“A BETTER UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE RACES”: SOUTHERN EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE RACE RELATIONS BETWEEN WORLD WAR I AND WORLD WAR II

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Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of the

Graduate School of Vanderbilt University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

History

May, 2013

Nashville, Tennessee

Approved:

Professor Helmut Walser Smith

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Introduction

Prior to taking a course on race relations at Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina in the 1931-32 school year, a young white woman completing a questionnaire administered by her professor answered the question "Should the Negro have any part in the government?" by exclaiming, "I cannot bear the thought of Negroes having any part in the government." By the conclusion of the class, her response to the same question had dramatically changed: "Yes, in state legislatures, in the national congress, and elsewhere. Whites fought the Revolutionary War because they had no part in government."[1] In this case, education appeared to have made an important difference in prompting one Southern white to fundamentally question the system of racial superiority on which Southern society was built. But Furman University was just one of many Southern public schools and colleges providing intensive instruction beginning in the 1920s that was intended to improve race relations in the South. This effort, vast in scope and far-reaching in ambition, was largely the product of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation and its Educational Director, Robert Burns Eleazer.

The Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC) was an organization founded by blacks and whites in the U.S. South in 1919 in an effort to tamp down the racial violence that had erupted across the country following World War I. Following the immediate crisis, the CIC expanded its mission from promoting good will between the races to improving the lives of Southern blacks and combating the worst instances of racial discrimination. Although both African Americans and whites were members throughout its existence, the CIC soon became the dominant mouthpiece for white Southern liberal sentiment in the 1920s and 1930s. Recent historians of the CIC have tended to focus on its limitations as

[1] E. J. Trueblood, "Effect of Race Relations Course: Students Revise Attitudes in South Carolina School," in *Education and Racial Adjustment: Report of Second Peabody Conference on Education and Race Relations, July 21-23, 1932* (Atlanta: Executive Committee of the Conference, 1932), 23. Dr. Trueblood was a Professor of Sociology at Furman University. The published record of the second Peabody conference was prepared and edited by Robert Burns Eleazer, Executive Secretary of the Conference on Education and Race Relations (founded following the second Peabody conference as an offshoot of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, of which Eleazer was Educational Director).

a force for change; although it may have been successful in reducing some of the most extreme abuses such as lynching, it did not attempt to fundamentally restructure Southern society by opposing segregation. And where these historians also mostly agree is in their belief that the influence of the CIC did not extend far beyond a small liberal elite of the South.[2]

Such a view of the CIC was not always held. In the landmark 1944 study of American race relations *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal stressed that the CIC "*is* a useful agency" whose "tactics *are* radical in the South."[3] He explained how "the Commission has encouraged the introduction of courses on race relations in hundreds of colleges and high schools throughout the South" and "has succeeded in getting pledges from 750 college professors, representing 400 white colleges of the South, to give rational discussions of race relations and of Negro capacity and achievement."[4] Myrdal further emphasized how these educational efforts to improve the lives of African Americans in the South were important: "It is no 'naïve assumption' that ignorance fortifies race prejudice, injustice and discrimination in the South. Education and cooperation will, therefore, have their effects even if they are slow to develop liberal political power which can force great reforms."[5] And Myrdal even challenged a CIC staff member's regret that the CIC's influence was not felt more widely by arguing that "through the press, the churches, and the schools the Commission has already been influencing even the 'mass mind.'"[6]

In fact, the CIC's educational efforts were even more widespread than Myrdal identified in *An American Dilemma*. By the early 1940s, 350 colleges and more than 2,000 public schools

[2] Morton Sosna, *In Search of the Silent South: Southern Liberals and the Race Issue* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 20-41; John Egerton, *Speak Now Against the Day: The Generation Before the Civil Rights Movement in the South* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 47-50 and *passim*; David L. Chappell, *Inside Agitators: White Southerners in the Civil Rights Movement* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 34-41. Chappell's book is by far the most critical of the Commission's perceived inadequacies.
[3] Gunnar Myrdal with the assistance of Richard Sterner and Arnold Rose, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1944), 848, 849.
[4] Ibid., 846.
[5] Ibid., 848.
[6] Ibid., 849.

throughout the South were using in their courses CIC curricular materials designed to stress African-American achievements and point out the many injustices Southern blacks still endured.[7] CIC curricular materials were widely used even in public schools and colleges in the Deep South, as its publications were taught in all of the South's state universities and teachers colleges, the major private universities, every Southern theological seminary, and most other institutions as well. "You see, we were trying to make it unanimous," the CIC's long-time Educational Director observed, "and we almost succeeded."[8] And one of the CIC's most prominent educational pamphlets, *America's Tenth Man,* a study of African-American history, had gone through twenty editions and had 220,000 copies distributed by 1941.[9] Yet despite the wide scope of the CIC's educational initiatives, modern historians of the Commission have paid little or no attention to these programs. If they are mentioned at all, the CIC's college work gets one passing reference and the Commission's extensive efforts in the public schools go unremarked. Only very rarely are any of the many CIC pamphlets meant to promote its approach to race relations in schools and other venues cited.[10]

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[7] Robert B. Eleazer, *My First Eighty Years: A Brief Account of My Life for Those Who Come After* (unpublished manuscript, 1957), 63, 73, in box 1, folder 25 of Robert Burns Eleazer (RBE) Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Jean and Alexander Heard Library, Vanderbilt University (VUSC). The typescript is divided up into three folders of box 1: folder 24 (p. 1-39), folder 25 (p. 40-80), and folder 26 (p. 81-106). Eleazer's unpublished autobiography could perhaps better have been titled *My First Sixty-Six Years*, since it ends when he moved back to Nashville in November 1943 to begin his new job as Special Worker in Race Relations for the Methodist Board of Education.

[8] Ibid., 73.

[9] Robert B. Eleazer, *America's Tenth Man: A Brief Survey of the Negro's Part in American History* (Atlanta: Conference on Education and Race Relations, 1941), 2, in box 3 of RBE Papers, VUSC. Throughout this paper, the 20th edition revised in December 1941 will be discussed. The Conference on Education and Race Relations was an organization established by the CIC in 1932, with Eleazer as permanent secretary, to handle the Commission's work in public schools and colleges. Eleazer, *My First Eighty Years*, 75-76, in box 1, folder 25 of RBE Papers, VUSC.

[10] Egerton does not mention the CIC's educational work at all. Sosna and Chappell both refer to the Commission's educational projects not for the purpose of discussing this work as important in and of itself but in order to discuss the racial attitudes held by white liberals in the CIC as embodied in a textbook apparently used in some early CIC college courses, Thomas Woofter's *The Basis of Racial Adjustment* (1925). Sosna observes that this was "a book used as a text for commission-sponsored college courses on race relations," and Chappell remarks that Wooster's book "was used as a textbook in CIC-sponsored college courses all over the South." Both authors are critical of the textbook's message; the textbook will be discussed further later in this paper. Sosna, *In Search of the Silent South*, 24; Chappell, *Inside Agitators*, 37.

The one exception to this pattern is Diana Selig's study of the cultural gifts movement of the 1920s and 1930s. She devotes a full chapter to investigating the Commission's educational work in the South, although her account is seriously weakened by lumping the CIC's educational program with the cultural gifts movement. While the cultural gifts movement as initiated by Northern white teacher Rachel Davis DuBois represented an anti-prejudice campaign that celebrated the unique cultural contributions of each race or ethnicity but minimized structural factors that promoted inequality, the Commission's educational program had aimed to downplay the differences between white and black Americans and stress the need to dramatically transform Southern society to allow African Americans to fulfill their own and the region's potential. In part, Selig's inability to recognize the fundamental differences between a "cultural gifts" focus and the curriculum of the CIC may reflect that she too did not adequately study the Commission's educational pamphlets; the very popular CIC pamphlets that directly addressed contemporary problems of race relations (including *Population Problems in the South* and *Understanding Our Neighbors*) were not cited at all in her book.[11] Without a proper understanding of the goals and influence of the CIC's educational work, an overall assessment of the value of the organization and its anti-prejudice campaign would be very incomplete.

Fortunately, a new manuscript collection recently processed by the Vanderbilt University Special Collections and University Archives will allow us to begin to assess the nature and impact of the CIC's educational initiatives. Robert Burns Eleazer (1877-1973) served as Educational Director of the CIC from 1922, when the Commission's department of education was created, to 1942, when the Commission on Interracial Cooperation folded into the newly formed Southern Regional Council. In addition to running the CIC's very active press service and assisting in the organization's many other varied activities, Eleazer directed the CIC's outreach programs to public schools and colleges for 20 years, from the ages of 45 to 65. In this role, he wrote most of the CIC's educational pamphlets,

[11] Diana Selig, *Americans All: The Cultural Gifts Movement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008). Selig's chapter on the CIC runs from p. 151-82.

urged adoption of CIC curricular materials in public schools and colleges throughout the South, and organized conferences designed to bring educators together to discuss how best to promote harmonious race relations and improve conditions for Southern blacks through education of the South's white population.[12] His manuscript collection contains a rich assortment of personal papers and official organizational records that shed light on the CIC's educational work and Eleazer's role and approach to it. Educational materials in the collection include Eleazer's unpublished autobiography, copies of many of the CIC's educational pamphlets, lesson plans for courses or units on race relations, student papers that resulted from these units, and student and teacher feedback about this instruction. From these records, an understanding of the CIC's educational initiatives to improve race relations and their impact begins to emerge.

This paper endeavors to provide a comprehensive account of the creation, implementation, and impact of the CIC's educational work. First, it will examine the intentions behind this work and its pedagogical techniques. What goals did Eleazer have for these projects, and what specifically did the Commission want to teach Southern white students about race relations? How fundamental a reshaping of Southern attitudes to blacks and African Americans' place in Southern society did the CIC propose? What teaching strategies were felt to be most effective to promote these changes? Despite what we can learn through answers to these questions, it is important to recognize that curricular suggestions provided from distant outside organizations may not trickle down to the classroom. Old ideas may persist, and new facts fail to travel. Curricula meant to improve race relations may be implemented in a way that enforces old stereotypes. The second part of the paper will examine some examples of actual classroom-level lesson plans to determine to what extend the CIC's aspirations got translated on to the ground level. Finally, one should attempt to determine what impact these educational programs had. To what extent were these lessons on improved race relations accepted by

[12] Eleazer, *My First Eighty Years*, 44-101, in box 1, folders 25-26 of RBE Papers, VUSC.

the students receiving them? One can begin to get at this question through student feedback about these educational programs and an examination of how the curricular materials got translated into the views expressed in student essays, which will form the third part of this paper. The final section of the paper will step back to examine whether a strategy of gradually changing beliefs through education or one of direct action ultimately made more sense for fighting the effects of racism in the South during the interwar period. In contrast to those scholars who took a narrow view of the CIC's mission and effectiveness, this paper will argue that the far-reaching educational work of the Commission demonstrates that the CIC undertook an ambitious campaign to fundamentally reshape Southern society. Through thorough but judicious marshalling of the latest scientific evidence on race relations, Eleazer produced curricular materials whose wide circulation in public schools and colleges across the South appeared to result in real and positive advancements in racial understanding among Southern students from the 1920s through at least the 1940s.

Goals and Approach

Unlike recent historians who have largely ignored the educational work of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, Robert Burns Eleazer regarded it, along with the CIC's efforts towards reconciliation and correcting racial injustice, as "a third distinctive phase of work."[13] He described in his autobiography how the leaders of the CIC realized that "bad interracial conditions grew out of bad attitudes," and that a change in such attitudes was necessary for permanent improvement of racial conditions. Eleazer further surmised that "such prejudiced attitudes are rooted much more in outworn traditions, false assumptions, mistaken opinion and groundless fear than in deliberate meanness and hostility."[14] There were very few college courses dealing with race relations at the time

[13] Ibid., 51, in box 1, folder 25 of RBE Papers, VUSC.
[14] Ibid.

and none in the public schools.[15] Worse, the social studies textbooks public school students were using tended to either ignore blacks completely or present a biased interpretation of them. "Altogether the conclusion was inescapable," Eleazer observed, "that, after going through them all, the pupil would come out not one whit more fair-minded than when he started, perhaps even more deeply prejudiced."[16] Never having received proper instruction in race relations, Southern people absorbed the superstitions and stereotypes of their surroundings. Thus, "it was necessary … to understand [prejudice], painstakingly to dig out and expose its rotten roots, and in their place to sow the seeds of intelligent opinion and fair-minded attitudes."[17] In looking back on his years at the CIC when writing his autobiography in 1957, Eleazer concluded that a passage from the apocryphal book Second Esdras best encapsulated the CIC's goals for its educational work in public schools and colleges: "I shall light in thine heart a candle of understanding which shall not be put out."[18]

The CIC's two-pronged approach to improving education on race relations included both promoting efforts to improve textbook coverage of African Americans and launching a campaign for public schools and colleges to develop courses and units within existing courses that would present students with an enlightened understanding of African Americans and black-white relations. These courses would use curricular materials prepared by the Commission that aimed to fight prejudice based on misperceptions by giving students the latest historical, sociological, and scientific facts about the subject. It is important to note that these curricular units did not merely involve spending one day talking about race relations; rather, what the CIC proposed and very many schools implemented were

[15] Ibid., 61-62. This discussion of the topic in Eleazer's autobiography did not refer to whether any race relations courses existed in Southern private schools. However, as Educational Director of the CIC, Eleazer did publicize and distribute CIC educational materials for use in church schools, study groups, and services. Promoting instruction about race relations in religious institutions of course became the focus of Eleazer's work in his later employment (1943-48, 1950) as Special Worker in Race Relations for the Methodist Board of Education. For reports on how CIC educational materials were used for instruction in religious settings (and the highly positive results which were reported), see T. Carlisle Cannon to RBE, 18 June 1932, in box 1, folder 3 of RBE Papers, VUSC; and Edna C. Horst to RBE, 12 December 1932, in box 1, folder 7 of RBE Papers, VUSC.
[16] Ibid., 67.
[17] Ibid., 51.
[18] Ibid., 61.

units lasting multiple weeks that involved readings, class discussions, student preparation of reports and posters, and often visits to black schools or other African-American organizations in the community. Many public schools developed an integrated curriculum that also included such elements as concerts of black spirituals, plays with African-American themes, publication of student work on the topic, coverage in the school newspaper, and community involvement. CIC-influenced instruction on race relations was intended to leave a lasting impression.[19]

To understand exactly what attitudes about race relations the Commission intended to foster, it is helpful to examine two of the key pamphlets meant to guide discussion: *America's Tenth Man: A Brief Survey of the Negro's Part in American History* and *Understanding Our Neighbors: A Factual Study of America's Major Race Problem*. In keeping with Eleazer's realization that public schools could more adequately implement curricular materials about race relations if they were integrated into existing classes instead of being part of a stand-alone course, he prepared specific pamphlets for classes in literature, music, journalism, history, civics, and other subjects. *Singers in the Dawn*, for example, was an anthology of African-American poetry intended for English classes, while *America's Tenth Man* related the history of African Americans in the United States with a focus on black accomplishments. Condensed versions of several of the individual pamphlets, including *Singers in the Dawn* and *American's Tenth Man*, were included as part of the 32-page pamphlet *Understanding Our Neighbors*. Eleazer explained in a study guide to this latter booklet that the pamphlet could either be used as a complete unit in a course like Sociology or Social Problems, or specific parts of it could be incorporated into classes in history, geography, civics, and literature (ideally with the school intending to cover all the sections in different courses).[20]

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[19] Ibid., 61-80.

[20] Robert B. Eleazer, *Study Guide for Understanding Our Neighbors: For Use of School Teachers and Leaders of Study Groups* (Atlanta: Commission on Interracial Cooperation, 1943), 4, enclosed in Sixth Edition of *Understanding Our Neighbors* in box 3 of RBE Papers, VUSC. Despite being included at the end of the Sixth Edition of this pamphlet, the *Study Guide* provided was actually written for a later edition of *Understanding Our Neighbors*, most

For the most part, Eleazer's pedagogical aim in *America's Tenth Man* (first published in 1928) was fairly straightforward.[21] He noted in the introduction to the 20th edition of the pamphlet (which was issued in December 1941) that slavery and Reconstruction had continued to cast a long pall over Southern memory, such that blacks continued to be viewed by many Southern whites "only as a semi-savage slave, or as an illiterate, dangerous freedman--in either case a liability rather than an asset."[22] Eleazer modestly presented the goal of his study as being an investigation as to whether the traditional view needed to be reformed, "to inquire whether the Negro has ever had any creditable part in America's history or made any worthy contribution to its progress."[23] The resulting narrative left no doubt as to how those questions should be answered. Throughout the narrative, Eleazer stressed the essential contributions of blacks to the United States; although he observed that "musical critics say that [black spirituals, ragtime, and jazz] are the only distinct contributions America has made to the music of the world,"[24] he made a particular point of going beyond the stereotypical association of African Americans with music to stress the many other very practical areas far outside the "cultural gifts" arena in which blacks excelled. Blacks played an important role in both exploring the New World and discovering the North Pole, African American "inventive genius" was demonstrated by the many American blacks with patents, and an African American was the first doctor to perform heart surgery.[25]

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likely the Seventh or Eight Edition. The specific version of the *Study Guide* discussed in this paper is the Second Edition, published in April 1943.

[21] Selig, *Americans All*, 341.

[22] Eleazer, *America's Tenth Man*, 3, in box 3 of RBE Papers, VUSC.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., 5.

[25] Ibid., 3, 15, 11, 14. Although Eleazer did not identify his sources for these facts in *America's Tenth Man*, one might infer that his information on the subject came at least in part from the four books he listed as recommended references for the history of African Americans in *Understanding Our Neighbors*. The only author of these books who was white was Ina Corinne Brown, who wrote *The Story of the American Negro*. African Americans wrote the other three books: Carter G. Woodson's *Negro Makers of History*, Benjamin Brawley's *A Short History of the American Negro*, and Merl R. Eppse's *The Negro, Too, in American History* (1938). Eleazer, *Understanding Our Neighbors*, inside back cover. The Tennessee Board of Education adopted Eppse's textbook for use the same year it was published. Gregory G. Poole, *Eppse, Merl Raymond (1893-1967) Papers, 1927-1961* (Nashville: Tennessee State Library and Archives, 1990), 5, available at http://www.tn.gov/tsla/history/manuscripts/findingaids/89-120.pdf.

To make his case that blacks played an indispensable role in the development of the United States, Eleazer was himself willing to bend the facts to support his argument. His discussion of blacks' patriotism and "devotion to the flag" stressed African-American revolutionary heroes[26] but failed to note the many American blacks who fought against the colonists because of British promises of freedom. And he argued that black troops "distinguished themselves" during the Spanish-American War without acknowledging that his major source, Theodore Roosevelt's book *The Rough Riders* (1899), presented a view of black troops in that war that, albeit unfairly, was far more mixed.[27]

One important goal of *America's Tenth Man* appeared to be to counter incorrect perceptions of African Americans that had led to racial injustices in Eleazer's time. Many white Southerners had justified discrimination against African Americans by disparaging blacks as members of an inferior race unworthy of the rights and responsibilities of full citizenship. Although Eleazer did not tackle scientific arguments about racial inferiority in this pamphlet (although he would in *Understanding Our Neighbors*, discussed below), he does take direct aim at the related contention that African Americans, because of their lack of civilization, were incapable of advancement. Citing a respected source, Eleazer stressed that "since the Civil War the progress made by Negroes has been phenomenal, more rapid … than was ever shown by any other group in an equal length of time."[28] Recognizing perhaps the appeal of quantitative data in establishing the credibility of one's arguments,[29] Eleazer then devoted several pages of the pamphlet to listing and numerically describing the rapid growth in black

[26] Ibid., 7

[27] Ibid., 8; Theodore Roosevelt, *The Rough Riders* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1900 [1899]), 156-59, accessed via http://books.google.com/books?id=lbkTAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=theodore+roosevelt+rough+riders&hl=en&sa=X&ei=Pg-gT9HrOsnEtwfw-vzcBA&ved=0CD4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=theodore%20roosevelt%20rough%20riders&f=false; Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 36-37.

[28] Eleazer, *America's Tenth Man*, 9-10, in box 3 of RBE Papers, VUSC. Eleazer attributed this observation as coming from Ambassador James Bryce.

[29] For a discussion of the appeal of quantification, see Wendy Nelson Espeland and Mitchell L. Stevens, "A Sociology of Quantification," *European Journal of Sociology* 49 (2008): 401-36.

property ownership, industrial employment, business creation, educational attainment, religious organization and commitment, and health.[30] Another common stereotype among some Southern whites, one that was often used to justify lynching, held that black men were sexually aggressive and a danger to Southern white women. Challenging that perception might explain why Eleazer went to great lengths to emphasize the "unparalleled devotion" that slaves demonstrated towards their masters' families during the Civil War. "Often left behind as the sole support and protection of families of Confederate soldiers," Eleazer wrote, "not an instance is recorded in which [a slave] violated his sacred trust."[31] Eleazer then provided an extensive quotation from 19th century Southern orator Henry W. Grady emphasizing this very point.[32] Eleazer likely intended students to recognize that Southern whites had no reason to fear blacks, so legal and extralegal means of control such as sham judicial proceedings or lynchings were simply not necessary.

