

PIECING A QUILT: JESSIE CARNEY SMITH AND THE MAKING OF
AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S HISTORY

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This is a critical analysis of Jessie Carney Smith's *Notable Black American Women* (1992) as an illustration of black feminist knowledge production. It explores the contributions of Dr. Smith to African American women's and library history during her more than four decades as Head Librarian at historically black Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. Under her editorship, *Notable Black American Women* was a pioneering effort to fill the previously long-existing gap in reference resources. Prior to 1992, mainstream reference publishers had never published biographical dictionaries concerning African American women's historical contributions and achievements. Over twenty years in the making, the inaugural volume contains 500 individually handcrafted biographies that chronicle the accomplishments of African American women. Using archival research, oral history and narrative analysis, I examine the influence of race, culture and gender on the research agenda and knowledge production of an African American woman librarian.

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CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW

There's something about...words when you put [them] together to make [them] pretty. When you enrich...I like doing that. I think that's some of what I picked up on...the utilitarian purpose of the literary quilt.¹

OBJECTIVE

My dissertation is significant to the field of Library and Information Science (LIS), because it interprets the historic relationship between race, culture, gender and the production of knowledge exclusively from the perspective of an individual African American woman librarian. Pioneering reference work, *Notable Black American Women* (1992) (hereafter *NBAW*), helped make African American women's lives more visible within historical research. In order to understand its contribution and the place of its editor, Dr. Jessie Carney Smith, in American librarianship, we must consider various elements of her personal and professional experience as a woman, African American, librarian, and Southerner. By investigating and setting out the details of her life, this historical study follows the trajectory of one aspect of her scholarship that culminated with the publication of the inaugural volume of *NBAW*.² "Piecing a Quilt: Jessie Carney Smith and the Making of African American Women's History", examines the groundbreaking reference resource *NBAW* as an illustration of black feminist knowledge production.

NBAW was the first biographical dictionary focusing solely on the contributions of African American women published by a mainstream reference publisher and edited by

an African American woman librarian. Black feminist knowledge production, as used in my study, encompassed the influences and the process of Smith's scholarship between 1976-1992. The Women's National Book Association Award winner in 1992, *NBAW* contains 500 individually handcrafted biographies that chronicle the accomplishments of African American women. To situate this pioneering reference work within the context of black feminist knowledge production, I liken it to a story quilt. While many quilts tell stories, the very nature of the narrative or story quilt is to share specialized knowledge and to communicate the "values, ideas and experiences" of the quiltmaker.³ (See Definitions section below.) Recognized as the Academic/Research Librarian of the Year by the Association of College and Research Libraries in 1985, Smith has been a key contributor to African American women's historical research during her tenure as Head Librarian at historically black Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee.⁴

INTRODUCING NOTABLE BLACK AMERICAN WOMEN

My dissertation focuses on *NBAW*, the intellectual product of Smith's third decade at Fisk. It was the culmination of her work to add to reference resources and to transform the image of African American womanhood. Smith's interest in African American women's history was a blend of her personal appreciation for the strong African American women of her childhood and of her professional desire to bring diverse voices into the library and into the classroom. Born in 1930, Smith was raised, taught and nurtured by women who served as role models in her family and within her rural Mount Zion, North Carolina community.⁵ In 1988, her dream merged with Gale Research (Gale), a reference publisher with a similar vision. After two decades of searching she found a mainstream reference publisher as committed as she to the

project on African American women. It took Smith four years and 212 contributors to craft the first volume of *NBAW* now considered a reference standard. *NBAW* contains the biographies of 500 African American women born between 1730 and 1960 who persevered and succeeded in the face of racial and gender inequality. With help from an advisory board, she made the initial selection from over 1000 nominations with an eye toward a representative group that was historically, professionally and geographically diverse. Women selected satisfied one or more of these criteria: “pioneer in a particular area, important entrepreneur, leading businesswoman, literary or creative figure of stature, leader for social or human justice, major governmental or organizational official, creative figure in the performing arts, noted orator, distinguished educator, noted scholar, a leader, pioneer or contributor in other fields or areas who meets the basic criteria suggested above for selection as an outstanding black American woman”.⁶

Distinguished by the number of entries, periods covered, and scholarly details, *NBAW* was described as “unique,” “important,” and “defies comparison” by mainstream media reviewers.⁷ Having previously languished in obscurity, many of the women profiled in the first volume of *NBAW* had never appeared in published reference resources. Among researchers of African American women’s history nationwide, *NBAW* was an eagerly anticipated project. One contributor to *NBAW* wrote:

I think your biographical anthology is a much needed project. It will be a valuable aid to me and others writing on black women. I look forward to using it as a reference point to explore some of the interesting relationships and parallels, which existed among the *Notables* included in the volume.⁸

In addition to editing each biographical essay, Smith authored forty-three biographical entries using archival research and oral history. She set the tone for this reference work, which lifted women from obscurity to make their stories known to a new generation.⁹ Before *NBAW* appeared, then available biographical dictionaries specifically concerning black women were very dated and limited in scope: Lawson Andrew Scruggs' *Women of Distinction* (1893); Monroe Alphus Majors' *Noted Negro Women: Their Triumphs and Activities* (1893; revised 1971); *Homespun Heroines and Other Women of Distinction* by Hallie Quinn Brown (1926); and *Profiles of Negro Womanhood* by Sylvia G. L. Dannett (1964, 1966). *NBAW*'s scope and depth was significantly broader and deeper than these previous volumes. (These *NBAW* ancestors will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Two).¹⁰

Using archival research, oral history and narrative analysis, I examine how Smith's upbringing influenced her decisions to research and document the history of African American women. She saved newspaper clippings, funeral programs and magazine articles the same way her mother saved scraps of cloth for quilting. Smith was part of extensive formal and informal networks of scholars who followed the accomplishments of African American women and other women of color. Smith also delighted in managing several collections by and about African American women as part of Fisk's library collection. When Edwin Gleaves, Dean of the Peabody Library School, asked her to develop and teach a course in African American bibliography in 1971, she welcomed the opportunity to raise students' awareness of minority literature, to share the historical contributions of minority writers and to expose students to rich research collections like the one at Fisk.¹¹ The course "Bibliography of the Negro"

coincided with the proliferation of black studies and was the first of its kind at Peabody and potentially nationwide.¹² While planning these classes in black bibliography (and later training programs in ethnic bibliography), Smith discovered a “conspicuous and disturbing” gap in major reference works concerning women of color.¹³ This lack of resources made it extremely difficult to locate women from diverse ethnic backgrounds to fill academic positions or to serve as consultants for training programs.¹⁴ Frustrated that she could not find such a reference resource, she began compiling one of her own. In March 1976, Smith began work on a project to acknowledge contributions of women of color on the local, regional and national level: *Directory of Significant Twentieth Century American Minority Women (MAW)*.

Literary Quilting Projects

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, two themes emerged in Smith’s work: 1) reclaiming and sharing biographical data of women of color and 2) transforming the representation of African American womanhood. From year to year, she actively pursued the dream of publishing *MAW* first under contract with Gaylord Professional Publications (Gaylord) and then with Neal-Schuman Publishers, but it was not realized. *MAW* waxed and waned for the greater part of a decade plagued with issues and unforeseen challenges. Among them were a fire, a surprise executive decision at Gaylord, persistent delays in data collection and disagreements with Neal-Schuman regarding selection criteria and formatting. By the late 1980s, Smith had re-fashioned the directory manuscript into a research project entitled *Minority American Women* in hopes of publishing the work with funding from the United Negro College Fund’s (UNCF) Distinguished Scholars Program. Once again, time and resources precluded

her from completing the biographical directory. Smith, instead, used the UNCF funding to edit another book, *Images of Blacks in American Culture (IBAC)*. With *IBAC*, Smith addressed the impact of negative representations of African American women and men on American culture. In the midst of her own publishing challenges, Smith found time to collaborate on *Contributions of Black Women to America (CBWA)*, with Dr. Marianna Davis, an African American English professor at Benedict College, an HBCU in Columbia, South Carolina. In order to appreciate the significance of *NBAW* and to understand Smith's role in library and African American women's history, I explore these literary quilting projects to discover how her challenging experience with *MAW*, her research on *CBWA* and her success with *IBAC* provided the pattern around which she later crafted *NBAW*.

DEFINITIONS

Notable women, black feminist thought, and quiltmaking are integral concepts to this dissertation. For the first half of the twentieth century, everything from public transportation to education operated on the premise of "separate but equal."¹⁵ During the era of segregation (Jim Crow) in America, legal and social barriers constructed a reality of second-class citizenship for the nation's African American population. Smith, like many other African American women of her generation, learned from her parents and her community how to navigate and transcend the racist and sexist parameters of American society. In the midst of it all, African American women served as the culture keepers of the African American community. Many sought to transform negative images of African American womanhood and their pioneering efforts were highly

praised within the African American community. To assist in the readability of my work, I include the following definitions:

Notable women: Notable women can be defined as “worthy of notice; remarkable; outstanding; industrious and capable.” Hallie Quinn Brown author of *Homespun Heroines and Other Women of Distinction* (one of the ancestors to Smith’s *NBAW*) described the African American women presented in her work as “pioneer women, self-sacrificing heroines” who “accomplished under the most trying and adverse circumstances.”¹⁶ Smith wrote similarly of the women featured in *NBAW* as having achieved much “in the face of racial and gender discrimination and abuse.”¹⁷ By definition then, a notable black woman was one who achieved pioneering success in the midst of intersecting oppression of race, gender, culture and politics. Whether an educator, artist, athlete or a stage coach driver, a notable woman was esteemed for being “industrious and capable” and “worthy of notice” for her “true devotion” to uplift the African American race.

