school teachers in the city's and state's public schools. During the 1870s, the school had received state, city as well as national recognition for its success. The school existence and its incorporation into the city's public schools system gave community activists an important resource in their fight for African American teachers. Insufficient number of trained African American teachers had been an argument made against the hiring of African American teachers in the public schools. Richmond Colored Normal provided parents of children in the public schools and community leaders with a counterargument. They pointed to this qualified corps of teachers as a reason for changing the School Board's policies. In a September 1876 address, John W. Cromwell argued that African American public school teachers "would awaken the proper interest in parents and pupils and furnish a report more favorable to the cause of education." With African American teachers, Cromwell concluded that they would improve overall enrollment of African Americans in Richmond and across the state. Hence, parents and community leaders turned to this growing corps of qualified teachers for their campaign.³⁴

Members of the African American community as well as school administrators strongly encouraged Richmond Colored Normal graduates to apply for teaching positions. Although the graduates typically scored higher than white applicants, few found employment. While meaningful results would not occur until the next decade, African American parents, community leaders, public school teachers, and Richmond Colored

in the Negro Schools of the Urban South, 1865-1890," *Journal of Southern History* 40, no. 4 (November 1974): 579-580; "The Necessity of Organization to Promote Our Educational Interest---An Address Delivered Before the Virginia Educational and Historical Association by its President J.W. Cromwell," *People's Advocate*, September 2, 1876, 2-3.

³⁴ "The Necessity of Organization to Promote Our Educational Interest---An Address Delivered Before the Virginia Educational and Historical Association by its President J.W. Cromwell," *People's Advocate*, September 2, 1876, 2-3.

Normal graduates laid the foundation for the struggle for African American teachers in the city's public schools. Indeed, the majority of the African American educators who found employment in the city schools had received their education at Richmond Colored Normal.³⁵

Funding represented a final aspect of the quality campaigns in Richmond. African Americans and their white allies recognized the importance of funding to the success of the public schools. Campaigns for school accommodations and teachers also hinged upon funding. Inadequate funding often thwarted African American efforts in securing school accommodations, better school conditions, and African American teachers. Funding was essential to the success of the public schools as well as the various campaigns. However, it was an issue in which African Americans had the least control over. Local, national, and international forces impinged upon African Americans and their allies' efforts in securing adequate funding. As a result, they sought as much money as possible for the schools and equity in the distribution of said school funds. Ultimately, the financial difficulties of the 1870s posed the greatest obstacle to their efforts.

Like the majority of Southern cities, Richmond suffered from a lack of funding necessary to adequately support the public schools. School Board officials did their best to fund the schools. Richmond typically spent between \$32,000 and \$53,900 in addition to the monies received from the state school fund. The majority of these supplemental monies came from taxation and creative fiscal policies. The city also employed monies derived from the Peabody Fund and bank interest. Thus, Richmond school officials funded the public schools

³⁵ *Virginia School Report, 1871*, 15, 19, 106-123; *Virginia School Report, 1874*, 116-117; For Richmond Colored Normal's incorporation into the city system, see "Eighth Annual Report of the School Board and Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA., for the Scholastic Year 1875-1876," *Annual Message and Accompanying Documents of the Mayor of Richmond to the City Council for the Fiscal Year Ending January 31, 1877* (Richmond: C. C. Baughman, City Printer, 1877), 30; For the statistics of the African American teachers employed see Appendix 4.

to the best of their abilities.³⁶

Rather than allocate more monies to the white public schools, Binford and school officials attempted to maintain a fair and consistent distribution policy. The School Board allocated funds in proportion to the number of students documented in the annual School Census. This policy ensured the equitable distribution of the limited funds to the white and African American public schools. Since the School Census never took into account actual usage, absenteeism and private school attendance never affected the monies allocated to the schools. However, the policy had an unintended negative consequence. As African Americans attended the public schools at a higher percentage than white students, the actual amount of money spent per student was inadvertently less. Thus, the rate per student spent was lower for African American students than for white students. This discrepancy of funds resulted from African Americans' firm belief in education and not race-based policies. But, some African Americans, such as John W. Cromwell, desired that the Board address this discrepancy. While they understood the difficulties faced by the School Board, they wanted more money appropriated, but settled for fairness.³⁷

The financial panic of 1873 and the state debt question brought the city's school funding policies to the forefront. White Richmonders began questioning the necessity of funding public schools for all children, but narrowed their focus to African American children. These individuals voiced their opposition to the city and state school system through the pages of several local publications. One such individual was Reverend Robert L. Dabney, a prominent minister who taught at the Union Theological Seminary in Richmond.

³⁶ Table IX, *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report*, 40-41.

³⁷ Table IX, *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report*, 40-41; "The Necessity of Organization to Promote Our Educational Interest---An Address Delivered Before the Virginia Educational and Historical Association by its President J.W. Cromwell," *People's Advocate*, September 2, 1876, 2-3.

After a series of articles published in the *Southern Planter and Farmer*, Dabney issued a scathing attack on the city's African American public schools but also the overall state school system.³⁸

Dabney's criticism opened the publication's April 1876 edition. Entitled "The Negro and the Common School," he strongly argued against the state's financing of African American education and the public schools in general. Dabney largely based his opinions on the public schools through observations made in Richmond and at other large urban centers in Virginia. His main objection centered on the perceived benefits of the system on only African Americans and the expense of the schools. He wrote: "To one of them only, I would add my voice: the unrighteousness of expending vast sums, wrung by a grinding taxation from our oppressed people, upon a pretended education of freed slaves, when the State can neither pay its debts, nor attend to its own legitimate interests." Dabney also felt that the state system caused more problems in terms of race relations by promoting African American suffrage, encouraging miscegenation, and depriving the state of a labor force. Instead, Dabney proposed a return to an educational system that existed in Virginia up until 1860. He concluded that the State should not be "a universal creator and sustainer of schools." He recommended that parents "create, sustain, and govern their own schools under the assistance and guidance of an inexpensive and (mainly) unsalaried board, and then render such help to those parents who are unable to help themselves, as the very limited school tax will permit." In so doing, he felt that it would "let the existence of some aspiration in parents or children

³⁸ Sharp, 44; Dailey, 25-29; "The Public School In Its Relation to the Negro," was a three-part series originally published under the author "Civis" in the *Religious Herald* during the spring and summer of 1875. The *Southern Planter and Farmer*, a monthly journal published in Richmond, reprinted the articles from December 1875 to February 1876. For the text of the articles, see Civis, "The Public School in its Relation to the Negro," *Southern Planter and Farmer* 36, no. 4 (December 1875): 707-711, Civis, "The Public School in its Relation to the Negro, No. II" *Southern Planter and Farmer* 37, no. 1 (January 1876): 35-42, and Civis, "The Public School in its Relation to the Negro, No. III" *Southern Planter and Farmer* 37, no. 2 (February 1876): 108-116.

be the uniform condition of the aid; for without this condition it is infallibly thrown away.”

Hence, Dabney’s proposed return to antebellum system meant a return to fewer taxes but also to the marginalization of African American education in Richmond and the state.³⁹

While the editor of the *Southern Planter and Farmer* wholeheartedly endorsed Dabney’s remarks, William H. Ruffner objected. He publicly defended the state school system and the city’s African American public schools over the course of four days in the *Richmond Dispatch* and *Richmond Enquirer* before having it published in pamphlet form. Ruffner first addressed the emotional nature of Dabney’s attack in his response. He argued that Dabney chose to use an emotional plea for a specific purpose. Dabney’s language invoked “the sentiment that education and other privileges are suited to the few and not to the many; it panders in language full of scorn and disgust to the common aversion felt for the negroes; and it strives to last into fury all the most violent passions of the war.” However, Ruffner felt that such language overlooked the necessity of a state funded educational system as a right for all citizens, regardless of race. Without the public school system, Ruffner concluded that state could not survive. He wrote: “As to raising a question between the public debt and the public schools, what could be more unwise.... We can educate and we can pay!... Will the body politic be preserved whilst gangrene is eating deeper and deeper?”⁴⁰

Second and most significantly, Ruffner succinctly debunked Dabney’s claims that African Americans achieved continued access to public education as a result of slavery. For Ruffner, Dabney had misread “the history of emancipation in the past, but without drawing

³⁹ “R. L. Dabney, “The Negro and the Common School,” *Southern Planter and Farmer* 37, no. 4 (April 1876): 252-254, 260-262.

⁴⁰ L. R. Dickinson, “Dr. Dabney’s on the Negro in the Public Schools,” *Southern Planter and Farmer* 37, no. 4 (April 1876): 317; William H. Ruffner, “The Public Free School System,” Circulars [including addresses, public documents, pamphlets, and miscellaneous material on public education in Virginia. Collected by W. H. Ruffner, superintendent of public instruction], 1-2, accessed at the Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia

the lessons they ought to have taught them... The negroes have no special claim on us because of slavery.” As citizens and taxpayers, African Americans had equal access to a state funded education. However, equal access never equated to integration as suggested by Dabney. Ruffner argued: “We find negroes in our churches, our theatres, our courthouses...our halls of legislation, but there is one place where no negro enters, and that is a *white public school house* [emphasis his].” As state law “separates the races in education, and in nothing else,” he reasoned that the “effect of the separation enters into the educational thought and training of the young and establishes the habits and etiquette of society with a firmness that nothing else is doing, or could do.” Hence, Ruffner debunked Dabney’s use of racial arguments as baseless and defended African Americans right to a public education supported by city and state funds.⁴¹

Ruffner’s elaborate response also signified the extent in which the educational networks functioned. At time of crisis, as in the case of Dabney’s critique, African Americans could rely upon their high-ranking partners for support. Ruffner’s intimate knowledge of Richmond’s and the state’s public schools and his relationships with African Americans allowed for his passionate response. The passion shown in his defense reassured African Americans that they could count on their white allies. Furthermore, Ruffner’s response also demonstrated that the creation of African American public schools had become firmly rooted in the state’s definition of the body politic. Ruffner’s defensive response, therefore, exemplified that African American education was seen as a vital part of state citizenship and worthy of state resources as well as state protection.

Although they had Ruffner’s support, African Americans refused to allow their white allies to solely speak on their behalf. African Americans, through the press and racial uplift

⁴¹ Ibid., 8, 10.

organizations, responded to Dabney. John W. Cromwell responded on behalf of the African American citizens of Virginia against “a most dangerous warfare is being made upon the free school system.” Published in the *People’s Advocate*, Cromwell’s critique first addressed the mismanagement of state and city school funds. He decried: “The first blow in this direction was the misappropriations of half a million of dollars of the public school funds by the authority of the State, to the payment of interest on the public debt. “ As a result of the mismanagement, Cromwell argued that these “friends of the cause of free education” catalyzed the Conservative Party’s war upon the public schools in which he considered Reverend Dabney as the “first anti-school champion.” He then reminded his readers that they had fought before against “a religious fanatic and lunatic” who had been enlisted to aid “the destruction of African American education.” Cromwell implored his readers and African Americans across the state to rally against such individuals. He concluded: “It would be criminal in us to remain silent in the face these ranters. We propose to meet them boldly, and hand them fearlessly, because we feel that every consideration of duty and patriotism demands it of us.” Through the pages of the *People’s Advocate* and the Virginia Educational and Historical Association, Cromwell and other African Americans primarily residing in Richmond, mobilized African American citizens “all over the State, in cities, towns and villages” into immediate action.⁴²

Public school students also entered the debate. As the criticism directly affected the quality of education received, students attending Richmond Colored Normal and High School deemed it necessary to comment. Two months after the publication of Dabney’s

⁴² John W. Cromwell, “Dr. Dabney’s Thrust At Free School,” *People’s Advocate*, May 13, 1876, 2; “The Necessity of Organization to Promote Our Educational Interest---An Address Delivered Before the Virginia Educational and Historical Association by its President J.W. Cromwell,” *People’s Advocate*, September 2, 1876, 2-3.

original remarks, James Hugo Johnston addressed an audience of normal and high school students at Richmond Colored Normal and High School. The normal student made a compelling argument.

Johnston opened his address by acknowledging Dabney's public remarks. Rather than summarizing Dabney's arguments to his audience, Johnston quoted him. "The professor says: Public school education has given the masses a smattering of learning, which has been to them the opening of Pandora's box. It has launched them on an ocean which they are incompetent to navigate[emphasis his]," Johnston informed his fellow students. "Every manufactory intoxicate their minds with the most licentious vagaries of opinions upon every fundamental subject of politics and religion. They have only knowledge enough to run into danger." Johnston then simplified Dabney's arguments for his audience. In clarifying Dabney's words, Johnston pondered that if "so much learning as the public schools give is a 'Pandora's box,' a fountain of evil," then "why doesn't the police put a stop to it?" But unlike Ruffner and Cromwell, Johnston went to the crux of the matter for students. "We fellow students are they very persons meant here. During the last dozen years or more, we have been thinking that we were arming ourselves against folly, superstition, rashness and danger, but we have only been fitting ourselves to run into it." Hence, Dabney's questioning of the public schools in reality questioned the very education obtained by Johnston and his peers. It was their education, their intellectual advancement as well as their intellectual abilities that were being dismissed by the prominent theologian. Through gaining knowledge, according to Dabney's argument, Johnston and his public school comrades had been intoxicated with the "licentious vagaries of opinions upon every fundamental subject of politics and religion." But for Johnston and his peers, they knew that the "Pandora's Box"

could not be closed regardless of the efforts of Reverend R. L. Dabney.⁴³

Since Dabney attempted to cast blame for the “Pandora’s Box,” Johnston addressed the question of blame in his conclusion. He wrote: “And now we are told that all this is a delusion, and that we have only been getting harm. Well who is to blame?” He concluded that it “isn’t us school children. How could we know?” He reasoned then that “the blame must rest upon the shoulders of our Principal, the Superintendent of School, and His honor the Mayor and our dear and faithful teachers.” For their intellectual corruption, Johnston, on behalf of his peers, offered the following words of forgiveness. “We forgive them all for they did not mean us any harm.”⁴⁴

As evidenced by Johnston’s address, students astutely recognized the consequences of Dabney’s critique. They would have been the greatest losers if Dabney and other detractors successfully removed African American public education from city and state resources. As a result, they entered the debate rather than have their parents, community leaders, and white allies speak for them. The issue of school funding was far too important for them not to engage in these debates. They ultimately had the most to lose.

City and state officials were not swayed by Dabney’s remarks. They still maintained a fair and equal funding policy. City officials appropriated between \$49,000 and \$53,000 in addition to state and outside funding received after Dabney’s critique. Hence, school officials remained committed to African American education despite the financial difficulties.⁴⁵

Public school funding became one of the primary issues debated in the elections for

⁴³ James Hugo Johnston, “The Public Schools,” speech, June 1876, box 3, folder 1, James Hugo Johnston, Sr. Papers, 1865-1914, Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia State University, Petersburg, Virginia.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Table IX, *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report*, 40-41.

city officials after Dabney's critique. During the 1878 election, the *Richmond Dispatch* provided its readers with each city councilman candidate's opinion of school funding. The newspaper asked each candidate the following question: "Are you in favor of maintaining the public schools in unimpaired efficiency and would you vote necessary money therefore?" All of the candidates pledged support of the schools. It would have been political suicide to do otherwise. Some candidates, such as W. H. Haxall, promised the maintenance of school funding while enacting fiscal responsibility and efficiency. Others, such as J. Taylor Ellyson, gave their unequivocal support of the public school, and promised to allocate any necessary funds that ensured their continuation. Responses to these questions featured prominently in the *Richmond Dispatch* as well as in African American newspapers, such as the *Virginia Star*, because it was a major concern for all. African Americans, like the Jackson Ward Republicans, used this information in their discussions of candidate endorsements. For the Jackson Ward Republican and other political groups, the issue of public schools and school funding played a pivotal role in their decisions for candidate endorsements. As demonstrated by the 1878 election, city officials could not be elected without providing some commentary on school funding. The fate of the public schools rested upon elected officials' fiscal policies. Thus, African Americans' use of the ballot secured the election of individuals who accepted equitable funding of their schools.⁴⁶

Continued financial support, though, never alleviated the funding crisis. Deficit spending and creative fiscal policies reached a turning point in 1878. School Board officials enacted a mandatory thirty-percent cut in teachers' salaries and delayed all projects. While

⁴⁶ Table IX, *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report*, 40-41; "City Politics," *Richmond Dispatch*, April 19, 1878, 1; "The Questions of the Day," *Richmond Dispatch*, April 20, 1878, 1; "The Local Situation," *Richmond Dispatch*, April 22, 1878, 1; "Responses from the Candidates for the Council," *Richmond Dispatch*, April 26, 1878, 1; "Jackson Ward Republicans," *Virginia Star*, May 11, 1878, 3.

school conditions deteriorated, this measure allowed the schools to remain open. When promised appropriations failed to materialize, cuts to teachers' salaries and project funding continued for the remainder of the decade. Despite School Board's financial difficulties, African American public schools weathered the storm as a result of the insistence of African Americans and their white allies.⁴⁷

Through the efforts of African Americans and their educational networks, the public schools remained funded. State and national financial difficulties posed real challenges but school officials did everything possible to maintain the schools. While not perfect, the public schools never closed as African Americans, even students, successfully argued that the schools were their fundamental rights as citizens. As long as they could convince individuals such as William H. Ruffner and dismiss detractors, African Americans achieved success.

While African Americans secured favorable white support of the public schools, they still faced a major struggle for quality public schools. Rather than having a unified campaign, African Americans remained divided as the benefits of the public schools was not shared equally. As a result, individual neighborhood struggles often characterized the initial improvement campaigns before coalescing into a broader community struggle. The national, state, and city financial crisis greatly assisted this transformation. Once unified, their activism combined with the relationships with high-ranking white officials permitted the survival of the schools while making some improvements to the school system's quality. In so doing, they also laid the foundation for the quality campaigns in the next decade.

Mobile: A Community's Struggle for Quality Public Schools

In Mobile, the departure of the Freedmen's Bureau created a vacuum in the

⁴⁷ "The City School Board," *Richmond Dispatch*, July 3, 1878, 4; "Public Schools," *Richmond Dispatch*, September 6, 1878, 1; "The Public Schools and Dr. Ruffner," *Virginia Star*, September 27, 1879, 2.

administration of the African American schools. Within the year, partisan politics would thrust African Americans into the quality campaigns. The community also began to look inward. This introspection made African Americans draw more upon their internal networks and rely less upon their white educational partners for success. For African Americans, the quality campaign represented a fight for the very survival of the public schools for their children. Without quality public schools, African Americans realized that previous educational victories would become moot.

Partisan politics directly influenced the shift to the quality campaign strategy. Without the Freedmen's Bureau to serve as a mediator, power struggles among school officials escalated by the start of the 1870-1871 academic year. The residual effects of the dual school board debate still dominated school affairs. Due to a series of court decisions and state mediation, George L. Putnam, Republican and American Missionary Association administrator, remained as the Superintendent of Schools for Mobile city and surrounding county. His school board consisted of members representing Republicans, Conservatives, and Democrats. Highly divided along party lines, any member's action was often seen as a personal and political affront to another. James M. Lowery and Charles A. Woodward, husband of Sara Stanley Woodward, tried to mediate between the members, but their efforts proved futile. Democrats and Conservatives quickly joined forces in targeting the actions of George L. Putnam and other Republican members in order to force their removal. By November 1870, politics prevented the School Board from effectively administering the Mobile public schools.⁴⁸

State officials again attempted mediation. At the urging of the Alabama State

⁴⁸ For criticism of Putnam, see "Untitled," *Mobile Daily Register*, December 6, 1870, 2, column 4; "The Public Schools," *Mobile Daily Register*, January 1, 1871, 3.

Superintendent of Public Instruction, the legislature intervened with a legislative act. Approved in November 1870, the legislation had three components. First, it reaffirmed Putnam's position as Superintendent of Public Schools. Second, it required new elections for the Superintendent of Schools and School Commissioners to be held in March 1871. This election mandate specifically addressed the claims made by Democrats and Conservatives regarding Putnam's legitimacy as superintendent. Since Putnam had been appointed rather than elected, state officials concluded that new elections would legitimate the School Board by providing school officials who had been duly elected. Third, the act also designated the Superintendent of Education as the only individual who was able to withdraw monies from the State Education Fund. With this legislative act, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Alabama legislature sought a resolution to the Mobile School Board crisis.⁴⁹

State intervention provided Democrats and Conservatives with an unexpected boon. Intervention exposed Putnam's ineffectiveness as an administrator because he could not resolve the Board's internal problems. Democrats and Conservatives capitalized upon the situation. In December 1870, Democrat and Conservative school commissioners staged a bloodless *coup d'etat*. They convinced Joseph Hodgson, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, to suspend George L. Putnam. Hodgson appointed Major W. T. Walthall as the interim Superintendent until the March 1871 elections. He then ordered teachers to report directly to the new superintendent. Putnam responded to his suspension with a lawsuit against the interim Superintendent. Ultimately, the prolonged court battle forced Walthall's resignation, but not Putnam's return. When the city, county, and state judicial system

⁴⁹ Joseph Hodgson, *Laws Relating to the Public Schools of Alabama, with Remarks and Forms, 1871* (Montgomery: W. W. Screws, 1871), 43-44 in Superintendent of Education, *Reports: Annual and Other Reports, 1857-1871*, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

questioned the legality of Putnam's suspension, Hodgson officially removed Putnam from office on the basis of "malfeasance in office." He appointed John R. Tompkins as the new interim Superintendent, and insisted that elections for Superintendent of Education and School Commissioners occurred on March 4, 1871 as scheduled.⁵⁰

Most white Mobilians openly acknowledged their support of the coup. On Christmas Day 1870, the *Mobile Daily Register* congratulated the School Board for the "change which has at last been effected to their great relief, by the suspension from office of Mr. Geo. L. Putnam and the appointment of Major W. T. Walthall." As a result of this change, the newspaper hoped that it would "be the inauguration of a new era in our school system." The article concluded with encouraging words pertaining to the upcoming School Board election: "Now, the only battle to be fought in March next will be simply a fair, and we hope, courteous between friends of the old and new systems..." Similarly, letters to the editor praised the coup and the events precipitated by Putnam's replacement. In one published letter, entitled "The Outrage on the Public Schools," the unknown author encouraged students, white and black, to force Putnam out of the schools if he returned to office. In conclusion, the author praised the present Board for doing their "duty to the county...[in the defense of the citizens] sacred rights." Other letters to the editor weighed in on the legal proceedings that could permit Putnam's return. Throughout, they expressed frustration at the legal system from issuing an injunction which permitted teachers to go unpaid to simply impeding the actions of the Board in moving beyond the coup. This overwhelming support

⁵⁰"Public Schools," *Mobile Daily Register*, December 25, 1870, 4; Major W. T. Walthall, "The School Usurpation," *Mobile Daily Register*, February 17, 1871, 4; For the letters removing officially removing Putnam and appointing Tompkins, see "County Superintendent of Education," *Mobile Daily Register*, February 24, 1871, 2; "To the Teachers," notice, *Mobile Daily Register*, February 22, 1871, 4.

effectively silenced individuals who may have opposed the Board's actions.⁵¹

Harnessing the white community's support, Democrats and Conservatives continued their alliance during the campaign. These groups employed the local white newspapers as it had during the 1868 state constitution ratification debate. Articles, editorials, letters to the editor and notices flooded the *Mobile Daily Register*. They urged white participation in the election through the usage of white supremacist strategies, primarily race-baiting and a redemption narrative.

Newspaper editors' usage of a race-baiting strategy permitted the elimination of white apathy. These articles evoked white fears of "Negro Rule" with this strategy. Race-baiting had previously yielded electoral success for Democrats and Conservatives. For the newspaper editors and strategists in the Democratic-Conservative Party, it made sense to use this proven strategy again in the School Board electoral campaign. For instance, "This Day's Election" raised the specter of "Negro Rule" in conveying its message to potential white voters. In reference to the African American community, the article argued: "Putnam has already humbugged a large number of those with the false and preposterous idea that free schools depend on his election." The article reasoned: "The lamentable truth is that a Yankee-carpetbagger can stuff any nonsense and absurdity into their heads, while they will not believe an oath of the most respectable white citizen of the community." This rationale openly questioned African Americans' intellectual abilities in making political decisions. By being persuaded by "nonsense and absurdity," as the article suggested, African Americans had proven their inability to properly exercise their franchise and resolve the School Board

⁵¹ "Outrage on the Public Schools," *Mobile Daily Register*, January 8, 1871, 4; For legal proceedings, see A. J. Moses, "The Public Schools," *Mobile Daily Register*, January 21, 1871, 4, "The Public Schools," *Mobile Daily Register*, January 27, 1871, 4, Pater Familias, "The Poor Teachers," *Mobile Daily Register*, February 1, 1874, 4 and Inquirer, "The Mandamus," *Mobile Daily Register*, February 21, 1871, 4.

situation. Since Putnam had the support of the majority of African American voters, the article concluded that only white voters could resolve the situation. The article implored readers: "...turn them from the field with the solid arguments of ballots. Turn out and do it, men of Mobile..." If not, the article warned "bitter regret and remorse will follow your neglect." This warning forced white Mobilians to take a stand politically on the School Board issue. As a result, the strategy helped to eliminate some white political apathy.⁵²

Newspaper articles also employed a redemption narrative. Southern Democrats and Conservatives desired to redeem the region from the ills of Republican rule after the end of military occupation. The redemption strategy made "Republicans," "Radicals," "Carpetbaggers" into political slurs. For party organizers, these pejorative terms symbolized dishonest and illegitimate government while "Democrats" and Conservatives" represented honest and legitimate government. The *Mobile Daily Register* heavily employed this strategy in the editions leading to the election. Mobile, the newspaper editors argued, had the chance to overthrow the "carpetbag oligarchy" in relation to the city schools. "Putnam is among the last of his tribe," one article's author reminded its readers, "...Putnam stands before the people changed with all those complications attaching to our local school interests, by which teachers have not received their salaries since December last." The article demanded readers to "[m]ake him let go his hold on the fat school teat and root, like any other pig, for his living." By centering the debates around Putnam's birthplace and political affiliation, these articles placed the election in terms of return to local rule and the Democratic Party in local governmental affairs. E. R. Dickson and other local candidates, as nominated by the organizations, represented a more suitable alternative to Putnam and members of the opposing party. According to media coverage, Dickson represented everything Putnam did

⁵² "This Day's Election," *Mobile Daily Register*, March 4, 1871, 2.

not. He was a scholastically qualified, competent administrator who possessed a “high character as a man and citizen” that was “beyond dispute.”⁵³

These polarizing political events catapulted African Americans into the quality campaign. The campaign made the community increasingly aware of the need for direct representation on the School Board. African Americans first turned to a cadre of local African American politicians. Amidst the campaign, they suffered a major setback. In February 1871, Lawrence S. Berry, former alderman under the Harrington administration, committed suicide. The ardent Republican had been a crucial ally for the community since emancipation and African American enfranchisement in 1867. As an alderman, historian Michael Fitzgerald argues, Berry “distinguished himself as an advocate for aggressive measures to benefit black constituents, especially poorer ones.” Moreover, Berry fully supported George Putnam on the issue of free public schools. His suicide made the community seek alternative candidates. As a result, African Americans rallied behind the People’s Free School Ticket. This political coalition nominated Putnam for the Superintendent of Schools and nine candidates for school commissioners. These candidates canvassed the African American community, specifically mass political meetings held in the local churches. To the dismay of the editors of the *Mobile Daily Register*, Democrats, and Conservatives, these meetings held in the “hot-houses for political incendiarism [sic] and plots against the welfare of society in the matter of judicious and honest suffrage” resulted in a large African American turnout on

⁵³ Foner, 412-425; “The Election,” *Mobile Daily Register*, March 4, 1871, 2; For additional anti-Putnam articles, see “The Inevitable Putnam,” *Mobile Daily Register*, February 15, 1871, 4, “The School Elections,” *Mobile Daily Register*, February 26, 1871, 2 and “Putnam as a Patent Self-Raiser,” *Mobile Daily Register*, March 4, 1871, 2; “The County School Convention,” *Mobile Daily Register*, February 23, 1871, 2; “Untitled,” *Mobile Daily Register*, March 4, 1871, 2.