Eleazer's account of African-American history naturally drew on the accepted historical scholarship of his time, and those instances where he chose to deviate from it shed interesting light on his motivations. In the 1930s and the 1940s, the accepted interpretation of slavery in the United States was the one presented by historian Ulrich B. Phillips in his books *American Negro Slavery* (1918) and *Life and Labor in the Old South* (1929).[33] Phillips presented a gentle version of slavery that had many benefits to the slave, and Eleazer echoed this sentiment with an overall assessment that "the results of slavery, too, were mixed. With all that the slaves suffered in mind and body, there were compensations in their new contacts with civilization, with education and the Christian religion, and with the discipline of regular work."[34] Nevertheless, Eleazer departed sharply from Phillips in the pamphlet's discussion of slavery's economic impact. Whereas Phillips argued that slavery was unprofitable and economically

[30] Eleazer, *America's Tenth Man*, 10-15, in box 3 of RBE Papers, VUSC
[31] Ibid., 8.
[32] Ibid., 8-9.
[33] For a discussion of Phillips's writings on slavery, see John David Smith, *An Old Creed for the New South: Proslavery Ideology and Historiography, 1865-1918* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985), 239-83.
[34] Eleazer, *America's Tenth Man*, 4, in box 3 of RBE Papers, VUSC.

disadvantageous to the South, Eleazer provided detailed statistics demonstrating that slavery was in fact a "vast economic asset."[35] Eleazer's reasons for deviating from Phillips become clear when one sees the results to which Eleazer put these data. "In the light of such figures," Eleazer wrote, "it would be hard to overestimate the vast contribution which Negroes have made to the material development and prosperity of the South."[36] Eleazer's strategy was not to look at the role of slavery but the contributions of the slaves themselves, in order to advance his arguments that blacks played an essential role in the growth of the United States and that the South specifically owed them much.

Eleazer's discussion of Reconstruction is equally revelatory. The historical consensus at the time, which was commonly accepted among whites in both North and South, was that federally imposed Reconstruction was a disaster, a time rampant with chaos, lawlessness, and corruption. Eleazer acknowledged the "injustices and political mismanagement" of the period but instead chose in *America's Tenth Man* to emphasize different points. Freeing of the slaves did not result in chaos and revenge-seeking, and the faults of Reconstruction should be laid not on the former slaves but on the white men who manipulated them. Eleazer defended this latter point through recourse to experts, by noting that "to this all the historians agree."[37] He further noted that Reconstruction governments in the

[35] Ibid., 6.
[36] Ibid., 7.
[37] Ibid., 9. Eleazer was not being correct here either, as influential works on Reconstruction were still being produced by scholars influenced by William Archibald Dunning, the historian whose writings on Reconstruction did blame blacks (especially through their greed and incompetence in the state legislatures) as playing an important role in the abuses of Reconstruction. Nevertheless, Eleazer's distortion to emphasize this point is perhaps understandable, given that movies like *The Birth of a Nation* and some textbook authors went to the opposite extreme by accusing Reconstruction-era blacks of heinous crimes far more serious than most white historians would find. For example, Eleazer may have felt the need to stress that all historians agreed that blacks were blameless to counter the impression a student may have received from reading the following in his or her history textbook: "The Negroes, guided by their white leaders, formed an association known as the Loyalty League for the purpose of keeping the white race under foot. They committed murder, arson, and crimes of every kind. The white people could get no protection from the courts. Organizations were, therefore, formed among the whites for self-protection. The most famous of these organizations was the Ku Klux Klan." Eleazer was of course well aware of what Southern textbooks were saying, as the passage quoted above appeared in his CIC pamphlet stressing the role of textbooks used in Southern schools in reinforcing prejudiced views towards African Americans. David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000), 352-57; R. B. Eleazer, *School Books and Racial Antagonism: A Study of Omissions and*

South "did some good things," most notably by establishing a public school system, "probably the most progressive and important step ever taken in this country."[38] One may wonder if some of these revisionist interpretations of Reconstruction may have been inspired by W.E.B. Du Bois's 1935 work *Black Reconstruction in America*,[39] but Eleazer would never have publicly acknowledged such a debt.[40] To use an understanding of social knowledge laid out by Mary S. Morgan, facts travels better when they have respected chaperones.[41] Eleazer knew his audience, and a revolutionary interpretation of Reconstruction proffered by an African American was something they would not be ready to accept.

Through a combination of numbers, facts, and subtle shadings of established scholarship, Eleazer laid out a careful argument to public school and college students of the importance of black contributions to American society and of the fundamental merit and civilizational attainment of the race itself. In so doing, Eleazer was promoting a better understanding between the races. But fostering improved race relations was only one of the CIC's goals, and its activities emphasized at least as much the need to combat the racially discriminatory practices that still existed in the South. Only emphasizing the successes of African Americans could instill in white students a sense that everything was fine. To combat such tendencies, Eleazer began and ended the 20th edition of his pamphlet with exhortations that built upon the lessons of the pamphlet to urge that further work was still needed. The epigraph of *America's Tenth Man* quoted Eleazer's mentor, W.D. Weathorford, that "it behooves every one of us to strive to know better all the peoples of the world and to help each and all in the struggle

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Inclusions That Make for Misunderstanding (Atlanta: Conference on Education and Race Relations, 1937), 4, in box 3 of RBE Papers, VUSC.

[38] Ibid.

[39] For a discussion of *Black Reconstruction in America*, see David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000), 350-78.

[40] It is reasonable to presume that Eleazer would have been familiar with *Black Reconstruction in America*. Eleazer certainly knew of and respected Du Bois, who was praised highly in *Understanding Our Neighbors* as was his work *The Souls of Black Folk*. The CIC and Eleazer himself engaged in correspondence with Du Bois during at least the 1920s and 1930s, and both men were living in Atlanta during the late 1930s and early 1940s. And given the dominance of the prevailing negative interpretation of Reconstruction, it is also an open question where Eleazer's more positive understanding of the period could have come from if not from *Black Reconstruction in America*.

[41] Mary S. Morgan, "Travelling Facts," in *How Well Do Facts Travel? The Dissemination of Reliable Knowledge*, ed. Peter Howlett and Mary S. Morgan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 26-30.

upward, envying no man his success, hating none, blessing and blessed by all." Besides being a subtle challenge to the argument that black advancement meant undesirable economic competition between the races, Weatherford's quotation made clear the desirability of ongoing struggle. Even more revealingly, the passage that concluded the pamphlet provided the very link students may need between the account of African-American accomplishment they had just read and the necessity of whites' continued role in combating injustice. Citing a "well-known Southerner,"[42] Eleazer quoted the speaker identifying blacks as "a blessing" and concluding: "In the years that are to come [the African American] needs the help of those who have voices of influence. He needs only that we remove unnecessary barriers out of his way, and give him a chance to demonstrate that under God he is a man and can play a man's part."[43] What better way to motivate the future leaders of Southern society to fight the discriminatory practices that had prevented blacks, America's indispensable tenth man, from realizing their own and their society's full potential.

The specific racial injustices that enlightened white Southerners should battle were laid out in vivid detail in the CIC's comprehensive pamphlet *Understanding Our Neighbors*. In contrast to historians like David L. Chappell who dismissively maintain that "the only thing the CIC did challenge was lynching,"[44] the Commission's educational program revealed a much larger agenda. Drawing from material originally contained in Eleazer's CIC pamphlet *Population Problems in the South*, *Understanding Our Neighbors* made clear that the CIC's educational and practical mission entailed not just fighting the extreme practice of lynching but challenging more structural deficiencies in Southern society, including peonage, the farm tenant system, racist practices by law enforcement and the courts, unfair wages,

[42] Eleazer, *America's Tenth Man*, 15, in box 3 of RBE Papers, VUSC. *America's Tenth Man* did not identify the quoted Southerner, but it was CIC executive director Will W. Alexander. Eleazer presumably felt that the leader of the organization that was publishing the pamphlet would not have been perceived as sufficiently impartial to be a credible source. *The American Missionary* 79 (1925), 199, accessed at http://books.google.com/books?id=PhnPAAAAMAAJ&q=%22negro+is+not+a+menace+to+america%22&dq=%22negro+is+not+a+menace+to+america%22&hl=en&sa=X&ei=GIeWT8myKILk9ATP6OGeDg&ved=0CDgQ6AEwAQ

[43] Eleazer, *America's Tenth Man*, 15, in box 3 of RBE Papers, VUSC.

[44] Chappell, *Inside Agitators*, 37.

unequal provision of educational opportunity and public facilities, and racial barriers to voting. The problems that African Americans in the South faced were often laid out very starkly: "Negroes, being largely without influence and political power, are sometimes arrested and thrown into jail for insignificant offenses and on the barest suspicion. They may be threatened and tortured to extort confessions or testimony. Then they may be convicted and sentenced to prison or to death solely on evidence thus secured. Usually people are assumed to be innocent till they are proved guilty, but with Negroes it often works the other way."[45] Eleazer regularly proposed specific solutions to the major problems he described, through such means as promoting black farm ownership; equalizing funding of public schools, public services, and recreational facilities; and increasing the numbers of blacks who served as police officers and on juries (at a time when, in many Southern states, no African Americans served in either role).[46] Selig, the historian of the cultural gifts movement, is incorrect to argue that the CIC leadership "determined not to challenge deeply rooted systems of domination" and felt that "change could result from individual adjustment rather than social reform." The CIC's educational materials regularly did encourage students to "aim to remove structural barriers that prevented blacks from achieving opportunity, mobility, and full citizenship." And the challenges the Commission's literature made to black inferiority most certainly did "contest the foundations of white supremacy."[47] In fact, the starkest difference between the cultural gifts movement and the CIC's educational work may be in their contrasting commitments to tackling structural injustice. While Rachel David DuBois retreated from her earlier advocacy of a curriculum that challenged racist practices in favor of one content to celebrate black accomplishments in the arts, the CIC over time urged the adoption of a

[45] R.B. Eleazer, *Understanding Our Neighbors: A Factual Study of America's Major Race Problem* (Atlanta: Conference on Education and Race Relations, 1942), 26, in box 3 of RBE Papers, VUSC. The version discussed in this paper is the Sixth Edition published in December 1942.
[46] Ibid., 24, 24-25, 26, 28.
[47] Selig, *Americans All*, 152, 153.

curriculum that presented ever more forceful opposition to the racial status quo, especially after the publication of its pamphlets dealing with civic problems in the late 1930s.[48]

To suggest that Eleazer encouraged the future leaders of the South to challenge the discriminatory practices built into their society is not to suggest that the CIC was promoting a perfectly egalitarian vision. Eleazer recognized the limits of tolerance within the South of the 1930s and 1940s, prejudices that were still held by many members of the Commission themselves, and *Understanding Our Neighbors* aimed to broaden students' perspectives in a gradual way. The pamphlet noted that the African-American share of the population in all Southern states was declining in order to deflect potential concerns that granting blacks more political power might allow them to take over state governments.[49] Eleazer criticized a number of Southern practices meant to deny blacks the ballot, including the white primary, actual and threatened intimidation and violence, and the arbitrary practices of white election officers in determining whether educated African Americans passed literacy tests.[50] But he nevertheless admitted that "not everybody is competent to exercise the ballot," which "should probably be protected by suffrage limitations," as long as "such limitations be applied equally to both races."[51] Along similar lines, *Understanding Our Neighbors* is almost completely silent about the fairness and wisdom of segregation. The pamphlet stresses that separate public facilities (as well as the public schools) should be equal but takes for granted that they would be separate, making no argument as to whether this reality was desirable or regrettable.[52] The only other occasion where segregation is even touched on occurred in a passage intended to correct the "misconception" that blacks want social

[48] Ibid., 82.
[49] Eleazer, *Understanding Our Neighbors*, 30, 22.
[50] Ibid., 27-28.
[51] Ibid., 28.
[52] Ibid., 24-26.

equality. But even here segregation was not mentioned; Eleazer's focus was on intermarriage.[53] In this section, Eleazer quoted a prominent African American opposing intermarriage as well as two Southern whites lamenting that demagogues played to the fear of "social equality" to distract from the real issues. "In any case," this discussion of social equality concluded, "it seems perfectly clear that the integrity of the two races can best be preserved by giving the Negro every opportunity for self-improvement, full protection of his rights, normal respect and consideration, and a chance to develop wholesome self-respect and pride of race."[54] As far as both voting and segregation were concerned, Eleazer intended to encourage the student readers of his pamphlet to accept that important reform of race relations must occur without thinking that society was being radically restructured in the process.

Though Eleazer's policy recommendations aimed to gradually reshape Southern society, *Understanding Our Neighbors* supported a far more fundamental transformation of Southern attitudes to blacks. Modern science had only started to challenge the tenets of scientific racism in earnest in the 1930s (with consensus largely not coming until after World War II discredited Nazi racial beliefs),[55] but at least as early as the 1941 edition of the pamphlet, Eleazer was already stating directly that "science offers no proof" that "Negroes are inherently (that is, permanently and hopelessly) inferior to white people."[56] Eleazer challenged the commonly held assumption that intelligence tests proved black inferiority by citing the latest scientific evidence, the 1935 book *Race Differences* by anthropologist (and Franz Boas student) Otto Klineberg. In referring to the World War I army intelligence tests, Eleazer reported Klineberg's findings that Northern whites outperformed Southern whites and that African Americans from some Northern states scored better than whites from some Southern states.

[53] However, Eleazer preferred the term "social intermingling" over "social equality" to describe the practice that he asserted blacks did not want. The pamphlet's readers quite possibly took the phrase "social intermingling" to refer to segregation, perhaps more so than the blacks Eleazer was discussing would have intended. Ibid., 31.
[54] Ibid., 31-32. Reference to "social intermingling" occurred on p. 31, and the final quote appeared on p. 32. The prominent African American quoted was former Tuskegee Institute principal "Dr. R. R. Moton." Ibid., 31.
[55] Paul Farber, "Changes in Scientific Opinion on Race Mixing: The Impact of the Modern Synthesis," in *Race and Science: Scientific Challenges to Racism in Modern America*, ed. Paul Farber and Hamilton Cravens (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2009), 130-51.
[56] Eleazer, *Understanding Our Neighbors*, 30, in box 3 of RBE Papers, VUSC.

Understanding Our Neighbors observed pointedly, "Did this mean that [Northern whites] were inherently more intelligent than [Southern whites], or only that they had had better advantages?" And consequently, "Was [black outperformance of whites] a measure of relative intelligence, or a measure rather of relative opportunities? If we make allowance for the latter factor on one side, must we not in fairness make it also on the other?"[57]

Eleazer mustered further scientifically based arguments to reject notions of black inferiority, arguments that proved all the more compelling since they demonstrated that religion agreed with science. Southern whites often resorted to the Biblical story of the curse of Ham (Genesis 9:20-27) to explain why blacks had darker skin. Eleazer explained why this interpretation represented a misreading of the Bible story[58] but went further to argue on both scientific and religious grounds for the commonality of humankind. "Science and theology agree that all branches of the human race had a common origin," Eleazer observed, and "the different branches of this human family [possessed] likenesses … [that] are much more numerous and fundamental than their differences." Both science and religion recorded that the blood of the different races is indistinguishable, and "this common likeness is intellectual and spiritual, no less than physical."[59] Eleazer even quoted evolutionary theory, citing the "well-known 'law of natural selection' or 'the survival of the fit,'" to explain at some length how dark skin color naturally evolved among residents of Africa to protect them from the tropical heat. Eleazer concluded, "We see, then, that the Negro's dark skin was not a curse, nor even a misfortune. On the contrary, it was a distinct advantage in the environment in which he found himself."[60]

Eleazer's audience, though, would likely to have been predisposed to see essential and enduring differences between whites and blacks, and it is interesting to see at what points Eleazer chose

[57] John Carson, *The Measure of Merit: Talents, Intelligence, and Inequality in the French and American Republics, 1750-1940* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 260-61, 381; Eleazer, *Understanding Our Neighbors*, 31, in box 3 of RBE Papers, VUSC.
[58] Ibid., 30.
[59] Ibid., 3.
[60] Ibid., 3, 4.

to muster cultural arguments to shape the attitudes of his readers. His discussion of blacks' African heritage represented a compromise between common Southern assumptions about Africa with the latest anthropological findings about the continent. Though acknowledging that the ease of survival in a tropical climate resulted in a "civilization retarded," Eleazer nevertheless stressed the many historical and modern-day achievements of Africans, citing for example Franz Boas's praise for contemporary Africans' "cultural achievements of no mean order."[61] Eleazer repeated the general understanding--stated even earlier in the century by Booker T. Washington[62]--that blacks had to catch up in terms of civilizational attainment, but the overall thrust of his argument (which was novel for the time) left no doubt that African Americans had largely done so.[63] And whereas Eleazer was willing to provide cultural explanations for historical African underdevelopment, it is striking how he resolutely refused to posit culture as a factor to explain the problems faced by Southern blacks in his time. Rather than describing

[61] Ibid., 4, 5. Eleazer indicated that he was directly citing Boas in the latter quotation.

[62] Booker T. Washington, "A Commencement Address in Washington, D.C.," June 16, 1905, in *1904-06*, vol. 8 of *The Booker T. Washington Papers* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 307, at http://www.historycooperative.org/btw/Vol.8/html/305.html (accessed April 21, 2009).

[63] One can read some ambiguity in the text of *Understanding Our Neighbors* as to the extent to which African Americans had caught up. The initial discussion of Africa's negative effect on black civilization observed how even the Britons appeared backwards (and thus racially inferior) until exposure to Roman civilization allowed them to overcome the deficiencies of environment and postulated that the same process may apply to blacks as well: "Now that the African at last is beginning to have his chance, will he also prove his ability, as the Britons did? Time alone can tell. Already the race is making notable progress, and many individuals are emerging whose attainments give ground for encouragement." Although that statement may imply that the civilizational attainment of African Americans remains an open question, the overall tenor of the pamphlet would likely leave little doubt in the readers' minds that the pamphlet was arguing that blacks had disproved their inferiority. The quotation above was immediately followed in the pamphlet by extensive discussion of the accomplishments of blacks in Africa itself, with one subheading reading "No Ground for Pessimism," and Eleazer's account of post-emancipation African-American history stresses the outstanding record of black progress. His later return to this point (in a passage quoted in the text) stresses the lack of scientific proof of black inferiority and remarks that it is "reasonable to assume" that blacks will follow the pattern set by other previously retarded races like the Anglo-Saxons, who "have largely outgrown their handicaps since opportunity came to them." Eleazer then challenges the presumptions about African Americans based on intelligence tests, cites a number of full-blooded American blacks who had accomplished much, and concludes, "What about hundreds of other pure-blooded Negroes who have achieved notably in spite of great handicaps?" Ultimately, Eleazer's opinion of black ability may best be encapsulated in a passage from the blurb on the back cover of *Understanding Our Neighbors* that outlines the pamphlet's argument: "And what amazing progress! From the first century to the twentieth at a single step! Religion, language, literature, mechanical skill, commerce, citizenship--the slow gains of two thousand years--encompassed in a lifetime. Where else in all history is there anything like it?" Eleazer, *Understanding Our Neighbors*, 5, 5-6, 6, 11-13, 30, 31, back cover.

attitudes acquired through slavery or poverty as contributing to African-American difficulties, Eleazer consistently placed the blame on structural conditions in Southern society itself. Southern blacks were disproportionately more likely to die from tuberculosis because "public health agencies have not given proper attention to its prevalence among colored people."[64] Eleazer highlighted a number of factors behind the higher crime rates reported for blacks, all of which reflected faults of the Southern system of governance: discrimination against African Americans in the criminal justice system, blacks living in "the worst sections of the cities," the lack of recreational facilities in black areas, and inadequate provisioning for African American schools. "Were Negroes given equal opportunity and complete fairness at the hands of the law," Eleazer concluded, "there is no reason to believe that their crime rate would be any higher than that of white people."[65]

As for explaining the very fact of African-American poverty, Eleazer also attributed that not to black culture or the slowness with which any race might climb the civilizational ladder but to discrimination practiced by whites: "Low wage scales are largely responsible."[66] Here was actually a case where Eleazer did not follow the latest social scientific knowledge. W.E.B. Du Bois at the turn of the century had posited systemic discrimination as the primary explanation for black poverty, but liberal social scientists during the 1930s (according to historian Alice O'Connor) "consistently and insistently looked to [black lower-class] culture as pathological," albeit a culture that was dysfunctional not because of innate black inferiority but because of the effects of the system of racial subordination they

[64] Ibid., 23.
[65] Ibid., 31.
[66] Ibid., 23. After tellingly quoting Booker T. Washington's line "You can't hold another man down in the ditch without staying down there with him," *Understanding Our Neighbors* asked students, "Should equal wages be paid for equal work, irrespective of race? Would this be of advantage to the white worker as well as to the Negro?" Eleazer's discussion of "the problem of poverty" touched on a class-based critique that promoted solidarity of white and black workers in the face of economic injustice that harmed them both. One can perhaps read here a taste of the much later "wages of whiteness" scholarship popularized by David Roediger. The resort of white workers to racial supremacy was costing them the chance for their own advancement. Ibid.; David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 2007 [1991]).

were forced to endure.[67] It seems very likely that Eleazer was aware of this literature given its prominence and the fact that he was acquainted with a wide variety of sociological studies related to African Americans in the United States.[68] So his decision not to refer to black pathology in *Understanding Our Neighbors* (and possibly to reject the premises behind the literature entirely) likely reflected his own purposes for the pamphlet. The liberal social scientists who wrote about black pathology intended their observations to justify interventions to alleviate the conditions that caused such attitudes to develop,[69] but conceding such dysfunctional beliefs would likely have cemented in white Southerners' minds their sense that blacks were racially inferior and thus deserving of a subordinate position in Southern society. Rather, Eleazer would have presumably concluded, such social science knowledge should be suppressed and white students should instead be shown evidence of blacks' inherent worth in order to realize in their own minds both the justice and the practical advantages of treating the South's black population fairly.