Black Feminist Thought: Black feminist thought revolves around the influential components of black women’s lives: work, intersecting oppression, empowerment, motherhood, activism, and sexual politics. While the breadth and range of black feminist thought varies, the four principles of black feminist epistemology addressed in this study are: 1) lived experience as criterion for meaning, 2) the use of dialogue, 3) the ethic of caring, and 4) the ethic of personal accountability. I use *NBAW* to illustrate how these four principles define a black woman scholar’s constant struggle to balance inequalities of race, culture and gender especially, as it relates to knowledge production.¹⁸

Quilting: Quiltmaking “offers a suggestive model for a black feminist aesthetic” that redefines knowledge and beauty.¹⁹ Historically, quilts and the process of quiltmaking have privileged women’s knowledge especially black women’s knowledge and creativity by conveying personal and interpersonal stories from one generation to the next. When stitched together the biographies featured in *NBAW* formed a dramatic historical tapestry about the past.

Story Quilt

The beauty of story quilts is that they possess both image and substance:

...quilts tell stories. What distinguishes narrative quilts is the stories are more apparent and the makers have generally revealed more about themselves--about who they are, what experiences they’ve had or what values and ideas they cherish.²⁰

Story quilts are distinguished by their ability to communicate multiple stories “one story to the viewer” and to “reveal the values, ideas and experiences of the maker.”²¹ Always fascinated by sewing and inspired by her mother’s quilting, young Jessie Smith dreamed of becoming a fashion designer. Had she been born in a more recent generation, perhaps, her dream could have been realized. Born in the era of Jim Crow, however, Smith reassessed her dream and chose from one of the traditional professional paths available to young black women in a segregated America. Her choice: librarianship. Black feminist thought provides one of the most relevant theoretical frameworks to critically interpret the scholarship of African American women librarians who were charged with preserving the cultural memory of the African American community, creating knowledge and maintaining access to it. Smith never lost the spark that had ignited her original dream of becoming a designer. Rather,

through her scholarship she pieced a literary quilt focused on reclaiming African American women from historical obscurity. Writing and compiling their biographies has enabled Smith to promote the creation of bonds and greater knowledge transfer from one generation to the next.

Many African American women like Smith were socialized to achieve formal education and were prepared for professional opportunities different than the women of previous generations. Under the mantle of segregation, these women were “looked to, encouraged to and expected to” use their education for uplifting the race in the few professions available to African American women--teaching, nursing, social work and librarianship.²² Librarianship, as a profession, has historically held a particular opportunity for African American women to preserve African American history. Many of these librarians became the keepers of African American culture in school, public, and academic libraries throughout the American north and south.

SIGNIFICANCE

This dissertation critically interprets existing scholarship by an African American woman librarian within the theoretical framework of black feminist thought within the field of LIS. (See Chapter Two). It fills existing gaps in the historical literature of American librarianship and contributes to the literature of black women’s studies. American library history, too often, has focused on the accomplishments of its white male leaders at predominantly white institutions (PWIs). Indeed, this is a contrast to the realities of librarianship practice since the profession has been mostly composed of women almost from its inception. Literature documenting the accomplishments of women librarians, black or white, rarely appeared until the 1970s with the rise of the

second wave feminism.²³ Under the strictures of legal and traditional segregation, the African American community had to educate their own librarians. The pressing need for more African American librarians came as a result of secondary school accreditation.²⁴ Throughout the twentieth century, numerous African American women librarians established professional careers at academic libraries at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Smith like many of these librarians acquired, preserved and provided access to significant collections of art, books, manuscripts and personal papers to correct generations of historical omissions and misrepresentations of the black experience in America.²⁵ As we see in Chapter Four, the pattern for designing *NBAW* emerged from Smith's experiences between 1976-1992 as research director of the *MAW*, regional field supervisor for *CBWA* and editor of *IBAC*. Most mainstream scholars and publishers were influenced by prevailing racist attitudes and did not publish materials by and about Black women. In response to this omission, many contemporary African American women scholars, particularly librarians like Smith, conducted research and created reference resources in order to reclaim the suppressed knowledge of their foremothers. In addition to the projects just mentioned, Smith served as an advisor to the Tennessee Women's Meeting and she directed the Zora Neale Hurston Festival in partnership with the Nashville Public Library. She also directed Themes in Black American Experience, a lecture and exhibit series funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. African American women's history and "Quilts and Quiltmaking in Black America" were among the topics researched as part of the series.²⁶ Black feminist thought provides a consistently evolving framework for

analyzing how these experiences influenced *NBAW*'s development and for examining Smith's contributions to African American women's history.

In the tradition of Stephanie Shaw and Kimberly Springer, my study accepts Collins' invitation to reinterpret existing works of African American women's intellectual production through new theoretical frameworks. For my examination of *NBAW*, I have interwoven the theoretical framework of black feminist thought with the interpretive framework of quilting. Applying the four principles of black feminist epistemology, I examine *NBAW* as a knowledge product whose manifestation was directly influenced by Smith's life experiences.²⁷ As an African American woman librarian raised and working in the South, she was acutely aware of the omission of black women in traditional biographical reference works. Her strong desire to reclaim the lives of black women has purposely led her to pursue work that has fulfilled personal as well as scholarly interests.²⁸ Alice Walker described this sense of purpose:

In my work, I write not only what I want to read--understanding fully and indelibly that if I don't do it no one else is so vitally interested, or capable of doing it to my satisfaction--I write all the things I should have been able to read.²⁹

Archival records, oral histories and narrative analysis indicate Smith's soul-deep need to craft *NBAW*, still the standard among reference works on African American women's history. Regarding her work with African American women's history, I asked Smith if she considered herself a quiltmaker. Silent for a moment, she enthusiastically exclaimed, "I think I am!"³⁰ With her research for "Quilts and Quiltmaking in Black America" in the 1980s, Smith rediscovered the artistry and utility of quilts crafted in the hands of industrious African American women. So inspired was she by their work, she

taught herself how to quilt and made a gift of her resulting work to her sister, Helena. Like her mother who saved the scraps from her dressmaking for quilting, Smith adopted a similar practice gathering information for her professional research. Twenty years of saving “every sliver of information” about African American women’s contributions provided her with the pieces she needed to design *NBAW*. Challenging editorial experiences on projects that preceded *NBAW* taught her how to quilt those pieces together resulting in a story quilt that expanded knowledge about African American women.

JUSTIFICATION

Sitting in the library history doctoral seminar during my first semester at GSLIS, I noticed how conspicuously absent African Americans and women were from the historical literature on librarianship. This observation prompted me to ask myself: How did I, an African American woman librarian from the South, arrive in an LIS doctoral program?

My search for an answer led me to the first African American to earn the doctorate in Library Science at the University of Illinois in 1964--Jessie Carney Smith. A quick look through Dissertation Abstracts and World Cat yielded more than fifty citations for books authored or edited by her but only a handful of brief biographical essays about her life and professional career. Smith herself wrote about her career experiences in two essays published in E. J. Josey’s *Black Librarian in America* (1970) and *Black Librarian in America Revisited* (1994). When I inquired if she had more autobiographical material, she quietly replied, “Unfortunately, I do not.”³¹ Smith fits into the category of women who make history but happen not to write themselves into history during the

process. Particularly true of practicing librarians, such omissions occur for a variety of reasons such as lack of interest, time and/or energy to dedicate to writing her story.³² As a result, there is a dearth of information on the history of African American women librarians at HBCUs in the South.

At first glance, little difference exists between the editorial process for crafting *NBAW* and of a traditional reference resource. Examination through the lens of black feminist thought, however, reveals Smith's commitment to reclaiming African American women's lives. With "black feminist sensibilities," she engaged in dialogic practices to connect people and resources and to encourage women to share their stories.³³ The more she came to know the women's stories, the more she cared for them and was even more determined to have their voices heard in these volumes. Her work demonstrated how a history of socio-cultural inequality informed and influenced African American women's educational and professional choices.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

"Piecing a Quilt" is divided into six chapters organized thematically. In chapter one, I have discussed the significance of this study and have provided a rationale for why I chose to examine *NBAW*. I have introduced the major pieces and threads composing this story quilt also known as a dissertation. Chapter two provides a review of literature on: 1) biographical resources on African American women prior to *NBAW*, 2) how African American women were socialized and educated during segregation, 3) the historical development of black feminist thought and 4) the role of African American women librarians within American library history. A biographical introduction of Smith follows in chapter three. I refer to her by first name Jessie in my discussion of her

formative years in the Mount Zion community of Greensboro, North Carolina to illustrate a progression from the personal to the professional. Tracing her professional evolution begins after her marriage in 1951. Thus, for the balance of the dissertation, I refer to her as Smith as I examine her work as a librarian in Nashville against the backdrop of Civil Rights of the 1960s, Black Power in the 1970s and the women's movement in the 1980s. In chapter four, I detail my methodological approaches: biographical, oral history and narrative analysis. I draw from oral history and archival evidence to demonstrate how Smith blended personal beliefs and professional commitments to create a research agenda and reference resource to redefine perceptions of black womanhood. I also discuss the advantages and challenges of researching an African American woman who is alive. In chapter five, I examine *NBAW* as a black feminist knowledge product through the interwoven theoretical framework of black feminist epistemology and quilting. The final chapter discusses the overall impact of the work and provides future directions for my research program.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

African American women's worldview has been distinctly defined by exposure to intersecting challenges to our culture and gender. Responding to this "legacy of struggle," black women intellectuals have worked to create positive representations of our personal and collective selves through art, music, and literature.³⁴

INTRODUCTION

My dissertation is an interpretation of the historical relationship between race, culture, gender and knowledge production. Due to the dynamics of slavery regarding black men, black women became the designated culture bearers for the community. Quilting fostered a 'safe space' for African American women to vent their frustrations and share their knowledge. Knowledge of distinct motifs, textile techniques (like appliqué and piecing), colors and rhythms was passed down through the generations by storytelling and quilting. Research by quilt historians Cuesta Benberry and Ronald Freeman has further revealed the skilled ingenuity and artful eye possessed by these early African American women folk artists.³⁵ I apply Collins' epistemology of black feminist thought to critically analyze Jessie Carney Smith's *Notable Black American Women* (1992) as an illustration of black feminist knowledge production. Frustrated by the lack of biographical reference resources about African American women, Smith collected information and crafted a pattern for *NBAW*. In the midst of persistent cultural and gender oppression, she designed a literary story quilt that served as a functional, creative expression as well as a transmitter of personal and cultural histories.