Election Day.⁵⁴

Ultimately, African American electoral turnout proved insufficient. The Democrat-Conservative coalition ticket won the Superintendent of Education position and the majority of the School Commissioner positions. However, this victory was not a landslide. African American electoral participation factored greatly in the narrow victory. A post-election *Mobile Daily Register* editorial remarked: “The wiley [sic] Putnam, taking advantage of it, and counting also on absentees among the fireman, ran a muck [sic] by way of a surprise which came near being successful.” The editorial rhetorically asked: “Will the white people of this county never learn not to forget that there is a dangerous inflammable element of black suffrage here that is ever on the alert for mischief, that they cannot safely ignore, and that needs always to be vigilantly watched.” Indeed, African American participation resulted in the election of three School Board members who promised their allegiance to the concerns of the African American community. A. E. Couch, Joseph Lomery, and Drury Thompson would represent the community’s interests on the School Board. While they lost having a reliable ally in the position of Superintendent of Education, they still had some representation.⁵⁵

Limited representation, though, never alleviated fears over the new School Board. Due to the contentious election, some African Americans feared retribution for their electoral support of the People’s Free School Ticket. Some believed that the board would enact policies resulting in a loss of school funding, and perhaps the closure of the African

⁵⁴ “Suicide of a Well-Known Colored Man, an Ex-Alderman,” *Mobile Daily Register*, February 19, 1871, 4; Michael Fitzgerald, *Urban Emancipation: Popular Politics In Reconstruction Mobile* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 153; “The People’s Free School Ticket,” *Mobile Daily Register*, March 4, 1871, 2; “The Elections,” *Mobile Daily Register*, March 7, 1871, 2.

⁵⁵ “Public School Elections,” *Mobile Daily Register*, March 10, 1871, 4; “The Elections,” *Mobile Daily Register*, March 7, 1871, 2.

American public schools. These fears worried the editors of the *Mobile Daily Register*, the organ for the Democratic and Conservative Parties who now dominated the School Board. Shortly after the election, the editors of the *Mobile Daily Register* published an editorial shortly after the elections as a means of calming the African American community's fears.

Entitled "The Colored Public Schools," the editorial acknowledged African American concerns over the new School Board. Within the opening paragraph, the editorial addressed the charges leveled at the new School Board by members of the African American community and their white allies. "The colored people have had their minds stuffed with many false and injurious ideas by Putnam and others, in regard to the treatment they would receive at the hands of the new Superintendent and School Commissioners," the editorial opened. In response to the "false and injurious ideas," the editorial recommended that parents and community leaders meet and fully discuss their concerns with the new Superintendent and School Commissioners. As elected officials, the editorial argued that officers must uphold "the proper care of colored children is as much a duty imposed upon them, and one that they have as much at heart, as the education of white children." For the editorialist, proper care entailed the allocation of school funds. Since taxpayers equally contributed to the school fund, the editorialist assured the African American community that "the commissioners have no thought or desired to exercise any partiality in the application of the fund to this important end." As a result, the editorial regarded the community's fears as misguided: "If the colored people suppose the Democratic and Conservative party, which now holds sway in Alabama, desires to keep the black people in ignorance, they are greatly mistaken." Hence, the African American community had nothing to fear.⁵⁶

The editorialist encouraged the community's usage of the schools. This would allow

⁵⁶ "The Colored Public Schools," *Mobile Daily Register*, April 2, 1871, 2.

African Americans to make up their own conclusions in regard to the new School Board rather than listening to individuals such as Putnam. If they did, they would not be “made the dupes and instruments of designing strangers, who come here for the express purpose of being them as pawns to play their game of plunder and office-seeking.” The editorial concluded with the following advice: “We advise them to look into the matter and judge for themselves. So far from finding obstacles and enmity, they will find that they have only kind, considerate and well-wishing friends for their improvement, not only in the school board, but in the community at large.” As suggested by the editorial, the new School Board and the broader white community pledged to fill the roles held by George L. Putnam and the previous School Board.⁵⁷

Despite this editorial, the white community’s actions betrayed their lack of commitment. It became quickly evident to African Americans that the white community endorsed the African American public schools solely out of a sense of obligation. They made no effort to view the African American public schools as legitimate institutions. Unlike Richmond, Mobile’s white community limited its recognition of the African American public schools. In the *Mobile Daily Register*, “our schools” referred solely to the white public schools as evidenced by its coverage of the schools’ closing exercises. Direct mention of the African American public schools occurred primarily during the announcement of teachers elected for employment. Obligation rather than a true commitment to African American education guided the white community’s actions. In short, African American public schools never reached the level of “our schools” and remained on the periphery.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ “The Colored Public Schools,” *Mobile Daily Register*, April 2, 1871, 2.

⁵⁸ For example, see “Our Schools,” *Mobile Daily Register*, June 29, 1871, 3; “Public Schools,” *Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register*, July 1, 1871, 2 and “Election of Teachers,” *Mobile Daily Register*, July 3, 1872, 1.

Racial politics surrounding the School Board election even embroiled the city's school-aged children. The March 1871 election campaign brought to the forefront questions of race, citizenship, and education. Following the election, the hostile racial climate did not immediately subside. Motivated by the racial climate, African American youths ridiculed the Decoration Day rituals celebrating the city's Confederate veterans. Maria Waterbury, a white teacher at Emerson Institute, extensively described the incident. From the safety of the schoolyard, African American children taunted the white women decorating the graves of Confederate soldiers in a nearby cemetery with a loud rendition of "John Brown's Body." After Waterbury heard the children sing, "John Brown's body lies moldering in the grave, But his soul is marching on," she ended recess instantly with the ringing of the school bell. "Over a hundred of them," Waterbury recounted, marched "reluctantly into the house, and to their seats." Horrified by their actions, Maria Waterbury delivered a stern lecture. She rebuked the students regarding the importance of respecting "the feelings of people, when they go to the graves of friends; that this school is trying to work by the golden rule." She felt that the young scholars had sunk to a level of immaturity shown by the adults in dealing with racial politics. After receiving the lecture, Waterbury noted that a group of ten or twelve boys had put away the rocks that they had picked up to throw at the Decoration Day processional while growling the word "Rebs." With her rebuke, she hoped that she could positively influence their future behavior as her lecture had successfully prevented a "small rebellion." Unlike other racially motivated fights, these African American youths had the benefit of a level-headed and caring schoolteacher. Her strong rebuke of the African American school children helped to diffuse the post-School Board election climate within the public schools.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Maria L. Waterbury, *Seven Years Among the Freedmen* (Chicago: T. B. Arnold, 1893), 97-98; For another example of an inter-racial fight between school aged children, see "A Lively Fight," *Mobile Daily Register*,

This incident revealed the intersections between politics and education. Broader politics surrounding the school often spilled into the classroom. As a microcosm of the society, children attempted to resolve the sociopolitical tensions present in their environment. When words proved inadequate, the children used their fists and projectiles. As a result, the schools acted as important sites for negotiating broader questions pertaining to race and politics. Public school teachers, such as Waterbury, proved essential in securing better political and racial relations beyond the classroom.

While African Americans failed during the March 1871 elections, their political participation did not end. They continued endorsing candidates, primarily Republican, at the national, state and local level. As extensively discussed by Michael Fitzgerald, African Americans' electoral participation had made a major influence in the city's politics over the course of the decade. Political meetings occurred throughout the city's churches, including Emerson Institute's chapel. On Election Day, as recounted by Waterbury, they showed that support en masse and often protected voters from intimidation and bribery. The community's endorsement, protection, and votes ensured that they had a voice in the affairs shaping their lives.⁶⁰

Children also understood the importance of African American electoral participation. From observing the community's political engagement, school-aged children anxiously awaited election results. They knew that politics affected their daily lives including their ability to obtain an education. Following the 1872 Presidential election, Waterbury extensively described her students' reactions to the results. She wrote: "At this election the

June 30, 1871, 3.

⁶⁰ For African Americans' influence over politics in Mobile, see Fitzgerald, *Urban Emancipation*, chapters 5 and 6; Richardson, 225; Waterbury, 90-91; Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2003), 224-226.

[R]epublicans gained the victory, and in a few days the colored school was told that General Grant was elected [P]resident.” In response, Waterbury recalled: “The whole school rose and sang the doxology.” The spontaneous school’s response showed that all members of the African American community valued electoral politics as a strategy.⁶¹

In elections for school commissioners, African Americans continued promoting African American and Creoles of Color candidates. Shortly after the March 1871 election campaign, the community suffered another major loss with the passing of John Carraway. Less than two months after the death of Lawrence S. Berry, Carraway’s death represented a blow. Carraway was Mobile’s “most distinguished politician,” according to historian Michael Fitzgerald, “having served in the constitutional convention, the legislature, and as a city councilman.” The death of two senior African American politicians posed as unexpected challenges to their efforts.⁶²

As a result, African Americans actively sought their replacement from within. In 1872, they endorsed W. Irving Squire for the 1873 School Board elections. Squire and his wife conducted a “large and flourishing” night school in the city. Squire had also formerly served as a City Engineer under the Harrington administration. The community viewed his commitment toward education and political experience as a reason to endorse his nomination. Riding high from the 1872 Presidential and elections, Squire noted the community’s optimism for potentially defeating the Democratic Party in the upcoming elections in a letter to E. M. Cravath. He wrote: “In the last election we beat the Democrats by nearly five thousand majority [sic]. We expect to [regain] our County Schools

⁶¹Waterbury, 91.

⁶² “Suicide of a Well-Known Colored Man, an Ex-Alderman,” *Mobile Daily Register*, February 19, 1871, 4; Fitzgerald, 129, 169.

Superintendent.” Squire then commented upon the community’s endorsement and his reluctant acceptance of it. “I will accept the nomination,” Squire wrote. “I am already occupying a comfortable position and shall not go from that place if we can find anyone else to take it, who is competent and our friend.” Squire’s hesitation showed the reluctance shared by other African American educators in entering the political arena. For Squire and others, competence in the classroom did not necessarily equate to competency in the administration of the public school system. Squire, though, still wanted to support the community who afforded him with a “comfortable position.” This motivated his acceptance. However, he acknowledged his own weakness and preferred that someone else ran. Consequently, the community had many difficulties finding suitable School Board contenders. However, this did not stop their efforts of securing a voice on the School Board.⁶³

African American electoral participation yielded few political gains. Democrats and their coalition with Conservatives continued achieving electoral success over the course of the decade. The party capitalized upon the lessons of the March 1871 school board elections in 1873, 1875, and 1877. A Democrat or coalition member held the County Superintendent position and the majority of School Board positions. By 1877, the Democratic Party held firm control over not only the School Board but city politics as well. It had become quite evident that the Republican Party had lost its ability to successfully compete politically. Mobile had been redeemed. Recognizing the political shift, the African American community adapted its politics in order to maintain a political voice.⁶⁴

⁶³ W. Irving Squire to E. M. Cravath, December 16, 1872, microfilm roll 3, AMA Papers, Alabama.

⁶⁴ “Mobile Colored Schools,” *Mobile Daily Tribune*, January 22, 1873, 2, column 2, *Interesting Transcriptions of Mobile Daily Tribune, 1870-1875 with Appropriate Index Prepared from Original Data by the Municipal and Court Records Project of the Works Progress Administration* (1939), Mobile Municipal Archives, Mobile, Alabama; City Directories, 1873-1877; For the Democrats return to power, see Fitzgerald, 198-228.

African Americans even considered switching political parties as a strategy for securing a voice in shaping political affairs. In May 1877, Reverend E. D. Taylor, Jackson Clay, James Allen, George Miller and Samuel Jones petitioned the Mayor, Board of Alderman, and City Council. These men had been staunch Republicans and were quite active in the African American community's political mobilization since 1867. Throughout the petition, these former Republicans unabashedly employed the white supremacist rhetoric of the Democratic Party. "The undersigned citizens representing the colored element of the City of Mobile respectfully suggest your honors consideration," the petition opened, "that prior to all the elections held in the City of Mobile for the different offices, they have been led into wrongs by unprincipled and unscrupulous [sic] men whose guize[sic] have been spacious and showy, but their aim have proved to be plunder,..". With this opening, the men appealed directly to the white supremacist notions undergirding the Democrats' return to political power. The community admitted to being duped by unprincipled and unscrupulous men, like Putnam. As a result, the petitioners concluded in the opening "...they have left us as enemies to the people that have ever been our friends immemorial, and have ever been the first to favor us in all troubles and it is intelligent for us to confess the same." Thus, their political allegiance to the Republican Party and Northerners made them into the political "enemies" of the local elite. According to the opening, they should have been aligned with the local elite and the Democratic Party. They now humbled themselves to the ruling elite.⁶⁵

Petitioners discussed negative outcome of their political decisions in the next section. Therein, they specifically addressed the detrimental effects of the community's political

⁶⁵ "Negroes Would Turn Democrats and Share Spoils, May 30, 1877," *Interesting Transcriptions From the City Documents of the City of Mobile for 1861-1884 with Appropriate Index. Prepared from Original Data by the Municipal and Court Records Project of the Works Progress Administration* (1939), 19-20, accessed at the Mobile Municipal Archives, Mobile, Alabama.

“infidelity.” They argued: “Notwithstanding our infidelity in all past elections and our actions in fighting politically against those who have ever been at services against those who have ever been at service to our relief when in trouble” resulted in the community’s despair. These wrong political choices resulted in poor conditions in the community and without political friends to alleviate their desperation. They requested relief from the Mayor, Board of Alderman and Common Council. Desired relief, according to the petitioners, lay in the form of patronage appointments: “Your petitioners would ask or pray that you would give them a recognition in the giving out of the public spoils...[and] that you give our petition your most careful and serious consideration.” The petitioners then presented the Mayor, Board of Alderman, and City Council with the names of seven African Americans for Corporation positions and ten African Americans for positions in the Police Department. In adopting a submissive stance, African American community, as represented by the petitioners, desired a real political voice in influencing the decisions affecting their community. In this instance, the Mayor, Board of Alderman, and Common Council did not act upon their suggestions. The political entities eventually tabled the petition. The petition also led to harsh criticism from the local newspapers. However, the African American community’s acknowledgement of their “infidelity” showed the lengths in which the community would go to achieve results.⁶⁶

While petitioners only asked for non-educational positions, the community hoped that the petition’s success would result in meaningful change in other aspects of government, including School Board administration. This is evident in the fact that Reverend E. D. Taylor acted as the chairman of the petitioners. Taylor was not a stranger to the African American public schools or Mobile’s African American community. His church functioned as the

⁶⁶ Ibid.; Fitzgerald, 226-227.

location for a public school. He regularly spoke at school functions such as picnics, graduations, and dedication ceremonies of new schools. Taylor's participation and the petition itself reflected the African American community's political savvy. African Americans firmly understood the shifting political currents within Mobile. They adopted any strategies that permitted them to have a voice in shaping political affairs. They also understood that embracing the new political regime was necessary. Positions of patronage and electoral success would only improve the schools and the overall community. Hence, Taylor's participation reflected the community's reading of Mobile's political climate.⁶⁷

Furthermore, African Americans embraced the advice given in the April 1871 *Mobile Daily Register* editorial by holding elected school officials accountable for their actions. They made their opinions known to the School Board, primarily through petitions. Petitioning had been a longstanding tactic employed by the community in dealing with the School Board. Historian Horace Mann Bond noted that the ritual of petitioning the School Board began as early as in 1867 with the Colored Mass Convention of the State of Alabama held at the Stone Street Church in Mobile. By 1871, African Americans had honed it into an art-form. First, they held special mass meetings to discuss the problem faced. From these meetings, they developed a course of action which entailed the creation of Petition Committee. The Committee would then create a petition for the community's approval. In the same meeting or another meeting, the community voiced any concerns regarding the proposed petition before voting upon it. After the community approved the petition, the petition would be sent to the appropriate parties and signees would be listed as "undersigned representatives" of the African American community. Reverend E. D. Taylor, chairman of the aforementioned petition, also spearheaded petitions to the School Board demanding better

⁶⁷ Fitzgerald, 233-234.

school conditions. Petitions sent ranged from repairs of existing schools to the construction of new schools to the hiring of teachers. Through petitioning, the community held its elected official accountable for the decisions made in regards to the African American public schools. The community's scrutiny, in the forms of the petitions, made School Board officials aware of their decisions pertaining to the African American public schools. If they made an unpopular decision, the African American community would definitely alert them of it. As a result, petitioning remained an important strategy in assuring the community's voice in School Board affairs.⁶⁸

Educational accessibility, such as school accommodations and night schools, represented another concern addressed by the quality campaigns. Demands for educational access centered upon several realities. First, the system lacked a sufficient number of schools to accommodate the city's African American school-aged population. The School Census reported the school system's African American school age population as 10,099 during the 1870-1871 academic year. However, actual enrollment remained much lower than the school census population. During the 1870-1871 academic year, 2,560 African Americans enrolled and the schools had an average attendance of 1,930. As the numbers suggest, interested students often faced many difficulties in securing a public school education. Many travelled great distances for overcrowded schools. Moreover, existing schools simply could not handle

⁶⁸ Bond, 84; "Colored Mass Convention of the State of Alabama," *Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register*, May 4, 1867, 2; "Poisonous Doctrines," *Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register*, May 5, 1867, 2; The text of these petitions have been lost in the historical record. The School Board minutes and local newspapers often acknowledged the receipt of these petitions. It can be inferred from these documents what the petitioners requested. See *Records of the Board of School Commissioners for Mobile County, Minutes, 1871-1887*, Mobile County Public School System, Barton Academy, Mobile Alabama; "The Colored Public Schools," *Mobile Daily Register*, April 2, 1871, 2, and "Mobile Colored Schools," *Mobile Daily Tribune*, January 22, 1873, 2, column 2 in *Interesting Transcriptions Of Mobile Daily Tribune, With Appropriate Index. Prepared from Original Data by the Municipal and Court Records Project of the Works Progress Administration (1939)*, accessed at the Mobile Municipal Archives, Mobile, Alabama.

the school census population. As a result, administrators turned away students due to the lack of suitable accommodations.⁶⁹

Second, school buildings were either rented or in disrepair. During the 1870-1871 academic year, the county rented six buildings for purpose of African American education. The number reduced to five during the following academic year. Putnam's removal resulted in the removal of Emerson Institute as a public school. Of the remaining schools, the majority were either "totally unfit for school purposes," or "not large enough" to accommodate the number of students desiring a public school education.⁷⁰ Instead of constructing schools, the School Board maintained a policy of renting African American churches. Dickson noted this practice in his report: "The colored people's Churches being generally the most suitable places for their schools, have been procured, so far as practicable, for the purposes of instruction. In some instances for repairs, in others free of rent [sic]." Though the schools resided primarily within the African American church system, the lack of permanent school structures bothered parents and community leaders. They found the poor school conditions "demoralizing." As a result, parents and community leaders, according to Waterbury, believed that the scholars were "losing what the A.M.A. have taught them." On this concern, African Americans found support of the Superintendent. Dickson acknowledged that the "colored schools have no school buildings as such, and considering the cost of erecting such buildings..." While he recognized the need for permanent structures, Dickson understood that "it will require time to procure [them]." But it was

⁶⁹ Superintendent of Education, *Annual and Other Reports, 1868-1879*, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

⁷⁰ May 15, 1871 Meeting Minutes, *Records of the Board of School Commissioners for Mobile County, Minutes, 1871-1887*, MCPSS.

uncertain how long the community would have to wait for better school accommodations.⁷¹

Third, the school system lacked flexibility in school offerings. The initial public school system lacked night schools and Sabbath Schools. Under the Freedmen's School system, these alternative day school programs allowed for the attendance of individuals unable to attend the day schools. Mobile had state approval for offering night schools but chose not to create them. Furthermore, state law restricted any implemented programs to "persons over the age of twenty-one." Designed for adult education, this provision still excluded a large portion of school aged children unable to attend the public schools. Mobile's lack of flexible course offerings and restrictive state laws left little choice for individuals such as Spencer Snell.⁷²

Work prevented Spencer Snell from attending the day schools. Instead, he attended private night schools operated by local African Americans in Mobile between 1869 and 1873. The future minister recalled his plight to obtain an education in a May 1889 *American Missionary* article. He wrote: "My first lessons from books I received in night school. At this time I was employed as [a] dining room servant by a family in Mobile. I did my work during the day, taking a little time here and there for study as best I could, and went to school at night." Snell then explained how his unconventional educational path led to an increase in better wages: "I suppose they considered my services more and more valuable as I became more enlightened, for, during the four years, my wages increased from \$3.50 to \$10 per

⁷¹ *Special Report of Joseph Hodgson, Superintendent Public Instruction of the State of Alabama, to the Governor, For the Scholastic Year, January 1, 1871, to September 30, 1871* (Montgomery: W. W. Screws, 1871), 67-69 in Superintendent of Education, *Annual and Other Reports, 1868-1879*, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama; Maria L. Waterbury to E. M. Cravath, November 6, 1871, microfilm roll 3, AMA Papers, Alabama.

⁷² Joseph Hodgson, *Laws Relating to the Public Schools of Alabama, with Remarks and Forms, 1871* (Montgomery: W. W. Screws, 1871), 43-44 in Superintendent of Education. Reports. *Annual and Other Reports, 1857-1871*, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

month.” Snell used the increase in his earnings for furthering his education. He recalled: “As my wages increased, I had more tuition to pay also, for during my study in the night school I had several teachers and paid some of them as much as two dollars per month.” While expensive, Snell considered the payment a great investment. He explained that “so anxious was I to acquire an education that I would have paid five dollars had it been required.” Snell overcame the financial burden posed by the lack of public night schools. Others were not as fortunate.⁷³

Moreover, the public schools proved less accommodating to irregular attendance than under the Freedmen’s School system. Administrators enforced a culture that punished sporadic attendance and shifting between schools during an academic year. In his first report as Superintendent of Education, Dickson bitterly complained about the Board’s efforts of maintaining consistent school enrollment. He placed the blame upon the addition of the African American public schools to the Mobile County school system. He wrote: “The trouble caused by changing schools is very much enhanced since the colored children have been a part of the public schools.” To illustrate his point, he provided an example from his brief tenure. He wrote: “When I began my official duties in March I was informed by a teacher that she had in her school, then numbering over one hundred pupils, scarcely twenty of the hundred who entered in November proceeding.” In order to rectify this problem, he explained: “Steps were immediately taken to prevent pupils from changing schools without

⁷³ Approved in November 1870, Section 8 of Article XIV-Local Law for the City of Mobile granted the Board of School Commissioners permission to establish night schools as they may deem necessary. However, the schools, if established were restricted to “persons over the age of twenty-one.” Designed for adult education, Snell would have been able to attend the city’s night schools, even it was offered. Joseph Hodgson, *Laws Relating to the Public Schools of Alabama, with Remarks and Forms, 1871* (Montgomery: W. W. Screws, 1871), 43-44 in Superintendent of Education. Reports. *Annual and Other Reports, 1857-1871*, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama; Reverend Spencer Snell, “A Student Letter: How I Was Educated, Led to Christ and Into the Ministry,” *American Missionary* 43, no. 5 (May 1889): 136, VF-Emerson Institute, USA Archives.

the written permission by the Superintendent. This for a while seemed to be quite sufficient, but means were soon discovered by which the order amounted to nothing.” An African American youth attempted to bypass the new system by assuming a new name when he tried to enter another school. Dickson noted that “[m]eans have been found by which this trick is exposed. The teacher asks the school what that boy’s name was before he came, and the newcomer generally finds some one ready to expose him.” For Dickson and teachers, consistent attendance at one school and not several permitted academic success. “We may by keeping the colored children at one school during a term, hope to give them proper instruction,” Dickson concluded, “and make their time at school a source of profit and culture, which certainly was impossible under former regulations.”⁷⁴

Dickson’s attendance difficulties revealed a shift in expectations and a school culture between the Freedmen’s Schools and public schools. Under the Freedmen’s School system, students transferred between schools for a variety of reasons. In this instance, it is unclear why the youth left the school and assumed a new identity for entry into another school. He may not have liked the school’s instructor. The new school may have been more convenient to his home and/or employment. It is evident, though, that the public school administrator’s desires for a strict school culture greatly differed from that of the students and parents. For Dickson, the “trouble of changing schools” was a new challenge to his administration of the city schools. For the students, the inability of changing schools at will and the stricter attendance policies posed as new challenges to their educational choice and access to an education.

⁷⁴ *Special Report of Joseph Hodgson, Superintendent Public Instruction of the State of Alabama, to the Governor, For the Scholastic Year, January 1, 1871, to September 30, 1871* (Montgomery: W. W. Screws, 1871), 69-70, in *Superintendent of Education, Annual and other Reports, 1868-1879*, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL.

Furthermore, Dickson's difficulties resulted from the imposition of a new grade classification system and curriculum. Public schools brought new grading classification systems. Under the new classification, Dickson found the African American students lacking. He noted in his 1871 report: "The schedule of studies has been changed in a great measure for colored pupils. I found pupils in the colored schools studying geography and grammar who could not write at all." By the end of the academic year, Dickson saw success: "Now every pupil, as soon as he can read simple sentences, begins to learn writing." However, parents wanted their children instructed in courses not offered by the schools, such as higher mathematics, music, art, and Latin. These courses were only available in the private school system.⁷⁵

Poor school conditions motivated African American parents' and community leaders' support of the city's private schools. Private schools offered better school conditions than the public schools, in terms of accommodations, apparatus, course offerings, and instruction. M. H. Leatherman cited the poor quality of the public schools as the reason for her decision to send her daughter to private schools. In a letter to the American Missionary Association, she noted: "There are a great many free schools about the city but as they do not amount to much, the people do not care to send their children, so long as there is any alternative." Withdrawal from public schools gave African American parents, like Leatherman, more control over school conditions. Students enrolled in private schools increased during the decade. Edward P. Lord noted the growth of the private school sector in Mobile. He remarked: "There were many private school, some of them taught by the colored Pastors..."