Race relations was an inherently loaded topic in the interwar South, and Eleazer's pedagogical approach was to treat it with a guise of as much impartiality as possible. Reflecting both Americans' appreciation of objectivity but also their tendency to distrust experts, Eleazer intended classroom use of *Understanding Our Neighbors* to lead students to believe they were drawing their own conclusions about black-white relations. Thus, Eleazer's *Study Guide for Understanding Our Neighbors* stressed that the way to teach such a controversial but important subject was to "merely teach THE

[67] Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 74-98. The quotation is on p. 77. A different take on this issue, one which distinguishes between social pathology and individual pathology, is provided in Daryl Michael Scott, *Contempt and Pity: Social Policy and the Image of the Damaged Black Psyche, 1880-1996* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

[68] The *Study Guide for Understanding Our Neighbors* recommended for teachers a number of sociological studies of race relations, including books written by prominent contemporary African-American researchers such as Charles S. Johnson and Horace Cayton. Cayton himself would later co-author (with fellow black sociologist St. Clair Drake) *Black Metropolis* (1945), a major study of African-American life that endorsed the concept of black pathology even though that was not the book's major focus. *Black Metropolis* was of course published after the Sixth Edition of *Understanding Our Neighbors*, but Eleazer chose to include none of the earlier works that recognized black pathology in his bibliography. Eleazer, *Study Guide*, 11; O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge*, 88-94.

[69] Ibid., 77.

FACTS, just as you would in relation to any other subject. Not Theories; Not Opinions; Not Propaganda. Just the plain, everyday, unquestioned facts of science, of history, of present-day conditions and problems, as they relate to this subject."[70] Granted, Eleazer glossed over the extent to which his employment of facts was selective (as discussed above in regard to *America's Tenth Man*). But in recognizing the importance of critical thinking to student learning, Eleazer was demonstrating his acceptance of one of the key insights of the progressive educational movement and its foremost proponent John Dewey. As Dewey and Eleazer understood, students were more likely to accept desired conclusions not through listening to teachers spout their personal beliefs but through students themselves deriving such judgments through their own reasoning from accepted facts.[71]

Understanding Our Neighbors was meant to guide the students in this process of critical thinking. The pamphlet, as Eleazer wrote in the *Study Guide*, "suggests lines of constructive discussion, helpful in forming intelligent opinion."[72] Most topics for the "Civic Problems" part of *Understanding Our Neighbors* began by laying out the facts and then followed those facts with discussion questions. As the *Study Guide* noted, "these are meant to be real questions addressed to the pupils, not rhetorical questions to be answered by the teacher."[73] The premise was that the student would naturally come to a proper understanding of race relations through applying the facts to the questions raised, although Eleazer was not above phrasing questions in such a way so as to predispose students to a certain answer. For example, after discussing the facts related to the discrimination against black public schools, the pamphlet asked, "Can people with little or no education be as efficient, as productive, and as law-abiding as if they had received greater advantages? Does not the whole community suffer when those

[70] Eleazer, *Study Guide*, 4.
[71] For more information about pedagogical progressivism, see Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961).
[72] Eleazer, *Study Guide*, 4.
[73] Ibid., 5.

advantages are denied or limited in relation to any group?"[74] This appeal to the best interests of the region as a whole points to another one of Eleazer's key strategies in *Understanding Our Neighbors*. Throughout the pamphlet's discussion of civic problems, Eleazer regularly emphasized two reasons why structural discrimination in the South had to be overcome. Improving the lives of African Americans by removing the artificial barriers they faced would always serve the dual goals of "doing justice to a minority group" and "serving the best interests of all."[75] Students were encouraged to realize that fighting racist practices benefited them no matter what personal predilections they brought to the table.[76]

Despite the occasional leading question in its pamphlets, the CIC intended its educational program to be structured like a scientific investigation of racial problems. Reflecting the principles of pedagogical progressivism that student engagement and understanding could best be fostered through learning by doing and real-world application, *Understanding Our Neighbors* constantly suggested that students inquire about the conditions under which African Americans lived in their own

[74] Eleazer, *Understanding Our Neighbors*, 26. Eleazer also broke from his professedly impartial stance on how the South should deal with race relations in his discussion of Southern views on how to treat blacks. Those who "think it necessary to deny the rights of the minority" subscribe to "the theory of autocracy against which our Revolutionary forefathers revolted," while those who "feel sure that no good can come from injustice" stand for "the theory of the democracy which [our Revolutionary forefathers] established." In light of that introduction, likely student response to the pamphlet's final question ("Which [view] shall America follow in reference to its 12,000,000 Negro citizens?") would appear foreordained. Ibid., 29.

[75] Ibid.

[76] One of the most eloquent statements in the pamphlet of Eleazer's belief that whites should do justice to blacks for the reason of common decency alone can be found in the very words with which the pamphlet concludes. Challenging the myth that "a sense of obligation to Negroes is contrary to Southern tradition," Eleazer gave several historical examples of prominent Southerners treating blacks fairly and concluded: "In the light of traditions like these no Southerner need apologize for taking seriously the nation's obligation to its twelve million Negro citizens, here through no fault of their own, and largely dependent for their chance in life upon the white man's justice and humanity." Ibid., 32. That wording may at first glance appear to run counter with how Eleazer chose to conclude *America's Tenth Man*, with its emphasis on black self-reliance and removing barriers so that blacks could "play a man's part." But the two emphases do not conflict if one interprets the conclusion of *Understanding Our Neighbors* as arguing that, no matter how independent blacks are, their continued improvement would remain impossible unless whites remove the racist obstacles to black advancement that the white South had previously imposed. How readers would have interpreted this passage in light of all they had previously read in the pamphlet, however, is unclear.

communities, in particular through personally visiting black schools and neighborhoods.[77] To truly grasp the inadequacy of governmental provision of public services where blacks live, "inquiry at the city hall will be helpful; first-hand observation even more so."[78] As the discussion of implementation of CIC educational initiatives later in this paper will explain further, such a process of opinion formation through critical thinking and scientific inquiry appears to have been practiced in many of the classes in public schools and colleges across the South that incorporated the Commission's lesson plans into their units on race relations.

And what was presented in these schools was a view of black-white relations that challenged Southern understandings (and even what has been normally presumed about Southern white liberals). It is common, for example, to assume that Southerners favored Booker T. Washington's accomodationist message over Du Bois's challenge to white supremacy. But the CIC was also interested in combating discrimination in the South, so its pamphlets' treatment of Du Bois was far more favorable than what students would likely have been exposed to earlier. *Understanding Our Neighbors* does discuss Washington favorably, calling his autobiography *Up from Slavery* (1901) "the best known Negro contribution to American prose" and "one of the great American classics."[79] But Du Bois if anything was singled out for even more extensive praise. Unlike Washington, Du Bois merited his own section in the pamphlet's discussion of outstanding black literary figures. His "famous" book *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) is identified as "rank[ing] with the best American literature," and the pamphlet observed that "there is hardly a more powerful piece of writing in American literature" than Du Bois's "great prose poem 'A Litany of Atlanta, Done at Atlanta in the Day of Death, 1906'," written in the aftermath of a

[77] Cremin, *Transformation of the School*; Eleazer, *Understanding Our Neighbors*, 23, 24, 25.
[78] Ibid., 24.
[79] Ibid., 20.

tragic race riot.[80] *The Souls of Black Folk* was actually singled out twice in the pamphlet for its great merit, with Eleazer later calling it "outstanding in both literary and sociological value."[81] Eleazer does not describe the thesis of *The Souls of Black Folk* in the pamphlet, but the fact that he singled out such a forceful challenge to the racial status quo as the one book students should read for a greater understanding of the place of blacks in American society emphasizes how willing Eleazer was to upset the fundamental racial tenets of the South.[82]

What is also noteworthy about *Understanding Our Neighbors* is what it does not contain. The book that Sosna and Chappell describe as forming the basis of earlier CIC-sponsored courses on race relations, Thomas Woofter's *The Basis of Racial Adjustment* (1925), leveled sharp criticism on activist blacks who agitated against Southern racism; such people were seen as disrupting the careful attempts by southern liberals to promote improvement in African-American conditions through cooperation between the races. Wooster's book also lambasted proposed federal anti-lynching legislation as not only illegal but also disruptive of that same necessary spirit of interracial harmony.[83] But such criticisms are nowhere to be found in *Understanding Our Neighbors*. Black militants were not discussed at all, and the discussion of lynching does not raise the issue of federal legislation.[84] The only reference to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) can be seen as mildly positive, in that a black author (James Weldon Johnson) whose poetry the pamphlet highly

[80] Ibid., 16. The poem, which appeared in Du Bois's first autobiography *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (1920), was actually entitled "A Litany at Atlanta." W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), 25-28. *Darkwater* is discussed in more detail below.
[81] Ibid., 20.
[82] Eleazer's willingness to challenge students' most deeply held beliefs is also suggested by *Understanding Our Neighbor*'s recommendation that one of the prose books by black authors "that should not be overlooked" was James Weldon Johnson's *Negro Americans, What Now?* (1934), a book that endorsed integration. Ibid.; Herman Beavers, "Johnson, James Weldon," in *The Concise Oxford Companion to African American Literature*, edited by William L. Andrews, Frances Smith Foster, and Trudier Harris (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 232.
[83] Sosna, *In Search of the Silent South*, 24-25; Chappell, *Inside Agitators*, 36-37.
[84] Ibid., 26-27.

praised was identified as having worked for a long time for the NAACP.[85] While recognizing that Southern society was not quite ready for educational material that encouraged students to support black agitation or federal intervention as possible solutions to the South's racial problems, Eleazer at least made sure--correcting the presumed errors of past southern white liberals--that his instructional efforts did not support a hostile reception to such activities. Tellingly, in the *Study Guide*'s long list of recommended CIC-sponsored or outside books to promote a greater understanding of race relations, *The Basis of Racial Adjustment* was not even included.[86]

Evolution and Implementation

Of course, just because the CIC's educational initiatives were encouraging students to accept fundamental changes in society does not mean that actual instruction in race relations proceeded along the lines the CIC envisioned. To understand how implementation of CIC curricular materials took place on the ground, it is helpful to trace the history of Southern educational initiatives on racial understanding. Although student study groups and a few college courses on the topic had been around since the 1910s, there do not appear to have been extensive instruction on race relations in Southern schools until at least the late 1920s. Eleazer launched the CIC's work in colleges in 1923, but his early efforts centered on sponsoring contests for individual college students to submit papers they wrote on racial topics and publishing educational materials (most notably *America's Tenth Man*) which students interested in impartial information on the subject could request. Eleazer observed in his autobiography, "It was obvious, however, that we could never hope to reach the great mass of students by this one-on-one method. The colleges themselves--all of them, if possible--must be enlisted if a really good job was to be done." After hitting upon the innovative idea of seeking to integrate discussion of African Americans as units within existing courses instead of as stand-along classes, Eleazer immediately

[85] Ibid., 19-20. At the time this edition of *Understanding Our Neighbors* came out, Du Bois was not employed by (or even a member of) the NAACP.
[86] Eleazer, *Study Guide*, 11.

"wrote fifteen hundred professors in nearly four hundred colleges all across the South, outlining the plan, offering materials, and asking their cooperation." The CIC's work in Southern public schools followed a parallel track, but perhaps slightly later since Eleazer's efforts to enlist both public school students and schools (in part by offering prizes to each) appeared to have occurred simultaneously instead of by interesting students first.[87]

Although the time line is not explicitly clear from Eleazer's autobiography as to the development of public school and college courses and units in race relations,[88] an important milestone appears to be the annual conferences on racial education held at Peabody College in Nashville, Tennessee from 1931 to 1933. Various combinations of Southern university and teachers' college presidents and faculty and state and district public school superintendents attended these conferences held at Peabody and later at the Blue Ridge YMCA conference center in North Carolina, which Eleazer described as "wield[ing] a wide influence in educational circles."[89] In the inaugural 1931 conference, Eleazer gave an address "The Quest for Understanding: Education in the Art of Getting Along Together" that explained the reasoning behind the CIC's educational work. In the speech, Eleazer expressed the long-held American belief in the ability of public education to transform society: "We will all agree, I believe, that the primary purpose of education is to prepare people to get along together--harmoniously, helpfully, and therefore happily. … The more difficult the problems of adjustment in any case, the more necessary it is that education contribute to their intelligent solution."[90] Eleazer cautioned

[87] Eleazer, *America's Tenth Man*, 61-63, 69-71, in box 3 of RBE Papers, VUSC. The quotations come from p. 70.
[88] Selig's account is also rather vague, although she does identify that race relations was discussed in over 100 colleges in 1933, and that the CIC's efforts in high schools picked up significantly in 1928, with almost 500 schools entering the CIC's *America's Tenth Man* competition in 1930. Selig, *Americans All*, 156, 162, 163.
[89] Eleazer, *My First Eighty Years*, 75, in box 1, folder 25 of RBE Papers, VUSC. Eleazer discussed these conferences on p. 66 and 75-77 of his autobiography. The proceedings of at least the first two Peabody conferences in 1931 and 1932 were edited by Eleazer and published by the CIC and are now available in various libraries and in the Eleazer Papers at VUSC.
[90] R. B. Eleazer, "The Quest for Understanding: Education in the Art of Getting Along Together," in *Education and Racial Adjustment: Report of Peabody Conference on Dual Education in the South* (Atlanta: Executive Committee of the Conference, 1931), 17. This first Peabody conference took place from July 20-23, 1931. For a discussion of Americans' deeply held belief in the power of public education to improve society, see William J. Reese, *America's*

that “good intentions” were insufficient because they could be “easily swayed by passion and prejudice” if “unintelligent.” As Eleazer starkly observed, “Good intentions, let us remember, lit many a funeral pyre in the days of the Inquisition.”[91] This problem was most severe, and the need for education all the greater, in the matter of race relations, where “the prevalence … of ignorance and misconception, of fear and hostility” led so clearly to “tragic results in humiliation, neglect and cruelty.”[92]

Eleazer’s argument in the speech tracks points he made in CIC pamphlets, but with an emphasis on why education is necessary to confront student misperceptions. Since religious leaders have failed to adequately debunk the assumption that the Biblical story about Ham indicated that blacks have been cursed, teachers of biology and geography are needed to explain to students why the skin color of Africans was a natural--and even beneficial--adaptation to their environment, “an awful shock [to] our vanity doubtless, but probably wholesome at that.”[93] Teachers of psychology would similarly explain why intelligence tests do not prove black inferiority, while sociology teachers discussing the development of civilizations would enlighten students on why African under-development was a product not of biology but of inevitable and correctable characteristics of the environment. Teachers of civics or sociology would point to discrimination against blacks in the Southern criminal justice system as the most likely explanation for the high African-American crime rate, and history teachers would debunk student beliefs that blacks were an “alien menace” to American civilization by emphasizing that the black “has been here from the first and has made contributions to America’s progress of which he has reason to be proud.”[94] Not surprisingly, when Eleazer discussed an issue that the CIC had by this point

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Public Schools: From the Common School to “No Child Left Behind” (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

[91] Eleazer, “Quest for Understanding,” 17.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid., 18.

[94] Ibid., 18-20. The quote is on p. 20.

produced publications about (such as *America's Tenth Man*), the widely distributed printed edition of these conference proceedings cited where these materials could be obtained.[95]

As these references to teachers in specific academic disciplines should make clear, Eleazer rested his arguments throughout this speech on an appeal to experts and to impartial uncovering of scientific truth. "What we need is not propaganda," Eleazer observed, "but simply such an objective presentation of facts as will stimulate the Negro to do his best, and prepare the white man to give him a man's chance."[96] The speech was in its essence a guide to educators, and so consequently Eleazer had *The Quest for Understanding* printed up as a CIC pamphlet that became distributed widely at teachers' colleges.[97] Thus, besides arguing that students can best be persuaded through an appeal to reason that seems independent of a teacher's perspective, the speech contained additional references to the pedagogical value of teaching race relations and the best instructional means for accomplishing it. By this time, Eleazer had already recognized that the most effective way to ensure that instruction in racial understanding was experienced by as many students as possible was to integrate it into many courses, since study of African Americans would "normally and properly" fit almost anywhere in the public school and college curriculum.[98] In keeping with the progressive educational principles like real-world applicability that he frequently advocated, Eleazer also observed how study of racial disparities in the funding of Southern schools, and teacher spurs for students to think about this problem in the context of the purpose and intended effect of public education, would greatly motivate students in their own education; "no trouble about the student's interest when confronted with issues as practical as these."[99] And not only would such engagement make the acceptance of proper racial attitudes more

[95] Ibid., 19, 21.
[96] Ibid., 23.
[97] Eleazer, *My First Eighty Years*, 75, in box 1, folder 25 of RBE Papers, VUSC.
[98] Eleazer, "Quest for Understanding," 23.
[99] Ibid., 21. Eleazer argued that funding of white and black schools should be equal despite the fact that whites paid more in taxes because the original aim of public schooling was to education the "children of the poor" and

likely, but the teaching of race relations would provide a "fine opportunity" to introduce students to broader content in the studied subject matter. Challenging students' beliefs in black criminality by exposing the students to the racist practices of the Southern criminal justice system would also effectively provide the classes with "first hand study of our legal processes in operation, and a valuable bit of preparation for citizenship."[100]

As this discussion of the importance to Eleazer of challenging the myth of African-American criminality indicates, what Eleazer was arguing for was not a curriculum that emphasized good feelings and a recognition of the "cultural gifts" of African Americans but one intended to persuade white Southerners that fundamental changes to Southern society meant to root out its system of racial supremacy were necessary. Although the beginning of the speech spoke of the role of education in promoting harmonious relations between the races, the body of "The Quest for Understanding" made clear that such advances in good will could only be accomplished through concerted effort by whites to redress black grievances. The Southern criminal justice system had to be reformed, and equal resources must go to black and white schools.[101] Civics teachers who avoid discussion of fundamental racial issues such as the discriminatory and thus improper distribution of public services are not doing their jobs; to Eleazer, a teacher who ignores these topics "need not claim to be educating his pupils for intelligent citizenship, for these are the vital matters with which his budding young citizens must ultimately deal."[102] Fundamentally, Eleazer's language of "getting along together" is inextricably linked with his passionate advocacy of fair treatment of blacks, and racial education is most valuable to the extent that it leads to students resolved to tear down structural barriers established to keep Southern blacks in their place. Eleazer's speech made this point explicitly clear when discussing the implications of Southern

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because unequal funding made it difficult for public schools to fulfill their essential mission of educating for effective citizenship. Ibid.

[100] Ibid., 20.

[101] Ibid., 19-20, 21.

[102] Ibid., 21.

whites' continued reliance on a mistaken understanding of the curse of Ham in deriving their opinion of blacks: "So long as that is the case, how can we expect normal relations of justice and equity between these two groups, especially since the more privileged outnumbers the other ten to one, and has at its disposal every agency of government and instrument of power? What more could the majority ask as a pretext for ruthless exploitation?"[103]

It is also important to recognize how Eleazer's thoughts on racial education evolved as scientific knowledge advanced and his audience changed. In this 1931 speech towards the beginning of the Commission's work in public schools and colleges, talking before an elite audience of (mostly) white liberals, Eleazer admitted that the evidence based on intelligence tests related to African-American intellectual ability was inconclusive: "The facts available certainly do not establish the Negro's inherent intellectual equality; but neither do they disprove it. The question remains unsolved. This the psychology teacher might well make clear."[104] Klineberg's book *Race Differences* came out four years later, and its evidence for black performance on intelligence tests being a product of environment rather than nature appears to have convinced Eleazer that the question of black intelligence had been settled. The Sixth Edition of *Understanding Our Neighbors* (from 1942) cited Klineberg's work prominently and presented evidence and framed discussion questions in such a way that students would have been led naturally to the conclusion that black performance on intelligence tests was a product of "relative opportunities" rather than "relative intelligence."[105] The latest social scientific evidence had adjusted Eleazer's thinking, but also likely just as important was his awareness that persuasion of the masses of conservative, deeply prejudiced white Southerners required the removal of ambiguity wherever possible.