In order to understand how *NBAW* filled this information void and Smith's role as an African American woman librarian, I have examined various bodies of literature across the disciplines of black women's studies, education, folklore, history and library science.³⁶ I chose these disciplines because they provide the complex socio-cultural context that influenced *NBAW*'s development. The following literature review provides an overview of these interconnected bodies of research, as they are most relevant to my study of *NBAW*. These include: 1) a discussion of biographical resources identified as ancestors to *NBAW*, 2) the historical development of black feminist thought, 3) studies illuminating the socialization and educational experiences of African American women during the era of Jim Crow and 4) research concerning African American women librarians and their role in library history.

***NBAW* ANCESTORS**

African American Book Publishing

NBAW was the first biographical dictionary to focus exclusively on the accomplishments of African American women to be published by a mainstream reference publisher. In the absence of interest and support from mainstream publishing, African American book publishing evolved as the result of influences both within and outside of the African American community. From the outside, "historical barriers of literacy, capital, and the institutions of cultural production have prevented African American publishing practices from being consolidated into a full-fledged industry within the United States."³⁷ The legacy of slavery and the result of unequal allocation of educational resources throughout the era of segregation meant that literacy levels of African Americans remained very low through the 1950s. Among the earliest

organizations to counter this disparity from within the African American community, literary and library societies of the 1820s and 1830s reflected the interest in books about black Americana.³⁸ Prior to WWII blacks had to self publish literature and biographical works because access to “white owned print technologies was severely restricted under slavery and for decades thereafter.”³⁹ During the late nineteenth century, the black publishing landscape was dominated by religious and academic institutions established by and for African Americans. In response to discriminatory practices within denominations, the African Episcopal Church and the African American Baptists of the National Baptist Publishing Board created their own publishing houses. Their publications focused on doctrinal and moral teaching. At educational institutions like Howard University and Fisk University, academic presses published resources for student instruction and publicity materials to assist in garnering financial support from Northern philanthropists. Post Reconstruction publications included political tracts, history textbooks and religious manuals that supported the uplift of the race and were directed toward elite middle class readers.⁴⁰ Uplift ideology “speaks to a personal or collective spiritual--and potentially social--transcendence of worldly oppression and misery.” Key characteristics include public education, economic rights, struggle, democracy, group resistance and black middle class consciousness.⁴¹ By the turn of the twentieth century, books “claiming the inferiority of black American’s mental and moral capacities” like Dixon’s *Clansman* were on the rise. Also on the rise, however, were the literacy and overall educational levels of black Americans, which gave birth to publishers like Joel A. Rogers, whose publications actively repudiated such claims.⁴²

Beginning in the early twentieth century, African American book publishing continued to grow as African Americans became better educated, migrated from the south to the north, and began to work in professional and technical occupations and became more vocal about obtaining civil rights. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) founded in 1909 provided another forum by which African Americans could learn more about their history and keep current with accomplishments of the race. However, it was not until *Brown vs. Board* in 1954, which struck down school segregation, that the African American reading public began to diversify. In the 1960s-1970s, thirty-seven African American book publishers enjoyed a boom due to the growth of black studies programs and the availability of federal funding. The majority of their publications were literary in nature. During this period, books of fiction, poetry and black history from these publishers were well received by “the library-oriented segment of the major white book reviewing media.”⁴³ Despite the success and value to the African American community, most publishers remained small businesses and lacked the big marketing budgets necessary to compete with mainstream publishers. In the shifting economic landscape of the 1980s, many African American publishers struggled to attract sufficient capital and encountered resistance from mainstream review media in efforts to garner exposure for their publications.⁴⁴

Few white publishers were eager to address the dire need for reference resources to document the true record of history of the African American community. One such publisher was Noel N. Marder, a white businessman from Yonkers, New York. So compelled by what he witnessed during the Civil Rights movement, Marder founded *Back our Brothers* a “non profit organization dedicated to the cause of interracial

understanding” and with help from baseball legend Jackie Robinson raised thousands of dollars for the cause.⁴⁵ He also founded Educational Heritage, Incorporated in 1960 and was among the first to successfully publish, market and distribute an encyclopedic reference set about the African American experience for the mainstream library market.

Negro Heritage Library

In response to the “deliberate exclusion” of African Americans in history books, Educational Heritage published a ten-volume set on African American history, the Negro Heritage Library, between 1964 and 1966.⁴⁶ An idealistic and ambitious publisher, Marder recruited an interracial group of editors and executives including Civil Rights activist Wyatt Tee Walker as vice president of marketing and services and pioneer black publisher Joel A. Rogers and baseball legend Jackie Robinson as editors.⁴⁷ Walker was chief of staff to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the first full time executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). When he left SCLC in order to become president of Educational Heritage in 1965, he became the first African American to head a publishing firm that grossed an excess of \$2 million annually. Marder turned over the day-to-day operations to Walker and became chairman of the board.⁴⁸ King, along with author Langston Hughes and fellow civil rights leaders Roy Wilkins and A. Philip Randolph, so believed in the work of Educational Heritage his endorsement was featured prominently in the advertisements:

The idea of the *Negro Heritage Library* is a tremendous one. I can think of no venture in the world of ideas that is going to be more critical to the Negro community. In a real sense it is the next frontier of our struggle.⁴⁹

In 1964, the *Negro History Library* released the first three titles of its ten-volume set: *Emerging African Nations & Their Leaders*, *A Martin Luther King Treasury*, and *Profiles of Negro Womanhood*.⁵⁰

According to Fairchild and Bopp “one of the most consistent features of reference work has been the high demand for information about people.”⁵¹ By definition, a biographical dictionary is “a single volume reference work or set of reference books containing biographical essays about the lives of actual people, sometimes limited by biographees that are deceased.”⁵² Indeed, biographical dictionaries are a core resource in any library reference collection. From the 1970s through the 1990s, the demand for more diverse coverage of biographical information came as the result of women’s studies, black studies and black feminist movements. During this period, available biographical dictionaries specifically concerning black women proved to have been very dated and were limited in scope.* For this study, four biographical works published between 1893 and 1964 were identified as ancestors to *NBAW: Noted Negro Women: Their Triumphs and Activities (NNW)*; *Women of Distinction: Remarkable in Works Invincible in Character (WD)* *Homespun Heroines and Other Women of Distinction (HH)*; and *Profiles of Negro Womanhood (PNW)*.

Biographical Dictionaries

Within this literary and historical context *NBAW* was published. It was a breakthrough in the realm of biographical dictionaries in three ways. First, a major

* For the purposes of traversing the timeline from 1893-1991, the terms collective histories, biographical encyclopedia and biographical dictionary are one in the same.

reference publisher, Gale Research, published *NBAW* and provided Smith with unprecedented editorial and financial support for the project. Second, it surpassed previous publications in scholarly depth and scope. It featured 500 African American women born between 1730 and 1960. Over 200 contributors crafted well-researched articles complete with bibliographies that often brought attention to research collections at historically black colleges and universities. Finally, *NBAW* included extensive biographical essays on the lives of seventeen African American women librarians and library administrators.

The fact that so few biographical dictionaries chronicling the contributions of black women existed prior to the publication of *NBAW* in 1992 was the result of a complex mix of legal and social factors. As a result of slavery and subsequently segregation, the lives of black people were virtually shrouded in illiteracy, and racial disenfranchisement. Black women faced the additional barrier of sexual exploitation. Enslaved men and women, used to fulfill domestic and reproductive duties that fueled the plantation economy of the American South, were not allowed to learn to read or write. Women, free or enslaved, whose stories did reach the printed forum appeared either as individual autobiographies or biographies and rarely appeared in publications beyond their geographic region of origin. Inadequate archival materials and difficulty in locating sources challenged both authors and editors. Using *Black Biography 1790-1950: A Cumulative Index* as a guide, these works--*NNW*, *WD*, *HH* and *PNW*-- were considered ancestors because they specifically: 1) were referred to in *NBAW*'s introduction, 2) were used by Smith to develop her initial selection criteria, 3) focused solely on black women

and their accomplishments and 4) contained at least 60 biographical entries/sketches.⁵³ What follows is a brief description of each work.