⁷⁵ *Special Report of Joseph Hodgson, Superintendent Public Instruction of the State of Alabama, to the Governor, For the Scholastic Year, January 1, 1871, to September 30, 1871*, 70; Maria L. Waterbury to E. M. Cravath, November 6, 1871, microfilm roll 3, AMA Papers, Alabama; Maria L. Waterbury to E. M. Cravath, November 20, 1871, microfilm roll 3, AMA Papers, Alabama.

Tuition costs, though, prevented many from utilizing this option.⁷⁶

Emerson Institute served as a viable alternative to the public schools. The school's conditions far surpassed that of the city's African American public schools. In terms of instruction, enrolled students noted the difference in quality. Maria Waterbury noted in a letter to E. M. Cravath: "One scholar the first who came to the inst. came from the best free school in the place said she had but one spelling lesson there in two weeks." The irregularity in which spelling lessons occurred suggests an overcrowded schoolroom and a high student to teacher ratio. If the schools were not overcrowded, this unnamed student would have had more frequent spelling lessons. It is evident that the student to teacher ratio made an impression upon the unnamed transferred student. For withdrawn students, Emerson Institute provided them with an education not available in the public schools.⁷⁷

Emerson Institute's affordability also made it a suitable alternative to most private schools. Administrators purposely kept the tuition costs low in order to ensure a "large and prosperous" school. While some parents objected to the nominal tuition costs, school administrators found that parents preferred "a pay school." George L. Putnam remarked: "Pupils are continually leaving other schools and are entering this one." The school expanded its program to additional day schools and night schools in order to accommodate the large number of students seeking admission. As a result, enrollment increased. The school boasted 125 scholars in November 1873, 167 scholars in April 1874, and 210 students in January 1876. Based upon these numbers, parents found Emerson Institute as their best option to the

⁷⁶ M. H. Leatherman to E. M. Cravath, October 15, 1872, microfilm roll 3, AMA Papers, Alabama; Edward Payson Lord to E. M. Cravath, January 11, 1873, microfilm roll 3, AMA Papers, Alabama.

⁷⁷ Maria L. Waterbury to E. M. Cravath, November 6, 1871, microfilm roll 3, AMA Papers, Alabama.

poor public schools.⁷⁸

Furthermore, Emerson Institute's night school program addressed the needs of African Americans unable to attend the day schools. W. Irving Squire and his wife initiated the school's program. They operated a private night school in Mobile. By 1872, their school outgrew its facilities. Squire approached American Missionary Association officials with the proposition of relocating his school to Emerson Institute and making the night program a part of their course offerings. In his appeal, Squire assured E. M. Cravath of the proposed school's success by providing evidence of his current's school success. "I have a flourishing night school of some two hundred members but we are crowded in our present quarters. Many of the best colored people are anxious for Mrs. Squire to operate a school." Squire then claimed that his position within the community as a former city engineer would permit the school's success. He argued: "Both Mrs S and myself are well known to the colored people of Mobile, and I know that Mrs. S. can easily organize a school of 150 members by the middle of the month provided that she can obtain the Blue College or Emerson Institute. " In his conclusion, he appealed directly to the organization's sentiments regarding African American education by mentioning the targeted population of the night school---children unable to attend the public schools. He concluded: "By complying with my request you will secure school facilities for many who are now deprived of them. " American Missionary Association executives approved the proposition. Squire's night school relocated to Emerson Institute.⁷⁹

By 1877, Emerson Institute's night school program was a major feature of the

⁷⁸ Maria L. Waterbury to E. M. Cravath, November 6, 1871, microfilm roll 3, AMA Papers, Alabama; Edward P. Lord to E. M. Cravath, November 28, 1873, microfilm roll 3, AMA Papers, Alabama; Edward P. Lord to M. E. Strieby, January 11, 1876, microfilm roll 5, AMA Papers, Alabama.

⁷⁹ W. Irving Squire to E. M. Cravath, November 25, 1872, microfilm roll 3, AMA Papers, Alabama; Edward P. Lord to E. M. Cravath, January 22, 1873, microfilm roll 3, AMA Papers, Alabama.

school's course offerings. Although the Squires' left Emerson Institute, the organization continued the program as it fulfilled an important role in the education of African Americans unable to attend the Mobile public schools. Educational accessibility and the school's prestige attracted the untraditional student to the night school. Albert Irwin, school superintendent, reported that "the night school mentioned is doing a good work for such as can not attend the day school." As a result, African American parents and children continued supporting the program as it was the best available option for them.⁸⁰

Students like Spencer Snell flocked to Emerson Institute's night school. Snell recalled how he learned about Emerson Institute and its night program. "While I was a student in one of these night schools, I chanced one day to see a newspaper which a colored man who knew me had thrown into the yard for me," Snell remembered. Happenstance resulted in Snell's discovery of the program. He recalled: "In this paper I read an article telling about Emerson Institute, a school of the American Missionary Association, and the commencement exercises soon to occur there. The school had been in Mobile for several years, but I had heard not of it till now." Upon discovering the school's existence, Snell became intrigued: "As soon as I read of these exercises, I determined to see them, for I had never heard of such exercises before. When the time came, I went one night, accompanied by a few of my fellow night-school students." These exercises made Snell determined to become an Emerson Institute student. He recalled: "We were well pleased with what we saw, and I said to them that I meant to enter that school when it opened the next fall, and that I meant to be an educated man if I could. " Afterwards, Snell actively prepared for his entry into Emerson Institute. He left his employment, moved back to the rural Alabama "whence I had

⁸⁰Albert B. Irwin to M. E. Strieby, March 7, 1877, microfilm roll 5, AMA Papers, Alabama.

[come from] to Mobile,” and became a teacher in the public schools. He earned enough money for his entry into the school during Spring 1874 term.⁸¹

If not for happenstance, Snell acknowledged that his academic career would have been different. He proclaimed his thanks to the unknown deliverer of the newspaper: “I shall ever feel grateful to the man who threw over the fence for me the article which I learned about that good school, for I am sure I am quite a different man to-day from what I would have been but for reading that article.” For Snell, the night school program and then Emerson Institute changed his life. He wrote: “Precious to me is the memory of those days during which I took tuition in the night-school, where the key was put into my hand and the door of knowledge was opened to me.” The night school system, whether at private schools operated by African Americans or Emerson Institute, benefitted a population unaddressed by the city’s public schools. Without the initiative of community members and their educational partners, individuals, like Snell, may not have attained an education.⁸²

For the majority of parents with children in the public schools, the private school system was not an option. These parents strongly objected to paying tuition for their children’s education as their taxes funded the public schools. Some shared W. Irving Squire’s assessment of the private schools as “swindling humbugs.” Thus, parents then had two options. They could either improve the quality of schools and educational opportunities or not send their children to the public schools. Since the latter countered directly with the community’s aim to become an educated people, they chose the former. Student withdrawal and the thriving private school system gave these African American parents ammunition in their struggle for quality public schools. Specifically, they pressured the School Board to

⁸¹ Snell, 136.

⁸² Ibid.

look for better accommodations and often cited withdrawal for the private schools as evidence. They understood that the growth of the private school system reflected poorly upon the School Board's ability to provide the African American community with public schools. Parents argued that students would not have left the public schools if school conditions had been better. With quality school accommodations, parents reasoned that the public schools would thrive.⁸³

School Board officials agreed. Prior to the start of the 1872-1873 academic year, they sought to improve school accommodations for African American children. In August 1872, Dickson approached American Missionary Association executives in order to secure Emerson Institute as a public school and renew the city's relationship with them. Dickson and the School Board first considered renting the property as was done under Putnam's administration. African American community pressure, though, made the School Board reverse its original plan. In September 1872, Dickson offered to purchase Emerson Institute instead of renting the property. He offered "\$15,000 in five annual installments without interest" for the property. Without African American communal pressure, the School Board would have continued its practice of renting African American church properties.⁸⁴

American Missionary Association executives refused the offer. They saw Emerson Institute as fulfilling the organization's post-Freedmen's School mission. The organization considered the nation as still being in danger as a result of the political return of the Democratic Party to Southern politics. Organization executives regarded African American education as its best course of action in curbing the effects of the Democrats' return to

⁸³ W. Irving Squire to E. M. Cravath, November 11, 1872, microfilm roll 3, AMA Papers, Alabama.

⁸⁴ E. R. Dickson to E. M. Cravath, August 2, 1872, microfilm roll 2, AMA Papers, Alabama; L. C. Steward to E. M. Cravath, September 14, 1872, microfilm roll 3, AMA Papers, Alabama.

power. Through its colleges and institutes, the organization fulfilled this mission. Emerson Institute's prosperity, financially and scholastically, made continuing its Mobile operations worthwhile to the dismay of Dickson. Emerson Institute came to represent the ideal solution. Rejection made the School Board continue their efforts of negotiating the school's sale to them.⁸⁵

Unable to procure suitable accommodations, School Board officials continued renting school accommodations. Over the decade, the schools expanded whenever the School Board had appropriate funding to support them. Under intense financial difficulties, newly established schools were consolidated with older schools. But overall, the School Board made real attempts in addressing African American demands for school accommodations. The Board also outfitted the schools with school apparatus and courses in order to prevent students from leaving. Their efforts, though, neither completely staved off student withdrawal nor ended the complaints over poor school conditions. Emerson Institute and other private schools had to reject interested scholars due to the large number of students withdrawing from the public schools for better conditions. This lack of success never abated the pressure felt by school officials for suitable accommodations.⁸⁶

The school accommodation campaign resulted in some gains. The community achieved greater educational access with the additional public schools and better school accommodations. African American parents and leaders effectively used petitions, student withdrawal and community support of the private schools as strategies. However, a large

⁸⁵ American Missionary Association, *The Nation Is Still In Danger; or Ten Years after the War* (New York: American Missionary Association, 1875), 6, 8; Richardson, 118-119, 123-140. The Mobile School Board eventually retained Emerson Institute as a public school in the twentieth-century. It would continue as an African American public school until it was destroyed under the city's urban renewal program.

⁸⁶ Edward P. Lord to E. M. Cravath, January 11, 1873, microfilm roll 3, AMA Papers, Alabama; Edward P. Lord to E. M. Cravath, March 29, 1873, microfilm roll 3, AMA Papers, Alabama; Mobile City Directories, 1870-1879, Municipal Archives, Mobile, Alabama.

percentage of the school census population remained uneducated. In 1879, 1,793 out of 9,836 school-aged children enrolled in the African American public schools. Private school enrollment only accounted for a small percentage of those not attending the public schools. African American parents and leaders recognized the discrepancy between the school census population and actual enrollment. They realized that obtaining adequate school accommodations remained at the heart of the problem. They hoped that continued activism would lessen this discrepancy.⁸⁷

African Americans made the employment of African American public school teachers an early objective of the quality campaigns. They found the city's hiring practices appalling. Even though the Board of School Commissioners claimed in April 1871 that it considered white, Creole, and African American applicants equally, they rarely hired African American and Creole teachers. With the exception of Sarah Stanley Woodward, African Americans and Creoles found employment as assistant teachers, aides or supernumeraries in the schools and not in the capacity of principal instructor. Often mistaken as white, Sarah Stanley Woodward found employment as the principal of the St. Louis School from 1871 to 1874. This lack of awareness permitted her from sharing the fate of other African Americans.⁸⁸

Instead of African American teachers, African American parents and children endured unsympathetic white public school teachers, such as Maria Wilhelm. Wilhelm had served as the principal teacher in the Creole School for two years without complaint. When the Board gave her an appointment as a "Negro School Teacher" in October 1874, she

⁸⁷ Superintendent of Education, *Annuals and Other Reports, 1868-1879*, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

⁸⁸ "The Colored Public Schools," *Mobile Daily Register*, April 2, 1871, 2; Mobile City Directories, 1870-1880; Richardson, 112-113; Ellen NicKenzie Lawson and Marlene D. Merrill, *The Three Sarahs: Documents of Antebellum Black College Women* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1994), 48-50, 54-63.

deemed this appointment as requiring the Superintendent's attention. After thanking E. R. Dickson for the appointment, she declined "that to which I have been appointed, knowing that I have neither the qualifications [nor] disposition to fit me for a Negro School Teacher." Wilhelm considered her previous appointment in the Creole School as a failure, and she claimed that she did not want to fail again. Thus, Wilhelm willingly turned down the appointment. In her letter to Dickson, she noted that she did not have another job but she wanted a position that was more suitable to her "qualifications and disposition." Dickson granted her a transfer from the "Negro School" to the Creole School during the 1874-1875 academic year. In order to ensure her success, Dickson appointed Miss M. F. Dubroca, Creole of Color, as her assistant. Apparently, Wilhelm found "qualifications and disposition" suitable as she completed the year at the Creole School. The following year, Wilhelm received a position outside of the African American and Creole schools. Mrs. Mary W. Weeman, Creole of Color, replaced her at the Creole School. As evidenced in her letter to Dickson, Wilhelm regarded her appointment as a "Negro School Teacher" as beneath her standards. She could tolerate a position in the Creole School but a position in the African American public school proved too much for her. Other white teachers shared Wilhelm's disdain. They regarded an appointment as a "Negro School Teacher" as the worst possible position in the public school system.⁸⁹

Under Wilhelm and other like teachers, African American students did poorly. While they made some progress in their annual examinations, E. R. Dickson noted the difficulties of the white teachers in their instructing African American students. "The colored children of primary grades, are most easily taught orally than by requiring them to study set lessons,"

⁸⁹ Maria J. Wilhelm to E. R. Dickson, October 13, 1874, *Records of the Board of School Commissioners for Mobile County, Minutes, 1871-1887*, MCPSS; Mobile City Directories, 1871-1875, Mobile Municipal Archives, Mobile, Alabama.

Dickson reported. This difficulty perplexed Dickson as well as the white educators in the African American schools. He wrote: "They take an interest in repeating what they learn, and will learn very readily in this way, when it is very difficult to induce the same pupils to study a set task." It is evident that Dickson and the white educators viewed the students' oral learning as contrary to common school techniques that demanded a silent curriculum and monitorial system. For Dickson, these pedagogical techniques facilitated schoolteachers in shaping their pupils into responsible adults. When these teachers forced another teaching method onto the children, such as inducing students to study a set task, they encountered problems. Instead of adapting their teaching methods, the white educators remained inflexible in their manner of teaching. As a result of the teachers' lack of flexibility, students were not advancing scholastically as previously done under the Freedmen's Schools.⁹⁰

Parents discerned the effects of the lack of African American teachers on their children's scholastic progress. Teachers like Wilhelm impeded their children's academic achievement. Parents wanted control over the quality of teachers as it affected their child's academic success. As in Richmond, they desired African American teachers in the public schools in order to secure academic success for their children. If they could not have African American teachers, they wanted teachers who were sympathetic to their students' development as citizens. In short, parents wanted teachers like Maria L. Waterbury.⁹¹

Waterbury utilized a holistic approach in her teaching. She was not merely instructing students in reading, writing, and arithmetic rather she was developing them into useful

⁹⁰ *Report of John M. McKleroy, Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of Alabama, for the Scholastic Year Ending on the September 30 1875* (Montgomery, AL: W. W. Screws, 1875), 93-94, 96-97 in Superintendent of Education, *Annual and other Reports, 1868-1879*, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL; Karl Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society 1780-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 67; 76-77.

⁹¹ Rabinowitz, 173-174.

citizens. She used schoolroom incidents as teaching moments. In her autobiography, she recounted her handling of a schoolyard incident that resulted from larger community debates following the March 1871 School Board elections. Instead of School Board politics, religious politics instigated a schoolyard fight between the “Baptists Rats” and “Methodist Fleas.” Over one hundred students participated in the fight on the grounds of an African American public school as a result of tensions between two churches. Respective church members resorted to name calling in characterizing the other. “Methodist fleas and Baptist rats; this among the parents,” Waterbury remarked, “and what wonder the children were tinctured with a sectarian spirit.” The school’s teachers “shamed them thoroughly” for the incident. The shaming of the children brought shame upon the feuding churches. As a result, the two churches held a series of revivals which resolved the tensions. Proud of her accomplishments, Waterbury concluded her account of the incident: “After that, we heard no more of ‘Methodist fleas, and Baptist rats.’” Again, Waterbury and the other school teachers assisted with diffusing community problems that spilled into the classroom. These teachers admonished children whenever necessary in order to make them into citizens. As a result, students thrived under teachers like Waterbury and African American teachers.⁹²

Starting in 1871, the community launched their campaign for African American teachers for the African American public schools. One strategy involved having educated members of their community apply directly to the Board of School Commissioners. The community encouraged Alice and Mattie Summerville, daughters of James A. Summerville to apply. These women had been regularly featured in the *Nationalist* for their scholastic achievement under the Freedmen’s School system. Their father’s reputation within the community also guided the community’s encouragement. According to historian Michael

⁹² Waterbury, 93-95.

Fitzgerald, Summerville was a “light skinned and a free man before the war; in 1870 he was a cotton sampler worth sixty-five hundred dollars.” Mary E. Weeman, Leanna Saxon, Laura A. Branch, and Miss E. J. Robertson also applied as a result of the community’s encouragement. On paper, these individuals met the stringent state teaching requirements and made them suitable candidates. Coupled with submitting qualified candidates, African American parents and community leaders sent petitions to the Board of School Commissioners.⁹³

These strategies met limited success. Alice Summerville received a teacher appointment at the Lawrence and Augusta Streets’ School. Other candidates were not as fortunate. School Commissioners either rejected or hired the qualified candidates as assistant teachers, aides, or supernumeraries. Leanna Saxon, Laura A. Branch, and Mattie Summerville received assistant appointments. Mary E. Weeman and E. J. Robertson received supernumerary appointments. According to the meeting minutes, the Board of School Commissioners stated that it considered all applicants equally and based their decision on the applicant’s meeting the stringent Alabama qualifications, prior teaching experience, and letters of recommendation. In response to complaints received, the Board argued that they found that the white candidates often proved more qualified than the non-white applicants. Hence, the few African American and Creole of Color hired met their standards. Despite failure, Reverend E. D. Taylor and other community leaders continued this course of

⁹³ Mobile City Directories, 1870-1877; The *Nationalist* regularly recognized the scholastic achievements of the Summerville sisters and Leanna Saxon. These women attended the Freedmen’s Schools conducted at the Medical College, which later became Emerson Institute. For example, see “School at the College,” *Nationalist*, June 28, 1866, 2; Fitzgerald, 181; October 2, 1871 Meeting Minutes, *Records of the Board of School Commissioners for Mobile County, Minutes, 1871-1887*, MCPSS.

action.⁹⁴

The teacher campaign caused alarm in the School Board. Dickson regularly defended the schools' predominantly white teaching staffs. He often centered his argument upon the low rate of absenteeism. In 1875, Dickson reported that in "the higher grades absentees are few. I have noticed that, even on stormy, rain and cold days, in a room of over 200 girls, there were not five absent." He contributed this low rate directly to the quality of the predominantly white teaching staff. Dickson reasoned: "Such regularity and attention shows a very high appreciation of these schools by parents and faithful work on the part of teachers." Dickson's use of low absenteeism was a plausible argument. If the teachers lacked the trust of students and parents, absenteeism would have been higher. The low rate was a reasonable indicator.⁹⁵

However, the focus upon low absenteeism addressed neither African American complaints nor the parents who withdrew the children from the public schools due to the inferior quality of teachers. This focus also ignores complaints received by teachers like Maria J. Wilhelm in regards to teaching in the African American public schools. The community's efforts placed the Board of School Commissioners on the defensive. Thus, the teacher campaign forced school officials to continually reconsider their decisions pertaining to the African American public schools.

African American complaints of the School Board's hiring practices also caused alarm within the white community. Using the local press, they defended the Board's and the

⁹⁴ Mobile City Directories, 1870-1877; For the common Board responses, see "The Colored Public Schools," *Mobile Daily Register*, April 2, 1871, 2; "Public Schools," *Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register*, July 4, 1871, 3; and October 2, 1871 Meeting Minutes, *Records of the Board of School Commissioners for Mobile County, Minutes, 1871-1887*, MCPSS.

⁹⁵ *Report of John M. McKleroy, Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of Alabama, for the Scholastic Year Ending on the September 30 1875* (Montgomery, AL: W. W. Screws, 1875), 96-97.

teachers of the African American public schools. In 1873, the *Mobile Daily Tribune* addressed the teachers' campaign. By focusing upon public school attendance by African Americans, the editorialist argued: "A fact which speaks volumes for the progressive spirit of the black man and his determination to prepare himself for the higher duties of citizenship, is that the percentage of school attendance among the colored children is relatively larger than among the whites." For evidence, the editorialist used the schools' enrollment statistics. "The reports for November show an enrollment of nearly 1100 colored and about 1900 white pupils, the total white population be recent estimate being double that of the colored." This evidence undercut the campaign's objectives. If the teachers were so bad, then why did the parents of the nearly 1100 students send their children to the city's public schools. The editorialist concluded that the quality teachers hired under Dickson's administration contributed this high percentage of school attendance. The editorialist reasoned that these parents recognized the quality of the "carefully selected" teachers and the application of the same standards for "scholastic attainments," and "experimental knowledge of teaching being applied to them as to teachers for white schools." The benefits of which resulted in their continued patronage of the schools. Thus, the return of the Democratic Party ensured the public schools' quality by employing "competent and efficient teachers."⁹⁶

Indeed, the editorialist presented a persuasive argument. Parents still sent their children to the public schools. The predominant white teaching staff never resulted in high absenteeism among the enrolled students. This superficial assessment, though, does not consider why parents would continue sending their children to the public schools. It

⁹⁶ "Mobile Colored Schools," *Mobile Daily Tribune*, January 22, 1873, 2, column 2, *Interesting Transcriptions of Mobile Daily Tribune, 1870-1875 with Appropriate Index. Prepared from Original Data by the Municipal and Court Records Project of the Works Progress Administration* (1939), Mobile Municipal Archives, Mobile, Alabama.

purposely ignores the existence of the thriving private school system. It also ignores that parents supported the schools in order to fulfill a communal desire to become an educated people. Abstaining from the public schools may not have been a choice. Hence, continued patronage reflected more of the lack of choice in educational options available than the quality of teachers.⁹⁷

Unconvinced, parents, ministers and other community members persevered by adopting another strategy. As noted in a previous chapter, they appealed and convinced the American Missionary Association executives of implementing a formal normal program that met Alabama teaching standards. Emerson Normal emerged from this partnership. Emerson Normal graduated its first students in 1876. Upon the graduation of William A. Caldwell, Artemesia Europe, and Mary Europe, parents and community leaders encouraged their application for teaching positions. Reverend E. D. Taylor and others felt assured that the Board of School Commissioners would not reject these candidates. Their efforts failed. None of the Emerson Normal graduates received teaching positions during the 1876-1877 academic year.⁹⁸

Frustrated, Reverend E. D. Taylor, Reverend Albert F. Owen and several African American parents with children in the public schools demanded a change in the School Board's hiring practices. In September 1878, the School Board thoroughly discussed a petition received from the African American community. On behalf of parents and the entire community, Reverend Taylor and petition committee members demanded that the Board appoint African American teachers in existing African American public schools and

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Richardson, 118-119; American Missionary Association, *Catalog of the Teachers and Student, Course of Study, Etc., of Emerson Normal Institute, Mobile, Alabama, 1900-1901* (Mobile: A. N. Johnson, 1901), 6-9; Mobile City Directories, 1876-1877.

whenever new schools were established. Swayed by their petition and the existence of Emerson Normal, the School Board adopted a resolution. In the first sentence, the resolution acknowledged the validity of the community's concerns: "The Board of School Commissioners have given our weight to the regard of the petitioners and agree that other things being equal, it would be reasonable to prefer Colored teachers for Colored schools." In the next sentence, the resolution called for a change in the Board's policies: "But in the organization of be found capable of managing them and it the Established policy of this Board to make places for others whether white or Colored, when new Schools are Established or vacancies occur in the Colored Schools..." The resolution also promised that "[t]he Claims of Colored applicants to fill the same will receive consideration and when equally competent in Scholarship and ability to govern will have the preference in selection." After this resolution and continued community pressure, William A. Caldwell received an appointment as the principal of the Good Hope School during the 1878-1879 academic year.⁹⁹

Caldwell's hiring represented a victory, but African Americans were not satisfied. African Americans and Creoles comprised a small percentage of the teachers employed in the public schools. These few positions never deterred them from their ultimate objective. African Americans desired an end to the Board of School Commissioners' hiring of white teachers in the African American public schools. Emerson Normal and other normal programs had created a corps of African American teachers which made such hiring practices unnecessary. Hence, they would continue to fight for African American public school teachers until all teaching positions were filled by an African American and/or Creole of

⁹⁹ September 18, 1878 Meeting Minutes, *Records of the Board of School Commissioners for Mobile County, Minutes, 1871-1887*, MCPSS; *Catalog of Teachers and Students*, 24-28; Mobile County City Directory, 1878-1890.

Color. Their struggle continued into the next decade.

Funding represented a final aspect of the quality campaign. Funding was essential to the success of public schools. Without it, school buildings could not be built, repaired, or outfitted with proper school apparatus. Funding also underpinned the teacher's campaign as employment secured the economic livelihoods for some community members. African Americans recognized the importance of adequately funding the schools. However, they also understood that they had least control over this issue. The Board of School Commissioners and the broader community concurred. Public schools were expensive. Yet, all agreed that public schools were a necessity for Mobile's citizens, regardless of race, class, gender, and/or former servitude.