Changes between the 1931 speech to Southern liberals and the 1942 pamphlet meant for wide consumption also reflect Eleazer's awareness of the constraints that limit the potential for

[103] Ibid., 18.
[104] Ibid., 19.
[105] Eleazer, *Understanding Our Neighbors*, 31, in box 3 of RBE Papers, VUSC.

reform of Southern society. Eleazer was unashamedly an economic liberal, and his writings and actions are filled with sharp challenges to capitalism.[106] Thus, it may have been natural speaking before Southern liberals in 1931 for him to combine class critiques with racial ones. In stressing that the labor of working-class African Americans up to the present day had made the economic gains of the South possible, Eleazer emphasized the importance of teaching students about "mutual dependence and social obligation," the moral necessity that workers should be compensated properly for their labor. Eleazer stridently (and sarcastically) concluded that education in social obligation "is quite as important, maybe, as teaching would-be captains of industry the most skillful methods of parting the public from its money."[107] Such forceful economic critique is largely missing from the 1942 edition of *Understanding Our Neighbors*. Eleazer did leave in place the gentle probing about economic justice that had also begun his 1931 discussion of the topic: "Who pays the taxes on a plantation, the man who owns the plantation or the man whose labor makes it productive?"[108] In the 1942 pamphlet, Eleazer did not expand this argument or offer further commentary. Missing are the far more pointed questions Eleazer asked in 1931 that would naturally result from this line of reasoning, including the query, "Whose labor makes possible the proprietor's profits, his daughter's leisure, his son's education?"[109] Gone too, of course, was the challenge to the unworthy motives of "captains of industry" quoted above.

One can think of several possible explanations for this change of emphasis. Eleazer's softening of his rhetoric could have reflected changes in the South over these eleven years, where the

[106] See, for example, Will W. Alexander to RBE, 24 February 1922, in box 1, folder 1 of RBE Papers, VUSC; and RBE to W. P. King, 25 January 1939, in box 1, folder 19 of RBE Papers, VUSC. In the first letter, CIC director Alexander explained why Eleazer was likely soon to be fired from his current position as editor of the newsletter for the Southern Methodist Board of Missions: "You have aroused the antagonism of two powerful and relentless groups: the capitalist class and the ecclesiastics in our church." In the second letter, written to the editors of the *Christian Advocate* (King) and seven daily newspapers, Eleazer sought to persuade them to publish an article he had written with a suggestion to improve the economy: "It is high time, it seems to me, [that] we get down to something fundamental in the effort to rehabilitate our economic system. By this time, it appears evident that pump-priming and so-called social security are not sufficient."

[107] Eleazer, "Quest for Understanding," 22.

[108] Eleazer, *Understanding Our Neighbors*, 26, in box 3 of RBE Papers, VUSC.

[109] Eleazer, "Quest for Understanding," 22.

region had become less open to explicit class critique. Or Eleazer's perceptions of the South's openness in this regard could have shifted. But pedagogical motivations may have been at work as well. Leveling such forceful economic criticism in a textbook intended for mass consumption would have been highly visible and likely controversial. But it might have seemed appropriate to Eleazer to expose sympathetic teachers to the full force of his argument, trusting in their ability to guide class discussion in a useful direction away from prying eyes. Whatever his motivation, *Understanding Our Neighbor*'s treatment of economic issues points to Eleazer's realization that the conservative South could tolerate only so much advocacy of change, and the radical restructurings of Southern government and society to improve the position of blacks that he was already advocating may have been endangered if the Commission had strived too far in directly challenging other pillars of the Southern way of life such as its systems of segregation and economics.

One of the attendees of the first Peabody conference in 1931 was H. L. McAlister, President of Arkansas State Teachers College. Having maintained at the conference that racial education would be more effective if integrated into units of courses throughout the curriculum rather than being taught merely through stand-alone classes, he and the faculty of Arkansas State Teachers College decided to put this advice into practice during the winter 1932 term through a program entitled "A Better Understanding Between the Races." At the 1932 Peabody conference, McAlister spoke about the race relations work done at his school and stressed how the steps taken by the Teachers College could be implemented at any college or university. The Eleazer Papers contains the 32-page report produced by the faculty of the Teachers College to explain the school's race relations activities.[110]

[110] President H. L. McAlister and Faculty, *Race Relations Course and Correlated Work in Arkansas State Teachers College, Conway, Ark.*, [1932], 1, in box 4, folder 7 of RBE Papers, VUSC. I will quote in this paper from the President's Report of Project as found in this document (p. 1-4), but these remarks also form the speech he gave at the second Peabody conference and appear almost verbatim in Dr. H. F. McAlister, "A Quest that Achieved Its Goal: Arkansas Teachers' College Shows What May Be Done. 800 Students Enlisted," in *Report of Second Peabody Conference*, 9-12. Arkansas State Teachers College is now the University of Central Arkansas (UCA). President Heber L. McAlister's last name was misspelled as "McAllister" on the cover page of the *Race Relations Course*

In his report at the 1932 conference of progress in the past year, Eleazer praised the initiative at Arkansas State Teachers College as "most notable" among "some" projects launched since the last conference that were "astonishing in their thoroughness and reach."[111] Units on race relations were incorporated during the winter 1932 term into classes in eight departments, and McAlister observed, "Every student in the Arkansas State Teachers College during the last year came in contact with this problem in at least 1 class. The junior college students came in contact with it in a number of classes."[112] Not only did all 800 students at the Teachers College receive education about blacks, but public school students attending the Training School of the Teachers College were exposed to racial instruction through the teaching of their supervisors (student-teachers).[113] The racial education activities engaged in throughout the Teachers College included not only reading, writing, and discussion but also art projects, presentations, service, visits to black communities and institutions, community engagement, performances, and training of African-American teachers.[114]

Examining the records of the Arkansas State Teachers College program in race relations for winter 1932 can shed interesting light on how the CIC's educational initiatives were implemented. Two limitations of the source material should be noted, though. One is that professor reports of the outcomes of their work in race relations are often disappointingly vague. As the goal of the program was to promote "a better understanding between the races," all too often professors merely echoed this language in vague declarations like "it was clear that the class had a proper attitude at least toward the

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report but is corrected to "McAlister" in these notes. He served as President of the Teachers College from 1930 to 1941. See http://uca.edu/archives/ucah1.php and http://uca.edu/archives/ppmcalister.php.

[111] R. B. Eleazer, "Ad Interim Activities," in *Report of Second Peabody Conference*, 7.

[112] McAlister, "A Better Understanding Between the Races," in *Race Relations Course*, 4, in box 4, folder 7 of RBE Papers, VUSC. The eight departments who all incorporated education about African Americans in their course work were "Education, English, History, Social Science, Biology, Home Economics, Drawing, and Public School Music." Ibid., 1.

[113] Eleazer, "Ad Interim Activities," 7; McAlister, "Better Understanding," 1, 2.

[114] Ibid., 1-4.

whole subject."[115] Also, classes in history, social science, and English wrote papers on topics dealing with race relations, and often professors listed the themes their students wrote about. However, no information on what the students had argued was provided, and often the tone of the papers was not clear from the identified topics. For example, looking at the papers written in a freshman English class, some themes written by students appear to propose a less-than-enlightened stance on racial issues (e.g., "Teaching the Negro to Be a Better Servant"), some imply the student had accepted the CIC concern for correcting the injustices of Southern society (e.g., "The Plight of our Negro Schools," "Equal Opportunities for White And Black"), but many make it impossible to gauge student attitudes (e.g., "The Problem of Segregation," "Race Discrimination, Legal and Illegal," "The Negro Mind").[116] Given that positive messages appeared to outweigh negative ones where the theme's argument could be determined, and that themes with a neutral title likely supported the goal of improving race relations that the Teachers College's program was meant to convey, it appears likely that the majority of themes reflected CIC values, but more sophisticated analysis of this point appears impossible.

Nevertheless, the report of the Teacher College's racial program in winter 1932 still provides rich information on how CIC efforts to promote better race relations were implemented on the ground. And what becomes apparent is the college's activities did mark an early stage of implementation of the CIC's educational program in which its goals as conveyed by Eleazer the previous year were not fully accepted. For one, the reasons President McAlister chose to implement the program appear to more reflect a desire to prevent blacks from continuing to be a burden on Southern society than Eleazer's new argument that, while improving the status of African Americans was certainly in the South's self-interest, an equally important reason to improve race relations was because blacks were an integral and valuable element of American and Southern society who were entitled to justice and fair

[115] McAlister, *Race Relations Course*, 7. The quotation came from a report written by professor A. J. Meadors describing a freshman English class.
[116] Ibid.

play. As McAlister observed in his introduction to the program, "The negro is here, what to do with him is the problem. The problem will not be solved in my life time nor in yours, but through education we can at least do something toward helping to make him more of an asset than a liability."[117] Also, at this early stage in the development of the Commission's educational program, proper curricular materials for teaching race relations had not yet been fully developed. Of the CIC's major educational pamphlets, only *America's Tenth Man* appears to have been launched; *Population Problems in the South*, the important discussion of the substantial changes necessary to Southern society, would not be published until 1937, nor *Understanding Our Neighbors* (the comprehensive curriculum in race relations) until 1940.[118] And the existing reading material on race relations as of 1932 was a decidedly mixed bag. A committee at the second Peabody conference (which did not include Eleazer or other CIC staff) had prepared a list of the 25 best books for use in race relations courses, five of which would be especially appropriate as textbooks.[119] Two of the five proposed textbooks presented a view of the American racial situation in keeping with CIC values, and perhaps not coincidentally both were written by African Americans: sociologist Charles S. Johnson's *The Negro in American Civilization* (1930) and historian and critic Benjamin Brawley's *A Social History of the American Negro* (1921). One book, *The Negro from Africa to America* (1924) by Eleazer's friend Willis D. Weatherford, did provide a generally positive treatment of African-American life and problems in the present day, but Carter G. Woodson sharply criticized its "unscientific" attribution of negative traits exhibited by American blacks today to the African past. And two of the committee's recommended books, Jerome Dowd's *The Negro in American Life* (1926) and sociologist Edward B. Reuter's *The American Race Problem* (1927), were condemned by

[117] Ibid, 4.
[118] Selig, *Americans All*, 176; Eleazer, *Understanding Our Neighbors*, back cover.
[119] Committee of Peabody Conference, "Twenty-Five Best Books: Suggestions for Race Relations Courses and Supplementary Reading," in *Report of Second Peabody Conference*, 54.

reviewers in the *Journal of Negro History* for using bad science and too often reinforcing negative stereotypes of blacks, although Reuter at least "manifests a tendency toward liberal-mindedness."[120]

Though the CIC's educational work clearly influenced the leaders of Arkansas State Teachers College to launch their program in race relations, the curricular content only reflected the Commission and Eleazer's approach to teaching race relations to a limited degree. *America's Tenth Man* did not appear in the Teachers College's report as one of the textbooks they used, and Woofter's *The Basis of Racial Adjustment* received only passing mention.[121] The texts used in Teachers College courses were therefore a mixed bag. The main sources for a race relations unit in a freshman-year Social Problems course include four books Eleazer would likely have approved of (Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery*, Robert R. Moton's *Finding a Way Out*, Weatherford's's *The Negro from Africa to America*, and Woofter's *The Basis of Racial Adjustment*) as well as *The American Negro Problem* by the prejudiced Jerome Dowd.[122] The primary text book for the sophomore-year Race Relations course was actually Dowd's fairly racist work *The Negro in American Life*, but the reference list (of which it appears students were required to read at least some of) contained a heavy representation of books by black authors including W.E. B. Du Bois, Robert R. Moton, Booker T. Washington, James Weldon Johnson, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Benjamin Brawley, Carter G. Woodson, Monroe Work, and Charles S. Johnson.[123] Perhaps most intriguing is that the professor of the Race Relations course included among the books for reference not just W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) but also his first autobiography

[120] Kenny Jackson Williams, "Brawley, Benjamin," in *The Concise Oxford Companion to African American Literature*, 45-46; C.G. Woodson, review of *The Negro from Africa to America* by W.D. Weatherford, *The Journal of Negro History* 9 (October 1924): 574-77; Unsigned review of *The Negro in American Life* by Jerome Dowd, *The Journal of Negro History* 12 (July 1927): 557-59; Unsigned review of *The American Race Problem* by E.B. Reuter, *The Journal of Negro History* 12 (July 1927): 559-61. The quotation from the Reuter review comes from p. 560.

[121] McAlister, *Race Relations Course*, 15, 28, 30. Woofter's book is only mentioned as one of 31 "references used in addition to standard histories" in a junior-year American history class, one of 18 general reference works in a sophomore-year course in the Social Science department on Race Relations, and (incorrectly titled as *The Basis of Social Adjustment*) as the last of eight identified "texts and references" used in the two-week race relations unit of a freshman-year course in Social Problems. Ibid., 28, 30, 2.

[122] Ibid., 30.

[123] Ibid., 28.

Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil (1920).[124] It would seem like a daring choice for a professor in the South to recommend that students read a book that not only bitterly denounced white racism but also critiqued capitalism, threatened a global race war, provided intimations of interracial sex, and suggested that God is black.[125] But the mention of *Darkwater* in one course aside, the inability of the Teachers College's race relations initiative to provide reading material that clearly reflected the CIC's agenda in 1932 suggests both the relative lack of books promoting good will between the races and the fact that the Commission had only recently begun its intense focus on transforming Southern society through its educational system.

With the CIC not having yet created many publications capable of strongly pushing its values, and with the president of the Arkansas State Teachers College not himself holding particularly liberal views of race relations that he had intended to emphasize, it is not surprising that the treatment of African Americans in the various classes in which they were studied generally reflected the attitude towards blacks of the professor in each class. Some courses at the Teachers College likely provided only minimal help in combating misperceptions about African Americans and in improving race relations in the South. For example, the students taking classes in the Education Department who served as supervisors of upper intermediate (probably 5th and 6th grade) children at the Training School taught a unit in "Negro Poetry." The main objective of this unit would certainly have sounded commendable from the CIC's perspective: "to attempt to develop more sympathy and understanding of the Negro through a study of his poetry."[126] And Eleazer and the CIC would also have welcomed that the Negro

[124] Ibid., 28. In the report, Du Bois's books were misidentified as *The Soul of Black Folk* and *Dark Water*, although these are not the only mistakes in the list on this page.
[125] Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality*, 11-23. *Darkwater* vividly described how the black peoples of the world believe that the "awful[ness]" of World War I "*is nothing to compare with that fight for freedom which black and brown and yellow men must and will make unless their oppression and humiliation and insult at the hands of the White World cease. The Dark World is going to submit to its present treatment just as long as it must and not one moment longer.*" To emphasize to his white readers the severity of the danger they faced if white racial domination was allowed to continue, Du Bois had this sentence in *Darkwater* stand out by placing it in italics. Du Bois, "The Souls of White Folk," *Darkwater*, 49.
[126] McAlister, *Race Relations Course*, 17, in box 4, folder 7 of RBE Papers, VUSC.

Poetry unit reported that the outcomes of the unit included recognition by the children that black poets "have contributed something of real merit" and especially that study of poetry by blacks produced in the children "broadened sympathies, and perhaps, more love with quickened desires for 'fair play' in contacts with the other race."[127]

However, the unit's resort to stereotypes to essentialize African Americans make it questionable whether it would have accomplished all of its goals. The primary focus of study was the poet Paul Laurence Dunbar, which the outline (ignoring such earlier black poets as Phillis Wheatley) dubiously described as "the first Negro poet of any merit."[128] In keeping with his pedagogical goal of encouraging serious student engagement and debate about race relations, Eleazer carefully chose poems for the CIC pamphlet *Understanding Our Neighbors* partly "for their significance as illustrating typical attitudes and reactions to the varying conditions which Negroes confront."[129] In contrast, the developers of the Negro Poetry unit for the Training School concentrated on presenting poems that were interpreted to reinforce to students common Southern stereotypes of African-American behavior. The only Dunbar works the 5th and 6th grade classes read were Dunbar's dialect poetry depicting slaves' antebellum plantation life; through targeted questions, the unit intended to convey that Dunbar's poetry revealed essential, and largely condescending, features of African-American character that persisted in the slaves' descendants in the present day.[130] Thus, among a number of questions that had

[127] Ibid. Other reported outcomes of this study of African-American poetry included "more ability to enter sympathetically and understandingly in the Negro's spiritual and mental life through his poetry" and "more appreciation for the beautiful found in contributions made by the Negro." Ibid.
[128] Ibid., 17. Dunbar's middle name is incorrectly spelled in the outline as "Lawrence."
[129] Eleazer, *Study Guide*, 8, in box 3 of RBE Papers, VUSC. Of course, the other selection criteria Eleazer used were the poems' "literary excellence and human interest." The varying attitudes toward life in the United States that Eleazer intended to convey through his poetry selections included "Dunbar's fine philosophy in 'Life'; [George M.] McCllellan's classic of forgiveness; [Claude] McKay's bitter defiance; [Joseph S.] Cotter [Jr.]'s gentle questioning; [Countee] Cullen's keen irony; James Weldon Johnson's ringing challenge." Ibid. See *Understanding Our Neighbor*'s section on Literature and Music in Eleazer, *Understanding Our Neighbors*, 14-21, in box 3 of RBE Papers, VUSC.
[130] In a quite telling contrast, *Understanding Our Neighbors* deemphasized Dunbar's dialect poetry, some of which did appear to reinforce the "plantation myth" of happy, care-free slaves. While acknowledging that these dialect poems were the most popular, Eleazer emphasized that "much of [Dunbar's] work, perhaps the best of it, is in conventional English." These standard-English poems often did include themes of race pride and opposition to

similar goals, the unit outline asked students to "show by reference to poems previously read, the Negro's tendency to dramatize." And by the children reading a lot of Dunbar's poems about antebellum slave life, "through it all we get a glimpse of the happy-go-lucky, trusting, child like Negro nature, enjoying the sunshine and fearing the shadow."[131]

Could an approach like this have met the unit's goals? It is possible, at least in part. On the one hand, the Negro Poetry unit did emphasize the high quality of the poetry the children were reading. The outline indicated that teachers should stress how "Dunbar reveals unusual skill in the use of the dramatic monologue" and depicts black people with "sympathetic though penetrating humor."[132] That the students would have also recognized that blacks were capable of demonstrating literary skill can also be deduced from the enjoyment these 5th and 6th grade children took from the poetry they read. The outline concluded that "up to the present, however, the interest and enthusiasm of both pupils and teachers [the college students at the Teachers College] have given no evidence of waning." After indicating that this point can be demonstrated by student comments (provided in supplementary material by the original author of this unit summary but not included in the formal *Race Relations Course* document), the report of the Negro poetry unit concluded with vivid language: "Of course, as is usual in a study like this, surprise and pleasure beget enthusiasm. To say that this study has been much worthwhile alike to pupils and teachers would be stating only the very obvious."[133] Given such

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racial discrimination that were more in keeping with the Commission's goals. Ibid., 15; Joanne M. Braxton, "Dunbar, Paul Laurence," in *The Concise Oxford Companion to African-American Literature*, 119-20.

[131] McAlister, *Race Relations Course*, 19, 20.

[132] Ibid., 20.

[133] Ibid., 20. The children were also asked to select their favorite poems, and the report noted that black poet Joseph S. Cotter, Jr.'s poem "Rain Music" "made an especial appeal." Ibid. See http://www.poetry-archive.com/c/rain_music.html for this poem. Despite the stereotype-perpetuating agenda the teachers of this unit were supposed to have drawn from their source material, the textbooks used appeared to have been standard, unbiased or racially progressive sources: *The Collected Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar* and anthologies of African-American poetry compiled by black poets James Weldon Johnson and Countee Cullen and by white liberal Robert T. Kerlin. Interestingly, the outline identified Johnson's anthology *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922) as "Book of American Poetry," but that more likely resulted from a typographical error than a hopeful Freudian slip. Ibid. For a revealing biography of Kerlin, see his eulogy in the *Journal of Negro History*, "Robert Thomas Kerlin," *The Journal of Negro History* 35 (April 1950): 230-32.

enthusiastic attitudes, and the likeability of the individuals portrayed in Dunbar's dialect poetry, it seems reasonable to assume that the children may have developed more warm or sympathetic feelings about African Americans and perhaps a greater desire to help blacks improve, on an individual basis, their status of living. And the depiction of African Americans as "happy-go-lucky" and "child like" may (perhaps unintentionally) have helped to counter the stereotypes of violent and sexually aggressive black males that contributed to an environment where lynching was tolerant. But whether reinforcing in children these blatant stereotypes about African American would truly have led to greater understanding and a desire to promote "fair play" between the races is a dubious proposition. Eleazer held as a fundamental tenet of his educational program that it was necessary to demonstrate to whites that blacks were not an inferior race and were readily capable of advancement; by then realizing both that African Americans could contribute to society and that a sense of justice made blacks entitled to their rights, white Southerners would thus begin to dismantle the systems of racial domination that hurt both blacks and Southern society. But the stereotypes perpetuated by the Negro Poetry unit would not likely have led the white students to recognize the abilities of the race as a whole, even if whites acknowledged that certain individual blacks could demonstrate intellectual worth. A paternalistic attitude might result, wanting to assist struggling African Americans (or the brightest members of the race) on an individual basis but still seeing the race overall as deserving to remain in the subordinate position they were filling in Southern society. Nevertheless, given how virulent were many of the anti-black sentiments in the South, even the modest attitudinal adjustments promoted by a racial education unit like this one would likely have contributed to improved race relations.