Noted Negro Women and Women of Distinction

In 1893, the first efforts to rectify the omission of African American women's history were published: *Noted Negro Women (NNW)* edited by Monroe A. Majors and *Women of Distinction (WD)* edited by Lawson A. Scruggs. Physicians by training, Scruggs and Majors were committed to highlighting the accomplishments of African American women.

Majors compiled *NNW* because he was eager to celebrate the "virtues and force of the noted women of the race."⁵⁴ His genuine passion for the subject plus his status in the African American community as a physician, helped him obtain information as he began work on *NNW*, the first ancestor to *NBAW*. Born on October 12, 1864, Majors was the son of Andrew and Jane Majors. His educational journey included West Texas College, Tillotson Institute and Central Tennessee College in Nashville. An 1886 graduate of Meharry Medical College, Majors was a frequent contributor to the local newspapers while pursuing his studies. He practiced medicine in California before returning to his home state of Texas in 1890. Later that year, motivated by "true devotion to our sisters," he began compiling 300 biographies recognizing the achievements of African American women and to "give inspiration to the girls of present and future generations".⁵⁵ Additionally, both *NNW* and *WD* spoke of better days for the African American community and their intended audiences were not only African Americans but "friends of the race" as well. Majors listed no specific criteria for inclusion

but several mentions were made in the “Introduction” to the inclusion of women who exhibited intelligence and a mastery of arts and sciences and were virtuous and moral. He culled previously published resources like *Webster’s Unabridged Biographical Dictionary* and *History of the Colored Race* for any shred of information on African American women’s contributions.

With *WD*, Lawson Andrew Scruggs turned his attention from the practice of medicine to writing black women’s history because he found it “a painful experience to see how little is known of our great women and their works.” Born to slave parents in Bedford County Virginia, Scruggs went on to graduate from Shaw University’s Leonard Medical School in 1886. Later that year, he and two other Shaw graduates became the first black physicians licensed to practice by the state of North Carolina. With a successful private practice in Raleigh, he held various academic positions at Shaw and Saint Augustine and helped found the Old North State Medical, Dental, and Pharmaceutical Society. Active in literary pursuits to help the black community, Scruggs established a reading room and library during his tenure as president of the Hesperian Literary and Social Club of Raleigh in the 1890s. He also published several articles concerning the negative portrayal of blacks by journalists like Thomas Nelson Page. To further address this concern, Scruggs developed *WD* as a means for “educating public sentiment, stimulating and encouraging the young women and young men of the race who are almost overcome and discouraged by the dashing billows of life’s angry sea”. A husband and father, Scruggs also dedicated his work to his first wife Lucie Johnson Scruggs who died during the preparation of the manuscript and one of the women featured in *WD*.⁵⁶

Along with fifteen contributors Scroggs wrote biographical sketches on ninety-one women among whom were artists, teachers, clubwomen, homemakers, physicians, and social activists.⁵⁷ Most sketches were written as narrative essays and included a photograph (lithograph or sketch) and a range of elements such as letters from well-known people of their day (George Washington's letter to Phillis Wheatley), quotes from the press and excerpts from the subjects' writings, speeches and poetry. Several essays were written by prominent people of that period including T. Thomas Fortune and Ida B. Wells. The audience for the book was young African Americans and "the philanthropists." He dedicated the work to his wife Lucie Johnson Scroggs who was included and recognized in the book recognized for her work as a teacher and writer. Written in the formal language of the period, the essays in *WD* were tinged with passionate, flowery exaltations. (See Chapter Five: Finding Phillis). While Scroggs and his contributors accomplished an amazing feat in acquiring intimate details of the women's lives, but some inaccuracies persisted. For example, Phillis Wheatley was mother of three children but *WD* listed her as having only one child. Almost 100 years later, Smith reflected on Scroggs' challenges for accuracy as she stressed the importance of gathering the most accurate information about the women she included in *NBAW*.

Homespun Heroines and Profiles of Negro Womanhood

The third ancestor to *NBAW* (and Smith's personal favorite) was *Homespun Heroines and Other Women of Distinction (HH)* by Hallie Quinn Brown which was published in 1926. A passionate advocate for equal rights for African Americans and women, Brown was born March 10, 1850 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Her parents

Thomas Arthur Brown and Frances Jane Scroggins secured their freedom from slavery and moved to Ontario, Canada in 1864 and then to Wilberforce, Ohio in 1870. Brown's parents were self-educated and actively involved with the Underground Railroad. After graduating from Wilberforce University in 1873, Brown worked diligently as a teacher in an effort to improve the literacy levels of black children. From her first professional position at Senora Plantation in Mississippi, Brown went on to serve in several capacities: Dean at Allen University (1885-1887), Dean of Women at Tuskegee Institute (1892-1893). In 1893, she returned to her alma mater, Wilberforce where she taught for the balance of her career. As a clubwoman, Brown founded The Colored Women's League of Washington, D.C., the forerunner to the National Association of Colored Women (NACW).⁵⁸

When she penned *HH* in 1926, Brown was serving as NACW's seventh president. The book contains biographies of sixty African American women born between 1745 and 1900. From those who endured enslavement to educators to homemakers to social workers, *HH* offered insights into the personal and professional spheres (work, religion, family life) of black women of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Brown stated that the audience was the youth of the current generation so they would be aware of struggles and accomplishments of black women. As best can be deduced, all twenty-eight of the contributors to *HH* were women.⁵⁹ Each biography was written in narrative form with detailed birth/death information as well as significant events and accomplishments of each woman's life. Many entries included photographs, etchings or silhouettes of the women.

An interesting thread connects *WD* to *HH*. Educator Josephine Turpin Washington wrote the Introduction for *WD* (1893) and the Forward for *HH* (1926). Washington was Scruggs' teacher at Richmond Institute, a Baptist Home Mission Society School in Richmond, Virginia. An 1886 graduate of Howard University, Washington spent her summer vacations as copyist for Frederick Douglass, Recorder of Deeds for the District of Columbia. In 1888, she moved to join her new husband Samuel H.H. Washington who was a physician in Birmingham, Alabama. Her introduction in *WD* acknowledged the self-sacrifice that black and white women made for their families regarding education and personal development. But she spoke most passionately of the additional challenge that black women encountered on account of racial prejudice and gender biases. Thirty-three years later in the Forward of *HH*, Washington expanded her sentiments as she spoke of the "wonderful spirit" which prompted black women to overcome these obstacles and she prophesied that "the spirit of the noble dead" would influence youth in the current generation and beyond to "finer character growth and racial development."⁶⁰ Smith would share a similar sentiment about this connection.

Almost four decades would pass before another biographical work focused solely on African American women was published in 1964. The inaugural title of the *Negro Heritage Library, Profiles of Negro Womanhood (PNW)*, was the first biographical reference work about black women published by Educational Heritage. Although Educational Heritage considered itself to be a mainstream publisher, financial difficulties resulted in the *Negro Heritage Library* being the organization's only publication. PNW's author, historian Sylvia Gwendolyn Liebovitz Dannett was likely chosen to lead this historic enterprise because she was considered a thorough researcher and thoughtful

writer who supported the Civil Rights Movement. Born in the borough of Manhattan, New York on Christmas Eve 1909, Dannett got her start as a writer by crafting plays for her summer camp in the Woodlands in Maine. She earned a degree in liberal arts from Douglass College (now part of Rutgers University) and went to work for her family's shirt business shortly after graduation. As freelance writer, she wrote passionately on themes concerning equality for women and African Americans. By 1964, she had published three books about the lives of white American women: *Noble Women of the North* (1959), *She Rode with the Generals: The True and Incredible Story of Sarah Emma Seelye, alias Franklin Thompson* (1960), and *Our Women of the Sixties* (1963).⁶¹

Originally, *PNW* was slated to be a single volume spanning women's lives from 1619 through 1963. Its goal was to recall the "sorrows and joys...frustrations and triumphs" of African American women long neglected by white historians and scholars. Dannett did not set out to chronicle a "who's who" but to offer biographical essays about women's achievements "representative of a cross-section of Negro womanhood."⁶² Early in her research process, Dannett realized a second volume would have to be produced in order to do justice to the women's biographies. She decided that the first volume would focus on 18th and 19th century women after discovering previously untapped troves of information which included;

letters, diaries, privately printed biographies and autobiographies. Pamphlets, stored in boxes literally covered in dust, old books, periodicals and copies of rare newspapers that brought to light the names of scores of women who brought honor and credit to their country...as teachers, writers, artists and musicians.⁶³

In addition to archival research, Dannett interviewed the twentieth century women who were the focus of the second volume of *PNW*. In total, *PNW* volumes I and II included

biographical essays on ninety-seven women. Geared to readers of all ages, *PNW* was marketed through African American churches first to families then to school, academic and public libraries. Dannett sought to include women who reflected the diversity of black women's experiences from homemakers to physicians to artists to radical social activists. The format was generous (average profile was 4-5 pages) and the narrative essays included illustrations of the women's likeness in volume I and full-page black & white photographs in volume II. Quotes from the women's writings, speeches and diaries were also part of the essay. *NBAW's* biographical essays contained many of the same elements.