Events during the 1870-1871 academic year impeded Mobile's ability to adequately fund the public schools. At the start of the decade, Mobile suffered from a lack of school funds but was able to sustain the public schools with the assistance of the Peabody Education Fund and the American Missionary Association. However, the dual school debate, Putnam's ousting, and the March 1871 school election caused the Peabody Education Fund to withdraw its financial support. Dr. Sears, agent for the organization, and trustees used the dual school board affair and continued problems on Board of School Commissioners as justification for its decision. Dr. Sears reported the organization's decision in his annual report: "In Mobile, there has been a litigation about the jurisdiction of the State and city officers, which has had the effect to nullify the agreement previously made by us with the city School Board..." Dr. Sears deemed that future financial support was contingent upon reapplication and a stable city administrative structure "to renew engagement." Putnam's removal also resulted in the withdrawal of American Missionary Association's financial

support from the Mobile schools. The organization had financially supported Emerson Institute under Putnam's administration. The events leading up to Putnam's removal convinced organization officials of the impossibility in working with Mobile's school officials. As a result, the American Missionary Association withdrew its funds and made Emerson Institute into a private school. The withdrawal of these financial sources resulted in the city's heavy reliance upon taxation, the state's School Fund, and deficit spending.¹⁰⁰

The lack of school funds made it impossible for the Board of School Commissioners to adequately support the schools. The State Education Fund allocated approximately \$13,400 dollars for Mobile's African American public schools and approximately \$18,000 for the white public schools. The Board supplemented these funds through taxation and creative financing means. Still, the supplemental funding never eradicated the Board's financial difficulties. The funding shortfall greatly impaired Dickson's administration of the schools. In 1871, Dickson shared his frustration. For him, teachers' salaries reflected much of the inefficiency from the previous School Board's administration. Dickson noted that "many of whom have been employed without due regard to the service to be rendered." To illustrate his point, he gave the following example "... in one school a teacher with a small school of boys received two hundred and twenty five dollars per month, while a principal of a girls school numbering one hundred and eighty pupils, receives only one hundred and twenty-five dollars per month." As a solution, he proposed equalizing salaries based upon grade and position. His plan would save \$267 per month in the teacher's payroll. Dickson's frustration also resulted from resolving the previous Board's debts. The city's financial

¹⁰⁰ Peabody Education Fund, *Proceedings of the Trustees Meeting, Held at Philadelphia, 15 February 1871* (Cambridge: Press of John Wilson and Son, 1871), 34, file 2, box 11, Peabody Education Fund Collection, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN; Richardson, 111-113.

situation made him determined to provide for the schools to the best of his abilities.¹⁰¹

Despite the financial hardship, Dickson maintained a fair and consistent policy. The Board allocated school funds in proportion to the number of students documented in the annual School Census at the same rate per student. This policy ensured equitable distribution of the limited funds to the white and African American public schools. The policy also ensured that African American taxes supported the African American public schools. For the African American schools, parents and community leaders recognized that this policy benefitted them. The School Census never took into account actual usage. As a result, student withdrawal and absenteeism never affected the monies allocated to the schools. State financial difficulties caused the city's apportionment of the state funds to decline for all public schools but not student withdrawal. This fair policy reassured parents and community leaders that their schools received as much money as possible. Race did not detrimentally affect the distribution of school funds.¹⁰²

Effects of the 1873 Financial Panic and the resulting depression reverberated within the African American community. As in other urban centers, the national financial crisis profoundly affected African Americans. It also coincided with a major yellow fever epidemic in Mobile. Both proved devastating to the city's African American population. Edward P. Lord described the dual impact in a letter to E. M. Cravath. He wrote: "The fever panic however with the money panic has made it impossible..." For Mobile's African American community, he explained: "The people here cannot raise any money even those who have

¹⁰¹ Superintendent of Education, *Annual and Other Reports, 1868-1879*, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama; *Special Report of Joseph Hodgson*, 64-65.

¹⁰² Superintendent of Education, *Annual and Other Reports, 1868-1879*, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama; Robert G. Sherer, *Subordination or Liberation?: The Development and Conflicting Theories of Black Education in Nineteenth Century Alabama* (University of Alabama Press, 1977), 8; Bond, 101-102, 104. According to Horace Mann Bond, Mobile's distribution of school funds was closely aligned with state policy. Similarly, he noted the benefits of the state system for African American public schools throughout Alabama and not merely Mobile.

money in the bank as that requires sixty days notice. Those who have been at work or teaching can collect nothing.” Owing to the community’s financial hardships, public school enrollment and average attendance increased among African Americans. Enrollment decreased to pre-Panic of 1873 levels only during brief periods of recovery. Enrollment fluctuations demonstrated the economic impact on some parents who simply could not afford private schools’ tuition, even the affordable Emerson Institute. Despite poor economic conditions, the private school system remained open. For instance, E. P. Lord planned opening Emerson Institute as scheduled with 40 scholars instead of remaining “here idle.” But, Lord hoped that the financial difficulties would not be long-lasting. He concluded his letter: “I trust the clouds are to be blown away soon....” The financial woes were not “blown away soon,” as Lord hoped. The financial panic started a long recession in which Mobile’s African American community suffered much of the brunt. Overall, Mobile’s African American population increased in response to rural flight for jobs, schools, and city services. This influx strained the social services designed for the African American community. As a result, neither the schools nor other social services could handle the population influx. Indeed, the 1873 Financial Panic affected all African Americans living in Mobile.¹⁰³

Starting at the state level, the financial crisis affected the public school system. The crisis took a toll on the state education fund. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction reported: “The financial depression experienced by all branches of the State Government for the last year has been specially embarrassing for the public school system.” Prior to the financial panic, the state legislature approved an act on April 19, 1873 in which the state retained a specified portion of school money collected by counties for the state fund. This

¹⁰³ Foner, 512; Edward P. Lord to E. M. Cravath, October 7, 1873, microfilm roll 3, AMA Papers, Alabama; Superintendent of Education, *Annual and Other Reports, 1868-1879*, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama; Fitzgerald, 217-220.

relief effort failed as the financial panic made the collection of these monies impossible.

Alabama's educational finances, according to Superintendent Joseph H. Speed in his 1874 report, had "been neither removed nor lessened. On the contrary, some new complications have, unfortunately arisen out of measures adopted for relief of the school system." As a result, state educational fund allocations to county and city school districts decreased.

Allocations from the "Colored Fund" fluctuated from a high of \$12,106 to a low of \$6,147 between 1873-1874 academic year and the 1879-1880 academic year. While these allocations never amounted to the money allocated during the pre-Panic years, the fund survived. Hence, state fiscal policies sustained the public school system amidst the crisis.¹⁰⁴

The decrease in state funds caused Alabama school districts to make difficult choices. Some shortened their school year. Others consolidated the number of schools. Mobile chose another option: city officials implemented a special tax solely for the support of schools. They also relied upon deficit spending in order to cope with any shortfalls. Overall, the Board of School Commissioners economized as much as possible. On average, Mobile still contributed \$10,000 to \$20,000 dollars per year in excess of the state fund allocations between 1873 and 1879. The Board still maintained its equitable distribution policy of the funds. But in comparison with other major Southern cities, Mobile spent less money for its public schools. Dickson noted this fact with pride at the School Board's fiscal economy in his 1875 report. The city spent slightly less than \$13.00 per student whereas Richmond, Virginia

¹⁰⁴ *Report of Joseph H. Speed, Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of Alabama, for the Scholastic Year Ending on the October 1, 1873* (Montgomery: Arthur Bingham, 1874), 3, 6 in *Superintendent of Education, Annual and other Reports, 1868-1879*, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL; *Report of Joseph H. Speed, Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of Alabama, for the Scholastic Year Ending on the October 1, 1874* (Montgomery: W. W. Screws, 1874), 3-4 in *Superintendent of Education, Annual and other Reports, 1868-1879*, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL; *Report of John M. McKleroy, Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of Alabama, for the Scholastic Year Ending on the September 30, 1875* (Montgomery: W. W. Screws, 1875), 7, 14 in *Superintendent of Education, Annual and other Reports, 1868-1879*, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL.

allocated \$15.88 per student. But, the School Board's economy did not help. The city went more and more into debt as its citizens' endured a heavy tax burden for its public schools.¹⁰⁵

By 1875, the city's indebtedness raised questions over the need to sustain the public schools, regardless of race. State officials questioned Mobile's appropriation of the dwindling school fund. As a result, the state legislature reorganized the city's appropriation which resulted in less state funds. African American appropriations from the state declined from \$12,106 to \$8,175 in the year following reorganization. State appropriations continued dwindling. Mobile's city officials resorted to taxation and deficit spending in order to alleviate the smaller state fund allocations. But, these measures were not enough. Moreover, these measures were unpopular among Mobile's citizens, white, black, and Creole. Their communities' had suffered from the crisis. Deteriorating city services, taxation and the repayment of city's debts added to their financial burden. Some objected to the measures and began openly questioning the necessity of free public schools. Their objections placed the Board of School Commissioners and defenders of the public schools on the defensive.¹⁰⁶

In 1875, the *Mobile Daily Tribune* defended the importance of sustaining the public schools. In discussing the role of government and public education, the newspaper explained: "The theory is this. In a government like ours, it is supposed that the permanency of it depends on the education of the people." The newspaper article reasoned: "Without this there can be no permanency; therefore it is the duty of the State to cram the people with reading, etc." This rationale harkened back to the arguments made after the American

¹⁰⁵ *Report of John M. McKleroy, Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of Alabama, for the Scholastic Year Ending on the September 30, 1875*, 96; *Thirty-First Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Alabama, for the Scholastic Year Ending September 30th, 1885*, Submitted by Solomon Palmer, Superintendent of Education (Montgomery: Barrett and Co., 1886) in *Reports of the Superintendent of Education, 1880-1888*, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL.

¹⁰⁶ For the city's indebtedness, see Fitzgerald, 199-204, 219-221.

Revolution and the during the national common school movement during the 1840s and 1850s. Without an educated citizenry, the national republic would fail. Public common schools ensured the perpetuation of a republican government. These philosophical debates, though, placed the defense of public schools in more abstract terms. Mobile's citizens remained unconvinced by abstract debates. The article's author also was not as convinced by these arguments either. However, the article's writer still believed in the public school system.¹⁰⁷

The *Mobile Daily Tribune* article then addressed the benefits of Mobile's public school system as a means of convincing naysayers. The article employed another popular argument in defense of public schools. Public schools, it argued, remained cheaper than jails: "To our impoverished people of Mobile the public schools are a great blessing. Hundreds of citizens have children who, without these schools, would grow in idleness, ignorance, and probably vice." In preventing idleness, ignorance, and vice, the public schools contributed to the city's overall public welfare. The article reasoned: "It is much cheaper to pay for schoolhouses than it is for penitentiaries and jails, without reference to the general public security from theft, arson, and other crimes." Instead of using abstract terms, the "schools cheaper than jails" argument illuminated the debate in terms most understood by Mobile's citizens. In its conclusion, the article hoped that Mobile's citizens, white, black, and Creole, would not become bogged down by the philosophical rationale for the necessity of the public school system. The article concluded: "And thus, although the right is not entirely demonstrable of the schools, it is certainly true of their benefits, we suppose, is conclusive of

¹⁰⁷ "Public Schools," *Mobile Daily Tribune*, June 30, 1875, 2, column 2, *Interesting Transcriptions of the Mobile Daily Tribune, 1870-1875 with Appropriate Index. Prepared from the Original Data by the Municipal and Court Records Project of the Works Progress Administration* (1939), accessed at the Mobile Municipal Archives, Mobile, Alabama; Kaestle, 3-12; 151-155.

the argument in their favor. “ The use of the concrete example allowed the argument to secure more support for the public schools. Most individuals may not have understood the intellectual arguments espoused in the defense of public schools as a right of citizenship. However, they understood the need of public welfare and public security. These arguments helped lessened the opposition to the continuation of public schools amidst the national financial crisis.¹⁰⁸

School funding still posed a challenge by the end of the decade. Nearly bankrupted by the public schools, Mobile faced another crisis on the Board of School Commissioners in 1878. School officials disagreed over the financing of the school system and the powers of the School Superintendent. As in the previous crisis, state officials acted as mediators. Leroy Box, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, reorganized the Mobile school system by ordering new elections and redefining the powers of the Board according to mandates established under the 1875 Alabama Constitution. Compliance with the new constitution and a subsequent 1877 state law made a significant change to the city’s school appropriations. New state mandates established a loophole in which funding would no longer be equitable between African American and white schools. County Superintendents now had the discretion of not using the state school census when making appropriations to the public schools. Instead, they could make appropriations based upon “the number of children of his district...who will probably attend each school, and apportion the district fund to the several schools of his district as nearly per capita as practicable.” With this authority, County Superintendents ensured “that all children who attend the public schools established for them shall receive equal benefit from such fund.” Prior state laws had not given any school official

¹⁰⁸ “Public Schools,” *Mobile Daily Tribune*, June 30, 1875, 2, column 2, *Interesting Transcriptions of the Mobile Daily Tribune*, 1870-1875, accessed at the Mobile Municipal Archives, Mobile, Alabama; Kaestle, 73.

the authority to “discriminate racially for or against either racial group.” This act made race a factor in school funding. Reorganization made the School Board compliant. As a result, school officials changed its system of allocations to public schools, including the monies derived from the state and local taxation.¹⁰⁹

The change in school fund allocations resulted in unintended consequences. Originally designed as a relief measure, the change would prove detrimental to African American public schools. Private school attendance and students not enrolled in the public schools now affected school funding. Since African Americans attended the schools in a larger percentage than white students, the schools had less money to provide them with school materials and suitable accommodations. Second, school superintendents now had the power to discriminate on the basis of race in the distribution of school funds. Using their discretion, school superintendents could divert more money to the white public schools than to the African American public schools. Equitable distribution was no longer guaranteed. These consequences became increasingly apparent during the next decade.

African American public schools survived Mobile’s financial hardships. African American children, parents, and community leaders understood that the fate of their schools hinged upon city and state finances as the national financial crisis thwarted their ability to sustain them. Throughout the decade, they found unexpected allies. Mobile’s Board of School Commissioners and state officials remained committed to public schools for all of its citizens regarding of race. While the issue of school funding went unresolved, they felt reassured by the Mobile’s financial commitment to African American education as the public

¹⁰⁹ Bond, 149; *Report of Leroy Box, Superintendent of Education for the State of Alabama, for the Scholastic Year Ending 30th September 1878, with Tabular Statistics of 1876-1877, Containing also the Laws Relating to the Public School System of the State With An Appendix of Forms* (Montgomery: Barrett and Brown, 1879) in Superintendent of Education, *Annuals and Other Reports, 1868-1879*, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

schools entered its second decade.

Mobile's African American public schools faced many challenges at the beginning of the 1870s. New challenges entailed new educational partners, the loss of outside financial support from previous educational partners, an inadequate number of school buildings and lack of educational offerings. Some challenges remained unresolved from the Freedmen's School era and the transition to public schools. The effects of bi-partisan politics within the School Board and the political return of the Democratic Party to city politics remained unresolved challenges. Despite these new and old challenges, the African American community remained committed to education as a right of citizenship. They devised and embarked on the quality campaign as a means of addressing the educational challenges.

Over the course of the decade, African American parents, students, and leaders slowly made gains in the improvement of the public schools. They made the most progress in securing African American teachers in the public schools. However, their quest for quality schools was far from complete. Adequate school accommodations, flexibility in course offerings, representation on the School Board, and funding still needed improvement. While success was limited, Mobile's African American community had developed the strategies for continuing their struggle into the second decade of African American public schools. As a result, they began the 1880s prepared to build upon the gains and lessons of the previous decade in their quality campaigns. For them, their struggle for quality schools continued.

Conclusion:

The departure of the Freedmen's Bureau signaled the beginning of a new phase in African American education--the public schools. African Americans across the urban South now faced a common plight as they sought to firmly root the public schools in their

communities and respective states. They sought expanding their educational networks to include new partners. However, by the end of the first year after the Bureau's departure, it became evident that new partners and new challenges required adaptation and shifting strategies by African Americans living in Richmond, Virginia and Mobile, Alabama.

African Americans shifted their activism with a series of campaigns centered upon improving the overall quality of the schools. While African Americans had more white support in Richmond than in Mobile, both communities embarked on the improvement campaigns with similar objectives. They sought direct representation on the School Board, the expansion of educational access, the employment of African American teachers, and equitable funding. They also employed similar tactics and adapted their strategies according to their reading of the social, political, and economic situation. Over the course of the 1870s, African Americans made relatively few gains for each objective. Yet, they persevered and the public schools survived the tumultuous 1870s. In so doing, they laid the foundation for continued activism during the next decade.

CHAPTER V

WALKING SLOWLY BUT SURELY: THE QUALITY CAMPAIGNS AND AFRICAN AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 1880S

On December 29, 1883, *New York Globe* readers were presented with a unique request from Petersburg, Virginia. Signed “Femme,” the African American female’s letter requested prayers for education and the accumulation of wealth for all urban black Southerners for the upcoming year. Probably considering the Danville Massacre and the likely removal of two African American school board members in nearby Richmond, she felt that education and wealth were the only weapons against the region’s poor material and racial conditions. Thus, she penned to the newspaper’s predominantly African American readership: “At the close of the war we were left to crawl, we crawled as well as we could, and when the time came for us to walk we had no one to stretch out their hands to encourage us to walk, but we did walk; true it was slowly, but surely.” During the 1870s, she argued that they lacked the “support from the whites, and our own people in the North were not able to help us.” Rather than merely cast blame, she concluded that education “helps to make a man brave and money makes him braver.” For these reasons, she implored readers: “Now again I entreat you to pray that we may continue to get education and wealth, and then we will be able to go along by the side of our white brother[s] unmolested.” The prayers demanded by Femme echoed the pleas of African American activists in Richmond and Mobile. For Femme, black Richmonders, and black Mobilians, education remained essential

in their quest for progress, equality, and protection from molestation.¹

In the 1880s, African Americans continued to walk “slowly, but surely” in their struggle for quality public schools. Using strategies adopted in the previous decade, African Americans and their allies achieved victories in improving the schools’ overall quality. In Richmond, activists’ careful maneuvering of a changing political environment accelerated the movement’s achievements. With a more conducive political environment, activists overcame many of the previous decade’s obstacles. Yet, they strove for additional success. On the other hand, Mobile activists experienced more setbacks than success. Perseverance and continued activism allowed them to make slow yet steady progress in their quality campaigns. Despite the different rates of change, urban African Americans’ continued insistence upon quality public schools reflected their firm commitment to becoming a literate people. Their activism ensured that African American children could continue to access a public school education. To them, quality publicly funded schools were key to this goal.²

No Longer Crawling: Readjusters and Success in Richmond

Richmond’s quality campaigns differed from other cities during the 1880s. Unlike other urban centers, African Americans greatly benefitted from a statewide political revolution. The emergence of the Readjuster Party accelerated the gains achieved by the quality campaigns. Capitalizing upon the momentous period of change, activists made significant progress in the overall campaign’s objectives by 1885. No longer crawling, African American activists and their allies desired to sustain the gains made while striving for additional success in the latter part of the decade. The next sections will examine the strides made within school board representation, school accommodations, employment of

¹ Femme, “A Prayer for Education,” *New York Globe*, letter to the editor, December 29, 1883, 4.

² Ibid.

African American teachers, and funding.

In order to understand the second decade of the quality campaigns, a brief discussion of the Readjuster movement is necessary. The Readjuster Party was a political coalition of urban African American and white immigrant workers, black tenant farmers and landowners in heavily African American eastern counties, and white landowners in western counties. The party catapulted into power by tapping into widespread resentment of the existing government's inefficiency to address poor economic conditions. The party offered a new vision for Virginia. According to this vision, Readjusters pledged social mobility, racial justice, an industrialized economic order, and a sustainable public school system for all Virginians, regardless of race. The Readjuster Movement, as argued by historians James T. Moore and Jane Dailey, represented a revolt against a form of government by the elites from below.³

The party's egalitarian vision and promises of educational reform attracted African Americans from Richmond and across the state. In 1881, black Republicans held two conventions, one in Richmond and one in Petersburg, in order to discuss a coalition between the state's Republican Party and Readjuster Party. In both conventions, delegates overwhelmingly endorsed an alliance during the upcoming elections. The men, especially a rising political leader, Captain Robert A. Paul of Richmond, found a common struggle between the parties, especially with the cause of public school education. Delegates left the conventions energized and began the work of mobilizing African American electoral support across the city and state. As a result of African American electoral support, Readjusters

³ James T. Moore, "The University and Readjusters," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 78, no. 1. Part One (January, 1970): 87; Jane Dailey, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 37-47.

achieved a significant victory by becoming the political majority. The party now controlled both the Governor's office and the state legislature.⁴

The new Readjuster legislature quickly enacted reform measures that benefited its African American constituents. The legislature abolished the whipping post. It doubled the number of public schools and established a state normal school for African Americans in Petersburg. It also placed African American physicians in charge of asylums for African Americans. Lastly, Readjusters appointed more African Americans to civil servant positions in Virginia. But, the Readjuster regime's greatest show of power occurred in 1883. Readjuster policies brought major reform to the Richmond School Board. This reform transformed the nature of African American activism, specifically their struggle for school board representation.⁵

Through happenstance and political maneuverings, Readjusters' reform yielded success in activists' campaign for school board representation. In January 1883, E. M. Garnett, Superintendent of the Richmond City Schools, realized that none of the Richmond School Board members took the required oath of office. Garnett notified the State Attorney-General of the situation. By not taking the oath of office, they violated state law. State Attorney-General F.S. Blair ordered them to take the required oath of office within thirty days or vacate the office. The City Council then would have another thirty days to replace any vacancies or have the State Board of Education fill the vacancies. On February 17th, the State Board of Education appointed a new, bi-racial Richmond School Board, comprised of

⁴ Daniel Barclay Williams, *A Sketch of the Life and Times of Capt. R. A. Paul: An Authentic and Abbreviated History of His Career from Boyhood to the Present Time; Containing a Reliable Account of the Politics of Virginia from 1874 to the Present Time* (Richmond: Johns and Goolsby, 1885), 19-20; Dailey, 89.

⁵ Williams, 21.

Republicans and Readjusters. With the appointments of two African Americans, Richard Forrester and Captain Robert A. Paul, the city's African American community finally had direct representation in the operations of city's public schools. Without happenstance and patronage, this victory would not have been made possible.⁶

Richard Forrester's extensive political experience and social prominence resulted in his selection. Considered to be one of the city's most prominent residents after the Civil War, Forrester was born in Richmond in 1822. His father was Gustavus Myers, a lawyer from one of the Richmond's most affluent and respected Jewish families. His mother was Nelly Forrester, a free woman of color who lived and worked in the household of Gustavus Myers' uncle, Moses Myers. His biracial parentage afforded him many beneficial opportunities in antebellum Virginia. When he was fourteen, he was sent to Canada in order to continue his education. He returned to Richmond in 1850 with his wife, Narcissa Wilson, a distant cousin. After the war, he prospered as a dairy farmer and a contractor. He became extensively involved in city politics and African American suffrage. In 1872, he was elected to the Richmond City Council, where he served as a councilman until his School Board appointment. Forrester's extensive political experience and social prominence made him a natural choice for the appointment.⁷

Although Captain Robert Austin Paul lacked Forrester's political and social qualifications, he was still a natural choice for the office. Born to slave parents on November 3, 1846 in Nelson County, Virginia, Paul gained his freedom after the fall of the Confederacy in April 1865. He relocated from Nelson County to Richmond after the war and quickly

⁶ Williams, 25-26.

⁷ Steve Clark, *Richard Gustavus Forrester*. *Richmond Time-Dispatch*, February 10, 2009, http://www2.timesdispatch.com/rtd/news/special_report/black_history/article/richard_gustavus_forrester/202796/, accessed January 19, 2010.

gained employment at a local hotel. Unlike Forrester, Paul never had a formal education. Instead, his mother gave him an extensive education in literature, mathematics, language, and philosophy at night. Politically, Paul never participated in local, state, and national elections until 1874. Paul's oratory skills and political devotion made him popular within the local and state Republican Party. After successfully campaigning across the state for the Republicans and Readjusters, Paul enjoyed a series of patronage positions in Richmond. At the time of his appointment, he served as a personal messenger to Governor William E. Cameron, who had an active role in the new appointments. Hence, patronage and not Paul's social or educational background allowed for his appointment to the Richmond School Board.⁸

Most African Americans in Richmond and across the nation celebrated Paul's and Forrester's appointments. They did not care that political maneuverings played a role in the men's selection. At a mass meeting at the First African Church in Richmond, attendees hailed their appointments and Readjuster policy as "activated by the great principles of equal political and civil rights for all classes, irrespective of race and color." Indeed, the city's African American community had achieved a major victory in terms of education, politics, and racial progress. Moreover, Paul and Forrester seemed to never disappoint them while in office. The men played an active role in the city's quality campaigns, specifically in the campaigns for teachers and school accommodations. The men's initiative on the Richmond School Board endeared them to students, teachers, parents, and activists. Hence, both the men's political and leisure activities, especially Paul's activities, were reported upon in Richmond and as far away as New York City. Of the two men, Paul would become more popular than Forrester among young African Americans and parents because of his

⁸ Williams, 6-11, 22-24; Dailey, 96, 208-209.

involvement in literary societies, church gatherings, and fraternal societies. Overall, African Americans, from children to teachers to parents, proudly celebrated.⁹

On the other hand, white Democrats immediately voiced their opposition. They strongly objected to Paul's and Forrester's presence on the Richmond School Board. As Hubbard G. Carlton, principal of Navy Hill, recalled in 1925, Forrester's and Paul's appointments "proved to be the 'last straw'." Democrats used the integrated school board in their arguments for removing the Readjusters from political power. Party leaders again employed the *Richmond Dispatch* for their statewide campaign against the Readjusters. In its coverage, the *Richmond Dispatch* editor and staff writers preyed upon white racial fears and anxieties and created an effective white supremacist discourse. In one article, the *Richmond Dispatch* implored readers: "It might as well be understood first as last that the whites of Virginia do not intend to permit negroes to be trustees of white schools. This is a humiliation to which nobody has a right to expect the superior race to submit." According to the *Richmond Dispatch*, the humiliation derived from having two African American men being in control over the employment of a predominant white female teaching corps, the management of the education of white children and the distribution of monies collected from white taxpayers. As the "superior race," white Richmonders needed to regain control of the Richmond white public schools and state politics in order to eliminate this humiliation. If not, they would lose their superior race status through their inability to control the white public schools. Thus, they would peril under the newest manifestation of "Negro Rule" in

⁹ Peter Rachleff, *Black Labor in Richmond, 1865-1890* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 103-104; Clark, *Richard Gustavus Forrester*; Williams, 27-29

Richmond and the state.¹⁰

The *Richmond Dispatch* also attacked the white school board members' willingness to work with Paul and Forrester. The newspaper's targeting of the white school board members harkened to a strategy first employed during the Freedmen's School period. In questioning their support of integration, the newspaper questioned their whiteness as conservative Richmond newspapers had done previously of Northern white missionaries, Freedmen's Bureau agents, and white supporters of Radical Reconstruction. In one article, the newspaper rhetorically asked: "Think on these things, ye white school trustees. Ponder the situation in which you find yourselves. If the negroes won't resign, you can resign." By resigning, the school board members would reaffirm their whiteness and belief in white supremacy. By not resigning, according to this logic, these school board members endorsed the threats being made upon the white public schools and white supremacy. Democrats' strategic targeting of the integrated Richmond School Board proved effective as white Virginians found the white supremacist arguments convincing.¹¹

Democrats' newspaper campaign produced a counter-campaign. A few local and national newspapers defended Paul's and Forrester's appointment and their work performed on the Richmond School Board. In defending the men and the integrated school board, editors sought to dissuade white Virginians from believing the *Richmond Dispatch* coverage. The *Richmond Whig* defended the new school board and ridiculed the *Richmond Dispatch* for its alarmist stance. A May 1883 article mocked the *Richmond Dispatch's* recommendation of having the white school board members resign. The article's writer proclaimed: "Just you

¹⁰ Hubbard G. Carlton, "The Evolution of the Richmond Public Schools with Reminiscences" (Paper presented at the Principals' Conference, June 3, 1925), 10, accessed at the Special Collections, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA; Quoted in Williams, 26.