Another Teachers College class whose approach to race relations may have produced limited though not inconsequential gains in racial understanding was the project launched by the Art Department, which like the Negro Poetry unit focused on lessons that could be learned from antebellum plantation life. The final project for the art students was the creation of an "enormous display …

covering a very large table" of antebellum plantation life. But unlike the Negro Poetry unit's efforts to use slave life as a means to discover the traits present in modern blacks, the purpose of the Art project was to pursue the likely more beneficial (if still very inadequate) goal of presenting the paternalism of master-slave relations as a model for race relations today.[134] The author of the Art Department's report acknowledged that Southern slavery was "fundamentally wrong" and not always as benign as it was depicted in the display, but nevertheless argued that such an idealized (but certainly often true) presentation of slavery was appropriate because "it is the highest development of a state of society which shows the possibilities of its accomplishment."[135] Thus, although the cotton fields were realistically depicted ("real cotton was used"), the position of "the overseer was eliminated."[136] The "crowning touch" of this scene of plantation life, which was set aside to give it particular emphasis in the display, was a special cabin that portrayed the white mistress caring for a sick black child and thus showed "the maternalism which so endowed [endeared?] their white mistress to her slaves."[137]

The point of this display was to demonstrate that the way to foster "more cordial relations between the white and negro races" was to restore the bonds of loyalty that had tied white masters to black slaves in antebellum times, bonds that were proven (as Eleazer had also argued in *America's Tenth Man*) by the "faithful service" rendered by slaves to their master's family during the Civil War and even Reconstruction.[138] The way to restore harmonious relations between the races in modern times was to promote conditions so that the races could once again "trust each other," and that by "convincing [blacks], as the old 'Massas' did[,] that we are his friend, we can without any hint of social equali[ty] aid in raising him to a higher level, and assist him in being a self respecting and useful

[134] McAlister, *Race Relations Course*, 2, 24. The quotation comes from McAlister's introduction.
[135] Ibid. 23, 24. In discussing the bad side of slavery, the Art Department report's author made an intriguing observation: "The evils of the system [of slavery] may find a parallel in the graft and injustice of some modern institutions and governmental functions although they have a moral right to exist, which slavery had not." One wishes for more information on what institutions and functions the author was referring to for the light they may shed on the author's perception of contemporary society. Ibid., 23.
[136] Ibid., 22.
[137] Ibid., 23.
[138] Ibid., 23-24.

citizen."[139] To the credit of the author of this unit, the means by which whites should prove they are the friend of blacks go beyond mere paternalistic aid to uplift individual African Americans so as to encompass efforts to benefit the race as a whole by promoting important changes to the mores and legal structure of Southern society: "giving ourselves unselfishly to his betterment in civic life, … showing an interest in his affairs, … working for legislation which will be to his advantage, educationally and otherwise, and … elimination [of] the half contemptuous attitude expressed in the word 'nigger.'"[140] This approach by itself echoed some of the arguments Eleazer would later make in *Understanding Our Neighbors*. He too made use of examples from earlier times to argue that contemporary Southerners should "emulate" the "sense of obligation to Negroes" embodied in "Southern tradition," and his efforts also aimed to promote harmonious race relations and build up self-respect among African Americans.[141] But Eleazer's strategy to educate Southerners into supporting fundamental restructuring of Southern society rested on employing multiple arguments, not only an appeal to Southern paternalism but also proofs of the equal abilities and progress of African Americans and demonstrations of their valuable contributions to the South and the United States. It is questionable whether an appeal to paternalism alone would have been sufficient to bring about the report author's (likely less far-reaching) reforms, and one must also consider the larger question of implementation. Did classes dedicated to creating this display of plantation life include lecture or discussion meant to lead student to the message the unit's designers wanted it to convey? And how clear would this didactic purpose have been to the larger group of students who saw the display? Nevertheless, the overall tenor of the Art Department's project suggested that it too may have contributed to better racial attitudes among white students, even if these more enlighted beliefs did not go nearly as far as Eleazer would have preferred.

[139] Ibid., 24.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Eleazer, *Understanding Our Neighbors*, 32, in box 3 of RBE Papers, VUSC.

Views likely more in keeping with what Eleazer would have endorsed were expressed in the courses that studied African Americans in the Social Science department. Despite using Dowd's *The Negro in American Life* as a primary textbook, the teaching outline used in the full-semester course entitled Race Relations suggest it covered the important points the CIC would have wanted it to convey. The unit on racial "problems peculiar to the South" included discussion on "economic peonage" and "lynching and other outrages" while stressing the "progress [of the black farmer] towards economic independence. Most telling was the outline's handling of black public education. It did identify one of the problems in this field as resting in a black character trait, a tactic Eleazer consistently avoided, but it is unclear from the outline whether the professor would have attributed this "lack of idealism among Negroes" to an inherent characteristic of African Americans or to the situation in which they found themselves. Most of the problems the outline considered as inhibiting black public education, though, were faults of the Southern system and not of black personality: "inadequacy of teacher, equipment" and "low standard of living." And that the syllabus identified one of these problems as being "maldistribution of public funds" suggested that the course aimed to teach that at least some of the problems blacks faced were the result of injustices in the structure of Southern society that could only be alleviated through fundamental, systematic reform. Interestingly, though *Understanding Our Neighbors* avoided virtually any mention of segregation, the syllabus for Race Relations tackled the subject head-on by providing for discussion of segregation as a "problem" in both the North and the South. Unfortunately, the outline did not state what made segregation a problem, and it reveals one of the units of the course as being "proposed solutions of the Negro Problem" without indicating what those were.[142]

[142] McAlister, *Race Relations Course*, 27. This outline was likely written by Maude Carmichael, the professor of the class (who attended the second Peabody conference in 1932, but not the conference in 1931 that would have preceded her teaching of this course). Ibid., 26; Eleazer, *[First] Peabody Conference*, 75; Eleazer, *Second Peabody Conference*, 60. The professor appeared to hold optimistic views of the future of American race relations, as the final unit of the course was entitled "a Hope future for the Negro," and its topics consisted of "biological and

The two-week unit on race relations in the Teachers College's Social Problems course also emphasized many of the points the CIC considered important. The introduction to the unit, in observing how the North was looking to the South for guidance on how to deal with race relations, stressed that a proper solution to the race problem would result in the African American "becom[ing] a more equal contributor to and sharer in our national life."[143] Such language echoed not only Eleazer's view that blacks were a valuable member of society but also that such contributions should not be one-sided; blacks have a right to an equal claim to the benefits of American civic life, something that would not be expected of an inferior race. Students were asked to discuss "negroes who have attained distinction in the field of business, the church, education, government, politics, journalism, painting, poetry, music, drama and science."[144] By ordering the list in this way, the unit prioritized most of the fields seen as particularly valuable to American society, including ones like politics and government which many white Southerners would have considered inappropriate for black participation; in contrast, fields like music where whites would be more likely to recognize African-American contributions were deemphasized. The unit did not limit itself to studying outstanding black individuals, but also examined overall black progress in property ownership, business and occupational attainment, and education.[145] The tone of the outline's discussion of voting suggests disapproval of the South's efforts at disfranchisement: "Constitutional Rights are given the negro in regard to suffrage? Show how the southern states by the attitude and laws have prevented the negro from voting."[146] The outline does suggest two areas in which the professor of the Social Problems course may not have been as possessed

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economic arrival assured[,] friendliness between the white and black races[,] social, economic and political adjustment[, and] agencies and fund provided for the uplift of the Negro." McAlister, *Race Relations Course*, 27

[143] Ibid., 30. Along these lines, one of the topics for discussion in the unit was "the importance of the negro to southern economic life." One cannot know exactly how the professor would have answered the follow-up question, "Is his contribution as great today?", but given the goals of this unit, one would not expect the answer would lower students' opinion of African Americans. Ibid.

[144] Ibid.

[145] Ibid., 30, 31.

[146] Ibid., 30. The unit within Social Problems, like the Race Relations course, also tackles head-on the issue of segregation by similarly identifying one topic of discussion as "the Problem of segregation as practical [sic] by the north; by the sou[th]," but again exactly how this was approached is unclear. Ibid.

with enlightened racial attitudes as did Eleazer; the discussion of "the Mulatto as a social problem" appears to indicate a distinct disapproval of intermarriage and interracial relationships, while *Understanding Our Neighbors* merely argued, without explicitly condemning the practice, that intermarriage was a red herring employed by demagogues.[147] Also, though *Understanding Our Neighbors* supported black expression of race pride as a means for blacks to strive to the heights of which they were capable, the Teachers College unit indicated greater skepticism of the practice by calling for the class to discuss "the advantages and dangers in the growing race pride."[148] This outline is also unfortunately vague on what solution to the race problem the students would likely draw from this discussion, as it merely identified four "proposals" to the problem that the class should subject to "critical examination." These four suggested solutions were "segregation, colonization in Africa, Amalgamation, and Race Equality except in social status," but there was no indication of how the discussion proceeded from there.[149] If the professor was serious in fostering "critical examination," though, than this unit fulfilled the CIC's goal that enlightened racial attitudes are best fostered by students bringing their own inquiry skills to an examination of the facts rather than through propaganda on the part of the teacher.

Given his support for progressive teaching methods, including the need for applying what one has learned to the real world, Eleazer would likely not have been surprised that among the most effective activities for fostering sympathetic racial attitudes were those cases where Teachers College students interacted with members of the black community. The professor of a freshman English unit on race relations remarked that student visits to black colleges, combined with reading and class

[147] Ibid.; Eleazer, *Understanding Our Neighbors*, 31-32. The full description of the "Mulatto" topic in the outlines reads: "The Mulatto as a social problem; the attitude of each race toward him; Discuss the probability of his decrease in numbers and importance relative to the pure black." McAlister, *Race Relations Course*, 30.
[148] Eleazer, *Understanding Our Neighbors*, 32; McAlister, *Race Relations Course*, 31. The unit's discussion of the race pride topic poses a question whose meaning appears unclear: "Do you think that the white race attitude [towards the growing race pride] should differ from that of the white neighbor of the negro[?]" Ibid.
[149] Ibid. The outline from 1932 concluded by identifying "agencies interested in Race Betterment" as consisting of "religious organization, educational funds, Negro organizations, [and the] Interracial Commission." Ibid.

discussion, "increased our interest and enthusiasm until the expression of our ideas and beliefs in a term theme was simply the out-pouring of our inmost thoughts."[150] A social psychology class had each student "[interview] businessmen or negroes or both attempting to discover the attitudes of each race toward the other." Though there was no word on whether the students understood that a businessman could also be black, the findings showed "rather definitely that the white race is gratifying its wish for recognition or superiority in its contacts with the negro." The results may have hit home starkly to students that where economic relations were concerned, harmony between the races was an illusion.[151]

Among the black-white contacts, two tree-planting programs were noteworthy. The third and fourth grades of the Training School visited a black school in a neighboring community for a tree-planting ceremony, in which "different pupils, both white and negro," worked together to shovel the soil. After they, they learned together as both black and white students head a talk that "led all to a greater appreciation of the trees and forests."[152] An even more consequential tree-planting ceremony was held with the members of the Race Relations course. The prior fall, the Daughters of the American Revolution had gone to every college and public school campus in Conway to host a patriotic ceremony and plant a George Washington elm tree, all campuses that is "with the exception of the negro school." Presumably to correct this injustice and reinforce that black students were patriotic Americans too, the Race Relations course resolved to organize a ceremony and planting of a George Washington elm tree on the campus of the black school as well. The program was held at the black school on the day after George Washington's birthday in 1932, in a ceremony in which both black and white students were regaled with a speech on Washington as a Citizen by a Teachers College professor. Students and faculty at both the black school and the white college participated in the program, which was "worked out by the [Race Relations] class." Perhaps reflecting their acceptance of the development of black race pride,

[150] Ibid., 5.
[151] Ibid., 8.
[152] Ibid., 10. The summary may have been written by Training School teacher Mrs. Boardman.

the ceremony included a performance of "The Negro National Anthem" by the students of the black school. The white college students and the black public school students then joined together for the singing of two patriotic songs, "Arkansas" and "America."[153] Symbolically, the ceremony appeared to be a very effective way to put into practice Eleazer's conviction that African Americans were "America's Tenth Man," an indispensable contributor to American society and not an alien presence.

The race relations program at Arkansas State Teachers College featured extensive additional interactions between the white and black communities of Conway. Teachers College professors led extension courses for black teachers, to promote a "better grade of teaching" so that the quality of teaching in black schools would match the quality of the recently opened Rosenwald Fund buildings. The black teachers taking these extension courses specifically requested that Maude Carmichael, the professor of the Race Relations course, give a session on improving race relations. In addition, Homer F. Hess, the Head of the Teachers College Music Department, went over to the black public school to form a choir. The African-American students went over to the Teachers College to give a concert in a performance "enjoyed not only by the students of the college, but by the people of the town who packed the house." A resolution and a small gift were presented by a black school teacher and an African-American dentist after the program in appreciation of the work Hess and the Teachers College had done in promoting "a better understanding between the races."[154] Though the particulars of the curriculum of the Teachers College program may not have fully met the goals of the CIC, the overall initiative seemed to be serving its purpose in fostering more harmonious race relations.

The most telling evidence for how interaction with members of the black community may have affected student attitudes came from reports of visits of white students to black schools to offer health advice. The 3rd and 4th grade students of the Training School went to a neighboring black

[153] Ibid., 3-4, 26. The black school was likely an elementary school. The Negro National Anthem is James Weldon Johnson and John Rosamond Johnson's song "Lift Every Voice and Sing."
[154] Ibid., 3, 4, 12, 25.

school to present a program of music, drama, and art that presented health lessons. The white children, who were very hospitably received, came away quite impressed. Some of the white children remarked that "I didn't know they [black children] knew so much" and "They surely can write well." Others observed that "I didn't know the negroes had such nice schools" and "I wish we had as nice a school bus to ride in as they have." From the CIC's perspective, it was very welcome that the children were impressed by black accomplishments, even if Commission staff would probably have preferred that students not gain the impression that the status quo was beneficial to blacks. Nevertheless, Eleazer might have have been happy that one pillar of the myth of black inferiority had been broken, and an explanation of the actual facts about racial conditions could come later.[155]

Another very helpful interracial contact came for the Teachers College's Home Economics Department. The Nutrition class of ten female college seniors visited Conway's black public school over five Friday afternoon to give talks and present posters about various topics related to health, nutrition, and hygiene. As the professor observed, "Each member of the class made one visit to the colored school and many of them seemed surprised to find how neat and clean things were and how polite and attentive the children appeared." The white students' likely misconceptions that blacks were dull and uninteresting, at a lower stage of civilizational attainment and not capable of succeeding in the wider society, were being shattered. As the professor of the Nutrition class astutely observed, "I rather imagine that the nutrition girls got more in increased interest in colored people than the children received in knowledge of nutrition."[156]

Teachers College President McAlister considered his school's race relations program a great success. "There is no end to the good that such a study will do," he wrote. "It reach[es] every part of our state. We have heard from it in all sections." He then added, "We expect to repeat the study each

[155] Ibid., 10-11.
[156] Ibid., 21. The author of this report who presumably was also the professor of the class was Lucy E. Torson.

year."[157] Looking back on the curriculum with the benefit of time, we can see the limitations to this program. The Teachers College race relations curriculum represented an early stage in the Commission's educational initiatives, before they had prepared an extensive selection of textbook materials and as their vision for the purposes of racial education was just getting refined and promulgated. But even though the CIC's influence was less at the Teachers College than it would be for many later race relations classes and units, the value of the Teachers College program was not negligible. Students learning from the most enlightened teachers would have been exposed to many of the points Eleazer considered most important, including awareness of the structural barriers in place to black advancement and the need for society-wide interventions to remove these racist obstacles. But even the students at the Teachers College who would have learned about race relations from teachers who maintained negative stereotypes about blacks would likely still have emerged from their course work with increased sympathy for members of the race and even perhaps an awareness of African-American accomplishments and need for white help in overcoming obstacles not of their making. Implementation of race relations study at the Arkansas State Teachers College would still have led to a better understanding between the races, and from Eleazer's perspective subsequent implementations in public schools and college across the South would likely only be better.

We can get a glimpse of what such a later implementation of a race relations unit might look like by examining the outline of a unit on "Our Negro Neighbors" taught in the spring of 1938 (as well as a school newspaper article about the unit). This particular unit was part of courses in Modern Problems taught at Girls' High School in Sumter, South Carolina. To some extent, this unit from a Deep South state followed the pattern examined earlier from social science classes at Arkansas State Teachers College. The students examined black progress since the Civil War; researched prominent black l eaders; discussed political, social, economic, and educational problems faced by African Americans, including

[157] Ibid., 4.

"handicaps" experienced by black schools and "discriminatory laws" that affected black "political status"; and studied "points in suggested negro program." Class discussion appeared to be an important component of the course, and again the students taking the unit applied its lessons to their own community. Some students investigated recreational opportunities available in Sumter in black children, and others contacted the county to inquire as to what was being done to prevent or treat tuberculosis in African Americans. At least one Modern Problems class visited a newly opened nursery school for black children, and the class planned to provide materials so that the pre-schoolers in the school could create scrapbooks.[158]

The title of the unit, "Our Negro Neighbors," suggests that the unit endeavored to promote the same spirit of good will and interracial cooperation that was the focus of the Arkansas State Teachers College program six year s earlier. But differences in the syllabi between those earlier courses and the one in Sumter indicate the greater influence the Commission's vision for race relations study had on the later unit. Most notably, the 1938 unit on race relations relied almost entirely on CIC publications for its reading material. All students were assigned to read the entirety of *America's Tenth Man* (along with a chapter of a sociology textbook), most students were expected to read the full pamphlet *Population Problems in the South*, and some students read selections from *Singers in the*

[158] "Unit VI: Our Negro Neighbors," [1938], in box 4, folder 12 of RBE Papers, VUSC; "Classes in Modern Problems Visit Negro Nursing School," *Sumter High News*, 9 March 1938, 1, in box 4, folder 12 of RBE Papers, VUSC. Girls' High School was apparently a division of Sumter High School. One of the teachers of Modern Problems at Girls' High School, although it is not clear if this is the one who wrote the unit outline, was Julia Reynolds. Besides referring to "handicaps" in "Negro Schools," the unit outline also ambiguously refers to "Aids." As with other syllabi, we are left with some ambiguity as to exactly what was taught. The classes examined "reasons for" black "crime and health rates" without identifying what reasons were provided, and the reference to studying "points in suggested negro program" is vague as to exactly what solutions were proposed or supported. Nevertheless, the dominance of CIC materials among the unit textbooks suggests that the students would at least have been exposed to the reasons for black crime and health rates that were grounded in the structural racism in Southern society, not in black culture or in innate black character deficiencies.

Dawn and *Southland Spirituals* (Eleazer-compiled collections of black poetry and black spirituals, respectively).[159]

The most revealing indication of the impact CIC ideas had on this unit was the heavy emphasis placed on reading *Population Problems in the South*. This was the CIC pamphlet (later made part of *Understanding Our Neighbors*) that vividly described the problems faced by contemporary African Americans, made clear how these problems were the result of structural racism in Southern society, and emphasized that solutions to these problems had to come through fundamental reform of Southern governance and systems. The questions that Sumter students were expected to answer or discuss after reading *Population Problems in the South* indicates that their teachers had also accepted the formulation laid out above of what students were supposed to learn from the pamphlet: "Read this entire pamphlet and list common injustices and discriminations against negro citizens. What practical measures are needed to correct these?"[160]

Besides revealing endorsement of the CIC approach that held that societal transformation and not just aid for individual advancement were necessary to solve the race problem, the use in the *Population Problems* question of the phrase "negro citizens" is also telling. As an essential component of promoting improved race relations, the designers of the Sumter race relations unit (as did the staff of the CIC) wanted to stress the innate Americanness and humanity of black people. One particularly interesting exercise undertaken by some of the students in the Modern Problems classes (and likely then shared with the rest of their class) was intended to drive home this point. These students were asked to read excerpts from "A Charge to Negro Boys and Girls," the commencement

[159] "Unit VI: Our Negro Neighbors." The sociology textbook used was *Our Changing Social Order* (1934), by Ruth Wood Gavian, Arthur Amos Gray, and Ernest Rutherford Groves.