NNW, *WD*, *HH* and *PNW* did the important job of capturing neglected history, thereby providing the foundation for future scholarly research.⁶⁴ All the authors--Majors, Scruggs, Brown and Dannett--were highly educated and these biographical resources were considered well researched during their respective periods. Published in the same year, it is not known if Scruggs and Majors knew of each other's work remains a question for future research. What may be observed in the historical data is the important role that money, distance and limited distribution channels all played in the overall accessibility of these resources. Lawson self-published *WD* in Raleigh, North Carolina while Majors' *NNW* was published and distributed by Donohue & Henberry Printers, Binders and Engravers over 800 miles away in Chicago, Illinois. *Homespun* was published in Xenia, Ohio by a small press and *PNW* was the only ancestor with nationwide marketing and distribution. The level of scholarship presented in *PNW* most closely resembled the type of essays that later appeared in *NBAW*. *PNW* was also significant because, in addition to crafting well written essays, Dannett offered extensive

scholarly threads for future researchers. The endnotes and bibliographies provided detailed lists of libraries and archives as well as the names of librarians and archivists who assisted her in gathering information. These scholarly threads offered reliable starting points for many of the contributors of *NBAW* as they began research for their essays. Building on these bibliographies, *NBAW* contributors also highlighted the collections of African American women's personal papers, speeches and manuscripts housed at HBCU libraries and archives. Further comparison of *NBAW* to its ancestors appears in chapter five.

NBAW not only addressed a gap in African American women's history, it also offered the most extensive biographical information on the contributions of African American women librarians. Prior to *NBAW*, the documented history of these librarians had been absent from mainstream library history and from other biographical dictionaries as well. *NBAW* included: Regina Anderson Andrews, Augusta Baker, Sadie Peterson Delaney, Eliza Atkins Gleason, Vivian Harsh, Jean Blackwell Hutson, Clara Stanton Jones, Virginia Lacy Jones, Lucy Laney, Nella Larsen, Catherine Latimer, Audre Lorde, Effie Lee Newsome, Annette Phinazee, Dorothy Porter, Charlemae Hill Rollins, Doris Saunders, Anne Spencer. Prior to *NBAW*, *CBWA*, a reference resource compiled by English professor Marianna Davis, only presented brief biographical sketches on African American women librarians. In addition to highlighting nine of the aforementioned librarians, *CBWA* also included Barbara S. Miller, Susan Dart Butler, Della Hayden Jackson, Agnes M. Jones, Ruby Stutts Lyells, Alma Jacobs, Hanna D. Atkins, Rebecca T. Bingham, Lucille Thomas, Letitia Woods Brown and Dorothy Jenkins Field. Smith who served as research director for the book was among those

profiled. (The image of her smiling while sitting at her desk at Fisk was the only photograph included in the section representing African American women librarians.)⁶⁵ Many of these librarians helped redefine African American womanhood by establishing the research collections and files documenting the lives and achievements of African American women. *NBAW's* contributors used many of these sources. Like many librarians of her generation, Smith did not (and still does not) identify herself as a black feminist. Her process for creating the literary tapestry, *NBAW*, however, distinctly embodies "black feminist sensibilities." Collins wrote:

To look for black feminism by searching for U.S. black women who self identify as "black feminists" misses the complexity of how black feminist practice actually operates.⁶⁶

This definition makes room for black women scholars like Smith, thereby making black feminist thought one of the most relevant critical social theories through which to assess the experience of African American women librarians.

DEFINING FEMINISM(S)

My discussion of black feminism follows the pattern of Benita Roth and Dayo Gore's views on multiple feminisms.⁶⁷ In her work *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*, Collins discussed how intersecting challenges shaped the experience not only for women of African descent in America but that of Latinas, Asian American and Native American women. During the 1970s, many women of color were actively engaged in acting, singing, writing and quilting their brand of feminism. As second wave feminism evolved through the 1980s, an intellectual, cultural and political disconnect marginalizing the experiences of women of color persisted. Black feminism takes into account issues of race, class, sexual politics and

religion, while gender oppression as it pertains to white middle class women's efforts to "claim autonomy and independence over their lives" has been the primary focus of second wave feminism.⁶⁸ A direct response to this marginalization within mainstream feminist discourse, black feminism sparked an increase in scholarship by black women scholars for and about black women. Yet, while many of these women were contributors to a growing body of literature, their works, words and stories were not being compiled into biographical reference works. Smith sought to rectify this omission first with *MAW* and then with *CBWA*. In addition to pieces gleaned from its ancestors, the pattern for *NBAW* was the result of Smith's previous literary quilting projects in the 1970s-1980s: *MAW*, *CBWA* and *IBAC*.

MAW and *CBWA* emerged when women from diverse ethnic backgrounds were defining feminisms for themselves. Their parallel efforts to make their voices heard and to have their achievements recognized were in response to social and gender as well as ethnic movements. Black feminism evolved from the Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the 1960s and 1970s and earlier movements such as clubwomen, church and the communist left. At the same time, Chicana feminism grew out of the Chicano labor movements of the 1970s. Similarly, Asian American women fought the oppression of silence in their culture, while issues of sovereignty and decolonization were central to the struggle of Native American women.⁶⁹ Reflecting on the mythologized 'sisterhood' of the women's liberation movements, scholars like Bettina Aptheker and Gerda Lerner acknowledge the experience of African American women as being distinctly different:

For women of color...such an empowerment cannot take place unless the communities in which they live can successfully establish their own racial and cultural integrity--unless racism is overcome. The experiences of women of color must assume a co-central focus in the shaping of feminist thought and action. Without this the liberation of women cannot be either envisioned or realized.⁷⁰

These feminisms countered the claim of 'universal sisterhood' by mainstream feminism and sought to address the intersecting challenges of gender, race, class, sexual politics and religion.⁷¹ A few African American women librarians made their voices heard in the conversation of multiple feminisms. Most vocal was librarian, poet and essayist, Audre Lorde. Known for her explorations of African American women's sexuality, she openly advocated for a feminism that validated racial, social and cultural distinctions.

Black Feminist Thought

For the purposes of my study, I approach black feminist thought as a "time tested" critical social theory.⁷² Collins asserts that while intersecting oppressions (poverty, violence, abuse, and racial segregation in housing, education and employment) are not unique to African American women, the common experience by African American women promotes a distinct standpoint or worldview that can directly inform our personal expression and professional work. Whether manifested through art, music or literature, knowledge produced by black feminist scholars:

1. Has reflected how lived experience
2. Uses of dialogue to obtain, synthesize and communicate knowledge
3. Demonstrates an ethic of caring
4. Demonstrates an ethic of personal accountability

My choice to examine *NBAW* through a black feminist lens rather than a womanist perspective embraces Collins' approach. According to Collins, womanism speaks to the "solidarity of humanity" and "universalizes what are typically seen as individual struggles while simultaneously allowing space for autonomous movements of self-determination."⁷³ As a sociologist, Collins builds on this definition of 'what is' to develop a more expanded 'how-to' paradigm concerning black feminism. In my study of *NBAW*, this is particularly helpful as I navigate the work of an African American woman scholar to influence self-definition as resistance to negative images and stereotypes of African American women.

The evolution of black feminist knowledge follows a particular historiographical pattern. According to African American woman historian Darlene Clark Hine, African American women are part of "a community of shared memory that exists at the intersections of race, class and gender" whose formal or academic history has developed along three parallel grids: 1) oral history, 2) individual and collective biographies and 3) theoretical examination.⁷⁴ The following paragraphs illustrate the diversity and evolution of contemporary black feminist intellectual production over time.

The first grid emerged in the 1970s with the creation of Oral History archives, such as the Schlesinger Library's *Black Women Oral History Project*, and the accumulation of manuscript collections. African American women librarians were active in acquiring and organizing various pieces of the lives of their foremothers. The challenge of locating written materials on the lives of African American women (and other women of color) has been a persistent one. At the heart of the challenge in securing resources by and about black women were the issues of literacy and access to publishing opportunities.

In the African American community, this challenge cultivated a “high degree of professional resourcefulness” among black women librarians.⁷⁵ To compensate for the lack of written sources highly valued in scholarly circles, black women scholar-librarians and researchers expanded the definition of historical materials to include oral histories, textiles and non-scholarly community networks. A combination of these practices was common among librarians at many of these institutions. The following account of the work of Dorothy Porter, Catherine Latimer and Pearl Graham illustrates these practices.

Historical methods employed by black women scholar-librarians were steeped with influences of an African American woman’s worldview that placed high value on the oral tradition as method for transmitting information and knowledge. One example of this practice can be found in the career experience of Dorothy Porter. Responsible for building collections at the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University from 1930 to 1973, her work established the model for African American research collections in general and brought to light new aspects of African American women’s history. In the 1940s, Porter helped to establish black women’s personal histories as valid historical material. Assisting writer Pearl Graham, she helped to substantiate the rumor that an enslaved woman Sally Hemings bore children fathered by Thomas Jefferson. Catherine Latimer, head cataloger and reference librarian at the 135th Street Branch of the New York Public Library, referred Graham to Porter. Well aware of the scarcity of documentation on African American women, Porter followed other avenues for securing sources deemed “unreliable by scholarly biographers” of the time. She inquired among her network of older black women and was “surprised to discover that her own mother knew an elderly woman in Boston, Lucy Williams, who claimed to

descend from Jefferson and Hemings.”⁷⁶ Placing the woman’s testimony alongside the other documents and mementos she had gathered led Graham to conclude that Sally Hemings’ four children were probably fathered by Thomas Jefferson. Validating knowledge through historical methods such as oral history was not an accepted practice among most historians trained in the Western intellectual tradition during this period. The result of Porter’s approach was the substantiation of knowledge repeatedly rejected by Jefferson’s biographers. This use of dialogue between these librarians and researchers and the acquisition of oral history from black women in the community led to creation and validation of knowledge.