¹¹ Quoted in Williams, 26.

white men step down and out and let our City Council put seven of the old trustees back. Any seven of our old fellows won't mind sitting with two 'niggers' who remain." The *New York World* also criticized the *Richmond Dispatch* for its white supremacist arguments. "This talk about 'humiliation' and the 'superior race' is in exceedingly bad taste. The Constitution of the United States has made negroes citizens in the fullest sense of the word," a June 1883 article stated. "We respect Governor Cameron for the step he has taken. It is time for this war against 'niggers' to stop." The state's *New York Globe* correspondent also criticized the negative Richmond press with the characterization of "Bourbon papers." T. Thomas Fortune, editor of the *New York Globe*, also featured articles praising William Mahone "for the emancipation of Virginia from the baneful effects of Bourbonism." But neither the *Richmond Whig* nor the *New York World* nor the *New York Globe* could gain enough popular support in order to effectively counter the effects of the Democrats' campaign.¹²

Opposition also came from some of the African American community's educational supporters. Dr. J. L. M. Curry greatly opposed Paul's and Forrester's presence on the Richmond School Board. In a meeting with several state legislative representatives, the Peabody Education Fund agent disapproved "altogether colored trustees and teachers for colored schools" to the dismay of the city's African American community. Curry was not alone in his views. Some northern African Americans shared similar opinions. During his 1884 visit to Richmond, William R. Granger regarded the community's support of Paul and Forrester and continued agitation for direct representation as a "trap." While the future Bucknell graduate and physician supported the continued struggle for African American public school teachers and school accommodation, Granger did not think that activism for

¹² *Richmond Dispatch* and *Richmond Whig* quoted in Williams, 26-27; "General Wm. Mahone. What He Has Done For the Colored People of Virginia," *New York Globe*, July 7, 1883, 1

African American school board members should be encouraged or continued. On this issue, as suggested by the opening vignette, Richmond activists often lacked northern white and African American support. The support received from a few newspapers proved inadequate and they were forced to walk alone.¹³

In the 1883 elections, Democrats regained power from the Readjuster-Republican coalition. Almost immediately, they began the process of removing Paul and Forrester. Since the Virginia Court of Appeals had upheld the legality of the State Board of Education's actions, the new state legislature devised and adopted legislation that required all School Boards to vacate office within thirty days of the bill's passage. This legislation also required new elections to fill the mandatory vacancies. African Americans in Richmond and across the nation recognized the legislation's true intent---the removal of Paul and Forrester. The state's *New York Globe* correspondent remarked: "It is strange to notice the amount of hatred shown by the party leaders. In order to get out one man, Capt. R. A. Paul, all the school boards in the State have been changed." But many felt helpless against the unfolding events in the state legislature, as noted by the Virginia correspondent. Still, African Americans held mass meetings and sent petitions to the state legislature demanding "colored trustees for colored schools." But their pleas went unheard. Paul, Forrester and others vacated the Richmond School Board. Voters elected a new, all-white school board. Within a short period, Democrats successfully overturned activists' gains by breaking up the "mongrel board."¹⁴

Rather than bemoan the loss, African Americans quickly returned to previous

¹³ More, "The Old Dominion," *New York Globe*, January 19, 1884, 1; William Richard Granger, "Richmond Colored Schools," *New York Globe*, February 23, 1884, 1. Granger became the third African American to graduate from Bucknell University in 1885. He would then receive his M.D. He would operate a private practice before becoming a school principal.

¹⁴ Williams, 25-26; More, "The Old Dominion," *New York Globe*, February 9, 1884, 1; More, "The Old Dominion," *New York Globe*, March 29, 1884, 4; Carlton, 10.

strategies in dealing with the Richmond School Board. There was one important difference, though. They became increasingly critical of the new board actions. After the required elections, African American parents, community leaders, and activists became skeptical of the claims that “politics should have nothing to do with the management of the schools.” They had witnessed the impact politics had first-hand. Instead, they hoped that the new school board would “practice what they preach.” When their initial interactions were unfavorable, they criticized the newly elected school board members as being “dumb as oysters.” For activists, their harsh critiques and subsequent relationships with the Richmond School Board resulted from a sense of duty to not only African American students but to the legacy of Paul and Forrester. In speaking of Paul, the Virginia correspondent for the *New York Globe* asserted: “The Captain has ably defended the rights of his people and proved that he was a man of courage in the higher sense of the word. The colored people have much to thank him for as their representative and when the proper time comes they will not be backward in showing their appreciation.” Hence, African Americans continued petitioning. They also openly questioned the Board’s decisions while hoping for another political revolution.¹⁵

African American activists also relied upon their remaining political allies. Since the state legislature never forced new elections for councilmen, Edward A. Randolph and other African Americans remained on the Richmond City Council. Randolph, a young African American lawyer from the Jackson Ward, regularly advocated on behalf of African American residents on matters such as appropriations for new school accommodations and the re-

¹⁵ “The Old Dominion,” *New York Globe*, March 29, 1884, 4; More, “The Old Dominion,” *New York Globe*, May 19, 1884, 4; For African Americans’ sense of duty to Paul and Forrester in their activism, see “More, “The Old Dominion,” *New York Globe*, April 12, 1884, 1;” For African Americans’ frank opinions of the Richmond School Board, see More, “The Old Dominion,” *New York Globe*, May 24, 1884, 4.

appointment of African American principals and teachers. Furthermore, Superintendent E. M. Garnett was not included in the mandatory elections. Given his prior sympathies with African American education, activists were not concerned that he would stop advocating on their behalf, especially on the issues of school accommodations and teachers. While they lost direct school board representation, African American parents, community leaders, and activists were not completely powerless. Through electoral politics, petitioning, and securing important government allies, African Americans retained a voice in the administration of the public schools.¹⁶

During the 1880s, the school accommodation campaign's central objective entailed providing accommodations for all school-aged children desiring a public school education. Despite their previous efforts, African American parents and activists became increasingly frustrated that the city's school system lacked an adequate number of school facilities. As a result, school enrollments represented a fraction of the city's school census. In their activism, African American parents, community leaders, and activists sought to redress this discrepancy.¹⁷

The Readjuster movement greatly assisted the school accommodation campaigns. Since 1879, Readjusters funneled more state monies to cities, towns, and counties to be used in the public schools. Using state funds, the Richmond School Board responded to prior demands for school accommodations that began in the 1870s. The School Board opened the East End School. The Board also renovated and enlarged existing city schools for African American schools. The capacity of Valley, Baker, and Navy Hill schools expanded as a result

¹⁶ "The Old Dominion," *New York Globe*, May 19, 1884, 4.

¹⁷ Table IX, *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA for the Scholastic Year Ending July 31st, 1893* (Richmond: C. N. Williams, City Printers, 1894), 40-41.

of the renovations. These improvements, though, never resolved the problem. To be sure, the number of enrolled students increased from 2,591 at the start of the decade to 3,140 two years later. But enrolled students only represented approximately 35.7% of the school census population. Since enrolled students reflected the schools' capacity, it is evident that the city simply lacked a sufficient number of schools to serve the school census population. Thus, the city schools remained inaccessible to a large majority of African American children.¹⁸

During the 1883-1884 academic year, parents and activists even became frustrated with the Readjuster regime. The city's reformed hiring practices prompted a surge in community interest. A large number of African American parents actively sought admittance in order to have their children receive the benefits of African American faculties at all of the African American public schools. On the first day of classes, the state's *New York Globe* correspondent reported that "parents could be seen marching their children to the schools, only to be refused admittance. The school accommodations here are totally inadequate. About one thousand pupils were turned away." With nearly one thousand students denied entry, activists demanded additional school accommodations from the City Council and School Board. Furthermore, they expected Paul, Forrester and Randolph to assist them. By October 1883, Randolph secured city appropriations which allowed for the opening of two schools on "the grounds formerly occupied by the Moore Street Industrial School." Paul also pushed through a resolution requesting additional city appropriations for the creation of another school in the city's west end. While Paul's and the city council's efforts were applauded, parents and other community members remained unsatisfied. In an October 1883 article, the *New York Globe* commented: "It is a crying shame that there should be one

¹⁸ Rachleff, 103; Table IX, *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA*.

thousand children thrown upon the streets from the fact that there is no room for them in the public schools.” As a result, parents and activists maintained their agitation with the support of their political allies on the Richmond School Board and City Council. Even with the adoption of these measures, school accommodations remained a source of frustration for activists.¹⁹

Democrats’ political return never stopped activists’ agitation. Residents, especially in areas woefully without adequate accommodations, resumed a strategy of petitioning. Unable to ignore activists’ demands, Richmond School Board responded with five major additions between 1884 and 1890. Three of the additions addressed the needs of the residents living in the west end section of Richmond. Overcrowded the conditions had forced the restoration of half-day sessions. Superintendent Garnett felt that the half-day sessions was an “injustice” to the students, teachers, and parents. On their behalf, Garnett recommended the immediate construction of a school-house. In 1887, the Moore School opened with former Superintendent Garnett as its principal. School officials re-rented the Moore Street Baptist Church property in order to accommodate student and resident demand the following year. A newly created Brook School also provided some relief, but the school quickly became overcrowded. Activists then forced school officials to purchase and renovate an armory that was used by African American soldiers. As the armory was located adjacent to the Brook School, school officials opened and renamed the school complex as the Monroe School. Similar agitation by residents in the eastern and southeastern section of Richmond resulted in the last two additions. The Fulton School opened during the 1889-1890 academic year. The East End School received a major renovation that expanded its overall capacity. These

¹⁹ “The Old Dominion,” *New York Globe*, October 6, 1883, 1; More, “The Old Dominion,” *New York Globe*, January 19, 1884, 1; W. R. Granger, “Richmond Colored Schools,” *New York Globe*, February 23, 1884, 1.

additions came directly from activists' initiative. While African Americans lacked direct school board representation, their perfection and application of protest strategies allowed them to make inroads on the school accommodations issue.²⁰

To be sure, these additions increased the number of children who could access the city's public schools. African American enrollment increased from 3,110 students during the 1885-1886 academic year to 4,968 students during the 1889-1890 academic year. Student enrollments were nearly doubled from the beginning of the decade. The newer facilities also allowed for an increase in the percentage of school-aged children attending the public schools. In relation to the school census, enrolled students steadily increased from 34.7% during 1885-1886 to 48.8% by the end of the decade. While this increase can be seen as a testament to African American activism, a large number of African American children could not attend the public schools. African American demand for public schools still remained greater than the number of available seats.²¹

These gains also never resolved the realities faced by enrolled students and those denied admittance. Enrolled students encountered overcrowded conditions in order to obtain an education. For some, they endured half-day sessions, an unpopular measure designed to increase educational access. For students not enrolled in the public schools and their tax-paying parents, they endured humiliation and frustration by being denied entry to a school system sustained, in part, by African American taxes. The lack of school accommodations

²⁰“Meeting of the School Board,” *Richmond Dispatch*, March 27, 1885, 1; “Called Council Meeting: More Schools to Be Built,” *Richmond Dispatch*, June 13, 1885, 1; “About the Public Schools,” *Richmond Dispatch*, September 15, 1885, 1; Martha Owens, “The Development of Public Schools for Negroes in Richmond, Virginia 1865-1900” (M.S. Thesis, Virginia State College, 1947), 29-31; Richmond (VA). School Board. *Nineteenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of the Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA., for the scholastic year ending July 31st, 1888* (Richmond: Everett Waddey, City Printer, 1889), 7-9, 45-46, accessed at the Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

²¹ Table IX, *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA.*

forced them to either to rely upon private schools or other informal means of obtaining an education. Consequently, African American parents and community leaders celebrated the increased number and percentage of African American public school students. However, they never stopped agitating for additional and better school accommodations. For African Americans living in Richmond, they continued to walk slowly, but surely.²²

Activists maintained the employment of African American teachers as a third objective of their quality campaigns. At the start of the decade, city hiring practices remained the primary obstacle. Despite the combined efforts parents, community leaders, and Richmond Colored Normal graduates, success was limited. The Navy Hill School represented the only school with African American teachers and a white principal at the start of the decade. Richmond Colored Normal graduates filled all of the available positions. Through petitioning, African Americans retained African American teachers at the newly created East End School in 1881. Likewise, these teachers received their training from Richmond Colored Normal and had a white principal supervising them. While success was limited, these schools evoked a sense of hope in the African American community that school officials would “see that it is best for all concerned to appoint colored teachers for all of our colored schools.”²³

Under African American teachers, parents, community leaders, and activists saw Navy Hill’s and East End’s scholastic results as justification for their continued activism.

²² Ibid.

²³ Howard N. Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890* (1978; reprint, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 174; “East End School,” *Virginia Star*, December 23, 1882, 4; “Navy Hill School,” *Virginia Star*, November 18, 1882, 4; “Annual Report of the Secretary of the School Board and Supervisor of School Property for the Scholastic Year 1880-1881. Ending August 1, 1881, and Supplemental Report to February 1, 1882,” *Annual Message and Accompanying Documents of the Mayor of Richmond to the City Council for the Fiscal Year Ending January 31, 1882* (Richmond: N. V. Randolph, City Printer, 1882), 30-31, accessed at the Richmond Public Library, Richmond, Virginia.

Students excelled academically as their teachers instilled pride in academic achievement. Teachers, such as Daniel B. Williams, James Hugo Johnston, and James Hayes, conveyed to their students that academic success permitted racial progress. As the “hope of the race,” these teachers promoted to their young charges the necessity of regular attendance, studying, and performing to the best of their abilities. As Williams informed students at a Moore Street Church Sunday School picnic, “You, a part of the rising youth of our race, hold within your grasp the possibility of adding rich and lasting benefits to your race and country. I desire to state in a plain, practical manner how you can do this. You must set before your minds a lofty standard of physical, intellectual and moral excellence.” Seeking not to disappoint their teachers, students outperformed their African American peers taught by white teachers on the semi-annual examinations and were often promoted at a greater rate. These rewards made parents, students, and community leaders continue their teachers’ campaign.²⁴

Despite these rewards, Navy Hill and East End teachers and students still experienced discrimination. African American teachers faced severe repercussions if they dared to question any discriminatory practice. In 1883, Daniel B. Williams advocated for better treatment for the teachers and students from principal Hubbard G. Carlton. In questioning the Navy Hill school principal, Williams faced “insubordination and mutinous conduct” charges in which the School Board decided upon the continuation of his employment. According to Carlton, Williams charged him with “unjust and unfair discrimination in the promotion of

²⁴ Robert J. Chiles, “The Hope of the Race,” *Industrial Herald*, July 27, 1883, 2, folder 10, box 1, James Hugo Johnston, Sr. Papers, Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA; Daniel B. Williams, “The Education of Children,” *Industrial Herald*, July 27, 1883, 3, folder 10, box 1, James Hugo Johnston, Sr. Papers, Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA; Daniel B. Williams, *Freedom and Progress and Other Choice Addresses on Practical, Scientific, Educational, Philosophic, Historic, and Religious Subjects* (Petersburg: Daniel B. Williams, 1890), 46-47; “Thirteen Annual Report of the School Board and Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Richmond for the Scholastic Year, 1881-1882” *Annual Message and Accompanying Documents of the Mayor of Richmond to the City Council for the Fiscal Year Ending January 31, 1883* (Richmond: Yancey, Waddey and Co, Printers, 1883), 41, accessed at the Richmond Public Library, Richmond, Virginia.

pupils.” While the School Board agreed to promote all students who passed their examinations, they left grade promotion up to the principals who often denied teachers’ grade assessments. By retaining students deemed competent by the teachers, Williams felt that Carlton undermined the teachers’ competency and qualifications for making such decisions. As a consequence, Williams received a suspension without pay. After rejecting Williams’ petition for reinstatement, the Board agreed that he could re-apply for his position during the next academic year. Despite this guarantee, he never regained his employment in the Richmond public schools. Instead, Williams taught in the Henrico County schools and at a private school operating from his residence while pursuing a degree from Brown University during the summer months. Ultimately, he found employment as a professor at Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute in nearby Petersburg. For activists, this incident reinforced the need for teachers as well as principals. Navy Hill students lost a valuable teacher and mentor when Williams’ questioned Carlton’s authority. Neither the students nor the community activists could afford to lose more teachers from these highly valued institutions.²⁵

Excluding the Navy Hill and East End Schools, the reality of white teaching staffs made activists continue their “colored teachers for colored schools” campaign. Local newspapers, such as the *Virginia Star*, vocalized parents’ and community members’ demands for African American public school teachers. A November 1882 article demanded recognition of African American civil and political rights as conferred by the state constitution and the Reconstruction amendments. In the appeal, the *Virginia Star* article

²⁵ February 26, 1883 Meeting, Minutes, printed pages 76-77 and March 5, 1883 Meeting, Minutes, printed page 87, Minutes of City School Board, box 1, Daniel Barclay Williams Papers, Special Collection & University Archives, Lindsay and Montague Hall, Virginia State University, Petersburg, Virginia; Daniel B. Williams, *Freedom and Progress and Other Choice Addresses on Practical, Scientific, Educational, Philosophic, Historic, and Religious Subjects* (Petersburg: Daniel B. Williams, 1890), 8.

extended civil and political rights to include African American public school teachers. The article's author remarked: "No candid white person in the South will deny that the colored people have been denied their civil and political rights. For, are they not as a class excluded from our juries, from holding office, aye, from teaching their own children in the capacity of public free school teachers?" In demanding the recognition of African American civil and political rights, the *Virginia Star* article concluded with a plea for fairness, equality, and dignity. "Give us our rights which belong to us. Give us fair and living wages for a fair day's work. Treat our women with the respect due to their sex. Open the doors of lucrative business to our young men and women. Assist and encourage us to educate our children and bring them up in refinement whenever our means will admit of it." Without fair and equitable wages, dignity, and education, as articulated by the *Virginia Star*, the city's African American population realized that full citizenship was not possible. Hence, African American public school teachers were integral to their quest for full citizenship by ensuring that current and future school-age children had access to better wages and respectability through education.²⁶

By December 1882, local newspapers became more aggressive in their demands for African American public school teachers. This militancy resulted from a growing frustration with the Readjusters' inability to fulfill their demands. A front-page *Virginia Star* editorial implored the city school board to following the model set by other major cities in Virginia. "Lynchburg, Petersburg, Norfolk, Hampton, Danville, Charlottesville, and Manchester have put colored teachers in their colored schools," the editorial opened. "Only Richmond and a few other localities in this State persist in refusing to give the colored people teachers of their

²⁶ "An Appeal to the White People of the South," *Virginia Star*, November 11, 1882, 1.

own race.” After recognizing the success of the Navy Hill and East End schools, the editorial concluded that the School Board’s refusal resulted from “motives of sordidness, spite and Bourbon blindness.” The editorial applauded Superintendent Garnett for his continued struggle to assist them against a determined foe. But, they recognized his inability to overcome the primary obstacle to their goal---obstinate school board members. The editorialist hoped that “a sound sense of justice will, before a great length of time, induce our School Board to do unto as they would that they should do unto them.” Through comparison with other major urban centers, activists hoped that public shame would bring change.²⁷

Activists also turned to the state’s Readjuster regime for assistance. They used the *Virginia Star* as a sounding board for their demands. One December 1882 letter to the editor made a case for state intervention. “The white people have white teachers to instruct their children. We want colored teachers to instruct our young; when we can find them competent,” the letter’s author argued. “We have asked for colored teachers, but the School Board says: “No” you must have the white ones.” The author demanded state intervention. He called upon the Readjuster regime to enact “a good honest government that does not make a difference on account of the color of the skin.” From this example, it is evident that activists had clear expectations of the Readjuster regime. They expected their state allies to make the city’s School Board more amenable to their demands. In requesting state intervention, African Americans elevated their teachers’ campaign from a city to a state demand.²⁸

In 1883, Readjuster intervention on the Richmond School Board allowed for a major

²⁷ “Colored Teachers for Colored Schools,” *Virginia Star*, December 9, 1882, 1.

²⁸ “Colored Teachers for Colored Schools,” *Virginia Star*, December 9, 1882, 1; “From the People,” letter to the editor, *Virginia Star*, December 16, 1882, 1.

victory in the teachers' campaign. Richard Forrester and Robert A. Paul broke the stalemate. The men successfully agitated for African American teachers and principals on behalf of attendees of a May 22, 1883 mass meeting held at the First African Church. According to the petition developed at this meeting, petitioners asked: "That while we would not presume to dictate as to the management of the Richmond public schools, we respectfully petition the Richmond School Board, as an act of justice to ourselves and as an advantage to our children, that they appoint colored principals and teachers to all our colored schools." Paul and Forrester paid heed to the petitioners. The men convinced their colleagues of listening to the petitioners' demands. African American applicants received teaching positions in the schools, excluding Richmond Colored Normal. After a passionate argument by Paul, the Board also promoted Albert V. Norrell, James H. Hayes, and James Hugo Johnston to become the principals of the Navy Hill, Valley, and Baker schools, respectively. Without Readjuster intervention and continued community pressure, the struggle for African American teachers and principals would have remained at a stalemate.²⁹

African Americans celebrated across the city and nation. After laboring for over a decade, parents, community leaders and activists had every reason to feel victorious. The Virginia correspondent for the *New York Globe* proclaimed: "At last we can assuredly say the battle has been fought and the victory is won." Parents clamored to have their children take part of the historic moment. As a result, the schools reported high enrollment and few absenteeism for the year. Community leaders also praised the programs developed by the principals. The former Navy Hill teachers devised a weekly lecture series in order to aid first-time Richmond school teachers. Each month, three experienced teachers gave lectures on teaching pedagogy. At the first meeting, Daniel Webster Davis, Margaret Woolfolk, and

²⁹ Rachleff, 103-104; Dailey, 70; Carlton, 11-12.

James Merriweather delivered lectures on “Corporal Punishment” at the Baker, Navy Hill, and Valley schools respectively. Local and regional newspapers regularly reported upon this continuous education series as evidence of Hayes’, Johnston’s, and Norrell’s ingenuity and competency for the positions held. From enrollments to teacher training, black Richmonders had every reason to celebrate the fruits of their activism. The academic year demonstrated that their efforts had not been in vain.³⁰

Furthermore, the public schools attracted the attention of government and civilian visitors. Superintendent Garnett and other officials regularly visited the schools. At a December 1883 visit to the Valley School, Superintendent Garnett said that “he was pleased with what he saw. He thought, at first, that the colored schools, under the new management, would cause him much trouble; but he found them doing as well as they had ever done” since the creation of the public school system. Comments such as this only vindicated the activists’ previous struggle. In response to his remarks, the state’s *New York Globe* correspondent commented: “Many persons prophesied a dark day for the schools when the change was made. The above speaks for itself.” Similarly, published tourist accounts also galvanized activists. In early 1884, William R. Granger toured the schools. While opposing “colored trustees for colored schools,” Granger found Hayes, Norrell, and Johnston to be competent and intelligent men who were ably assisted by the teachers. Under their tutelage, Granger was greatly impressed by the students’ scholastic progress and their respect for the teachers. He wrote: “In conduct and decorum, the pupils reflect the care of the teachers. Strongly refractory spirits are seldom met; and then such receive prompt attention. Respect for teachers is a characteristic feature in each of the schools. No loud rebukes are necessary, nor

³⁰ “The Old Dominion. Masonic Celebration, Meeting of the Acme Literary, Another Victory, Colored Teachers and Principals,” *New York Globe*, July 7, 1883,1; “The Old Dominion,” *New York Globe*, September 29, 1883, 4.

[sic] frequent calls for order.” In his visit to Richmond Colored Normal, Granger noticed a sharp difference in the students’ interactions with their white teachers. For Granger, the “lack of that deep regard for the teacher shown in the primary grades” at the normal school reinforced the success of African American faculties and principals. Indeed, reports from Garnett, Granger, and other visitors served in convincing skeptics of the merits of African American public school teachers and principals. From the principals to the students, these reports demonstrated success rather than failure.³¹

The creation of African American faculties resulted in an uproar among white Virginians. Displaced principals objected their removal. Hubbard G. Carlton, the former Navy Hill principal, bitterly recalled: “The principals of Baker, Valley, and Navy Hill of which I was principal, were removed and three of my male teachers, colored elected principals; all of the white teachers in the colored schools were turned out and colored ones appointed...” As a result of the actions of the “mongrel board,” according to Carlton, a “revolution began.” State Democratic party organizers seized upon the displacement of the white principals and teachers as justification for removing the Readjusters from power. Democrats argued that the Readjusters’ Richmond School Board experiment resulted in job loss for white principals and teachers in order to place African Americans on “an equal footing.” Through such arguments, the party successfully convinced white Virginians that similar experiments would occur in their cities, towns, and counties if the Readjusters remained in power. As political maneuverings allowed for the appointment of Hayes, Johnston, and Norrell, state and city politics permitted the men’s removal at the end of the

³¹ “Old Dominion,” *New York Globe*, December 1, 1883, 1; W. R. Granger, “Richmond Colored Schools,” *New York Globe*, February 23, 1884, 1.

1883-1884 academic year.³²

African Americans mourned the return to the status quo. As evidenced by mass meetings and published correspondence in the African American press, feelings of disappointment, shock, and anger permeated throughout the city. In a *New York Globe* article, the Virginia correspondent shared the sentiments shared by the majority of the city's African American community. "Again have the Bourbons shown their greed for office by the ousting of Messrs J. Highland Hayes, J. H. Johnston and A. V. Norrell, the colored principals of this city, from the colored schools, and putting white men in their places," the article opened. "There was no charge against them, in fact the record made by the respective schools under their control is unparalleled in their history." Owing to the success of the schools under the three men, the correspondent astutely recognized that race and political partisanship motivated their removal. Despite being the recipients of diplomas from "an institution that a Democratic board sanctioned," the correspondent argued that the "partisan Board went to work and scraped up persons from far and near to supply their places." As a result, the author and most African Americans considered the School Board's actions to be "the first time in the school life of Virginia that a School Board has been the reflection of a revolutionary legislature." For parents and activists, the principals' removal reinforced that competency no longer mattered in the selection of school principals. Race and political affiliation did.³³

At the same time, parents, children, and community leaders endured the removal of eleven male African American teachers for their political activities. These men had received their appointments by the Readjuster appointed school board and had been active members of

³² Carlton, 10-11.

³³ More, "The Old Dominion: Ousting the Colored Teachers from Richmond Schools," *New York Globe*, July 5, 1884, 1.

the Readjuster-Republican coalition. While Hayes, Johnston, and Norrell received their former positions in the schools, these men lost their jobs. They were replaced by African American female teachers. As women, they were seen as less threatening than their male counterparts. To be sure, women were active participants in Richmond's political scene and could be considered anything but apolitical. However, they could not physically cast a ballot that would oust the School Board members. For these reasons, the School Board replaced the eleven teachers. Their removal epitomized that race, political affiliation, and gender mattered more than competency in the selection of teachers.³⁴

Although African Americans served as principals for only one year, African American teachers remained. White teachers lost their monopoly on employment in the African American public schools. During the 1884-1885 academic year, the School Board rejected a petition of displaced white teachers and white community leaders for their re-employment during the 1884-1885 academic year. After the Readjuster revolution, whites only served in African Americans schools as principals and/or as faculty members at Richmond Colored Normal. As a result of the changed hiring practices, African American parents and community leaders turned their attention to other objectives in the quality campaigns by 1885. With African American public school teachers, they felt reassured that the children would be treated with respect and dignity. They no longer felt concerned about the quality of education received under the educators' tutelage. Thus, they felt that the campaign for African American public school teachers could end as they had achieved the desired result.³⁵

³⁴ More, "The Old Dominion," *New York Globe*, July 19, 1884, 4.