[160] Ibid. In addition, all students taking this Modern Problems unit would have to answer (whether in writing or through class discussion is unclear) the questions "What do you think white people can and should do to help establish peaceful and friendly race relations? Which race has the larger share of responsibility for this?" Given that the first question focused on whites, and that most students answering this question would also be reading *Population Problems in South* and know of the systemic obstacles the white South put in place to prevent black advancement, it is almost certain that the expected answer for the second question would be "the white race." Ibid.

address given by Robert R. Moton at Tuskegee Institute in 1912 in which he encouraged the graduates to practice the virtues of simplicity, self-respect, and courage in their lives. Rather than take the obvious approach to a Southern audience of using this speech as justification for an approach to race relations based on Tuskegee accomodationism, the designers of the unit challenged the students with a far more intriguing question: "Do you find any advice in this which might equally well be given to white boys and girls[?]" By stressing that the similarities between blacks and whites might be greater than their differences, the unit architects shared with Eleazer a desire to promote mutual cooperation with both races working for black advancement on the basis of their shared humanity.[161]

Implementation of the CIC's educational programs varied greatly among the different institutions in which race relations units were employed, but most of the work did appear to advance at least some of the Commission's goals. But assessing what effect these efforts to improve race relations had on the students who experienced them is naturally difficult. The student newspaper for Sumter High School actually did provide information about the impact of the race relations unit of the Modern Problems courses: "The girls seem to like this type of study and say that these units have been helpful to them. It has enlightened them on certain subjects and enables them to have a more impartial outlook on important factors in a normal American life."[162] This description is unfortunately rather vague, but the next section will provide other ways to attempt to measure how the study of race relations affected student attitudes.

Impact

[161] Ibid.; Robert Moton, "A Charge to Negro Boys and Girls," in *Readings in American Democracy*, edited by Thames Ross Williamson (Boston: D. C. Heath & Co., 1922), 305-07, available at http://books.google.com/books?id=O1RCAAAAIAAJ. Granted, given all the efforts Eleazer put to prove black equality through the rapid progress of the race since the Civil War, he would likely not have welcomed Moton's statement in the speech that blacks were an "undeveloped, backward race." Ibid., 306. Moton became principal of Tuskegee Institute following the death of Booker T. Washington in 1915. Interestingly, a group of other students in the class were also asked to provide advice to white children, albeit for a very different purpose: "Draw up a code of conduct for white boys and girls which would make for better race relations." "Unit VI: Our Negro Neighbors."

[162] "Classes in Modern Problems," 1.

Although the exact effects on education on the beliefs and attitudes of individuals are hard to determine, one can begin to get at this question in the case of the CIC's educational initiatives by looking at published surveys and questionnaires, analyzing the attitudes expressed in student papers, and looking for quotations about their completed courses or units by teachers and students. In the 1931-32 school year, 21 students taking a class about African Americans at Furman University in South Carolina completed a questionnaire about their attitudes toward blacks at both the beginning and end of the course, being requested (although perhaps not anonymously) in the first questionnaire to "express their raw personal opinions, no matter how unfavorable they might be" and in the second "to make only such statements as reflected their real attitudes."[163] The results were reported at the second Peabody conference. The effect of the students' background on their answers is not clear reading the findings now; being from the Deep South, the students may be expected to hold "reactionary" views, yet perhaps the presence of raw prejudice may have been militated by the fact that the students were college attendees in 1931-32 and thus were likely of higher socioeconomic status than the average South Carolinian.[164] Although our ability to interpret the findings today are limited by our lack of any information about the content of the course, the findings nevertheless suggest that student gains in racial understanding and sympathy as a result of the course were impressive.

Perhaps the most noteworthy finding of the questionnaires is how extreme the students' racism and ignorance were at the beginning of the course. When asked to write 25 or 50 words reflecting their "immediate reaction to the word 'Negro,'" responses included "stupid, lazy, unlikable, dishonest, cowardly, mean; the lowest form of human beings; a piece of fallen humanity; a person who needs character education; people black in color and in character; was made as a servant only; leave them alone." The students' proposed "ultimate disposition" for blacks "given plenty of time"

[163] Trueblood, "Effect of Race Relations Course," 21.
[164] Ibid. The quoted word is from the report, which stated that "in the light of this [Civil War] background it is entirely natural that the typical attitude of South Carolinians toward Negroes should be reactionary." Ibid.

were “back to Africa; colonization on reservations in America; education, with much stricter segregation; let them alone.” Views had shifted substantially by the end of the class. The top choice for “ultimate disposition” of blacks was now “bi-racial development,” and the list of characteristics immediately associated with the word “Negro” included “a grossly mistreated race; sympathy for the Negro and shame for the white race; neither love nor hate, but tolerance and fair play; the facts are very startling; give him a fair chance; we should be our brother’s keeper. Two students said: ‘He is still repulsive; he is still black;’ but even they added: ‘Give him a chance.’”[165]

Although students even in the first questionnaire “were partly fair, at least” when asked “should white people always be given ‘jobs’ in preference to Negroes,” their initial answers to questions about black education, living standards, and “part in the government” suggest the traditional Southern antipathy to black schooling, economic advancement, and political activity were still strong. The majority of students in the first questionnaire wanted to limit the amount of education blacks received, with comments like “only a very elementary education, with a little more for leaders” and “a little learning makes them big in their own eyes” typical. Following the course, students were more willing to say blacks should be educated as much or almost as much as whites, but some still wanted to direct black education towards vocational training. The majority of students initially did not feel that blacks should “have as high living standards as whites,” with comments including “they are inferior in nature; they couldn’t become adjusted; this would tend to make the races equal; they do not need as high living standards; they are not sufficiently wealthy and cultured.” The “predominant” answer to this question by the end of the course had shifted to “yes,” with students now remarking “it is desirable; much higher than they now have; as high as they can reach; they need it; relatively so; for what reasons must their standards be lower than those of whites?; it would help the white people to lift their standards yet further.” Opinions about black role in governance also shifted, from very negative to slightly positive.

[165] Ibid., 21, 25.

And students even after the second questionnaire were still not ready to identify many grounds upon which blacks and whites were equal, and all still declared the average black "inferior" to the average white. However, the areas in which educational, economic, legal, and political rights, and most students even before taking the class attributed black inferiority to an "inferior background" rather than "inherent inferiority."[166] The overall tenor of the results in the last two paragraphs suggest that the antipathy towards African Americans at least in this part of the South in the early 1930s was so strong that race relations education truly did have a long way to go, and that even new attitudes that still fell far short of what the CIC hoped still may have represented substantial improvement in Southern whites' understanding and sympathy toward blacks.

A few additional points are worth making from this study. One, as always, teacher attitude plays an important role in how students' beliefs change. The study's professor wrote, "An honest study of the subject [of social equality] led all the students, as well as the instructor, to conclude that social intermixture (especially that of sex, whether matrimonial or illicit), is undesirable" but that blacks deserve "more justice in everyday matters and in legal procedures and more opportunity in schools, in industry, and in other phases of the social order."[167] What these and the earlier responses about education, government, and living standards suggest is that the students of this course had gone from merely desiring to treat blacks better on an individual basis to supporting certain governmental measures to improve the overall condition of the black race. Finally, despite the one quotation above about higher black living standards helping whites and the professor's conclusion that "prejudices … will also hold the white man down,"[168] what is striking about the reported findings is that the motivation for every other wish to improve the condition of blacks fell into the category of promoting justice and human decency. Even in an environment as virulently racist as this one was, it did appear possible to

[166] Ibid., 22-23, 22, 24-25, 23, 23-24, 24.
[167] Ibid., 24.
[168] Ibid., 26.

change students' minds about race relations without the course emphasizing white self-interest to do so.

Deeper insight into how students coming from a community with strongly engrained racist beliefs experienced course work on race relations can be found through study of the race relations unit of Clinton High School in Mississippi. The advanced civics class club (composed of members of the advanced civics class and a few other interested students) met in 1937 to discuss race relations. Club time was devoted to studying the CIC pamphlets *America's Tenth Man*, *Population Problems in the South*, *The Quest for Understanding*, and *Singers in the Dawn*. A white professor considered an expert in race relations spoke before the club, and many club members traveled to nearby Jackson to hear George Washington Carver speak at a scientific conference. The club planned to resume study next year, at which point the club planned to devote more time to "helping Negroes of our community," including students of a soon-to-open black school. The program chairman concluded, "I think that there is not one of the students who has not a much broadened outlook on race relations in regard to the Negro. We have, indeed, learned that 'America's Tenth Man' needs help and that we of the white race and the future leaders of this country have a large responsibility in the matter." Fortunately, the fact that the students were asked to write a paragraph assessing the effect of these racial efforts allows us to see how study of race relations was understood on the ground in one particular Deep South school.[169]

The program chairman submitted the paragraphs from seven of the 45 students in the club to the CIC. One thing that is immediately apparent was what a low opinion students had of blacks previously. Lucile Ryan reported that "before this study I thought of the Negro as an ignorant indecent part of humanity and classed him in the same group as animals." Prior to club discussion, Ann Scott "subconsciously thought of the Negro as an unimaginative, stolid, ignorant race of people who were to be treated just as one chose, and who had no rights beyond those that they exercised when they were

[169] Dixie Standifer and J. M. Lassetter, "Race Relation Unit: High School, Clinton, Miss.," 1937, 1, 2, in box 4, folder 11 of RBE Papers, VUSC. The quotations are on p. 2.

slaves." The student consistently reported that following their racial education, their "viewpoint" had been "broadened a very great deal," their "opinion" has entirely changed," and a "great light" has been "thrown" on the "Negro problem."[170]

Student attitudes entering "the impartial discussion of this subject" affected the direction such discussions would take. Because the students entered their club's discussion with such a low opinion of blacks, it became a breakthrough in improving race relations just for a student like Alpheus Vaggener to come to the conclusion that "I have found that the Negro does not have to be a liability to our country." Thus, the students were most attracted to the arguments in the CIC curricular materials that showed "that the Negro has played and is still playing an active part in developing our nation." The high achievements of leading blacks gave student Marjorie Stuart a sense of relief: "I have learned that even though there are few geniuses that Dr. Carver is certainly one of them. If he could accomplish what he has, then there must be thousands who could do something helpful the world." Presumably, the chance to hear Carver speak personally more dramatically affected Marjorie's perception than anything she could have read. The students in Clinton High School's civics club were certainly capable of showing sympathy to African Americans, but recognition of the humanity of blacks often returned back to the issue of how to make African Americans assets to society: "It is unfair, not only to the poor old Negro tenant farmer, to keep him a semi-slave, but to the whole country. Every thing must be done to right this wrong to society."[171]

The solution to the "Negro problem" was education, in terms of both improving educational opportunities for African Americans and providing race relations education to high school students. "The children of today are the men of tomorrow," after all, "and then it will be our problem." The students appeared to recognize that the problems blacks faced (especially as related to "just how bad" the conditions in African-American schools were) were larger than could be solved by individual

[170] "Change of Student Attitudes," 1937, 1-3, in box 4, folder 10 of RBE Papers, VUSC.
[171] Ibid., 1-2.

effort, but they appeared more comfortable recommending continued education of whites about race relations than explicitly endorsing the specific structural reforms to Southern society they would have read about in their pamphlets. The students at Clinton High School maintained some ambivalence about the role of African Americans in the United States. The same student who praised the genius of Carver "learned … how an elementary education would benefit the Negro and … realize[d] just how much the Negro needs that 'common sense' education." The student who originally felt that blacks should have no more rights than slaves did came to "realize [that blacks] are entitled to express their individuality" but felt the question remained open as to "how far-reaching should the rights of the Negro be?" And she expressed the same faith in the power of education as the rest of her classmates: "I believe that a continuation of the study of this problem will eventually reveal a solution." The students of Clinton High School's civics club had accepted the Commission's faith in education as the best means to improve race relations, but they were not yet ready to draw the conclusions from this instruction (about the need for structural reform of Southern society) that the CIC was hoping for. Perhaps when they resumed study next year.[172]

It is fortunate that the Eleazer Papers also contain a number of student papers, submitted by public school students as part of the contests the CIC had sponsored, that allow us to explore the impact of racial education in a different way. The education materials in the Eleazer files include 20 student papers, including multiple papers from two high schools (located in West Blocton, Alabama and Biloxi, Mississippi), papers labeled as prize winners in the high school competition, and

[172] Ibid. Some of the quotations from Clinton High School students found their way into the CIC's publicity for their educational programs. It is interesting to see how Eleazer would massage the quotations to convey his preferred message. According to CIC publicity materials, Clinton student Homer Peden remarked, "The study of this problem has awakened us to the fact that we must do something about it." What Homer really wrote expressed far less conviction about political action and far more unease about the continued presence of blacks in American society; the fact that his club had been awakened to was actually that "since we have the Negro and will probably continue having him in our midst, we must do something about it." [Eleazer], "Typical High School Projects," 2, in box 4, folder 11 of RBE Papers, VUSC; "Change of Student Attitudes," 1.

several other assorted student papers.[173] The caveats should be noted that students writing papers may be merely restating what their teacher (or the organization sponsoring a contest) want to hear and not expressing their true beliefs, and that the student papers present in Eleazer's files likely do not represent a random sample of the hundreds of thousands of papers written for CIC-supported race relations courses and units. In fact, because the submitters of the papers would presumably have felt that such essays reflected the values the CIC was looking for, many of the student papers present in the Eleazer Papers likely represent what the Commission may have regarded as the best demonstrations of enlightened student attitudes towards race relations.[174] Analysis of the papers produces a number of interesting findings:

1. Though the CIC contests ostensibly dealt with *America's Tenth Man*, its pamphlet on African-American history, students frequently drew on a variety of sources for their reports, so the papers generally brought up contemporary civic problems even though they were not the major focus of the pamphlet. Many of the student essays submitted for the contest did not in fact deal with history. And even those that did so regularly discussed civic problems or made it clear how the lessons of history had relevance for the issues blacks were facing in the present. For example, a student essay included in the West Blocton folder described African-American political accomplishments in such glowing terms that the only reasonable conclusion that could be drawn was that blacks deserve to participate fully in the political life of the South: "In politics the Negro may be highly commended for the sincere and fruitful effort which he had made to fulfill the obligations of citizenship. Facing tremendous handicaps in the

[173] The reviewed student papers can all be located in box 4, folders 10 and 12 of the Eleazer Papers. For reasons explained below, the six Biloxi papers and one paper by a student-teacher that also served as an outline for an elementary-school unit on Africa were not subject to full analysis. (The latter paper was the only one of the twenty not written by a high school student.) It is likely that the Eleazer Papers contain additional examples of student essays, most likely prize winners from both public school and college students, in its collection of CIC press releases (box 2, folders 15-17 and box 3, folders 1-2).

[174] But certainly many student papers submitted to the CIC would not reflect the organization's values, for a number of possible reasons including presence in the Deep South skewing understanding of what the CIC endorsed, teachers or professors not fully on board with the CIC's mission, courses or units using reading materials other than CIC-provided pamphlets, or students sending papers to the CIC on their own without a full understanding of what the Commission was seeking.

exercise of his rights of suffrage, exploited in many cases by selfish politicians, misled on numerous occasions by cleverly concocted propaganda, he has nevertheless, in most cases, consistently and effectively followed the dictates of his conscience, insofar as he is able, and has done his part in the maintenance of good government. … Under the most adverse conditions [black men and women] have taken a part in civic affairs of which any race might well be proud."[175] The extensive degree to which much public school instruction on race relations looked beyond history also suggests that the CIC's message about the need to structural transformations of Southern society likely spread wider than just the circulation of its pamphlets related to civic problems would imply.

2. Most of the papers went beyond individual aid to blacks to discuss the disadvantages they faced in Southern society and the need for society-wide or governmental efforts to improve the position of the race as a whole. One paper criticized Southern efforts to limit black participation in New Deal programs and concluded that "self-interest, simple justice, and common sense demand the South give the Negro a New Deal."[176] Another by an Oklahoman student called for whites to "remove all unnecessary obstructions [to black advancement] and race prejudice from our midst" and further urged reform of Southern newspapers so as to share positive news about blacks and to avoid conveying the impression that "the Negro is incurable criminal, habitually vicious, and hopelessly worthless."[177] The

[175] "America's Tenth Man," 8-9, in box 4, folder 10 of RBE Papers, VUSC. This anonymous student essay was likely written by a white student in West Blocton, Alabama, since it was located in a folder in which all other student essays present could be identified as being from that town. For ease in archival identification, I will note that this essay contains a hand-written "5" in a circle at the top of the first page and begins "According to the Census of 1930."The omitted portion of the above quotation praised black officeholders: "Many colored men and women have been elected to responsible offices and have served capably and well. They have on occasion served with distinction as governors, senators, congressmen, legislators, and judges, as well as in other capacities." Ibid., 8.
[176] Pauline Hardemon, "Does the South Owe the Negro a New Deal?", 2, in box 4, folder 10 of RBE Papers, VUSC.. The essay was a summary or commentary on an article by Guy Johnson.
[177] Wallace C. Wardner, "America's Tenth Man: An Essay Concerning Interracial Cooperation," 2, 4, in box 4, folder 12 of RBE Papers, VUSC. Warner was a 16-year-old sophomore from Hobart, Oklahoma. Wardner's advocacy of newspaper reform is likely not an original idea on Wardner's part, as Eleazer and the CIC had engaged in similar efforts at various times. Interestingly, the copy of Warnder's essay in the Eleazer Papers contains a lot of hand-written editorial corrections. I would guess they were made by Eleazer himself, perhaps with intent to use the essay for CIC publicity purposes. As a future project, analyzing the changes might yield interesting insight in the differences in belief and approach between the designer and the recipient of curricular materials. To avoid

winner of the CIC's first prize for 1932, Virginia Davidson of Fayettesville, Arkansas, ridiculed how "in enlightened, twentieth-century America the negro finds it necessary to plead for trial by jury!" She appeared to support the "new negro"'s demand for "equal freedom in the exercise of the civil rights to which his citizenship entitles him, jury service, voting privilege." And this essay that the CIC chose to publicize by awarding it first prize even came down in opposition to at least some forms of segregation: "So the white man is beginning to ask why a respectable, well-behaved human being shoud be denied room in any hotel by reason of his colour, is questioning the progressiveness of town ordinances forbidding the presence of a negro after nightfall. The era of prejudice is passing. Both races are on the threshold, half inside a fuller, freer, happier life, a friendly co-existence in which a free expression of the best that is in them is possible."[178] Davidson ultimately was endorsing bi-racial mutual cooperation as the solution of the race problem, the preferred solution for the CIC as well and one that pervades quite strongly so many of the student essays available in the Eleazer Papers.

3. A number of papers, by the way in which the author took a point from a CIC pamphlet and expanded it in an even more compelling direction, reveal how the author had sincerely accepted the point being conveyed. For example, *America's Tenth Man* merely states that "the natives of Africa were perhaps the first to smelt iron" and that Crispus Attucks was the first American to die at the Boston Massacre.[179] But an essay from Montgomery, Alabama that won a CIC prize emphasized the importance of black achievements even more strongly by noting, "If one can imagine what the stage of our economic development would be without the universal use of iron, he will begin more to appreciate America's Tenth Man." And Attucks did not only die, but also served as an inspiration to others. "Possibly the hearts of more patriots were fired to fight for American Independence when they saw

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ambiguity (in case the editorial changes were by Warnder), I will unless where noted in this paper only quote passages untouched by editorial correction.

[178] Virginia Davidson, "America's Tenth Man," 1932, 3, 4, in box 4, folder 12 of RBE Papers, VUSC.

[179] Eleazer, *America's Tenth Man*, 4, 7.