The professional relationship between Latimer, Porter and Graham speaks to the intimate, creative collaboration that has historically existed between African American women scholar-librarians, archivists and researchers. Academic (and public) librarians took it upon themselves to collect “every sliver of information” about notable black women wherever they encountered them whether in newspapers, church programs or a neighbor’s attic. The collections amassed by these librarians at institutions like Howard University made them the primary repositories of biographical materials on African American women. Academic researchers in history, journalism, sociology, psychology, ethnic studies and other disciplines have been heavy users of these resources in fields including By doing this work, African American women librarians changed the landscape for documenting black women’s history. The social revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s placed black women librarians at the forefront of research innovation as predominantly white institutions called upon the librarians’ expertise to build collections to support

black studies and women's history. This grid also included the preparation of reference works, including Smith's *MAW* and Davis' *CBWA*.

NBAW fits into Hine's second grid. This grid centered on the production of monographs, individual and collective biographies of African American women's participation in major sociopolitical movements, anti-slavery, suffrage, clubwomen, civil rights and feminist. Collins cites Toni Cade Bambara's *Black Woman: An Anthology* (1970) as the beginning of a formal black feminist agenda. *Black Woman* included Frances Beale's article "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female" which detailed the intersecting oppressions of race, class and gender. In their novels, writers Toni Morrison, Ntozake Shange, Gayle Jones and Alice Walker brought to light black women's issues. At the same time, social scientists--Joyce Ladner, Bonnie Thornton Dill and Rosalyn Terborg Penn and others--centered their work on black women's experience. By the early 1980s, black women intellectuals (writers, artists, academics) were actively moving toward a more explicitly articulated black feminist theory. bell hooks discussed being a black woman and feminism in her books *Ain't I a Woman* (1981) and *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (1989) while Angela Davis' *Women, Race and Class* and *Women, Culture and Politics* (1989) sparked a conversation about black women's political economy. "A black feminist statement" by the Combahee River Collective (1977) stated for the first time specific dimensions of African American women's personal and organizational empowerment. *When and Where I Enter* (1984), Paula Giddings' narrative history, provided a synthesis of African American women's history.

In *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men but Some of Us are Brave: Black Women's Studies (But Some of Us are Brave)* (1982) editors Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell-Scott and Barbara Smith chronicle the political development and formalization of black women's studies and feminist theory. The anthology was the product of black women's power "to name ourselves." By highlighting the current research (circa 1982) of black women scholars across disciplines, Hull et al. crafted a volume which continues to serve as a "reference text and pedagogical tool" concerning African American women. Of particular interest for my study are the extensive bibliographies and bibliographic essays by Yellin and Brown, which provided solid starting points for many contributors to *NBAW*.⁷⁷

Librarian Ann Allen Shockley also contributed to this grid with the compilation of *Afro-American Women Writers, 1746-1933: An Anthology and Critical Guide* (1988) during her tenure as Fisk's special collections librarian between 1969-1998.⁷⁸ Beverly Guy-Sheftall's anthology *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African American Feminist Thought* (1995) counters the narrative of mainstream feminism with the "rewriting of the familiar narrative of American feminism and a retelling of African American intellectual history."⁷⁹ Through the writings of past pioneers like Sojourner Truth and Anna Julia Cooper and those of modern day black feminist scholars like Deborah K. King, Darlene Clark Hine and Alice Walker, this volume charts the development of feminist consciousness among African American women. A path breaking collection of articles, this critical and insightful work "unveils the multiplicity of black women's voices."⁸⁰ *NBAW* benefited from Smith's professional connections with many of these women whose scholarship provided the foundation for black feminist thought. As *NBAW*

advisory board members, Bell-Scott, Guy-Sheftall, Hine, and Cole shared Smith's commitment to ensuring black women's voices were heard.

The third grid expands theoretical discussions of African American women's challenges with race, culture and gender. My dissertation, an examination of *NBAW* and Smith's experience through the lens of black feminist thought, is part of the third grid.

Quilting Knowledge

Collins' analysis of knowledge validation processes is central to my study of *NBAW*. Personal creativity, intergenerational communication and collective empowerment are interlocking elements of the quilting tradition of African American women. The same elements are part of the knowledge production of African American women scholars. Until the late 1970s, social institutions and policies shaped mainstream intellectual production knowledge claims about African American women within the knowledge validation processes they controlled.⁸¹ Historically, publishers and scholars were complicit in this process by producing resources and scholarship that failed to acknowledge the contributions of African American women. To address this void, black women scholars began to make their voices heard. Scholars like Hull, Bell-Scott & Smith wrote and crafted resources that reflected their distinct experience as black women in America. While *But Some of Us are Brave* was well received by like-minded scholars, it encountered resistance because scholarly communities that counter the dominant epistemology and prevailing assumptions (i.e. the notion of black female inferiority) risk being deemed less credible and having their intellectual production

suppressed. Many African American women librarians addressed issues of image and of access to information in various ways. Some like Shockley crafted well documented bibliographies to assist researchers seeking information on contributions of African American women to American culture. They embodied positive self-image in their knowledge, poise and propriety and willingly accepted the mantle as role models to the younger people with whom they came in contact. This was especially true of the African American women librarians who were born and educated during segregation. Smith and her staff were among the first in the country to prepare their colleagues, both black and white, to handle the rapid growth of black studies from 1968 through 1975.⁸² Keenly aware of her role in bringing positive attention to the rich cultural heritage of African Americans, Smith's work with African American bibliography highlighted Fisk University Library's impressive collection of African American history. Stitching together pieces of information and her lived experience, Smith sought to transform the image of black women by crafting a biographical story quilt about black women's lives.⁸³ In order to appreciate the significance of *NBAW* to African American women's history and to better understand Smith's role, it is necessary to explore the education and historical role of African American women librarians.

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN LIBRARIANS

This dissertation strategically situates the scholarship of black women librarians in the midst of black women writers like Alice Walker and black women historians like Darlene Clark Hine. This historical study heeds the call of library historian Wayne Wiegand to expand the view of library history by offering insights into how African American women came to the field of librarianship during the era of segregation and

became leaders in the field during the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement and beyond. He noted:

...for a profession dedicated to multiculturalism, our historical literature demonstrates too much tunnel vision. At this point in its own history, librarianship knows relatively little of its role in retarding or facilitating multiculturalism's nineteenth and twentieth century progress.⁸⁴

Historically, they were instrumental in acquiring, assembling and disseminating information by and about black women. The historical literature of American librarianship, while acknowledging the feminized nature of the profession, has too often focused on the accomplishments of its male leaders at predominantly white institutions. In terms of the traditional historiography, librarianship follows along the similar "master narrative" of mainstream American history which privileges white male leaders. The rare inclusion of white middle class women highlighted a small number of superstars in library administration and education.

The rise in feminist consciousness within the library ranks during the late 1970s influenced the creation of scholarship like Weibel and Heim's *The Role of Women in Librarianship, 1876-1976: The Entry, Advancement, and Struggle for Equalization in One Profession* (1979), landmark anthology, charts major issues from the feminization of the profession, progressive era activism and public librarianship, the impact of World Wars I and II through the second feminist movement in the 1960s. Baum's *Feminist Thought in American Librarianship* (1982) surveys the impact of radical and liberal feminism on the "thought and agenda of American library women." However, much like the history of American feminism "has been primarily the narrative of the heroic deeds of white women," these works brought about by American library feminism focused

solely on the actions of white women in the profession of librarianship. The profession developed into a distinctly feminized field in large part due to Melvil Dewey's practice of hiring women who possessed a commitment to service and who were "of strong moral character." For white women librarians, this combination of characteristics resulted in a century long struggle for status both within and outside the library community.⁸⁵ By contrast, African American women who came to the profession during the era of Jim Crow were a highly visible, active part of the black community. Clara Stanton Jones, the first African American president of the American Library Association, the leading professional organization of U.S. librarianship once wrote:

Black librarians have never been saddled with the image of the prim, forbidding, 'jailor of books' (to quote Melvil Dewey's scornful phrase). Invariably, [the black librarian]...has been ...an active leader, helper, worker in the community, who was never intimidated by the kind of role required to take the library to the people. They have shared their talents...with the community as part of their involvement in civic and cultural life.⁸⁶

Instead of emphasizing how an African American woman librarian's experiences differ from that of a white woman or black man, I submit that Smith's experience serves "as one specific social location for examining points of connection" toward a more complete view of library history.⁸⁷ Librarianship offered an ideal social location for expanding black feminist thought due to the highly feminized nature of the profession and to African American women librarians' connection to the African American community.

This dissertation is one of the few in-depth biographical studies to critically analyze the scholarship of an individual African American woman librarian at a historically black college or university. Lelia Rhodes notes:

black librarians have contributed to the progress of libraries of all types, and although black female librarians played an active role in advancing the field of librarianship, many of their contributions have gone unnoticed.⁸⁸

Dawson's thorough bibliographic exploration in the ethnic diversity issue of *Library Trends* in 2000 remains the best starting point for examining what has been written by and about African American women librarians.⁸⁹ It reveals that much of the other literature that has emerged concerning African American women in librarianship (public, special, school, academic) has been in the form of collective biography, autobiographical writings and biographical dictionary entries. Numerous biographical essays chronicle the successes of African American women librarians in areas such as fundraising, collection development, and community service. Yet, few scholarly works exist that analyze the intellectual production of scholar-librarians particularly in the context of historically black colleges and universities.⁹⁰ Wiegand acknowledged that while collective biographical work on African Americans and women has enriched library history, this type of research "can [only] partially correct a jaundiced perspective of the past."⁹¹ More extensive biographical study on African American women librarians will provide the profession with lessons concerning this demonstrated accountability to community and use of scholarship to promote intellectual dialogue.⁹² This study illustrated how Smith's work on African American women's history connected her to other African American women intellectuals, increased diversity within American librarianship and women's history and provided a solid foundation for new scholarship.