³⁵ Carlton, 11; "Twenty-first Annual Report of the Superintendent of the Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA., for the Scholastic Year Ending July 31st, 1890," *Annual Message and Accompanying*

As in the previous decade, the quality campaigns' success was contingent upon funding. At the end of the 1870s, the city's financial situation remained as such---all public schools, white and African American, were underfunded. The emergence of Readjuster Party, though, transformed city and state officials' attitudes toward school funding and broke a major obstacle. While African Americans continued seeking as much money as possible for the schools and equity in the distribution of said school funds, the Readjuster movement made their crusade easier.

The Readjuster political movement ended the school funding crisis of the previous decade. William Mahone and other Readjuster political leaders made school funding a priority for the nascent party. Indeed, the 1879 party platform endorsed sustaining a system of adequately funded public schools. The party pledged reforming how the state distributed school fund monies to cities, towns, and counties and increasing the amount of state monies appropriated. Funding reform, according to the Readjuster's 1879 platform, would allow that "no child shall be deprived of the blessings of education." The party's educational reform platform accounted for its success in the 1879 elections. Upon achieving political success, the party immediately fulfilled its educational platform by increasing state aid given to Richmond during the 1879-1880 academic year. As state contributions increased from \$5,188.50 to a staggering \$24,904.80, the crisis ceased.³⁶

The infusion of money set the tone for state and city appropriations for the entire decade. While state appropriations slightly decreased for the next two years, state educational

Documents of the Mayor of Richmond to the City Council for the Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 1890 (Richmond: C. N. Williams, City Printer, 1891), 13, accessed at the Richmond Public Library, Richmond, Virginia.

³⁶ Williams, 15; Table IX, *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA*.

contributions never dwindled to pre-Readjuster amounts. Even with the decline of the Readjuster Party, state educational funds contributed between \$23,000 and \$30,000 to the Richmond public schools. Moreover, increased state funds correlated with an increase in city allocations. By reaffirming the state's commitment to public schools, specifically African American public schools, the City Council contributed more money. Through taxation and fiscal management, the city allocations increased from approximately \$50,000 to over \$100,000 by the end of the decade. Indeed, state and city allocations to the public schools greatly surpassed the amounts of appropriations given to the city public schools during the previous decade. Hence, the city's ability to fund its African American schools greatly improved.³⁷

Richmond school officials now could fulfill African American parents, children, and community members' demands for quality public schools. To be sure, increased state and city funding never completely eradicated the school funding shortfall. City officials also could not completely address all of the problems associated with the public schools. But, city officials now had more capital in order to acquire additional school accommodations and staff the new school facilities. As a result, the quality campaigns greatly benefitted from the infusion of educational funds. African American activists now no longer dealt with debates over the fiscal feasibility of public schools or the legitimacy of African American education. Liberal state and city expenditures cemented African American public school education as a right of citizenship.³⁸

³⁷ Table IX, *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA*.

³⁸ "The City School Board," *Richmond Dispatch*, November 28, 1884, 1; "Annual Report of the Clerk of School Board and Supervisor of School Property for the Scholastic Year 1884-'85," *Annual Message and Accompanying Documents of the Mayor of Richmond to the City Council for the Fiscal Year Ending January 31, 1884* (Richmond: Walthall and Bowles, City Printer, 1885), 27-28; "Seventeenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of the Public Schools of the City of Richmond, VA., for the Scholastic Year 1885-'86," *Annual*

African Americans and their allies now sought maximizing the amount of educational funds given to the public schools. In order increase educational access for taxpayers' children, parents, community leaders, and other allies fought against any measures that diverted school monies away from the city's African American citizenry. For instance, the African American community, city school officials, and government officials refused to support school choice program legislation. In 1886, Richmonders and other urban Virginians advocated against the Berry Bill. This legislation proposed to "allow the children in county or city to attend the public schools in any other city or county." Citizens recognized that the proposed bill would have made the school accommodation problem worse despite the "liberal expenditures." Such a bill, as best articulated by the *Richmond Dispatch*, would allow for the exclusion of more Richmonders in order "to make room for the children from other parts of the State, whose parents pay nothing into the city treasury." Hence, many found the bill to be "very injurious to the Richmond public schools" and advocated that their state representatives vote against the bill. Richmonders' objection also revealed the continued dilemma associated with school funding. Despite the liberal expenditures, Richmond still experienced financial difficulties. Other than raising taxes, city officials remained unable to overcome this obstacle and resorted to maximizing the money spent for its citizens.³⁹

Activists also engaged in national educational funding debates. The city's African American population strongly endorsed the Blair Bill. Designed to provide federal funding to the nation's schools, African Americans and their allies recognized that federal intervention could overcome the remaining obstacles to school funding. "Much interest is manifested here

Message and Accompanying Documents of the Mayor of Richmond to the City Council for the Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 1886 (Richmond: Everett Waddey, City Printer, 1887), 9, accessed at the Richmond Public Library, Richmond, Virginia.

³⁹ "Mr. Berry's School Bill," *Richmond Dispatch*, January 29, 1886, 1.

in the bill for National Aid to Education,” the Virginia correspondent for the *New York Globe* reported. “It is a bill that should be certainly be the means of lifting the colored man to the foreground.” In addition, activists believed that federal intervention would provide the necessary surveillance upon southern states in distributing the funds equitably. In the same *New York Globe* article, the correspondent wrote: “When the accommodations for the whites are the accommodations for the colored, then, and not until then, will we believe in the possibility of the whites doing justice to Negroes in this respect.” The correspondent concluded: “To consign such a bulk of money to the keeping of these Southern Bourbons would be worse than folly, and fatal to the interests of the Negro.” As evidenced by this article, black Richmonders’ support of the Blair Bill reflected a belief that the school funding issue was a national rather than a city, state, or regional struggle. By the 1880s, black Richmonders firmly believed in the transformative nature of education in relation to citizenship and progress. Based upon their experience, activists felt obligated to support the passage of this federal legislation. The legislation would not only aid African Americans in Richmond but all African Americans across the South and nation.⁴⁰

In supporting the national educational bill, African American parents and activists also desired a restoration of their earlier relationship with Northerners and Federal government. The community’s discourse surrounding the federal educational legislation included discussions of the nation’s previous commitment to African American education. The Virginia correspondent reminded *New York Globe* readers that the majority of “all the fine institutions of the South for the colored youth were reared by Northern contributions.” As articulated by the *New York Globe* correspondent, activists played up this relationship as a reason for supporting the bill’s passage. This discourse also called into attention the

⁴⁰ More, “The Old Dominion,” *New York Globe*, April 5, 1884, 4

perceived abandonment of northern and Federal support after the departure of the Freedmen's Bureau. The correspondent remarked: "The South passed laws before the war to crush the educational abilities of the black man, and it [has taken] more than twenty years to wipe out that spirit." In highlighting the length of time, the correspondent chastised New Yorkers, Northerners, and the Federal government. For fifteen years, the efforts of black Richmonders and other Virginians eradicated most of the local sentiment "to crush the educational abilities of the black man." Their efforts sustained the foundation established by northern and Federal contributions. Yet, the correspondent and Richmond activists hoped that their chastisement would convince *New York Globe* readers of the legislation's necessity. They and other black southerners would willingly overlook previous abandonment if they secured enough northern support for the bill's passage and implementation. If the bill failed, activists feared for the future of their quality public school campaigns but also of campaigns across the rural and urban South. On this issue, Richmond activists did not want to walk alone in the struggle.⁴¹

Changes in attitudes at the city and state level allowed African Americans and their allies to make substantial gains in their struggle for school funding. Unlike other southern cities, black Richmonders experienced the benefits of liberal school expenditures. Liberal expenditures allowed for them to secure funding for the construction and staffing of additional school accommodations. Yet, these liberal expenditures never stopped their agitation in securing more state and cities monies for their schools, especially after Readjusters' demise. They also demanded that the region use Richmond as a model in the funding of African American education. Hence, the community engaged in national debates

⁴¹ More, "The Old Dominion," *New York Globe*, April 5, 1884, 4.

addressing the funding of not only their schools but for the schools of their southern brethren who were not as fortunate. Although black Richmonders' experience can be classified as atypical, they still engaged in a struggle for equitable and sufficient school funding which was common across the region. It may have been easier for them to achieve results, but they still had to fight for this campaign objective.

Over the 1880s, African American activists made significant progress in their quest for quality public schools. Maneuvering a favorable political environment, activists secured direct representation on the Richmond School Board. The school system expanded with new schools. The new accommodations allowed for more African American children to access a public school education. African Americans also found employment as teachers and briefly as principals. With the infusion of state and city funding, activists ensured that the schools received sufficient financial support. Through newer and older protest strategies, activists greatly improved the Richmond public schools. Indeed, African Americans and their allies could claim success by the end of the decade.

Activists still strove for more progress as the schools remained far from perfect. African American children were still being denied access to a public school education because of a want of adequate accommodations. After brief success, the African American community lacked direct representation on the Richmond School Board. The removal of Paul and Forrester re-established a dependency upon their white allies for the education of African American children. Activists also proved unable to fully overcome the remaining funding shortfall affecting their schools. Yet, parents, community leaders, and activists remained undeterred by the remaining school problems. Their activism kept the schools open and made them into better institutions. Without the activists' perfection of the previous

decade's protest strategies and adaptation, these setbacks may have been greater in Richmond.

Still Crawling: African Americans' Struggle for Quality Schools Continues in Mobile

Unlike Richmond, Mobile never experienced a political revolution. Yet, African Americans continued agitating for quality public schools. Through continued pressure upon their allies and resilience in the face of adversity, activists achieved success during the 1880s. They also experienced setbacks. Unlike their Richmond counterparts, African Americans proved less successful in securing direct representation on the Mobile County Board of School Commissioners. Throughout the 1880s, Democrats firmly controlled the city's political system. While African Americans maneuvered the terrain and secured various patronage positions, they proved unable overcome the party's white supremacist views of African American school commissioners. They, like Richmonders after the fall of the Readjusters, were unable to persuade elected officials or voters that African Americans were capable of managing the schools. Undeterred by the obstacles, they continued to crawl while making steady progress in their struggle for quality public schools.⁴²

Despite the lack of direct representation, parents, religious leaders, and activists relied upon strategies honed during the previous decade. First, they continued the practice of petitioning. African Americans continued to hold mass meetings at local churches where they crafted petitions. After securing signatures, they sent the petitions to the School Board. Through petitioning, they maintained a political voice. While not always successful, petitioners forced the School Board to address their concerns at official meetings. Hence, petitioning allowed them to have some control over the schools. Furthermore, African

⁴² Michael Fitzgerald, *Urban Emancipation: Popular Politics In Reconstruction Mobile* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 247.

Americans employed the ballot as a strategy. Using their electoral power in school elections, the African American and Creole communities forced candidates to address their community's needs in their campaigns in exchange for their votes. After the elections, they held the officials accountable for action with threats of not supporting them in the next election. These strategies reflected their ability to effect change to school operations even without African American and Creole school commissioners. While hindered, the lack of representation never silenced African Americans and their allies, politically.⁴³

Mobile's fight for school accommodations was threefold. First, African Americans and Creoles of Color sought to maintain existing accommodations accessible to anyone desiring a public school education. Second, they sought the expansion of the school system in order to increase the number of students enrolled. Third, they fiercely protected the private school system. During the previous decade, activists found the existence of private schools beneficial in their quality school campaigns. Private schools ensured choice while providing a model for what the public schools could become. Over the course of the decade, African Americans and Creoles experienced both success and setbacks as they crawled their way to quality public schools.

African Americans and their allies sought to keep existing schools open. At the start of the decade, the city offered five public schools for African American children and one school for Creole children. Student enrollment reflected approximately 30% of the city's school census population. Though meager in number, activists fought to ensure that the number of schools did not decrease as it would have prevented educational access to more

⁴³Fitzgerald, 247-250; 257-265; "The Election," *Mobile Daily Register*, November 10, 1888, 4, column 2, Interesting Transcriptions Of Mobile Daily Newspapers, 1860-1901 with Appropriate Index. Prepared from original data by the Municipal and Court Records Project of the Works Progress Administration (1939), accessed at the Mobile Municipal Archives, Mobile, Alabama.

African American children. In maintaining six schools, activists could still claim a victory as available accommodations remained the same. Thus, activists desired keeping the number of schools at a minimum of six. This would ensure continued access to students already enrolled in the public schools while establishing a minimum enrollment standard.⁴⁴

In struggling to maintain the existing schools, African American and Creole activists often reinforced social differences between the groups as they protected the educational interests of the other. Since the end of the Civil War, separate schools existed for Creole and African American children. Through negotiations between the communities, the Creole School found the support of the African American community in maintaining the separation. At the start of the decade, the Board of School Commissioners began reconsidering the school's existence. At the February 16, 1881 meeting, School Commissioners contemplated a petition received from Ben Johnson requesting his child's admittance into the Creole Free School. In discussing the petition, the Board considered the necessity of the separate school for Creole of Color children. School Commissioners felt that consolidating the Creole Free School into Augusta Street School would be adequate. However, public outcry from the Creole and African American communities enabled the continuation of the school. Creole and African American activists realized that closure to the Creole Free School would have decreased the number of public schools to five. It did not matter that the school had a small enrollment or that it reinforced division between the Creole and African American communities. Activists equated threats to one group's educational interests as threats made to the other. Although internal division remained, unity prevailed in the protection of the public schools. In this instance, activists convinced the Board of School Commissioners of

⁴⁴ Superintendent of Education, *Reports of the State Superintendent of Education, 1880-1888*, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama; Mobile City Directories 1880 and 1881, Mobile Municipal Archives, Mobile, Alabama.

the necessity of maintaining the Creole Free School until 1887 when the school permanently closed.⁴⁵

For the existing schools, activists also sought necessary school repairs. These repairs and renovations made the schools into functional facilities which helped activists to sustain a positive public image of the schools. Poor conditions often deterred parents from sending their children to the public schools. Indeed, they opted for the city's private school system or non-attendance as evidenced by the student enrollment figures. Student enrollment decreased from 2,225 students during the 1880/1881 academic year to a decade low of 1,818 students during the 1882/1883 academic year. Owing to their activism, public school enrollment steadily increased to 2,356 students by the end of the decade. Improved facilities also allowed for school officials to commend the city's African American school facilities in official state reports. Better facilities, though often cosmetic, attracted parent, student, and community support.⁴⁶

The construction of new schools was a second objective of the school accommodations campaign. Activists proved less successful owing to the city's financial situation. Between 1880 and 1886, activists were unable to secure new accommodations for African American and Creole children. While school officials attributed low enrollment to racial differences between white and black students, activists understood that the heart of the

⁴⁵ February 9, 1881 Meeting, *Records of the Board of School Commissioners for Mobile County, Minutes, 1871-1887*, Mobile Public School System, Barton Academy, Mobile, Alabama. After this meeting, the board continued staffing the Creole School until funding dictated the school's closure in 1887. Mobile City Directories, 1880-1890.

⁴⁶ Superintendent of Education, *Reports of the State Superintendent of Education, 1880-1888*, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama; Superintendent of Education, *Reports of the State Superintendent of Education, 1889-1898*, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama; Willis G. Clark. *History of Education in Alabama, 1702-1889* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889), 272.

problem lay in the few school accommodations. Their failure resulted in the continuation of a majority of African American children and their parents being denied access to a public school education. Hence, activists continued their school accommodation campaign.⁴⁷

Success occurred only when activists requested new facilities in order to replace school facilities closed by the Board of School Commissioners. Citing inefficiency, the Board of School Commissioners closed the Creole Free School in 1887. Activists successfully persuaded the Board to open the Monroe Street School for the displaced Creole student population and the neighborhood's growing school-aged African American population. Although displaced Creole students enrolled at the Augusta School or at a private school, activists did receive a new facility and maintained the city's school offerings to six schools. In 1888, another reduction occurred. Activists acquired the Broad Street Academy, but they lost the St. Louis Street School, Good Hope School and the Monroe Street School. To be sure, displaced students flocked to the newly built Broad Street Academy and other schools as evidenced by the enrollment figures. However, activists suffered a major setback. The city's public school system decreased its offerings to African American and Creole children from six schools to four schools by the end of the decade.⁴⁸

Sustaining the private school system as an alternative to the public school system was a third component of the school accommodations campaign. In their quest for educational access, African Americans and Creoles supported private schools as providing parents and children choice. But, they also supported private schools as a means of improving the public

⁴⁷ Clark, 273.

⁴⁸ Mobile City Directories, 1880-1890; Superintendent of Education, *Reports of the State Superintendent of Education, 1880-1888*, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama; Superintendent of Education, *Reports of the State Superintendent of Education, 1889-1898*, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

schools. This is evident in the community's protection of Emerson Institute. During the 1880s, black Mobilians continued their dependency upon the existence of Emerson Institute. As a viable alternative to the public schools, activists used the school in order to press school commissioners for better school accommodations and expanded programs. Therefore, the continuation of Emerson Institute as a private school remained of high importance for activists. Without Emerson Institute, they would have lost an important bargaining chip with school officials. As a result, they fiercely protected the school.⁴⁹

The school's destruction demonstrated its importance to African American activists. Arson plagued during the winter of 1881-1882. The arsonists' fiery attempt to permanently close the school initially brought sadness to the school's principal, Emma Caughey. "Emerson Institute is lying in ruins," bemoaned Caughey. "For the second time in her history she is smoldering in ashes,... the enemy approaches again and applies the torch---this time with marvelous success." Instead of mourning the school's loss, Reverend Albert F. Owens and African American religious leaders immediately found temporary locations for the school until it could be rebuilt. This solution often placed Emerson Institute within the same buildings rented as public schools. Reverend Albert F. Owens, pastor of the Third Baptist Church, made his church's basement available as a temporary site for some Emerson classes while other sections operated as a public school. Community leaders' initiative and resolve allowed classes to resume within days of the fire. In an article to the *American Missionary*, Caughey reported that the school reopened "on Monday, Jan. 30, with three departments, at the Third Baptist Church, about one mile from the 'Home' and two departments in the

⁴⁹ O. D. Crawford, "Anniversary Reports: Emerson Institute," *The American Missionary* 35, no. 7 (July 1881): 209, VF-Emerson Institute, University of South Alabama, Mobile, Alabama.

basement of the Little Zion Church, about three blocks distant from the Home...” As in the 1876 arson of Emerson Institute, the community’s outpouring of support demonstrated their refusal to give into opposition to the school and more broadly, African American education. Like the public schools, Emerson Institute allowed for the community’s to make progress in becoming an educated people. As it fulfilled an important function, parents, religious leaders, and activists felt that the institution warranted both its support and protection. Arson only reinforced their commitment to educational access for all. Hence, religious leaders, parents, and activists contributed their money, space, and time in the school’s rebuilding. As a result, Emerson Institute and Normal School reopened the school in a larger facility in October 1882.⁵⁰

In their struggle for school accommodations, activists achieved limited success. Activists could not prevent the closure of some public schools. However, they secured improved facilities at the remaining schools as well as newer facilities. They also sustained a vibrant private school system as an alternative to the public schools. While their activism never achieved a substantial increase in overall enrollments, their activism permitted the continuation of the African American public schools in improved facilities.

During the 1880s, African American activists had two objectives in their teachers’ campaign. First, they sought the employment of African American teachers and principals. Second, they demanded the creation of a public normal school option within the city’s school system. In terms of both objectives, African Americans achieved their greatest success in their struggle for quality public schools. Through their activism, they achieved both

⁵⁰ Emma Caughey, “Emerson Institute, Mobile, Ala., Burned,” *The American Missionary*, 36, no. 3 (March 1882): 80-81, VF-Emerson Institute, University of South Alabama, Mobile, Alabama; Emma Caughey, “Emerson Institute,” *The American Missionary*, 37, no. 6 (June 1883): 172-174, VF-Emerson Institute, University of South Alabama, Mobile, Alabama.

objectives.

The employment of African American teachers was a high priority for activists. Parents and other activists utilized the Board of School Commissioners' promise of employing African American teachers and the emergence of African American teaching corps in the city as the basis for their activism. In September 1878, the African American community, through a petition, secured the Board of School Commissioners' commitment in hiring of "Colored Teachers for [the] Colored schools." While the Board affirmed its commitment with the hiring of William A. Caldwell in 1879, African American parents, religious leaders, and other activists continued to demand the hiring of African American teachers and principals in all of the schools. At the start of the decade, African Americans comprised a small percentage of the teachers and principals employed in the city's African American public schools. They demanded that School Commissioners uphold their promise which would be "in the best interest" of the schools, as an 1884 *Mobile Item* resolution argued. In pressuring the Board, parents, community leaders, and activists made some gains. The city began hiring more African American public school teachers. However, they failed to comprise the majority of the teachers employed. Often, they held subordinate positions to their white counterparts. These gains, though, did not stop parents from demanding African American teachers in all of the city's schools.⁵¹

But by 1885, activists re-evaluated their protest strategies. Frustrated with the Democratic leadership, they demanded that the Board of the School Commissioners hire L. W. Cummings and F. A. Stewart. Although better qualified than the white teachers employed

⁵¹ September 18, 1878 Meeting Minutes, June 25, 1882 Meeting Minutes, September 14, 1885, *Records of the Board of School Commissioners for Mobile County, Minutes, 1871-1887*, MCPSS; *Catalog of Teachers and Students*, 24-28; *Mobile County City Directory, 1878-1890*; Quoted in Fitzgerald, 259.

at the Davis Avenue school, the recent Fisk University graduates received subordinate teaching positions. In their appeal, the men turned to the community for support. Agreeing with Cummings and Stewart, approximately thirteen hundred African American residents signed petitions “contending that black teachers would do a better job and that those who pursued higher education deserved encouragement.” Several white elite also signed the residents’ petitions as they felt that the African American and Creole schools should have African American and Creole teachers as a matter of fairness. However, the School Board remained firm in its hiring decision. When petitioning failed, Cummings, Stewart, and the residents surrounding the Davis Avenue School considered more aggressive tactics.⁵²

Activists proposed a boycott. Cummings, Stewart, and residents held a mass meeting in order to discuss “colored people for colored schools, and demand that the colored people have their rights.” Stewart called for a boycott in order to “compel them to give us colored teachers.” Four-fifths of the meeting attendees agreed. The 1885-1886 academic year opened with a boycott at the Davis Avenue School. Though attendance remained “quite small,” the month long boycott quickly lost momentum and ultimately failed. School Commissioners held firm in their decision. Support from white political elites dematerialized as a result of the new militancy. Yet, the Davis Avenue community’s very public discontent forced the Board of School Commissioners’ to once again reconsider its hiring practices. The following year, the Board hired several “colored teachers for the colored schools” while professing that race did not factor into the selections of teachers. This concession would not have been possible without the boycott and the activism of African Americans and their allies.⁵³

⁵² Fitzgerald, 263-264; September 14, 1885 Meeting Minutes, *Records of the Board of School Commissioners for Mobile County, Minutes, 1871-1887*, MCPSS.

⁵³ Fitzgerald, 264-265; Mobile City Directories, 1886-1887, Clark, 272.

Perhaps, African American activists' greatest success occurred with the creation of the Broad Street Academy, a public normal school. In their struggle for African American public school teachers, activists worked with the American Missionary Association in the development of a normal school. Emerson Normal trained a corps of teachers that received teaching positions in the city and county schools during the decade. Owing to the success of Emerson Normal and the African American partnership with the American Missionary Association, the Mobile County Board of School Commissioners created a new school that would serve as both a primary school as well as normal school for city residents. In 1887, the Broad Street Academy opened. The two-story clapboard school also fulfilled another community demand. It boasted an all-African American faculty that drew upon the city's educated African American ministry, Emerson Normal graduates, and Emerson Institute graduates. In the normal program, faculty assisted with the training of future teachers. In the primary school, the faculty, especially William A Caldwell, instilled racial pride and the rhetoric of racial progress through education to their students. As a former student recalled, Caldwell "ran the school with discipline and never tolerated any foolishness of any kind on campus. If there was ever any kind of trouble with a pupil it would be dealt with that day with the parents' involvement." Through its normal school and faculty, Broad Street Academy symbolized progress and success. Thus, they achieved two victories with the creation of one institution. Until the school's closure due to a suspicious fire in 1947, Broad Street Academy remained a source of pride in the African American community.⁵⁴

By the end of the decade, the teachers' campaign proved to be the greatest victory for parents, religious leaders, and activists. Their activism resulted in the gradual erosion of the

⁵⁴ Mobile City Directories, 1888-1890; Paulette Davis-Horton, *The Avenue: The Place, The People, The Memories* (Mobile: Horton, Inc., 1991), 24-25, 39.

city's discriminatory hiring practices. In demanding that School Commissioners uphold their 1878 promise, African Americans and Creoles steadily received teaching positions in the city's schools. They also secured all-black faculties at several city schools. While African Americans and Creoles still competed with white candidates, the overall number of those employed was greatly improved from the start of the decade. Moreover, they secured a public normal school option within the city. Broad Street Academy expanded the curriculum offered but also created a pool of candidates in which the city could draw upon for employment. Perseverance and continued activism resulted in the gradual transformation of the city's schools for African American children. By 1890, enrolled students were most likely taught by an African American or Creole teacher than a white teacher.⁵⁵

In terms of school funding, Mobile's experience greatly differed from African American residents in Richmond, Virginia. Indeed, Mobile's experience typified the experiences of most African American struggles in cities, towns, and counties across the South. Neither Mobile nor areas outside of Virginia experienced a political revolution similar to the Readjuster Movement. For activists, the situation in Mobile remained bleak as city and county officials proved unable to adequately fund the public schools, whether white or black. New state laws also proved to be an obstacle for the activists. Despite these major obstacles, African American and their allies recognized that the success of the quality campaigns hinged upon funding. As a result, they sought as much money as possible for the school system but they recognized that they faced an uphill battle.