Crispus Attucks, a Negro, fall first for his country at the Boston Massacre."[180] Another Alabama student (from West Blocton) went even further than Eleazer did to defend the black role in Reconstruction: "Although there has been much said about reconstruction, the Negro was taken advantage of and he did very well under the circumstances."[181] A prize-winning paper from Mississippi launched from the typical CIC starting point that whites need not fear rising blacks with the insightful observation that worry over that occurring was "a clearly illogical posotion [sic], for what cultured, educated Negro has ever advocated disorder or anything looking toward a race riot?"[182] CIC publications in their discussion of civic problems had suggested that students investigate "what [health] services are available in the Negro schools? How [does this] compare with those provided for white people?"[183] Apparently having done so, a student from West Blocton, Alabama reported in his essay, "Public health clinics, dental examination, and inoculations against contagious diseases are much more general in white than in Negro schools."[184] Having earlier stressed the necessity of continued racial education for whites, this student was here putting the best progressive pedagogical principles into practice. Sometimes, too, students were able to fulfill the CIC goal of promoting a sympathetic understanding of African Americans by inserting additional material into a pamphlet's recitation of facts. A West Blocton student made the unequal distribution of resources between white and black public school outlays was "nearly four to one against

[180] Mahala Alice Ashley, "America's Tenth Man," 1, 2, in box 4, folder 12 of RBE Papers, VUSC.
[181] Mary Frances Harris, "America's Tenth Man: A Brief Survey of the Negroe's [sic] Part in American History," 5, in box 4, folder 10 of RBE Papers, VUSC. For what it is worth, this was one of the very few passages from this essay that was not plagiarized (in the literal sense of using the same words) from *America's Tenth Man*.
[182] Peggy Williams, "America's Tenth Man," 1, in box 4, folder 12 of RBE Papers, VUSC. The student attended high school in Crystal Springs, Mississipppi
[183] Eleazer, *Understanding Our Neighbors*, 23.
[184] R. C. Wilson, "Population Problems in the South," 5, in box 4, folder 10 of RBE Papers, VUSC. I am assuming here that these questions in the Civic Problems unit of *Understanding Our Neighbors* also appeared in the *Population Problems in the South* pamphlet it was adapted from, as is likely. I also appreciated the directness of the author's description of blacks' treatment by police: "Negroes, being largely without influence and political power, are the chief sufferers of the law officers." Ibid.

the group most completely dependent upon public funds for its education opportunity."[185] And an Oklahoma student jabbed at white hypocrisy and disloyalty by introducing his discussion of the facts laid out in CIC pamphlets of black accomplishments during World War I by asserting that blacks have "sacrificed much for the race which claims superiority."[186]

4. A few CIC publications mentioned in passing the desirability of blacks developing race pride, but a number of student essays directly endorsed this development and in fact made it a focal point of their analysis. The winner of the CIC's first prize for 1932, Virginia Davidson of Fayettesville, Arkansas, made appreciation of the "new negro" a focal point of her argument. "A self-respecting, ambitious individual is this new negro, who, in studying his own race, finds cause to lift his chin and answer contemptuous charges with such proud statements as this," at which point Davidson cites black accomplishments in music, literature, and patriotism. One may think Davidson's argument would have been more convincing had it stressed African-American achievements in more practical fields, although her admiration for the "new negro" who "has discovered his own talents and is demanding recognition of them" emerges very clearly.[187] An Oklahoma student also observed blacks working for race improvement, arguing that "the Negro's ambition, instead of seeking power and wealth for wealth's sake, is an ambition to improve his race, and to this purpose he educates his children, toiling to the limit to accomplish" this task.[188] And the anonymous student author whose essay appears in the West Blocton folder praised African-American periodicals for how much they had done "to aid in the development of that well balanced racial consciousness which is so essential to permanent achievement."[189] Since many in the South had previously opposed the development of black race

[185] T. A. Bradford Jr., "Recent Trends in Race Relations," 3, in box 4, folder 10 of RBE Papers, VUSC.
[186] Wardner, "America's Tenth Man," 4.
[187] Davidson, "America's Tenth Man," 2, 3.
[188] Warner, "America's Tenth Man," 3.
[189] "America's Tenth Man," 7.

consciousness for the encouragement it might provide for black activism, student support of black race pride would seem like a hopeful development.

5. An underlying theme in several of the essays was that blacks were getting to the point where they could no longer tolerate continued discrimination against them, and should forceful black opposition to injustice emerge, the students would have seen it as regrettable but not unwarranted. One student asked, "Will the Negroes always be patient, forbearing and peaceful in their struggle [for fair play]?"[190] In a prize-winning essay from Mississippi, one student expressed her support for whites providing help to blacks so the race would be "encouraged in its inevitable climb upward" by warning, "The present too largely prevailing ignorance is likely to breed discontent, increasing until the injustice of the situation is sensed and methods of violence resorted to in a desperate effort to gain deserved recognition."[191] An Oklahoma student started a discussion of the future with a paean to black promise and potential, stressing that by removing the structural obstacles and prejudicial attitudes that limited black success, "the Negroe's [sic] resources, his character, his force, and his ability will be the more brought out, to become a great asset, a most powerful element assisting in our civilization, and adding much riches and joy to the world." But the student concluded ominously: "Refuse him his rights, and no one can prophecy the future."[192] One may wonder if such an attitude, an awareness that blacks had legitimate grievances that were not being adequately addressed, might have made these students more tolerant of civil rights protests when they did occur.

6. As the CIC would have welcomed, a number of papers placed strong faith in education, both in terms of its benefits for blacks but especially in the value of further study by white students on race relations. A paper from 1938 observed, "It is thought by many that a very great improvement in

[190] Hardemon, "Does the South," 2.
[191] Williams, "America's Tenth Man," 1.
[192] Wardner, "America's Tenth Man," 2. I have quoted the original typed wording, before someone (possibly Eleazer) made hand-written edits to the document. The changes made including replacing "most powerful" with "valuable," deleting "much," and striking the comma from the ominous sentence. The editor had also underlined the "oe" in "Negroe's." Ibid.

education [of blacks] would solve the negro problem. Health, citizenship, and vocational training are particularly needed. The negro with such a schooling could take his place more readily in white civilization and he would be [in] competition for the whites in higher positions."[193] That this student was willing to accept blacks within white civilization, and even to endorse competition between the races, represented a sharp divergence from Southern views of yesteryear. As for race relations education for whites, one of the West Blocton, Alabama students, who had earlier declared the Civil War a "great mistake" for the loss of life and bitterness that resulted, stressed that "it seems important that young people in the schools preparing for citizenship give serious study to [the race problem], so that in the future it may be handled more wisely than in the past and with less loss and greater advantage to all concerned."[194] CIC prize winner Virginia Davidson stressed the importance of white study as well, but in combination with black activism; the new negro "is creating an interest in himself and his needs," and "thoughtful white men" had started researching African-American life to work out a successful solution.[195] The anonymous essayist in the West Blocton folder also expressed great faith in the power of education to transform lives and ultimately society. Echoing insights Eleazer made in his unpublished autobiography, the essayist observed that "prejudice is the product of pure ignorance and as modern education has become more universal racial antipathies have tended to become more and more obsolete." This student praised interracial groups for making both blacks and whites "more tolerant." Such improved attitudes (in a reversal of the order proposed by Eleazer) encouraged people to study race "sympathetically and scientifically," which in turn made racial problems more likely of solution. Like the CIC and most student essayists, this author held "mutual cooperation" as the means for resolving

[193] J. W. McSwain, "The Problem of Negro Education," 1938, 4, in box 4, folder 10 of RBE Papers, VUSC. Eleazer had written on this paper "Typical High School Papers," although that description likely was meant to apply to all the essays in that folder.
[194] Wilson, "Population Problems," 3.
[195] Davidson, "America's Tenth Man," 3, 3-4.

the race problem by securing black their "rightful place in modern life."[196] This faith in education as a powerful means to reshape society provided this student paper author and many others with an optimism about the race problem, a feeling that the United States was on its way to securing harmonious relations between whites and blacks.[197]

7. A couple papers, though still portraying blacks in a stereotyped manner, nevertheless endorsed expanded educational opportunities and increased black land ownership, themselves rather radical steps given traditional Southern opposition to these advancements. A paper from a Houston high school student, for example, once used the work "darky" to describe an African American, believed that black contributions to American literature consisted not of African-Americans' own writings but on how the black experience had been successfully used by white authors such as Eugene O'Neil, and offered the essentalist conclusion that the black's "highly emotional nature is fully expressed in his spiritual outlook." Nevertheless, this student considered black land ownership "a golden opportunity" and explained how by "grasping the opportunities of our public schools, the Tenth Man can take an intelligent part in American life." And even this student recognized the structural barriers to black advancement, as he urged white individuals and organizations to work together so that "better laws and conditions could be obtained."[198]

8. The student essays from Biloxi, which focused on the theme of improving the health of the African Americans, tended to present the least positive depictions of blacks. Ironically, these papers were part of a very expansive unit in the Biloxi Public Schools in which a white and black public high

[196] "America's Tenth Man," 9.
[197] The anonymous author in the West Blocton folder concluded his paper with a grand vision of what the future would likely hold: "Consequently the student of racial affairs is justified in being hopeful for the future and in anticipating a new era in which men and women will be regarded not as Negroes or Caucasians, but rather as Americans. When that time comes this country will have attained an enviable degree of social progress and development, and its Tenth Man will assume his rightful place with the other nine." Ibid., 10. Of course, not all student essayists shared this particular vision of the future, and many would likely have opposed it should its dream of blacks and whites becoming Americans imply an acceptance or even encouragement of social equality, "amalgamation," and an ultimate fusion of the races.
[198] Billie Billingsworth, "America's Tenth Man," 7, 8, 11, 12, in box 4, folder 12 of RBE Papers, VUSC.

school collaborated on efforts to improve the health and sanitary conditions of blacks at school and in their neighborhoods. Nevertheless, the inability of this cooperative endeavor to translate into improved sentiments toward blacks may have resulted at least in part from the prejudiced assumptions the unit's coordinator took into the project.[199]

9. Even a paper that preferred that blacks "toe the line" provided such a strong reconception of African-Americans' place within the United States that that term could no longer mean what it had previously. Consider the author's discussion of W.E.B. Du Bois: "One of the greatest of all authors is W. E. [B.] Du Bois. … He combines in unusual degree the temper of the scholar and romanticism of the Negro race. Forced by the pressure of circumstances, gradually he was led from the congenial retreat of the student into the open area of social struggle. For more than two decades now he has stiven to interpret the desires of his people. He has traveled thousands of miles and delivered hundreds of speeches, and all of this service has been very necessary." Coming off this ringing endorsement of Du Bois's civil rights activism, and with further acknowledgement that "the Negro is an assest [sic] to us in many ways and we should treat them as such," the author's belief that "if we would do this, that they

[199] Helen Edwards, "'Tenth Man' Project, Biloxi High School, Biloxi , Miss.," 6, in box 4, folder 12 of RBE Papers, VUSC. Edwards, presumably the unit's coordinator, concluded as to the results of the sanitary campaign in African-American neighborhoods: "We believe that we have done some good and hope to continue . We have at least put some of the negroes to thinking , but because of the general tendency of the race we will have to watch them to see if they keep up thework [sic]." The project outline and six student essays from Biloxi in this particular unidentified year (all in box 4, folder 12 of the RBE Papers) are fascinating and well worth further analysis. For example, whereas--as discussed in this paper--personal contacts with African Americans were often one of the most effective ways to combat white prejudices against blacks, why did that apparently not happen as a result of the personal contacts in this case? Are the topic(s) of health and/or sanitary conditions not as conducive to promoting better attitudes to blacks among whites than some of the other issues that affect black-white relations? Although a full analysis would be fascinating and likely yield valuable insights, I will resist conducting one at this time because it seems important to clarify the time line first. The Biloxi schools won or received honorable mention from the CIC during two years. And another source quotes the Biloxi superintendent expressing a far more enlightened understanding of race relations than was contained in the unit preserved in the archives. Knowing the order of these developments (and if any overlapped) would allow me to make more reliable conclusions about what characteristics the CIC was looking for in school projects and whether the Biloxi curriculum presented an increasingly progressive outlook on race relations over time as might be expected. I will also exclude from analysis for now due to its complexity an 18-page student paper (in box 4, folder 10 of the RBE Papers) prepared by a student at a Tennessee teachers college describing the "Unit on Africa" she designed for a third-grade classroom. Similar to the Arkansas unit of "Negro Poetry" discussed above, this one would have likely increased child interest in and sympathy for blacks but ultimately (due to its trafficking in stereotypes) likely not resulted in a wish to help African-Americans beyond an individual level.

would also visualize the situation differently and perhaps, shall we say, 'toe the line', in such a way as to benefit themselves as well as us to a greater degree" strikes one as representing a vastly different system of power relations in the South than had existed previously.[200]

10. In contrast to how the CIC was most often referred to as an organization meant to promote interracial harmony, a paper about the Commission's anti-lynching activities insightfully described it as "an association of … Southern men and women for the promotion of understanding *and justice* between the races" (italics mine).[201]

11. A prize-winning paper made a surprising reference to the unfairness of the Jim Crow system by referring to blacks "riding in unwelcome jim-crow cars," which demonstrated a particularly empathetic understanding of African Americans since even the literature of Southern liberals (when they discussed the topic at all) were likely to imply that blacks' main concern was equality, not ending segregation. And for a student to recognize that blacks disliked segregation may indicate awareness on the student's part that "separate but equal" was a myth, and that many blacks opposed segregation because it implied racial inferiority.[202] But this was not the only paper to question the wisdom of segregation. An essay from a West Blocton, Alabama student lamented that prominent African American Juliette Derricotte died following an accident in Georgia because her white doctors "didn't take her to the local hospital which is for white people only. Probably if they had taken her to the hospital she would have had a better chance to have recovered."[203] Virginia Davidson's paper (discussed

[200] "The Negro as Publisher and Author," 3-4, 5, in box 4, folder 10 of RBE Papers, VUSC. In the archives, the paper with that title follows a page labeled "Outline."

[201] Billy Harris, "Southern Leaders Impeach Judge Lynch," 1, in box 4, folder 10 of RBE Papers, VUSC. The omitted text referred to the CIC as an association of "a hundred" Southern men and women, but that number was likely an underestimate for the time the paper was written.

[202] Ashley, "America's Tenth Man," 3. Even though this paper from Alabama won a prize from the CIC, one wonders if the Commission would have expressed unease with the paper's assertion that "America's Tenth Man should not let his grievances overshadow his opportunities." Was this merely an encouragement to race pride (a practice the author endorsed elsewhere in the essay), or could it signal's the author's skepticism over efforts to redress structural racism in the South? Ibid.

[203] Bradford, "Recent Trends," 2. This account appeared in a section of Bradford's essay entitled "Inaduquate [sic] Hospital Facilities," but if the student was completely comfortable with segregation, he or she could have

above) explicitly endorsed at least certain types of desegregation. Skepticism about the system of segregation was actually more visible in the student essays in the Eleazer Papers than explicit support of the policy; one of the few observations that may have even implied possible endorsement of continued segregation was a note that "the Negro is not pleading for union with the white race, but for unity, a far different and far better thing!"[204]

Although reading the essays does not allow one to know what students believed before they received instruction in race relations, the overall impression gained from the student papers was that in the majority of cases, when taught by an instructor sympathetic to the CIC's mission, Southern whites came out of racial education with an increased understanding and a greater sympathy for the South's African-American population, a desire for conditions for blacks to be improved, and an awareness that at least some broader societal reform correcting racial injustice was necessary for blacks to advance. Even those students who persisted in holding stereotyped attitudes to African Americans realized that the racial status quo could not be maintained.

Reading the student papers suggests that many recipients of education in race relations took from it the very lessons the CIC desired. Further evidence for the efficacy of racial education comes from a survey conducted by the Commission in the late 1930s of professors in Southern colleges who offered courses in race relations.[205] Of the 77 full courses in Southern colleges dedicated exclusively to racial problems,[206] the Commission received questionnaires back from the professors of 40 of them. The survey respondents gave their race relations courses high praise. Fully 27 of 36 who answered the

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lamented not that the white hospital would not admit Derricotte but that there was not a black hospital nearby (or that an insufficient number of black hospitals had been built). Bradford incorrectly spelled the last name as Derrecotte and misidentified the year as 1930 (instead of the correct 1931). For more information about the controvery evoked by the Juliette Derricotte incident, see Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: Fight for Equality*, 297-99.

[204] Williams, "America's Tenth Man," 3. This was the prize-winning essay from Mississippi.

[205] [Robert B. Eleazer], *College Courses in Race Relations: An Effort to Meet the Challenge of the Southern Situation* (Atlanta: Conference on Education and Race Relations, 1939).

[206] These 77 courses came from 73 Southern colleges and universities. An additional 53 colleges covered race relations as a topic in Social Problems courses, and 260 more schools taught units about African Americans in other departments (the goal Eleazer had been striving for). In all, then, 387 Southern colleges provided instruction in race relations in their curriculum at this time. Ibid., 3.

question thought their course modified students' attitudes "a great deal" or "considerably." Out of 39 professors who estimated the value of their race relations in comparison to others, ten professors thought their race relations course was the "most important and valuable course we give" and 24 considered it "one of the most valuable." One professor regarded it as his "choice course, because I see in it an opportunity to render a greater service to my students, my state and the South than in any other." Another thought that "no course [was] more challenging, stimulating and enjoyable," and a couple stressed how much student interest it raised. When asked to comment on the course's effect on students, two patterns emerged. One emphasized how the teaching of the course followed the pedagogical principles recommended by Eleazer. "The course leads students to look for scientific evidence before forming opinions and attitudes," wrote one, and another remarked that "prejudices largely disappear when replaced by facts." Professors also made reference to how the course led to student direct action or awareness of the need to restructure society. As one observed, "That some students are profoundly affected is shown by their subsequent records of service to Negores." Another professor reported that "his students assure me that their attitudes changed greatly. They favor programs and policies required to do justice to Negroes." Several professors observed that interracial contacts were especially valuable, whether through "a visit to a Negro college [that] did most to mitigate prejudice" or through interacting with "educated Negroes." Well over half of the courses included some opportunity to build a better understanding between the races through interracial contact. The consensus of professors who taught race relations courses in the South was that their courses had a substantial impact for the better.[207]

People who wrote to Eleazer also frequently stressed how valuable courses or units in race relations were. Albert Ashley of the Henry Street Settlement in New York wished that Eleazer "will continue your good work with Southern students. You seem to have a 'knack' of presenting hard facts so

[207] Ibid., 5-7.

that they are not only graciously received but long remembered."[208] W. C. Jackson, Dean of the Woman's College of the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, delivered an encomium to the work Eleazer did as the CIC's Educational Director: "Your great work is an everlasting monument to you; nothing can take it away. I hope you feel the deep and abiding satisfaction to which you are so richly entitled. You have done a job that will have everlasting consequences, and you have done it brilliantly."[209] And representatives of the public schools found Eleazer's educational work just as valuable, as G. T. Bludworth, Special Rural School Agent for the Texas Department of Education, proclaimed in 1928 that "I consider your work in the Southland is doing as much for the uplifting of both races as any movement now extant."[210]

But what were the long-term impacts of the Commission's educational programs? This question is obviously harder to answer, but the correspondents to Eleazer who addressed this question consistently felt the educational programs he ran had made (and would continue to make) a major difference. J. L. Clark, a professor in the Division of Social Science at Texas's Sam Houston State Teachers College, commemorated Eleazer's retirement from the CIC by observing that "in my judgment few movements have been originated which have had as far reaching and as beneficial results as the Conference on Education and Race Relations." He then described in great detail all the ways Texas had benefited through educational officials who had attended conferences in education and race relations at Peabody or Blue Ridge, including through two attendees who became active in the Texas CIC chapter and "have touched thousands of Texas teachers and public school pupils" through their work. The letter

[208] Albert Ashley to RBE, 22 August 1933, in box 1, folder 1 of RBE Papers, VUSC.
[209] W. C. Jackson to RBE, 22 December 1942, in box 1, folder 8 of RBE Papers. VUSC. Writing Eleazer upon hearing of his retirement from the Commission, the beginning of Jackson's letter is actually even more touching in conveying how much Eleazer's work meant to Jackson personally and professionally: "My feelings about the Commission and my relations to it are rather mixed; but there is one phase that is not mixed--namely, my association with you. There is nothing but unalloyed pleasure in that. … I have enjoyed my association with you as I have that with few other people. To me you were always the justification of the Commission. For you to leave it is just unthinkable to me. It just isn't the Commission without you." Ibid. Jackson had served on the Program Committee of the Peabody conferences and the Executive Committee of the Conference of Education and Race Relations.
[210] G. T. Bludworth to RBE, 4 January 1928, in box 1, folder 2 of RBE Papers, VUSC.

also provided specific evidence of how the Commission's educational initiatives were contributing to the very kinds of systemic restructuring that the CIC sought; one of the attendees at a Blue Ridge conference was then chairing a committee that "recently submitted to the Bi-racial group recommendations for legislative action looking toward equalization of education opportunities in Texas and other related subjects."[211] Also writing upon Eleazer's retirement from the Commission, the superintendent of the Magnolia Public Schools in Mississippi concluded that "you have made a major contribution to the cause for which you have been laboring; all future achievements will have a firmer foundation because of your endeavors."[212] And in the letter written in January 1943 upon Eleazer's retirement by H. C. Brearley, this professor and founder of the Sociology Department at Peabody College put Eleazer's achievements in their historical context: "During most of these twenty years I have known of your work and can testify to its value in the improvement of race relations. While at present white-Negro tension seems to be increasing, this increase might have been far greater [if] it were not for the work that you and others like you have been doing since the first World War." [213] Supporters of the interracial movement certainly saw the CIC's educational work as having substantial and lasting benefits. In writing to a Journalism professor at a Georgia college, Eleazer too expressed that "it is gratifying to know that you, along with so many other educators in our Southern institutions, are building in the present student generation a more intelligent and fair-minded public opinion regarding the race question." In that same letter, Eleazer nicely summarized how the mission of the CIC was not to celebrate cultural gifts or to promote harmonious relations between the races in isolation but rather "our biggest job is the effort to change the attitudes of white people and thereby bring about improved conditions for the Negro minority."[214] The next session will take a broader view in examining the value and worth of this strategy.