This study of Smith builds on Lelia Rhodes' 1975 dissertation "A Critical Analysis of the Career Backgrounds of Selected Black Female Librarians." Rhodes culled her sample of fifteen librarians from *The Biographical Directory of Librarians in the United*

States and Canada, Who's Who of American Women, Who's Who in Library Service: A Biographical Directory of Professional Librarians in the U.S. and Canada and the *Negro Almanac*.⁹³ Ranging in age from forty-five to seventy, the women profiled included library school deans, retired deans, directors (public, special, academic), curators and state librarians who had achieved their positions before the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Smith was the youngest librarian featured in Rhodes' dissertation, the first research study of African American women librarians.

Each librarian in the study received a list of questions specifying the type of information Rhodes was seeking. Then, Rhodes conducted a tape-recorded oral history with each librarian (with the exception of one who completed a questionnaire) similar to oral histories like those of Miriam Matthews and others that were part of the Black Women's Oral History project. Through her research, Rhodes revealed the dual challenges of cultural and gender biases faced by African American women pursuing library education during the era of legal segregation and how they parlayed those challenges into successful careers that enabled them to contribute to the African American community as well as the library profession.⁹⁴

My examination of Smith's scholarship concerning African American women's historical research will further explore this union of cultural and gender expectations and professional commitment. Like the other fourteen women profiled, Smith's socialization and formal education occurred during the era of segregation. African American communities invested in educating their young women who in turn would employ their talents to uplift the community. Teaching, nursing, social work and librarianship were the professions primarily available to African American women during this period. In 1996,

historian Stephanie Shaw examined the experiences of forty-five African American women born between 1880 and 1930 to create a view of professional opportunities that were available to them during Jim Crow and how they were socialized for these roles. These women were taught values and given tools by their parents and community members to navigate and transcend the sexist and racist parameters by which the greater society operated. Shaw describes this socialization process as “socially responsible individualism.”⁹⁵ Her study includes ten librarians. Susan Dart Butler, Clara Stanton Jones, Miriam Matthews, Joyce Cooper Arkhurst, Barbara Pickett, Mollie Huston Lee, and Judith Ann Carter Horton were public librarians; Ruth Anna Fisher worked for the Library of Congress. Charlemae Rollins was a children’s librarian and Sadie Peterson Delaney pioneered bibliotherapy. While none of the librarians in the study worked as academic librarians, Smith’s upbringing (born in 1930) corresponds well with the elements put forth by Shaw. As these women began their careers as librarians, they reenacted the lessons from their own childhoods including those of individual work ethic and collective responsibility.⁹⁶

This dissertation affirms Shaw’s argument and illustrates ways in which these values of caring, dialogue, personal accountability and lived experience informed Smith’s practice and knowledge production as a scholar-librarian. Of this ethos of caring, Clara Stanton Jones writes:

...there was a kind of indoctrination of an obligation to share the privilege of education to ‘uplift the race.’ That common exhortation, which I remember from my childhood...this traditional spirit of caring and concern is one of the strengths from the Black heritage, and it is probably the source of the Black librarian’s strong dedication.⁹⁷

Many African American women librarians approached the profession from a worldview centered on a “humanist vision of community” which speaks to the special sense of caring that motivated them to make books and information available by African Americans for African Americans.⁹⁸

As professional librarians, many African American women have addressed the lack of positive images for black women and of access to information about their lives. Librarians, like Smith, have historically served as the keepers and shapers of African American culture and history. Education provided black women with a means to sustain themselves and their communities in professions that extended their role as culture keepers beyond the domestic sphere. Throughout the twentieth century, most of these librarians pursued their careers at HBCUs and in other educational institutions within the African American community. According to Shaw, those who chose librarianship brought to the profession a particular ethos of caring and social responsibility. Instilled from childhood, these values prompted them to gather, to organize, and to provide access to resources in order to uplift the African American community. In addition to maintaining and creating primary source material, African American women scholar-librarians also expanded the definition of historical methods that shaped how research was done on black women’s diverse experiences in America. The term, black feminist thought, has become synonymous with the African American women’s intellectual tradition of linking ‘what you know with what you do.’ As part of both worlds, the everyday lives of African American women (education, work, family, community activism) illustrated the intersecting oppressions of racial and gender inequality. Their expertise and records were critical to the success of projects like *MAW* and *CBWA*.

QUILT PIECES

African American women librarians were charged with preserving the cultural memory of our community, creating knowledge and maintaining access to it. The class, racial and gender politics of these women was informed by a segregated environment, espoused middle class values and encouraged them to use their education to move the black community forward. Black feminist thought will provide the most relevant theoretical framework to critically interpret Smith's scholarship between 1976 and 1992. Like many women of her generation, Smith has chosen not to self identify as a black feminist. As demonstrated in the women she invited to serve on *NBAW's* Advisory Board, Smith highly regards the works of other black women intellectuals who do identify as black feminist. In discussing the 'why' of doing this work, however, Smith simply states, "I want people to see the beauty of black women and their work."⁹⁹ With the publication of *NBAW*, Smith crafted a story quilt for future research about African American women's history.

CHAPTER THREE: INTRODUCING JESSIE CARNEY SMITH

I had a lot of love for family and for community.... it's an African proverb... 'it takes a village to raise a child' and I would say my little village raised us.¹⁰⁰

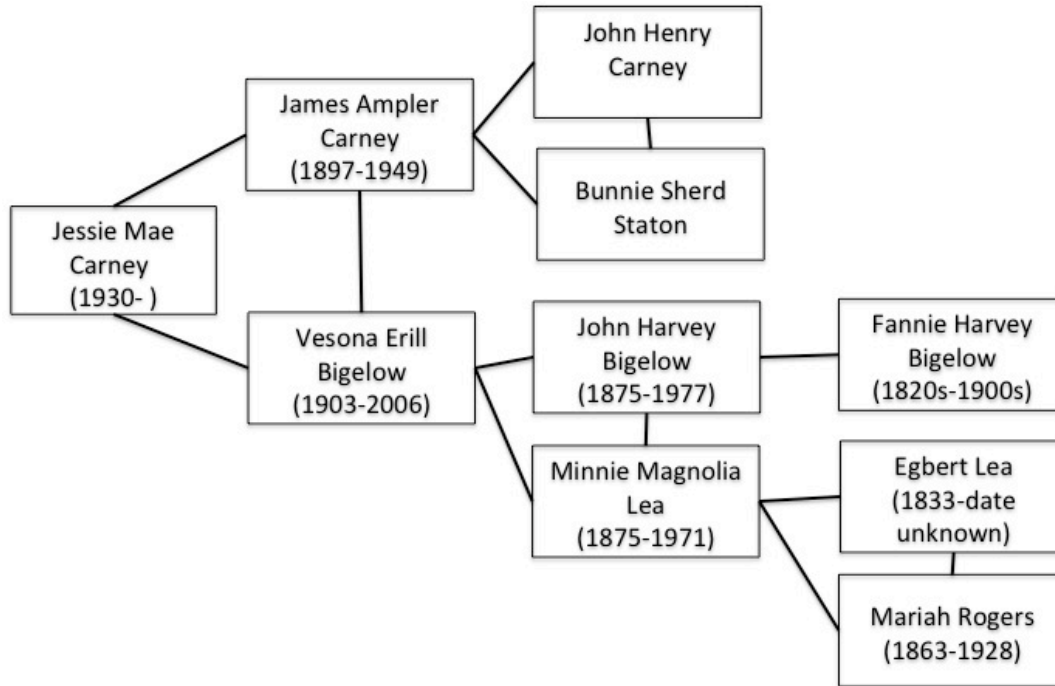


Figure 1: Bigelow/Carney Family Tree

INTRODUCTION

Jessie Carney Smith's *Notable Black American Women (NBAW)* was crafted as a tribute to the "strong" African American women whose historical voices had previously gone undocumented. She dedicated the reference work: "To my mother, Vesona Bigelow Carney Graves--my most notable black American woman--and to all the black American foremothers and mothers and sisters, who together have made our history." Rooted in the collective historical experience of African American women, black feminist

epistemology offers a set of principles for creating and validating knowledge by and about African American women. These principles are: 1) lived experience as criterion for meaning, 2) the use of dialogue, 3) the ethic of caring, and 4) the ethic of personal accountability. (See Chapter Two). Within the African American community during the era of Jim Crow, young African American women like Smith began learning these principles early in life. Her home community, Mount Zion, closely resembled an African village where “all men were considered father and brother, and all women were mothers and sisters... irrespective of their actual blood lines.”¹⁰¹ Traditionally, inside black communities black men were respected and black women were protected. Children were exposed to positive role models and learned that they, too, could contribute to the community’s uplift. Overall, every community member had a service to render and a role to play. Within the larger society of Jim Crow segregation and discrimination, blacks established businesses, religious and educational institutions, and a way of life that was basically independent of white influence. This chapter details the socio-cultural context and life lessons (hard work, education, and social responsibility) influencing Smith’s professional choices that ultimately led to the development of *NBAW*.