As in the previous decade, state and city financial difficulties posed the greatest obstacle to their efforts. During the 1880s, changes to the state distributions from the "Colored Fund" had major ramifications for African Americans living in Mobile. Monies

⁵⁵ Clark, 272-273; Mobile City Directories, 1885-1890.

from the “Colored Fund” not only subsidized primary education but also secondary education. While state officials provided generous appropriations to Tuskegee and other secondary schools, the public schools suffered. Overall, this mandate equated to less state funds. While Mobile received nearly two-thirds of the state funds received by the county, state appropriations ranged between \$4,000 and \$5,000 for the entire decade. City officials proved incapable of sufficiently overcoming this shortfall as the 1875 constitution specifically prohibited local taxation for school purposes. Thus, school funding still posed as a challenge during the 1880s.⁵⁶

Unlike their Richmond counterparts, the Board of School Commissioners abandoned their policy of equitable school fund distributions. At the start of the decade, Mobile city and county schools were now compliant with the 1875 state constitutional mandates in terms of school funding. The constitution and the resulting state legislation gave school superintendents the authority to discriminate on the basis of race in the distribution of school funds. Using their discretion, superintendents could divert more money to the white public schools than to the African American public schools. As the city’s ability to finance the public schools worsened, superintendents chose to apply monies from the “Colored Fund” in order to ensure that the white public schools completed a full academic year.⁵⁷

This decision affected the city’s schools. African American and Creole students

⁵⁶ Horace Mann Bond, *Negro Education in Alabama: A Study in Cotton and Steel* (1939; reprint, Tuscaloosa : University of Alabama Press, c1994), 148-151; Superintendent of Education, *Reports of the State Superintendent of Education, 1880-1888*, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama; Superintendent of Education, *Reports of the State Superintendent of Education, 1889-1898*, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

⁵⁷ Bond, 135-136, 148-149; *Report of Leroy Box, Superintendent of Education for the State of Alabama, for the Scholastic Year Ending 30th September 1878, with Tabular Statistics of 1876-1877, Containing also the Laws Relating to the Public School System of the State With An Appendix of Forms* (Montgomery: Barrett and Brown, 1879) in Superintendent of Education, *Annuals and Other Reports, 1868-1879*, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

experienced a shortened academic year than their white counterparts. For seven academic-years, they went to school fewer days than white students. Students only once experienced a near equitable term and twice did students experience a longer academic year than their white counterparts. This decision also affected teachers' salaries. The average monthly salaries for African American teachers were less than their white counterparts. Moreover, the salaries received were much less than in the previous decade when white teachers filled the majority of the teaching positions in the African American public schools. While this decision resulted in a shortened school year and inequitable teacher pay, the city never closed the schools nor did officials not respond to some of the activists demands. Though the schools remained underfunded, activists maneuvered the poor economic terrain and achieved some success in the overall campaign for quality schools.⁵⁸

In light of the ongoing school funding difficulties, African Americans looked toward Washington, DC for assistance. The proposed Blair Bill, according to African American parents, community leaders, and activists, would greatly assist their efforts to create quality public schools. Activists found agreement with city's white political elite on this issue. In 1880, the *Mobile Register* favored federal aid as a means of furthering the progress made by African Americans. The newspaper asked its readers: "Do we not today see a great improvement in the race compared with that they were ten years ago?" In his 1887 annual report, State Superintendent Solomon Palmer also gave his support for federal intervention. He wrote: "Without assistance from the general government, I fear the State will never be able to give thousands of her children, now verging into manhood and womanhood, that

⁵⁸ Superintendent of Education, *Reports of the State Superintendent of Education, 1880-1888*, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama; Superintendent of Education, *Reports of the State Superintendent of Education, 1889-1898*, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

education so necessary to qualify them for useful lives, to make them ornaments in society, a blessing to the State and benefactors or mankind; and without which they will have to grope their way in the darkness of ignorance, eking out a miserable existence through life.”

However, African American residents desired not only the infusion of federal monies but the necessary oversight in the equitable distribution of said funds. State and city school fiscal policies demonstrated the need for federal oversight. Like their Richmond counterparts, they recognized the bill’s ability to correct southern fiscal mismanagement and elevate southern African Americans in Mobile but across the region. Hence, they strongly endorsed the restoration of a partnership with the Federal government. But as these national debates continued throughout the decade, African Americans and their allies pressed forward in their efforts to secure adequate funding for the city’s schools.⁵⁹

To be sure, African American activists and their allies experienced their greatest setback in their campaign for school funding. They proved unable to overcome state and local forces in securing additional school funds. Yet, despite these setbacks, activists could claim a minor victory as the city’s African American public schools never ceased. While woefully underfunded, the parents of enrolled children continued to have access to a school system supported by city and state taxes. As the decade progressed, it became increasingly clear that only federal intervention would overcome the school funding obstacles. Hence, they hoped for the passage of the Blair Bill while “crawling” in their struggle for quality public schools.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Fitzgerald, 251; *Thirty-Third Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Alabama, for the Scholastic Year Ending 30th September 1887, With an Appendix of the Public School Laws and Forms for Teachers and Officers by Solomon Palmer, Superintendent of Education* (Montgomery, AL: W. D. Brown and Co., 1888), 17 contained in *Reports of the State Superintendent of Education, 1880-1888*, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama; More, “The Old Dominion,” *New York Globe*, April 5, 1884, 4.

In the 1880s, African American and Creole activists continued their slow crawl toward quality public schools. Through their various campaigns, they made some progress by building upon the previous decade's gains and lessons. They sustain student enrollments with renovations to existing schools and the construction of new facilities. They protected Emerson Institute and other private schools. In so doing, they maintained academic choice for the city's African American and Creole citizenry. They successfully agitated for African American public school teachers. However, activists proved unable to overcome several obstacles. The political climate prevented them from securing direct representation on the Board of School Commissioners. But, their greatest failure lay in securing adequate city and state funding. The schools remained woefully underfunded. While they pressed on, they understood that overcoming the school funding issue remained their greatest challenge. It was a challenge that required more than their activism. It required national intervention.

Conclusion

In Richmond and Mobile, African American activists and their allies began the second decade of public schools with a common mission. They desired quality public schools. In their struggle, they employed tactics adopted and perfected during the previous decade. Petitioning, electoral politics and the consciousness-raising use of the media remained effective protest strategies. Over the 1880s, activists adopted newer strategies--- direct School Board representation in Richmond and the boycott in Mobile. These tactics allowed activists to overcome several obstacles to varying degrees of success. As a result, the respective cities saw some improvements to the public schools.

Richmond and Mobile activists' reading of the local and state political climate yielded success as well. In Richmond, activists' ability to gauge the Readjuster regime

secured significant campaign objectives in the early 1880s. Also, their reading of the post-Readjuster regime allowed them to maintain the gains achieved. While they experienced setbacks in School Board representation and African American principals, activists maintained African American teachers and liberal appropriations while securing additional school accommodations. Similarly, Mobile activists effectively read the city's and state's political climate. They recognized that success would not occur as a result of political revolution. Instead of giving up hope, they persevered amidst a bleak political landscape with petitioning, electoral politics, and even boycotting. Activists secured some school renovations, the establishment of new schools, and the employment of African American teachers. Thus, activists' reading of the political climate dictated not only the overall quality campaign's progress but how activists operated within such a climate.

As the decade progressed, activists became increasingly convinced that national intervention would overcome the greatest obstacle to quality public schools---funding. Federal intervention and oversight would ensure the securing of public school facilities for every school-age child desiring an education. The discrepancy between enrolled student and non-attending would be greatly decreased. Federal funding would also ensure that enrolled students had access to quality conditions and quality teachers. Hence, African American activists hoped for the passage of Blair Educational Bill while striving for additional success in their respective quality campaigns.

EPILOGUE

THE BLAIR EDUCATION BILL AND THE DEATH OF EDUCATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION, 1890

After twenty-five years of steady progress, events of 1890 provoked unexpected commentary from two individuals who were invested in African American education. In December 1890, Maria L. Waterbury surveyed the contemporary African American educational efforts in Mobile, and across the South. The former Mobile Freedmen's School educator found the lack of local school funding and Northern philanthropy disturbing. To Mobile and Alabama officials, Waterbury demanded: "In view of the this state of things in one of the Gulf states, will the South please give the North, *a chance to keep still*, by giving free schools to all its people!" But for her northern audience, she offered a stronger rebuke. Their perceived abandonment of the some eight million African Americans living in the South prompted Waterbury to conclude her autobiography with a pointed question. She asked: "Reader, have you done you duty by them?"¹

Thirteen years later, W. E. B. Du Bois offered similar commentary on the retreat from Educational Reconstruction. Like Waterbury, he questioned why conditions had deteriorated since 1890. In his essay, entitled "Of the Training of Black Men," Du Bois argued that the "years of constructive definite effort toward the building of complete school systems" crumbled as a result of "new obstacles." He reasoned: "In the midst, then, of the larger problems of Negro education sprang up the more practical question of work, the inevitable

¹ Maria L. Waterbury, *Seven Years Among the Freedmen* (Chicago: T. B. Arnold, 1893), 198.

economic quandary that faces a people in the transition from slavery to freedom, and especially those who make that change amid hate and prejudice, lawlessness and ruthless competition.” Hence, DuBois concluded that these new obstacles, specifically industrial education and worsening race relations, permitted the deteriorating conditions.²

After the gains of Educational Reconstruction, what had transpired that would allow Waterbury and DuBois to make such remarks? The answer lay in the events surrounding the Blair Education Bill in 1890.

In 1890, Educational Reconstruction ended with Congress’s failure to pass a piece of legislation known as the Blair Bill. As in the Compromise of 1877, Congress’s failure represented another compromise but in terms of education rather than politics. Motivated by concern for the plight of the former slaves and inadequately financed public schools for white and black children in the South, Senator Henry W. Blair of New Hampshire proposed the bill that allotted \$77 million in federal funds for public schools to be distributed to the states, proportionate to their illiteracy rates, over several years. As illiteracy was much higher in the Southern states, black Mobilians, black Richmonders, and the Superintendents of Public Instruction in Virginia and Alabama supported the bill which would have overcome the last obstacle in sustaining the public schools for white and African American children. Together, they convinced their Congressional representatives to support the bill passage in an almost the decade- long fight. This support allowed for the bill to almost pass three times during the 1880s. Although Republicans controlled Congress and the presidency in 1890, the issue of national school funding and African American education failed to unite all Republicans. As historian Michael Perman has argued, “sectional post-Civil War problems were no longer

² “Of The Training of Black Men,” *The Souls of Black Folk*, in *DuBois Writings* (New York: Library of America Press, 1986), 427.

sources of cohesion in the party but instead serve to divide it.” While older Republicans Henry W. Blair, President Benjamin Harrison, and John Sherman still championed a federal education bill, younger Republicans assisted with its defeat on March 20, 1890. In a 39 to 43 vote, 27 Republicans and 12 Southern Democrats voted for the bill while 18 Republicans, 16 Northern, Midwestern, and Western Democrats, and 9 Southern Democrats voted against the bill. Although the Republicans almost succeeded, they lost their best chance in securing the bill’s passage and the bill never reappeared again. After its defeat, it became clear to urban African Americans and their allies realized that federal intervention would not occur.³

Yet, African Americans pressed on in Richmond, Mobile, and across the urban South. Building upon their legacy, urban African Americans shifted strategies in order to deal with the new political and racial climate. Unlike in 1865, they were better equipped for such an undertaking. With new partners such as the John F. Slater Fund for the Education of Freedmen and the Rosenwald Fund, they continued to build upon a legacy of networks that had yielded them success since emancipation. Thus, black Richmonders and black Mobilians continued to push through an educational agenda for their respective cities and states. They remained committed to a larger struggle for legitimacy and access to education. As partners and conditions changed, they never lost sight of these aims. While Educational Reconstruction ended, African American public school education did not. It merely entered a new phase as the Jim Crow era posed new challenges. Using the lessons learned over a

³ For the history of the disputed Hayes-Tilden election and the Compromise of 1877, see Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 575-587; Daniel W. Crofts, “The Blair Bill and the Elections Bill: The Congressional Aftermath to Reconstruction” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1968), iv, 176-220; Crofts’ dissertation remains one of the definitive histories of the Blair Education Bill. In his discussion of the 1890 Senate vote, he included Texas as a border state. As a former Confederate state, I included Texas votes for the bill in the Southern Democrats tally. Michael E. Perman, *Struggle for Mastery: Disenfranchisement in the South, 1888-1906* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 38-43.

twenty-five year period, black Richmonders, black Mobilians, and other urban African Americans merely refined older strategies, adopted new tactics, and sought new partners.

APPENDIX 1:

Population Statistics, 1800-1890

Richmond population, 1800 to 1890

	White	Enslaved	Free African American	Total African American	Total Population	African American % Total
1800	4798	2293	607	2900	5737	51%
1810	6445	3478	1189	4467	9735	48%
1820	7725	4387	1235	5622	12067	47%
1830	10718	6349	1986	8335	16060	52%
1840	15274	7509	1926	9435	20153	47%
1850	23635	9927	2369	12296	27570	45%
1860	27928	11699	2576	14725	37910	38%
1870	27928	n/a	23110	n/a	51038	45%
1880	35765	n/a	27832	n/a	63600	44%
1890	49034	n/a	32330	n/a	81388	40%

Mobile population, 1820 to 1890

	White	Enslaved	Free African American	Total African American	Total Population	African American % Total
1820	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1500*	
1830	1647	1175	372	1547	3194	48%
1840	8262	3849	541	4410	12672	35%
1850	12997	6803	715	7518	20515	37%
1860	20854	7587	817	8404	29258	29%
1870	18115	n/a	13919	n/a	32034	44%
1880	16885	n/a	12240	n/a	29132**	42%
1890	17429	n/a	13630	n/a	31076	43%

Sources: *Fifth Census*, 84-85; 100-101; *Sixth Census*, 206, 244; *Seventh Census*, lii, 258, 422; *Eighth Census*, 9, 519; *Ninth Census*, pp. 81, 280; *Tenth Census*, 97, 358, 447, 456; *Eleventh Census*, 57, 348, 451, 483; "Richmond Population, 1800-1860," VF-Richmond Slavery, VHS.

*1820 Census only noted the county's population with a racial breakdown but not the city's demographics. The 1850 Census reported the city's total population independent of the county but without the demographic information.

**Mobile's physical size reduced after 1870 when the 1st, 6th, 7th, and 8th precincts became their own corporation. Change reflected in the 1880 census.

APPENDIX 2:

Freedmen's School Statistics, Richmond, Virginia, 1865-1870

	Black Students	White Students	Total Students	Black Teachers	White Teachers	Total Teachers	Day Schools	Night Schools	Total Schools	Self-Sustaining Schools by Blacks	Partially Self-Sustaining Schools by Blacks
7/1865	No	Schools	Reported								
8/1865	No	Schools	Reported								
9/1865	Report	Missing	From	Archives							
10/1865*			1723	19	19	38	13	6	19	12	
11/1865*			2314			39	13	6	19	10	
12/1865*			2225			37	15	3	19	10	
1/1866*			2591			35	15	3	18	6	
2/1866*			2958			35	22	3	18	6	
3/1866*			3144			36	23	3	25	6	
4/1866*			2536			40	23	3	26	8	
5/1866*			2536			40	23	3	26	8	
6/1866*			2042			37	23	3	26	10	
7/1866	No	Schools	Reported								
8/1866	No	Schools	Reported								
9/1866	No	Schools	Reported								
10/1866	1834	225	2059	25	31	56	25	8	33	13	2
11/1866	2202	285	2487	30	40	70	29	12	41	15	5
12/1866	2623	345	2968	31	40	71	39	12	51	15	3
1/1867	2152	438	2590	32	36	68	33	11	44	16	2
2/1867	1700	345	2045	25	39	64	33	11	44	16	1
3/1867	2916	4	2920	23	41	64	34	11	45	15	1
4/1867	2627	642	3269	18	43	61	38	6	44	22	1
5/1867	2648	599	3247	22	37	59	41	1	42	16	2
6/1867	2401	640	3041	24	41	65	44	2	46	16	2
7/1867	511	0	511	22	1	23	21	0	21	21	0

8/1867	490	0	490	19	2	21	20	0	20	20	0
9/1867	477	0	477	20	1	21	21	0	21	21	0
10/1867	1289	400	1639	20	20	40	37	3	40	20	5
11/1867	1993	642	2635	27	38	65	50	4	54	26	15
12/1867	2002	642	2644	27	40	67	49	9	58	20	3
1/1868	2520	643	3163	14	50	64	25	6	31	15	8
2/1868	2556	644	3200	20	47	67	42	6	48	0	12
3/1868	2680	646	3326	20	47	67	44	5	49	15	6
4/1868	2772	642	3414	25	44	69	45	6	51	16	1
5/1868	2242	644	3086	27	42	69	46	3	49	18	6
6/1868	2271	642	2913	26	43	69	49	1	50	16	7
7/1868	492	0	192	15	3	18	18	0	18	18	0
8/1868	587	1	588	26	4	30	49	1	50	16	7
9/1868	567	1	568	24	1	25	17	3	20	17	0
10/1868	2202	268	2470	29	35	64	48	12	60	15	12
11/1868	2574	272	2836	32	46	70	49	17	66	16	13
12/1868	2606	327	2933	32	46	78	37	7	44	20	10
1/1869	2932	327	3259	34	48	82	65	6	71	22	4
2/1869	3089	328	3417	33	44	77	66	5	71	22	2
3/1869	2167	0	2167	6	30	36	30	2	32	0	8
4/1869	2049	317	2366	6	41	47	34	10	44	4	7
5/1869	1797	322	2129	6	40	46	23	9	32	1	7
6/1869	1709	244	1953	8	37	45	34	5	39	0	13
7/1869	257	0	257	4	2	6	6	0	6	1	3
8/1869	458	0	458	4	5	9	9	0	9	1	3
9/1869	433	0	433	4	5	9	9	0	9	1	5
10/1869	151	0	151	4	27	31	26	0	26	0	5
11/1869	2402	2	2904	9	39	48	36	0	36	0	2
12/1869	2401	2	2403	9	43	52	40	3	43	0	5
1/1870	2942	4	2946	9	56	65	42	3	45	0	5
2/1870	2886	3	2889	12	56	68	50	0	50	0	5
3/1870	2754	11	2765	11	55	66	41	3	44	0	4
4/1870	2461	3	2464	11	43	54	41	1	42	0	4

5/1870	2219	2	2221	11	39	50	38	0	38	0	2
6/1870	2012	3	2015	10	38	48	37	0	37	0	2

Source: State Superintendent Monthly Statistical Reports, July 1865 to June 1870, Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Virginia, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1870, Research Group 105, Microfilm Roll 11.

* Aggregate for District

APPENDIX 3:

Freedmen's School Statistics in Mobile, Alabama, 1865-1869

	Black Students	Free Blacks Prior to the War	White Students	Black Teachers	White Teachers	Day Schools	Night Schools	Total Schools	Self-Sustaining Schools by Blacks	Partially Self-Sustaining Schools by Blacks
09/1865*	621									
10/1865*	497									
11/1865	Closed									
12/1865	Closed									
01/1866	Closed									
02/1866*	760				17			3		
03/1866*	750				11					
04/1866*	511									
05/1866*	414									
06/1866*	728									
07/1866	Closed									
08/1866	Closed									
09/1866	Closed									
10/1866	Closed									
11/1866	413	0	0	0	7	0	0	4	2	2
12/1866	538	4	0	3	8	0	0	5	0	5
01/1867	604	15	15	7	6	10	10	20	5	2
02/1867	834	21	15	8	9	15	8	23	6	5
03/1867	834	21	15	8	9	15	8	23	6	5
04/1867	834	21	15	8	9	15	10	23	6	5
05/1867	834	21	15	8	9	15	10	23	6	5
06/1867	604	15	15	8	9	10	10	20	5	2
07/1867								Closed		
08/1867								Closed		

09/1867								Closed		
10/1867								Closed		
11/1867								Closed		
12/1867	402	6	0	0	8	3	0	3	0	3
1/1868	522	4	0	1	9	3	0	3	0	3
2/1868	743	38	0	1	9	3	1	4	0	4
3/1868	703	35	0	1	9	3	1	4	0	3
04/1868	758	29	0	10	9	8	0	8	0	8
05/1868	719	9	0	9	12	10	0	10	9	1
06/1868	484	21	0	7	11	6	0	6	1	5
07/1868	198	19	0	6	2	5	5	10	3	2
08/1868								Closed		
09/1868								Closed		
10/1868	431	6	0	1	6	3	0	3	1	0
11/1868	565	8	0	5	9	2	0	2	1	0
12/1868	539	27	0	5	9	2	0	2	1	0
01/1869	514							1		

Source: Monthly Reports of District Superintendents, Jan. 1866-Jun. 1870, Superintendent of Education for the State of Alabama, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1870, Research Group 105, Microfilm Roll 5

*Reports only contained basic information.

APPENDIX 4:

Comparative Statistics of the Richmond African American Public Schools, 1869-1890

Session	School Population	Total School Population (white and black)	*Schools	**Black Teachers	Total Enrollment	Monthly Enrollment	Average Daily Attendance	State Funds (white and black)	City Funds (white and black)	Other Funding Sources (white and black)
1869-1870									15,000.00	15,000.00
1870-1871		17,381	33	12		1,537	1,330		42,625.00	2,155.79
1871-1872			32	8	1,912	1,452	1,273	18,251.10	32,500.00	2,651.49
1872-1873	7,607	18,086	35	9	2,128	1,521	1,346	16,512.90	43,000.00	5,853.49
1873-1874			33	10	1,918	1,479	1,367	15,071.66	44,752.60	2,000.00
1874-1875	8,899	20,754	32	8	1,836	1,482	1,427	18,215.11	45,915.11	500.00
1875-1876			35	8	1,961	1,664	1,588	18,753.00	50,429.50	205.73
1876-1877			41	10	2,150	1,846	1,769	20,754.00	53,551.09	889.86
1877-1878			43	11	2,389	2,032	1,983	16,603.20	53,903.99	3,262.05
1878-1879			45	11	2,219	1,919	1,873	5,188.50	50,961.66	8,119.33
1879-1880	8,786	21,536	44	11	2,170	1,956	1,924	24,904.80	49,929.99	913.84
1880-1881			51	17	2,591	2,233	2,118	22,784.79	49,650.22	414.47
1881-1882			54	18	2,828	2,237	2,183	23,280.42	51,480.85	766.26
1882-1883			54	18	3,140	2,743	2,671	28,250.92	52,696.71	679.12
1883-1884			62	48	3,074	2,785	2,736	28,858.24	50,535.59	922.98
1884-1885	8,954	21,679	62	62	3,104	2,820	2,697	29,006.83	69,875.12	1,204.76
1886-1887			81	60	3,809	3,521	3,374	28,876.43	76,050.86	1,239.41
1887-1888			95	76	4,422	4,060	3,941	28,854.05	86,100.21	3,137.96
1888-1889			99	75	4,798	4,114	3,996	29,752.26	100,039.59	3,279.52
1889-1890	10,175	24,974	98	76	4,968	4,107	3,966	30,242.20	106,865.67	2,719.22

Source: Table IX: Comparative Statistics, *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools of the City Of Richmond, VA for the Scholastic Year Ending July 31st, 1893*. Richmond: C. N. Williams, City Printers, 1894, 40-41.

*Number represents the number of grades and not the actual number of physical school buildings.

APPENDIX 5:

Comparative Statistics of the Mobile Public Schools, 1871-1890

Session	Total School Population (County)	Black School Population (County)	*Schools	Teachers	Total Enrollment	Average Total Attendance	State School Fund (County)	Colored School Fund (County)	White School Fund (County)	Days Taught (Black Schools)	Days Taught (White Schools)
1/1871 to 9/1971	23,316	10,099	31	41	2,560	1,930	31,484.21	13,468.33	18,015.88		
1871/1872	24,870	10,089	24	43	2,087	1,592	33,139.83	13,441.91	19,697.92		
1872/1873	24,870	10,089					27,978.65	11,350.12	16,628.53		
1873/1874	25,400	10,330					21,116.66	8,608.34	12,558.32		
1874/1875	25,400	10,330	35	39	2,118	2,063	29,790.12	12,106.02	17,684.10		
1875/1876	24,780	10,270	37	41	1,684	1,417	19,746.21	8,175.01	11,571.20		
1876/1877	23,865	9,836	28	36	1,772	1,574	16,562.68	6,510.82	10,051.86		
1877/1878	24,780	10,270	31	31	1,598	1,391	17,093.93	7,077.65	10,016.28		
1878/1879	23,865	9,836	41	41	1,793	1,490	16,815.37	6,921.24	9,894.13	72	120
1879/1880	23,865	9,836	45	45	2,111	1,872	14,936.62	6,147.95	8,778.67		
1880/1881	23,865	9,836	36	40	2,225	1,971	17,927.85	7,389.22	10,538.63	142	180
1881/1882	23,865	9,836	47	47	2,183	1,815	16,845.98	6,940.49	9,905.49	120	132
1882/1883	23,865	9,836	50	37	1,871	1,477	14,132.67	5,815.63	8,317.04	124	167
1883/1884	24,467	10,034	36	48	1,818	1,764	19,328.93	7,926.86	11,402.07	130	146
1884/1885	24,467	10,034	29	47	1,990	1,626	19,451.27	7,976.92	11,474.35	122	101
1885/1886	24,811	10,040	34	53	2,315	1,998	17,863.92	7,228.80	10,635.12	145	160
1886/1887	24,811	10,040	29	42	2,419	2,195	18,112.03	7,329.20	10,782.83	162	152
1887/1888	27,264	11,027	31	51	2,075	1,574	18,808.29	7,280.02	11,528.27	150	152
1888/1889	27,264	11,027	33	56	2,366	1,832	19,902.72	8,049.71	11,853.01	148	140
1889/1890	23,130	9,875	38	67	2,356	1,885	19,654.85	7,998.75	11,656.10	146	162

Source: Compiled from Alabama. Department of Education. *Annual, Biennial, and Special Reports, 1855-1890*. Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

*Number represents the number of grades and not the actual number of physical school buildings.