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[211] J. L. Clark to RBE, 5 January 1943, in box 1, folder 3 of RBE Papers, VUSC.
[212] R. L. Hunt to RBE, 21 December 1942, in box 1, folder 7 of RBE Papers, VUSC.
[213] H. C. Brearley to RBE, 25 January 1943, in box 1, folder 2 of RBE Papers, VUSC.
[214] RBE to Gertrude R. Brigham, 12 June 1942, in box 1, folder 20 of RBE Papers, VUSC. Dr. Brigham was then Director of the Journalism department at Georgia's Brenau College. Interestingly, Eleazer offered the last line

Assessment

The Commission on Interracial Cooperation had been criticized in its own day and by later scholars for its gradualism. Those activists and historians felt that direct action to tackle injustice, not slow efforts to promote harmonious relations, were necessary to produce fundamental change in the South.[215] With its educational efforts, at least, it is true that the CIC self-consciously adopted a gradualist strategy. Eleazer possessed the deep faith, shared by many Americans, that education was fundamentally capable of transforming society through changing hearts and minds, but deeply ingrained racist beliefs would not be eliminated overnight. In writing to a professor at the University of Alabama who had recently led a "favorable" discussion with students about race relations, Eleazer observed, "You are quite right in suggesting that in matters of this kind it is necessary to proceed with judgment and caution. I am sure that we are making progress, thought it sometimes seems slow."[216] He possessed a realistic awareness of how long educational transformation might take, but also an understanding of when society might be conducive to reform through more direct action. Replying to an African American who had written Eleazer criticizing conditions in rural Alabama, Eleazer informed him, "It is relatively easy to mobilize leadership and get results in the centers of population." But in rural areas without established leadership, any problem could seem rather intractable. "I do not know how the problem is to be solved," Eleazer lamented. "Certainly it cannot be done by any quick or easy process. Personal contacts and the slow process of education are probably the only means that will be availing."[217] But Eleazer sincerely believed that such educative processes would not be in vain, a process he found demonstrated in microcosm from a story relayed to him from a minister at Tuskegee Institute. As Eleazer summarized the situation, a group of white youths of St. Mark's Church became aware of

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about the CIC's mission as a defense of the fact that "all of our headquarters staff at the moment happens to be white." Such a caving to public sentiment reflects both the CIC's gradualism and its realism about what is possible (and achievable) in a still heavily racist society. See the next section for greater discussion of these points. Ibid.

[215] Sosna, *In Search of the Silent South*, 38-39; Selig, *Americans All*, 153-53.

[216] RBE to Gladstone H. Yeuell, 10 July 1941, in box 1, folder 20 of RBE Papers, VUSC.

[217] RBE to E. Julius Williams, 7 March 1931, in box 1, folder 19 of RBE Papers, VUSC.

"conditions of neglect and injustice, brought, perhaps for the first time, directly to their attention." The youth's "spontaneous reaction" to what they learned was to adopt resolutions protesting the injustice. Education led to immediate action to redress grievances, but Eleazer believed this was not the end of the story. "If the facts could be made known universally to the rising generation, I think we might expect very decided improvements when they come into positions of responsible leadership. This is what the Educational Department of the Interracial Commission has been persistently trying to do for a number of years, especially through the colleges and public schools."[218] Teach children about injustice and how it could be eliminated, and one would have prepared the future leaders of the South to guide their society to a better and more egalitarian tomorrow.

Such a viewpoint might sound somewhat naïve, but one point many of the skeptics of the CIC do not properly appreciate is how potentially dangerous opposition to the status quo was in the South in this time period. Eleazer himself had been warned that moving to Atlanta to do interracial work might be dangerous to him and his family, and he had on another occasion been afraid for his life when accosted by a group of Blackshirts (Nazi sympathizers who demanded at the height of the Depressoin that blacks be fired so white could take over their jobs) when he left after taking notes at one of their meetings.[219] Eleazer recognized too the potential for danger in his idea to teach race relations in the schools; he speculated that "to most of [the 1,500 professors he initially wrote about this project] the idea, without doubt, was new and revolutionary; all of them knew that the subject was unpopular and explosive; to some it was probably even taboo."[220] This sentiment was supported by those who wrote him. After attending the third Peabody conference in 1933, one which focused on teaching race relations in the public schools, African-American historian Merl R. Eppse wrote Eleazer that "so many dangerous and worth-while things were said so frankly and with such earnestness that one cannot

[218] RBE to Rev. Harry V. Richardson, 8 December 1939, in box 1, folder 19 of RBE Papers, VUSC.
[219] Eleazer, *My First Eighty Years*, 44-45, 92-93.
[220] Ibid., 70-71.

evaluate [the worth of the conference] accurately." After stressing how much he personally felt the conference was worthwhile, he continued with even starker language about the radicalism and inherent danger in the CIC's educational work: "You and Dr [Will] Alexander are never to be forgotten for the great amount of personal sacrifice and interest which both of you manifested at the conference. I can say this frankly and truthfully, I have never heard white men of the south quite so brave and frank in all my life." Eppse felt that their willingness to speak out "certainly is ample evidence that a sense of justice and fair play is taking hold of the South thru such men as you two are."[221]

But the threat always remained that challenging society's entrenched structures too sharply could put anyone at risk. Myrdal was right, after all, that the work of the Commission *was* radical for the South of its time. S. Ralph Harlow, a white professor of religion and Biblical literature at Smith College in Massachusetts, recognized that one important breakthrough in the CIC's interracial work was "the fact that the Atlanta Inter-racial Committee have lunch together." But though this "step has marked significance," it represented one of the CIC's "victories you cannot proclaim." Four decades after the outrage generated by Booker T. Washington's dinner at Theodore Roosevelt's White House, such activity was still taboo. Harlow's description of what would have resulted had the Commission's interracial lunches become known speaks vividly to the necessity for Southern liberals to practice gradualism: "Yet the telling of it in some quarters might handicap the very cause to which you are dedicated. We are out to advance a Cause, not to win arguments. If ever there was a need of 'being harmless as doves and as wise as serpents' it seems to be in this field."[222] Given the "highly explosive issues with which [the CIC pamphlets] dealt," it may come as a shock that Eleazer could report in his autobiography that "it is a surprising fact that nobody, so far as I can recall, ever offered an unfavorable

[221] Merl R. Eppse to RBE, 7 August 1933, in box 2, folder 5 of RBE Papers, VUSC. Eppse was then a professor at the black college Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State College in Nashville.
[222] S. Ralph Harlow to RBE, 29 March 1941, in box 1, folder 7 of RBE Papers, VUSC.

criticism of any of these materials, either to me or to my chief [Alexander]."[223] Eleazer could only think to attribute this "almost unbelievable" point to "the assumption, which I hope is true, that the author was given some measure of the providential leading that he always sought."[224] But the relative lack of objection to the Commission's curricular materials also speaks well to Eleazer's ability to be "harmless as doves and wise as serpents." By couching his appeals in rhetoric that he was merely presenting facts and allowing students to draw their own conclusions, and by having the insight to know the limits of what white Southerners could be persuaded to accept, Eleazer was able to get away with widely disseminating pamphlets that fundamentally challenged white supremacy and urged systematic efforts to dismantle the South's structures of racial domination.

That CIC curricular materials did not back down from discussion of the structural inequalities that Southern blacks faced was reflected in their endorsement by many African Americans. Selig argues that the educational agenda proposed by black scholars, who wanted instruction in race relations that tackled civic problems directly, contrasted sharply with the desire of white liberals to emphasize blacks' cultural gifts. But the very African-American scholars Selig quotes as wanting racial education to address inequality and discrimination are many of the same ones who wrote Eleazer praising the CIC's efforts. Selig writes: "Merl R. Eppse's list of topics revealed a very different focus from white liberals' focus on cultural gifts. 'The Social Studies for Negroes must, by the nature of things, include: Lynching, Jim-Crowism, Discrimination, Low Wages, Denial of the Ballot, Lack of work in city, State, and National Government, Tenant-Farming, Share Croppers, Personal Service, Unskilled Labor, Lack of Business, Poorly Equipped Schools, and hundreds of other things which cause the Negro to be

[223] Eleazer, *My First Eighty Years*, 74-75. This was not the first time Eleazer made an observation like this, as his report on the *America's Tenth Man* project at the second Peabody conference included the remark: "From many principals and teachers the Commission has had commendatory letters. No unfavorable reactions have been reported." R. B. Eleazer, "High Schools Doing Race Relations Work: Hundreds Participate in 'Tenth Man' Project--'Interesting and Helpful,' Say Educators," in *Report of Second Peabody Conference*, 27.
[224] Eleazer, *My First Eighty Years*, 75.

handicapped in his struggle for his rightful place in the social order.'"[225] But *Understanding Our Neighbors* covered nearly all of these topics, and in fact Eppse had substantial praise for the CIC itself. Noting that the Peabody conferences which were spurring Southern colleges and public schools to add impartial discussion of race relations to their curriculums "are too valuable to close at this crucial hour," Eppse observed, "I firmly believe that the South is the laboratory for this Biracial experiment to be solved and that all of the meeting held elsewhere and by people who study and think under different environment cannot feel the tenseness of the situation as we who live in the thick of the situation."[226]

Eppse did not believe the CIC's educational programs followed a watered-down "cultural gifts" framework. Nor did African-American sociologist Charles S. Johnson, who was quoted in Selig's book as favoring a curriculum that both portrayed "the fact of an unequal economic struggle" and featured "abstract considerations of social justice."[227] But he too thought highly of the Commission's educational work, as he wrote Eleazer upon his retirement from the CIC, "I want you to know … how valuable and effective I feel that your work has been over the past twenty years. To your painstaking and skillful efforts I attribute the effectiveness of the large scale educational program of the Commission. We all know very well that progress and development in any field are slow unless accompanied or preceded by a campaign of education which puts people in the frame of mind and spirit to accept change. This has been your job and you have done it exceptionally well. You have, as you must know, my profoundest respect and best wishes."[228] Another enlightening letter Eleazer received on his retirement came from Horace Mann Bond, a black historian then serving as President of Fort Valley State College in Georgia. Selig quotes Bond writing seven years earlier doubting the value of the CIC's work and expressing skepticism of the likely effectiveness of state-level curricular revision because

[225] Quoted in Selig, *Americans All*, 222-23. Selig's full discussion of this point is on p. 220-23.
[226] Eppse to RBE, 7 August 1933, in box 1, folder 5 of RBE Papers, VUSC..
[227] Quoted in Selig, *Americans All*, 222.
[228] Charles S. Johnson to RBE, 23 December 1942, in box 1, folder 8 of RBE Papers, VUSC. Johnson at the time was Director of the Department of Social Sciences at Fisk University.

"schools … have always … been the instruments through which social forces were perpetuated."[229] In the intervening seven years, the Commission launched and heavily promoted a series of pamphlets, widely adopted in Southern public schools and colleges, aimed at convincing students that the Southern structures aimed at perpetuating a system of white supremacy had to be dismantled. Whether this development changed Bond's mind about the Commission's work is unclear, but in writing to Eleazer upon his retirement as Educational Director in 1942, Bond expressed a far different outlook about the usefulness of the CIC's educational work: "As you may know, I am inclined largely to view the events and personalities of the Interracial Commission through the eyes of my father [James Bond]. I know he would now, as he did during his life time, view your services and personality as beyond compare the most honest and constructive of any he knew. This is what he felt, and this is what I feel."[230]

Besides having a beneficial effect on the attitudes and receptivity to social change of white Southerners, other African Americans recognized how valuable the CIC's curricular materials were to helping Southern blacks resist the demoralizing effects of Jim Crow. Eleazer believed that school textbooks read by African Americans should instill race pride, expressing the regret that because most history textbooks up to that time had ignored or disparaged blacks, "the Negro child finds in his school history little to encourage him, to inspire pride of race, little incentive to patriotism and to a sense of national unity."[231] Pamphlets like *America's Tenth Man*, with their insistence that U.S. blacks are true Americans and not aliens to U.S. society and can boast of a proud list of essential contributions and

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[229] Selig, *Americans All*, 179-80. I read Bond's observations about the CIC less skeptically than Selig does. The full sentence from his 1935 article reads: "To Negroes it has frequently seemed to be a cunning device to soften, without actually remedying, the harshness of Negro life in the South; while to many white persons it has seemed to be a degrading scheme intended as an undermining factor in Southern society." Selig only quoted the first part of that sentence. To me, it reads as more a description of what others think than of his own opinion of the organization. And even Bond's remarks about schools as perpetuators of existing social forces do not indicate a belief that they must inevitably remain this way. Horace Mann Bond, "The Curriculum and the Negro Child," *The Journal of Negro Education* 4 (April 1935): 164-65, 168.

[230] H[orace] M[ann] Bond to RBE, 27 December 1942, in box 1, folder 2 of RBE Papers, VUSC.

[231] R. B. Eleazer, review of *The Treatment of the Negro in American History School Textbooks: A Comparison of Changing Textbook Content, I826 to I939, with Developing Scholarship in the History of the Negro in the United States* by Marie Elizabeth Carpenter, *The American Historical Review* 47 (July 1942): 897.

impressive accomplishments, would have built up the self-esteem of black children and their conviction that their race need not to be doomed to the bottom rungs of Southern society. These sentiments were echoed in a letter to Eleazer by Columbia University-based black sociologist Edward M. Gilliard, who wrote within a few years of the first printing of the pamphlet, "I do hope you will continue to publish "America's Tenth Man" until every Colored boy and girl in the world will have read it. Especially the Colored boys and girls of the United States. The information in "America's Tenth Man" is too valuable to our race to be allowed to go out of print."[232] CIC pamphlets could thus have contributed to the ultimate transformation of Southern society through both reshaping white attitudes and inspiring blacks to fight for the equal place in society to which their innate merit entitled them.

The multiple ways in which educational efforts can lead to societal reform suggest that the debate over Gunnar Myrdal's approach to improving race relations leads to a false dichotomy. Critics of Myrdal, including Ralph Ellison, have argued that the means to overthrow an entrenched belief system is not through promoting gradual adjustment in white attitudes but through class struggle or directly attacking the structures of racial domination themselves.[233]But the CIC never felt it had to choose between the two. While its Educational Director Eleazer focused on the Commission's educational programs, the other staff members (and also Eleazer himself, at times) continued the CIC's activism to stop lynching, provide legal aid to black victims of the Southern criminal justice system, take

[232] Edward Madison Gilliard to RBE, 13 July 1930, in box 1, folder 6 of RBE Papers, VUSC. The finding aid misidentifies the letter as being from 1920. Selig discusses African-American use of CIC pamphlets in Selig, *Americans All*, 168-69. For Gilliard's institutional and professional affiliation, see http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/2766378?uid=3739912&uid=2129&uid=2&uid=70&uid=4&uid=3739256&sid=56231902783.

[233] Ralph Ellison, "*An American Dilemma*: A Review," *Shadow and Act* (New York: Random House, 1964 [1944]) , 303-317; David W. Southern, "*An American Dilemma* After Fifty Years: Putting the Myrdal Study and Black-White Relations in Perspective," *The History Teacher* 28 (February 1995): 227-53; Walter A. Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal and America's Conscience: Social Engineering and Racial Liberalism, 1938-1987* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); David W. Southern, *Gunnar Myrdal and Black-White Relations: The Use and Abuse of* An American Dilemma*, 1944-1969* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1987). David L. Chappell presents a similar parallel for the post-World War II period over the debates between white Northern liberals and black Southern activists over how best to combat Jim Crow in David L. Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

certain cases in this area to the Supreme Court, investigate and report (publicly and at times to federal officials) abuses of black labor, and research and publicize information on the many other problems Southern blacks had to endure. With regards to the CIC's educational initiatives in colleges and public schools, Eleazer would have not have seen a contradiction between changing white attitudes and challenging the fundamental structures of society. The letter quoted above about rural conditions in Alabama indicates Eleazer's awareness that the context of the struggle for social change (e.g., urban vs. rural) affects greatly the best strategy for waging it.

A letter written by Eleazer in 1937 is also revealing in this regard. Eleazer responded to a query by a representation of the Philadelphia-based Emergency Peace Campaign as to whether "the Peace Campaign might do something about Negro suffrage in the South" by explaining that a problem did exist but recommending that the Peace Campaign make no efforts in this area. At first, one might be skeptical that Eleazer's recommendation for inaction reflected either insincere or insufficient support for the cause of black political rights or an inability to recognize when certain causes merited more support than pacifism. But a more careful reading of the letter indicates that Eleazer's concerns were grounded in his realistic assessment of how and whether change can occur the South. He doubted the value of working to secure federal or state legislation both because of the unlikelihood of its passage and because "local opinion at last controls in matters of this kind." The Emergency Peace Campaign's time line of securing improvement in the situation within one year was unrealistic, and white Southerners would have not reacted well to a radical outside organization attempting to influence its external affairs. The causes of both peace and black suffrage, Eleazer noted, "might suffer by being tied to the other." In the end, Eleazer concluded that "bad as the conditions are, however, I do not see the possibility of doing anything effective about it except by a relatively slow educational process for the improvement of public opinion on this point."[234]

[234] RBE to James P. Mullin, 12 February 1937, in box 1, folder 19 of RBE Papers, VUSC.

As of 1937, few viable options existed in the South to produce fundamental change. Attitudes towards blacks among the white population had not improved sufficiently for black activism to be safe or effective, nor would state legislators likely still hostile to black advancement be willing to pass useful legislation. The only recourse to secure a dramatic overhaul of Southern practice was through education, but the CIC was not proposing a mere curriculum exploring the "cultural gifts" of blacks. Rather, the Commission pushed hard in its curricular materials to lead students to a realization that society must be transformed in order for African Americans to be able to secure their deserved and beneficial place in Southern society. Today's enlightened youth would be tomorrow's voters and legislators. The CIC's educational campaigns were intended to foster the attitudes in both whites and blacks that would make an end to white supremacy possible. The two goals were inseparable from each other. Whites who now saw blacks in a different light would work together with blacks possessive of new feelings of race pride to ensure the fundamental restructuring of Southern society. Given the conditions that existed in the South before World War II, this may well have been the only viable avenue for change available.[235]

Conclusion

Throughout his preparation of the CIC's educational materials, Eleazer aimed for a judicious application of the latest scientific and social scientific evidence, emphasizing those findings that advanced his cause but ignoring those facts he did not want to see travel. He astutely harnessed his understanding of the ways in which Americans perceived scientific evidence, by for example letting the circumstances dictate when he would resort to an appeal to experts. All of these efforts were in service to Eleazer's goals, which reflected those of the CIC as well from at least the late 1930s, of enlightening students as to the problems in Southern race relations in order to win their support for expansive efforts

[235] For a discussion of the substantial transformation in American and Southern society wrought by World War II, see Michael J. Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 171-96.

to combat many of the barriers of structural racism that continued to plague Southern society. Now it is true that curricular innovations preached from on high may undergo modifications as they are implemented in the classroom level, and students may not always absorb the material in the ways its designers intended, but the evidence in this paper suggests that much of the mission of the Commission survived largely intact at the ground level. Looking back from the present day, the reach of the CIC's educational programs remains impressive, as does the degree to which the Commission aimed to effect a substantial transformation in Southern racial attitudes using pedagogical techniques intended to be long-lasting.

In his autobiography, Eleazer cited how 111,000 college students made use of educational materials provided by the CIC in just a limited period of time, "and of these more than 65,000 were studying to be teachers, a fact of great potential significance for the future." When one combines these figures with the "perhaps another hundred thousand" students learning about race relations "in 2,000 high schools" at that time, "you get some idea of the extent and outreach of the work we were trying to do" in "turn[ing] on the light of intelligent understanding."[236] Eleazer furthermore believed that CIC efforts were promoting fundamental changes in student attitudes, and this paper reports evidence from student papers and other sources that students did indeed emerge from racial study with enlightened or improved outlooks. Teachers likely experienced similar transformations of their views, and both they and leading public school officials of even Deep South states such as Mississippi wrote the CIC to express their appreciation.[237] Eleazer did acknowledge that the Southern Regional Council appeared to have canceled the CIC's active promotion of public school and college educational programs in response to war demands after he left the organization in 1942, although certainly Commission publications remained in print and continued to be distributed.[238] By this time,

[236] Eleazer, *My First Eighty Years*, 72, in box 1, folder 25 of RBE Papers, VUSC.
[237] Ibid., 66.
[238] Ibid., 79, 60.

though, boards of education in the Southern states had already established units in race relations as part of the curriculum, and Eleazer felt that the overall progress of incorporating such teaching in the schools themselves had gone too far to be at risk. Writing in his autobiography in 1957, Eleazer observed, "These continuing effects [of interracial education], I am sure, we would find in the official school machinery itself, where fundamental changes for the better had been made; in thousands of teachers in public school and college who for years had worked on this problem, faithfully and effectively; in the training courses introduced into scores of teachers' colleges; and in the multitudes of young men and women in school and college—tens of thousands of them—in whose minds and hearts we had helped to light candles of understanding that are burning still."[239]

Vast numbers of white Southerners had received significant exposure to progressive racial views in Southern public schools and colleges from the 1920s into at least the 1940s, and still more likely received such instruction from the teachers whose training in Southern teachers colleges was such a focus of the CIC's efforts. It is these students who came of age as the civil rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s unfolded. Scholars have noted how the civil rights movement in the South at this time resulted in far less violence and fewer fatalities than similar freedom struggles throughout history.[240] David L. Chappell attributed this surprising fact to division among white Southerners and their inability to successfully offer religious defenses to the Southern racial system.[241] But in light of the CIC's massive commitment to improving white opinion of blacks in the South, one may wonder whether white Southerners' unwillingness to fight at all costs to defend their system of racial subordination may imply that they were just no longer as deeply committed to it as they once were.

[239] Ibid., 79-80.
[240] Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 2.
[241] Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*.