APPENDIX 6:

Richmond Colored Normal Graduates, 1873-1890

First Name	Last Name	Graduation Session	Status Prior War	School Employment	School Name and Location	Comments/Notes
James H.	Bowser	1872-1873	Free	Yes	6th and Duval St. School (Navy Hill), 1870-1874	After transfer to state system, Bowser becomes a postal clerk in Richmond. He marries Rosa L. Dixon in 1879 and fathered a son. He died in April 1881 at 31 years old from consumption. An elaborate funeral and memorial service is held for him. Member of Virginia Educational and Historical Society.
Rose L.	Dixon	1872-1873	Slave	Yes	Teacher, Navy Hill, 1873-1879; Navy Hill, 1883-1884; Baker, 1884-1923	Born January 7, 1855 in Amelia County, VA to slave parents, Henry Dixon, carpenter and Augusta Hawkins Dixon, domestic servant. Family moved to Richmond the war's conclusion and she enrolled in the Freedmen's Schools. One of the few African American educators employed in Richmond after 1870. She married and became the widow of James Bowser. She was a community activist and published an essay in 1902 work on the state of African Americans in the United States. She retired in 1923 and died February 7, 1931 from complications from diabetes. Member of Virginia Educational and Historical Society; Virginia Teachers' Reading Circle, Virginia Teachers' Association; Women's Educational Circle and Richmond Colored Normal Alumni Association.
Bettie G.	Mason	1872-1873		Yes	Navy Hill, 1873-1880	
Maria L.	Bowler	1872-1873		Yes		
Lucy	Thompson	1872-1873	Free	Yes	Navy Hill, 1874-1875	Born to free parents in Henrico County, Virginia.
Junius L.	Adams	1872-1873				
Emma C.	Chinn	1872-1873				

Albert V.	Norrell	1872-1873	Slave	Yes	Principal, Navy Hill, 1883-1884; Teacher, Navy Hill, 1873-1883 and 1884-1896.	Served as a summer institute instructor during the late 1880s. Member of Acme Literary Association and Virginia Educational and Historical Society. One of the thirteen co-founders of the <i>Richmond Planet</i> .
Nannie J.	Merriwether	1872-1873		Yes	Navy Hill, 1873-1875; Valley, 1883-1896	After marriage, she left the schools briefly. She returned under her married name, Wynne, as a teacher at Valley.
Laura A.	Parsons	1872-1873		Yes	Navy Hill, 1876-1877	
Fannie	Roane	1872-1873				
Maggie F.	Woolfork	1872-1873	Slave	Yes	6th and Duval St. School (Navy Hill), 1870/71; Navy Hill, 1871-1884; Baker, 1884-1887	She is the sister of Peter Woolfork. She attended the music program at Hartshorn Memorial College, Richmond. Member of Virginia Educational and Historical Society and Acme Literary Association.
Mary E.	Johnson	1872-1873		Yes	East End, 1888-1890; Brook, 1892-February 23, 1893	
Josephine	Shields	1872-1873				
B. T.	Blackburn	1872-1873				
Katie E.	Archer	1873-1874		Yes	Navy Hill, 1877-1879	
Josephine M.	Brown	1873-1874				
Bettie B.	McDaniel	1873-1874		Yes	Navy Hill, 1880-1890	
Henry B.	Hucles	1873-1874	Slave			One of the thirteen co-founders of the <i>Richmond Planet</i> .
Maggie F.	Gardner	1873-1874				
Sophia E.	Walker	1873-1874				
Edward A.	Bolling	1873-1874		Yes	Navy Hill, 1875-1880	
Hardina	Willis	1873-1874				
Virginia V.	Brown	1873-1874				
Amy	Dodson	1873-1874		Yes	Navy Hill, 1875-March 13, 1877	Died during the 1876-1877 term.
Martha T.	Miles	1873-1874				
Mary L.	Wells	1873-1874				
Jennie F.	Roberts	1874-1875				

Martha C.	Harris	1874-1875				
Ann	Smith	1874-1875		Yes	Navy Hill, 1875-February 4, 1877	Died during the 1876-1877 term.
Rosini	Cox	1874-1875				
Lucy L.	Huckles	1874-1875				
Mary A.	Merriweather	1874-1875				
Texanna	Moore	1874-1875				
Martha C.	Trice	1874-1875		Yes	Navy Hill, 1883-1896	
Eddie	Carter	1874-1875	Slave			One of the thirteen co-founders of the Richmond Planet.
James	Hayes	1874-1875	Slave	Yes	Navy Hill, 1876-1883; Principal, Valley, 1883-1884	One of the thirteen co-founders of the Richmond Planet.
Armstead	Walker	1874-1875		No		He married Maggie Lena Mitchell in 1886. He was a building contractor in Richmond, Virginia.
William H.	Gwathmey	1874-1875				
William H.	Jarves	1874-1875				
Temple A.	Miles	1874-1875		No		He served as instructor and trustee at the Moore Street Industrial School from its inception until its corporation as a public school.
Richard H.	Scott	1874-1875				
Emma	Blunt	1875-1876				
Elizabeth	Brown	1875-1876				
Cornelia	Brown	1875-1876		Yes	Baker, 1883-1896	
Lucy	Brooks	1875-1876		Yes	East End, 1880-1890	Delivered a recitation at the June 16, 1887 Richmond Colored Normal Alumni Exercises; Instructor at the Bedford City, VA summer institute, July 7 to August 8, 1890
Laura	Burrell	1875-1876				
Victoria	Pollard	1875-1876		Yes	Navy Hill, 1876-1890	
Martha	Sampson	1875-1876		Yes	Navy Hill, 1883-1889	
Jennie	Semmes	1875-1876				

James Hugo	Johnston	1875-1876	Slave	Yes	Navy Hill, 1876-1883; Teacher, Baker; Principal, Baker, 1883-1884; Valley, 1884-1887; Principal-Virginia Colored Normal and Collegiate Institute, Petersburg, VA, 1888-1914	Born in Richmond, Virginia, July 29, 1858; Served as a summer institute instructor during the 1880s; He served as second president of Virginia Colored Normal and Collegiate Institute from 1888 until his death in 1914. Member of Peabody Reading Circle and Virginia Teacher's Association. One of the thirteen co-founders of the Richmond Planet.
Richard	Combs	1875-1876				
William	Fields	1875-1876				
Benjamin	Graves	1875-1876	Slave	Yes	Valley, 1883-1898	One of the thirteen co-founders of the Richmond Planet; He resigned from Valley in order to enlist. He served as captain in the Spanish American War.
Daniel Barclay	Williams	1876-1877		Yes	Navy Hill, 1880-1884; Henrico County Public Schools, 1884-1885; Moore Street Industrial School, March-June, 1885; Virginia Colored Normal and Collegiate Institute, Petersburg, VA, 1885-1895	Born November 21, 1861 in Richmond, Virginia, he attended and graduated from Worcester Academy, Worcester, MA and Brown University after Richmond Colored Normal; He was the first instructor of Greek and Latin at Virginia Colored Normal and Collegiate Institute. He served as a summer institute instructor during through the 1880s. He published several works including <i>Freedom and Progress</i> (1890). He dies in 1895.
Hester	Cheatham	1876-1877				
Catherine A.	Dabney	1876-1877		Yes	Navy Hill, 1879-1887	
Josephine J.	Turpin	1876-1877		Yes	Navy Hill, 1877-1878; Richmond Institute, 1880-1883	Born in Goochland County, VA, July 31, 1861 to Augustus and Maria Turpin. Journalist to <i>Virginia Star</i> , Richmond Planet, New York Globe, Industrial Herald, New York Freeman, Christian Recorder and the A.M.E. Church; Attended Howard University, 1883-1886. Married to Dr. Samuel H. H. Washington, a physician in Mobile, Alabama. She dies in 1949.
Mattie M. L.	Hope	1876-1877		Yes	East End, 1880-1883; Navy Hill, 1884-1890	

Margaret J.	Judah	1876-1877		Yes	Navy Hill, 1880-1883 and 1884-1896; Valley, 1883-1884	
Emma J.	Walker	1876-1877		Yes	Valley, 1883-1884	
Mary E.	Reese	1876-1877		Yes	Navy Hill, 1882; Baker, 1884-1888 and 1892-February 20, 1893; Moore, 1888-1890	
James E.	Merriweather	1876-1877	Slave	Yes	Navy Hill, 1877-1884	One of the thirteen co-founders of the Richmond Planet.
J. Andrew	Bowler	1876-1877		Yes	East End, 1880-1896	
Albert	Johnson	1876-1877				
Julia B.	Harris	1877-1878		Yes	Navy Hill, 1882-1884; Valley, 1884-1888	
Walter	Fitzhugh	1877-1878	Slave	Yes	Navy Hill, 1883-1886	One of the thirteen co-founders of the Richmond Planet.
Miles	Jones	1877-1878		Yes	East End, 1881-1886; Moore, 1887-1890	He made remarks at the 1890 commencement exercises.
Maria L.	Anderson	1877-1878				
Pauline	Anderson	1877-1878				
D. Webster	Davis	1877-1878	Slave	Yes	Navy Hill, 1880-1883 Baker, 1883-1913	Born March 25, 1862 to slave parents, John and Charlotte Ann (Christian) Davis; Poet, normal educator in the summer institutes, activist. Lynchburg Baptist Seminary, 1893-1895; ordained Baptist minister; He delivered the Richmond Colored Normal commencement address in June 1887.
James	Randolph	1877-1878				
George	Stephens, Jr.	1877-1878		Yes	Baker, 1884-1889; Brook, 1892-1893	Delivered the oration at the June 16, 1887 Richmond Colored Normal Alumni Exercises.
Anna L.	Wallace	1877-1878		Yes	Navy Hill, 1879-1883; Valley, 1884-1889	
Matilda	Stutley	1877-1878				
Jones A.	Turner	1877-1878				
Grace E.	Richardson	1877-1878				

Willie C.	Johnson	1877-1878				
Laura A.	Taylor	1877-1878				
George C.	Anderson	1877-1878				
Sallie	Johnson	1877-1878				
William E.	Hope	1877-1878		Yes	East End, 1884-1890	
Augustus C.	Brown	1877-1878				
Moses G.	Lewis	1877-1878				
Rosa	Lindsay	1877-1878				
Marietta L.	Chiles	1879-1880	Slave	Yes	Fredricksburg Colored School, Fredricksburg, VA, 1880-1883; Baker, 1883-1896	Daughter of Richard Chiles, born January 1862; Graduated RCN with highest honors; She remained at Baker for 46 years
Maria	Anderson	1879-1880		Yes	Valley, 1884-1896	
Patsie	Keiley	1879-1880		Yes	Navy Hill, 1883-1893	
Maggie	Richards	1879-1880		Yes	Baker, 1883-1886; Moore, 1887-1890	
Maria	Cooley	1879-1880		Yes	Navy Hill, 1883-1889	
James H.	Ferguson	1879-1880				
Martha	Cooley	1879-1880		Yes	Baker, 1883-1888	
Fannie S.	Payne	1879-1880		Yes	Baker, 1883-1886	
Mary E.	Anderson	1879-1880		Yes	Manchester, VA, 1882-1883; Navy Hill, 1883-1890	
Frank	Jones	1879-1880		Yes	Baker, 1883-1884; Moore, 1887-1896	
John	Mitchell, Jr.	1880-1881	Slave	Yes	Fredricksburg Colored School, Fredricksburg, VA, 1881-1883; Valley, Richmond, 1883-1884	Born July 11, 1863 to house servants of James Lyons estate, John Mitchell Sr. and Rebecca Mitchell; Virginia correspondent for the <i>New York Globe</i> ; Editor of the <i>Richmond Planet</i> . Member of Acme Literary Association. He died December 7, 1929.
Lucinda	Smith	1880-1881		Yes	Navy Hill, 1883-1886	
James E.	Robinson	1880-1881		Yes	Navy Hill, 1883-1884; Moore, 1887-1893	

Samuel J.	Sutton	1880-1881		Yes	Baker, 1883-1884.	Born in 1863, Sutton moved to Richmond when he was 7 yrs old. He was a personal friend and classmate of John Mitchell, Jr. He moved to Texas in fall 1886. By 1895, he was the principal of the High and Grammar School in San Antonio, Texas.
Abram L.	Morton	1880-1881		Yes	Navy Hill, 1883-1884; East End, 1887-1888; 1892-1893; Valley, 1888-1889, 1895- 1896	
Ben. P.	Vandervall	1880-1881		Yes	East End, 1883-1884	
Katie G.	Randolph	1880-1881		Yes	Valley, 1884-1896	
William H.	Flood	1880-1881				
Robert D.	Jones	1880-1881		Yes	Baker, 1883-1884	
Abram L.	Richardson	1880-1881				
Ida	Hall	1882-1883		Yes	Valley, 1884-1888; Baker, 1888-1896	
Ellen B.	Mundy	1882-1883		Yes	Valley, 1884-1890	
Sallie G.	Boyd	1882-1883		Yes	Baker, 1883-1888	
Maggie L.	Mitchell	1882-1883	n/a	Yes	Valley, 1883-1888	Better known by her married name of Maggie Lena Walker; Born in circa 1867 and dies in 1934.
Frank W.	Harris	1882-1883				
Cornelia	Hill	1882-1883		Yes	Baker, 1883-1888	
John H.	Holmes	1882-1883				
Eugene L.	Mundin	1882-1883				
Wender Phillip	Dabney	1882-1883	n/a	Yes	Louisa County Virginia elementary school, 1884-1887; East End, 1887-1889; Fulton School, 1890- 1893	Born November 4 1865 to former slaves, John and Elizabeth Foster Dabney. He attended Oberlin preparatory program in 1883. He established and served as the editor of <i>The Union</i> , 1907-1952. He died June 5, 1952.
Mary E.	Cary	1882-1883		Yes	Valley, 1883-1886	
Louis S.	Cook	1883-1884				
William A.	Mundin	1883-1884				

William P.	Burrell	1883-1884		Yes	Baker, 1885-1889	
Wallace P.	Epps	1883-1884				
William S.	Jones	1883-1884				
Julia I.	Stephens	1883-1884		Yes	Navy Hill, 1884-1896	
Annie E.	Williams	1883-1884				
Sarah J.	Turpin	1883-1884	n/a	Yes	Moore, 1887-1896	Sister to Josephine J. Turpin; Born in 1867 to Augustus and Maria Turpin.
Ella S.	Carter	1883-1884		Yes	Valley, 1885-1893	Name often appeared as Eliza S in city reports.
M. Ella	Christian	1883-1884		Yes	Baker, 1884-1887; Moore, 1887-1890	
Chas. R.	Bright	1884-1885				
Thomas	Wallace	1884-1885				
Henry C.	Smith	1884-1885				
Emily S. A.	Jackson	1884-1885		Yes	Moore, 1887-1889; Brook, 1889-1890; East End, 1892-1896	
Josephine	Hooper	1884-1885		Yes	East End, 1887-1890	
M. Juliet	Nicholas	1884-1885		Yes	Navy Hill, 1885-1890	
Lucy J.	Flood	1884-1885				She attended the College Preparatory program at Hartshorn Memorial College. Member of Rachel Hartshorn Education and Missionary Society, Secretary, 1883-1884.
Rosa	Blakey	1884-1885		Yes	Baker, 1885-1889	
Mary E.	Willis	1884-1885		Yes	East End, 1887-1896	
Perzealia E.	Robinson	1884-1885		Yes	Moore, 1887-1889; Brook, 1889-1890	
Elizabeth E.	Smith	February 1885-1886		Yes	Baker, 1886-1889	She would marry Daniel Webster Davis.
Lula G.	Haskins	February 1885-1886		Yes	East End, 1887-1890	Sung a duet with Fannie Johnson at the commencement exercises.
Lillian	Harris	February 1885-1886		Yes	Baker, 1887-1890	Delivered the valedictory address at the commencement exercises.
Cornelia E.	Hawkins	February 1885-1886		Yes	Navy Hill, 1887-1888	Read an essay entitled, "Home" at the commencement exercises.

Mary L.	Jackson	February 1885-1886		Yes	Navy Hill, 1889-1890	
Ella V.	Bolling	February 1885-1886		Yes	Valley, 1887-1890	
Henrietta	Darricott	February 1885-1886		Yes	Moore, 1887-1890	
Charles	Robinson	February 1885-1886				
Ellen	Jones	February 1885-1886				
Richard	Chiles	February 1885-1886				
Daniel	Wilkinson	February 1885-1886				Read a selection entitled, "Model Sermon," at the commencement exercises.
Thomas	Mitchell	February 1885-1886				
Sarah A.	Byers	February 1885-1886		Yes	Baker, 1886-1890	
Fannie	Johnson	February 1885-1886				Sung a duet with Lula G. Haskins at the commencement exercises.
Parthenia H.	Jones	June 1885-1886		Yes	Moore, 1887-1890	
Elizabeth	Bagby	June 1885-1886		Yes	Valley, 1887-1890	
Sallie C.	Keene	June 1885-1886		Yes	East End, 1887-1890	
Lucy A.	Peters	June 1885-1886		Yes	Moore, 1889-1890	
Millie C.	Cooke	June 1885-1886		Yes	Navy Hill, 1887-1890	Died in February 1890 during the term.
Maria L.	Hope	June 1885-1886		Yes	East End, 1887-1890	
Emily C.	Standard	June 1885-1886		Yes	Navy Hill, 1887-1889	

Rosa B.	Brooks	June 1885-1886		Yes	Navy Hill, 1888-1890	
Nannie P.	Roberts	June 1885-1886		Yes	Moore, 1887-1890	Read a selection entitled, "Church Reveries of a School Girl," at the commencement exercises.
Lizzie B.	Tabb	June 1885-1886				
John H.	Banks	June 1885-1886				
Jacob T.	Wright	June 1885-1886				
Annie B.	Coots	June 1885-1886		Yes	East End, 1887-1890	Read an essay entitled, "Odd Moments---The Golden Dust of Life," at the commencement exercises.
Mary E.	Willis	June 1885-1886		Yes	East End, 1887-1890	
Alice	Adams	June 1885-1886		Yes	Moore, 1887-1890	
Lizzie E.	Holmes	June 1885-1886		Yes	Baker, 1888-1890	
Mary L.	Jasper	June 1885-1886		Yes	Navy Hill, 1888-1890	
John D.	Frasier	June 1885-1886				
Florence E.	Isham	February, 1886-1887		Yes	East End, 1888-1890; Moore, 1890-1896	
Mary B.	Wilson	February, 1886-1887				
Annie E.	Gough	February, 1886-1887		Yes	Moore, 1888-1893	She gave an address of welcome at the commencement exercises.
Mary V.	Holt	February, 1886-1887				
Sallie G.	Young	February, 1886-1887		Yes	Moore, 1888-1889; Brook, 1889-1890	

Mary F.	Burwell	February, 1886-1887				
Julia A. B.	Johnson	February, 1886-1887				Delivered a selection entitled, "The May Queen," at the commencement exercises.
George W.	Lawson	February, 1886-1887				
Mary M.	Mitchell	February, 1886-1887	Yes		Baker, 1888-1890	Delivered a selection entitled, "Ask Mamma," at the commencement exercises.
Emmeline	Rose	February, 1886-1887				
Earlie A.	Lee	February, 1886-1887	Yes		Navy Hill, 1892-1896	
Louise J.	Corbin	February, 1886-1887	Yes		Valley, 1889-1890; East End, 1892-1893; Baker, 1895-1896	
Annie E.	Brown	February, 1886-1887				Delivered an essay entitled, "A Good Name," at the commencement exercises.
Martha J.	Holt	February, 1886-1887	Yes		Moore, 1892-February 15, 1893	
Kate M.	Harris	February, 1886-1887	Yes		Moore, 1888-1890; Brook, 1892-1893	
Annie M. P.	Burrell	February, 1886-1887				
William H.	Eggleston	February, 1886-1887				
Eva F.	Keene	February, 1886-1887				
Cora Lee	Brown	February, 1886-1887	Yes		Navy Hill, 1889-1893	
David W.	Parker	February, 1886-1887				
J. Henry	Crutchfield	February, 1886-1887				Delivered the valedictory at the commencement exercises.

John H.	Brown	February, 1886-1887				
Frank W.	Boyd	June, 1886-1887				
Fannie E.	Robinson	June, 1886-1887		Yes	Moore, 1889-1896	
Julia	Priddy	June, 1886-1887				
Martha E.	Cootes	June, 1886-1887		Yes	Valley, 1892-1893; Brook, 1895-1896	
Julia A.	Braxton	June, 1886-1887		Yes	Moore, 1889-1896	
Eliza	Johnson	June, 1886-1887				
Rosa B.	Yancey	June, 1886-1887		Yes	East End, 1892-1896	
Percy	Quarles	June, 1886-1887				
Delia	Hundley	June, 1886-1887				
S. Alice	Kemp	June, 1886-1887		Yes	Moore, 1888-1896	
Hester L.	Lightfoot	June, 1886-1887		Yes	East End, 1889-1893	
Mollie E.	Turner	June, 1886-1887		Yes	Navy Hill, 1889-1896	
Willie	White	June, 1886-1887				
Maggie E.	Chiles	June, 1886-1887		Yes	Brook, 1889-1893; Baker, 1895-1896	Delivered a selection entitled, "Behind the Clouds the Sun Still Shines," at the commencement exercises.
Ophelia C.	Haskins	June, 1886-1887		Yes	Navy Hill, 1892-1896	

Mary R.	Payne	February, 1887-1888				
James O. A.	Forrester	February, 1887-1888				
Arthur W.	Farrar	February, 1887-1888				
Mary L.	Gaines	February, 1887-1888	Yes		Baker, 1889-1896	
Lucy V.	Bolling	February, 1887-1888	Yes		East End, 1892-1896	
Annie Belle	Haskins	February, 1887-1888	Yes		Baker, 1892-1896	
Martha T.	Cousins	February, 1887-1888				
Henry A.	Knight	February, 1887-1888				
Robert H.	Thurston	February, 1887-1888				
Mattie M.	Johnson	June, 1887-1888				
Robert H.	Williams	June, 1887-1888				
Cora G.	Robinson	June, 1887-1888	Yes		Navy Hill, 1889-1893	
Susie E.	Harris	June, 1887-1888				
Sallie J.	Dillard	June, 1887-1888				
Lena V.	Isham	June, 1887-1888	Yes		Navy Hill School, 1892-1896	
Carrie V.	Walker	June, 1887-1888				
George H.	Fleming	June, 1887-1888				

Joseph M.	Jackson	February, 1888-1889				
Albert T.	Wright	February, 1888-1889				Delivered an essay entitled, "Patience and Perseverance" at the commencement exercises.
Vera A.	Holmes	February, 1888-1889	Yes		Baker, 1892-1896	
Robert B.	Randolph	February, 1888-1889				
Mary A.	Mason	February, 1888-1889				
Mary M.	Norman	February, 1888-1889				
Lena M.	Forrester	February, 1888-1889	Yes		Valley, 1892-1896	
Willie A.	Henderson	February, 1888-1889				
Rosa M.	Moody	February, 1888-1889	Yes		East End, 1892-1896	Delivered an essay entitled, "Home" at the commencement exercises.
Mary E.	Moore	February, 1888-1889				
Kate C.	Watkins	February, 1888-1889	Yes		Brook, 1892-1896	
Mary B.	Holmes	February, 1888-1889	Yes		Moore, 1892-1896	
Nelson	Williams, Jr.	June, 1888-1889	Yes		Valley, 1892-1893; Transferred to Fulton School, April 15, 1893-1896	Delivered the valedictory at the commencement exercises.
Lizzie G.	Yancey	June, 1888-1889	Yes		Baker, 1895-1896	Delivered an essay entitled, "Odd Moments" at the commencement exercises.
William B.	Thom	June, 1888-1889				

Julia L. R.	Burnley	June, 1888-1889				Delivered a selection entitled, "The First Settler's Story" at the commencement exercises.
Andrew J.	Walker	June, 1888-1889				
Mary L.	Davis	June, 1888-1889		Yes	East End, 1892-1896	
Lizzie B.	Wills	June, 1888-1889		Yes	Baker, 1892-1893	Delivered a selection entitled, "A London Bee Story," at the 1889 commencement exercises.
Beulah T.	Mosby	June, 1888-1889				
William G.	Carter	June, 1888-1889				
Cora E.	Sandridge	June, 1888-1889		Yes	Navy Hill, 1892- April 15, 1896	
Sallie L.	Willis	June, 1888-1889				
Walter	Brown	June, 1888-1889				
Jos. L. B.	Forrester	June, 1888-1889				
M. Jane	Boyd	June, 1888-1889				
Lula A.	Willis	June, 1888-1889		Yes	East End, 1892-1896	
Walter J.	Field	June, 1888-1889				
Victoria B.	Duke	June, 1888-1889				
Percy C.	Mundin	February, 1889-1890				
Alice O.	Sparks	February, 1889-1890				

John L.	Harris	February, 1889-1890				
Robert F.	Dabney	February, 1889-1890				
Barbara E.	Coleman	February, 1889-1890		Yes	Moore, 1895-February 15, 1896	
Mary H.	Robinson	February, 1889-1890				She read an essay on "Politeness" at the commencement exercises.
Mattie C.	Tinsley	February, 1889-1890		Yes	Navy Hill, 1895-1896	
Lizzie A.	Gaines	February, 1889-1890				
Mattie G.	Willis	June, 1889-1890				She received the Bronze Peabody Medal in 1890.
Jerdenia E.	Henley	June, 1889-1890				
Olivia C.	Oliver	June, 1889-1890				
Maggie J.	Macklin	June, 1889-1890				
Susie	Jackson	June, 1889-1890				
Laura B.	Lewis	June, 1889-1890				She read an essay on "Woman's Influence at the commencement exercises.
Gertrude D.	Lawrence	June, 1889-1890				
M. Elizabeth	Harris	June, 1889-1890				
Moselle L.	Coots	June, 1889-1890		Yes	East End, 1892-1896	He delivered the valedictory address at the commencement exercises.
Phyllis A.	Burton	June, 1889-1890				
George A.	Harris	June, 1889-1890				

Kate G.	Robinson	June, 1889-1890		Yes	Moore, 1892-1896	
Octavia M. L.	Patterson	June, 1889-1890		Yes	Moore, 1895-1896	
Lillie B.	Valentine	June, 1889-1890				
Annie E.	Brooks	June, 1889-1890				
Emma A.	Evans	June, 1889-1890		Yes	Brook, 1892-1896	
Victoria B.	Powell	June, 1889-1890		Yes	Baker, 1892-1896	
H. Bell	Fitzhugh	June, 1889-1890				
Emma N.	Taylor	June, 1889-1890		Yes	Brook, 1892-1893	
Wallace B.	Christian	June, 1889-1890				
Lucy J.	Brown	June, 1889-1890				
S. Gertrude	Evans	June, 1889-1890				
Total Graduates: 280; No graduates during the 1878-1879 and 1881-1882 sessions.						

Sources: Virginia Dept of Education, *Virginia School Report: Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction*. Published annually from 1871-1891, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA; Richmond (Va.). *Statistical Report of Richmond, 1873-1890*, Richmond Public Library, Richmond, VA.

APPENDIX 7:

Emerson Normal Graduates, 1876-1890

First Name	Last Name	Status Before War	Graduation Session	Teaching Employment	School, Location, Dates	Comments
William A.	Caldwell	Slave	1876	Yes	Teacher, Principal, Good Hope School; Broad Street Academy, Mobile	
Mary	(Europe) Jones	Slave	1876	Yes	Teacher, Private School in her residence.	She continued the school in her home after her marriage. In 1901, the American Missionary reported that she taught a successful school out of her residence.
Artemesia	Europe	Slave	1876	Yes	Teacher, Private School; St. Louis School, Broad Street Academy	
Robert	Stewart		1880	Yes	Principal, Pensacola, FL	
Ferdinand A.	Stewart		1880	Yes	Professor of Pathology at Meharry Medical College, Nashville, TN, 1899-1931	Born in August 6, 1862 in Mobile, Alabama to Henderson and Louisa (Jones) Stewart; Physician and Surgeon; Graduated from Fisk University, 1880, M.A. 1890; Harvard University, M.D. He was a professor of Pathology at Meharry Medical College, Nashville, TN, 1899-1931.
Julia	Chavanah		1884			
Zachariah	Jones		1884	No		Graduated from Talledega College, 1895; Pastor at Grove Hall, AL; Died August 1897.
Mary	(Adams) Hamilton		1887	No		Married to Washington P. Hamilton, August 1890.
Ella	(Bates) Compton		1887	No		Married to Gwin Compton, May 1887.

William	Harris		1887			
Benjamin	Holt		1887	No		Hotel keeper in Little Rock, Alabama.
William	Oliver		1887			
Thomas	James		1887			
Dora	Watson		1887			
George	Wilkinson		1887	No		Physician and Surgeon, Birmingham, Alabama; member of the Historian Medical Society of Alabama.
Sallie	(Washington) Chinn		1887			
Susan	Jackson		1889	Yes	Teacher at Daphne, Alabama	
Sarah	(King) Hall		1889	Yes	Teacher at Mobile,	Died in 1900.
Lillian	(Beecham) Williamson		1889			
Maria	(Burke) Wilson		1889	Yes		
Simon B.	Durette	Creole	1890	No		In 1890, Durette was the foreman for the Creole Fire Company No. 1; In addition to this duties as a fireman, he was a musician.
Mary F.	(Girard) Weeks		1890			

Total Graduates: 23

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