MEET THE VILLAGE

On September 24, 1930, Vesona Bigelow Carney gave birth to healthy fraternal twins in the home of her parents, John Harvey and Minnie Lea Bigelow in the Mount Zion community in northeast Greensboro, North Carolina (Guilford County). For the newest citizens of Mount Zion, Vesona and her husband, James, chose to name the baby boy Jodie Sylvester and the baby girl Jessie Mae. Along with older siblings Horatius Ampler and Helena Erill, Jessie and Jodie grew up under the loving attention of

their parents, maternal grandparents and aunts “in the little country neighborhood”.¹⁰² Home to 300 people, Mount Zion was a predominantly Black community where young Jessie and her siblings were constantly influenced by strong African American role models from a range of income levels. Families in the community ranged from tenant farmers to landowners with varying degrees of cultural, economic, social or political status.¹⁰³ Jessie’s family reflected a similar pattern.

On one end of the spectrum were Jessie’s paternal grandparents in Tarboro, Edgecombe County, North Carolina. John Henry Carney, a Baptist minister, and her grandmother Bunnie Sherd (Staton) along with their son Winzer and daughter Lottie Lee (Carney) and her husband Mack Dickens were sharecroppers. Jessie’s visits to see her father’s side of the family were limited to once or twice a year due to distance from Greensboro to Tarboro (approximately 150 miles).

At the other end of the spectrum were Jessie’s maternal grandparents, John Harvey and Minnie Lea Bigelow (or “Grandad and Grandma” as Jessie referred to them.) The Bigelows owned a twenty-one acre tobacco farm three and one-half miles outside of Greensboro and lived in a two-story house. Jessie’s immediate family could be located somewhere in the middle of the spectrum. Her parents, James and Vesona, both attended North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College (A & T College) in Greensboro. James graduated and later owned and operated J. A. Carney’s Square Deal Service Station on East Market Street. Vesona briefly taught elementary school before devoting herself to her children and helping run the family business.¹⁰⁴

MEET THE BIGELOW/CARNEY FAMILY

Origin stories are very important to families. In the African American tradition, these stories have often been transmitted as oral history. In a time when most Southern blacks were descendants of enslaved ancestors, Jessie grew up hearing a different story about her great-grandmother Fannie Harvey Bigelow (1820s-1900s). A free born mulatto, Fannie worked as a house servant for the Rascoes, a prominent white family in Caswell County, North Carolina. Members of the Rascoe family owned a general store that sold everything from groceries to caskets in Anderson Township, which was about ten miles south of Yanceyville and approximately 50 miles from Greensboro.¹⁰⁵

According to Bigelow family history, it was believed, although never documented, that Fannie's relationship with Louis L. Rascoe--"a brother to the head of the Rascoe family"—produced a son. This son, John Harvey Bigelow, was born on June 15, 1875, in the Sweet Gum community near Yanceyville. A handsome and very fair skinned child with "gray eyes and wiry hair," John bore a strong resemblance to the men in the Rascoe family. While he was still young, Fannie married twice: first to Henry Harvey and then to "a man named Bigelow". As John grew up, he became a skilled carpenter and farmer and worked as a laborer on Louis L. Rascoe's farm through the turn of the twentieth century. In his free time, he was the pitcher for a local integrated baseball team in Alamance County. Baseball was a favorite pastime in the rural South. Usually held on Saturday afternoons, baseball games were a place to meet friends and for "courting". It was at one of his baseball games that he met his future wife Minnie Magnolia Lea.¹⁰⁶

Minnie Magnolia Lea was born March 25, 1875 in Mebane, Alamance County, North Carolina. The third child of Egbert and Mariah Rogers Lea, she grew up in a large family. Her father was Egbert Lea and her mother was Mariah Rogers, a mulatto. Egbert and Mariah married in 1875 and by 1900 owned a small farm in the Melville Township.¹⁰⁷ They were parents to ten children: Rebeca, Jason, Minnie, Claudie, Daisey, Eddie, Robert, Adolphus, Mar(c?)k and Walter. As a young woman, Minnie enjoyed attending local baseball games with her younger brothers and sisters between helping out at home and her duties as a school teacher. One baseball player, John Bigelow, drew her attention. At first sight, John believed Minnie to be the “prettiest woman he had ever seen.” John and Minnie married on December 27, 1900 with Lawson Morgan, another local baseball sensation as best man and Minnie’s cousin, Martha Brown, as maid of honor. The fact that Minnie’s parents owned land in 1900 when three-fourths of blacks living in the South were tenant farmers or sharecroppers was impressive.¹⁰⁸ While little documentation exists as to how much income their farm generated, family oral history suggests that they were sufficiently financially secure to host a wedding to which the minister’s gift to the bride and groom was a beautiful “beverage set.”¹⁰⁹ This part of Jessie’s origin story demonstrates the socio-economic diversity within the African American community at the turn of the century.

The newly married couple spent the early years of their marriage living on and farming the Rascoe’s property. Between 1901 and 1914, Minnie gave birth to six daughters: Imogene McKeever, Vesona Erill, Cozy Uzette, Oves L., Therone Estimo and Euphrey Tankersley. Desiring the best education he could provide his daughters, John moved his family “by horse and buggy to a farm some three and half miles east of

Greensboro” in 1908. Known for having a better school system for blacks, Guilford County was home to two black colleges: Bennett College for Women and the Negro Agricultural and Technical College of North Carolina (later The Agricultural and Technical College of North Carolina henceforth referred to as A & T College.)¹¹⁰ A deeply religious man, John was a charter member of the Laughlin Memorial Episcopal Church founded in 1908 where he served in various roles-- church treasurer, Sunday School teacher and superintendent-- throughout much of Jessie’s childhood.¹¹¹

Of her Grandad John, Jessie once wrote that he was the “most fascinating man I have ever known.” Even with limited education (“a few grades in a one room school in Caswell County”), he envisioned a different future for his daughters when he moved his family to Guilford County in search of better educational opportunities.¹¹² He spent the next several years working as a farmhand for Will Fry and saving his earnings to buy his own farm. On December 20, 1913, he and neighbor George Richmond purchased 43 1/8 acres of land from Whitfield Spencer (W.S.) & Corrine Clary in the Gilmer Township of Guilford County. A “well-known tobacco man,” W.S. Clary was president of the Tobacco Board of Trade and owned hundreds of acres in and around Greensboro.¹¹³ Together, George and John paid \$1725.00 for the property. Eight years later, John purchased 21 acres of the property from George for “ten dollars and other valuable consideration.”¹¹⁴ Indeed, his ability to purchase forty-three acres of land was a remarkable feat for any man, black or white, in the South at this time. On this property, John built a two-story home for his family and established a thriving tobacco farm. The Bigelows became primarily self sufficient and grew a variety of fruits and vegetables. The farm’s fertile black soil provided the Bigelows (and later the Carneys) with

“tomatoes so big, so red; beans so bountiful; and watermelons in... full supply.”¹¹⁵

Minnie sold the excess produce in Greensboro and in the nearby black community of Mount Zion. Jessie’s development was greatly influenced by the teachings and experiences of her matrilineal line--the Bigelows-- as she, her parents and her siblings lived on the Bigelow farm until James and Vesona were ready to purchase a home of their own in 1932.

James Ampler Carney was born in Tarboro, Edgecombe County, North Carolina on April 12, 1897. He entered high school at 21 and upon completing high school left home to attend A & T College in Greensboro. The first college graduate in his family, Carney chose the A & T College because he knew he could work his way through by farming in rural Guilford County. However, as it turned out, instead of farming, he worked part-time while in school for Lane Thomas, an man who operated a service station with an automobile repair shop. By 1927, James had completed a B.S. degree in engineering and automobile mechanics and had met and married Vesona Erill Bigelow. Born on December 11, 1903 in Caswell County, North Carolina, Vesona Erill Bigelow was the second of six daughters born to John and Minnie Bigelow. Vesona and her sisters attended high school, received college educations and went on to become educators. To facilitate his daughters getting to and from school at either Bennett or the A & T College, John Bigelow had purchased a car and made sure they learned to drive although he never learned to drive himself. Although she did not graduate from college, Vesona worked briefly as a classroom teacher until marriage (April 30, 1927) and motherhood became her priority. Indeed, with the arrival of Horatius on February 28, 1928, Helena on October 28, 1929 and the twins Jodie and Jessie on September 24,

1930, she dedicated her full attention to the needs of her rapidly expanding family. To better accommodate their family, James purchased a home on a ¾ acre parcel adjoining his father-in-law's farm for \$280 in 1932.

With her maternal grandparents just across the field from their home, Jessie and her siblings were frequent visitors:

We enjoyed having breakfast with our grandparents on Sunday morning. Grandad always said an especially long prayer, after which we had a hearty meal. Of course, we had plenty of food at my parents' house nearby, but there was something special about Sunday mornings with our grandparents.¹¹⁶

Jessie learned early the importance of giving. Her family was very active in the Mount Zion community. The Bigelows were listed among the founding families of Laughlin Memorial Episcopal Church and were known for their generosity. Visitors to the Bigelow home often left with a jar of fruit preserves or pickled vegetables. During the fall harvest, John made locust beer and apple cider and hosted a harvest dinner of Brunswick stew with family and friends at summer's end.

The Carney's contributions to the community came through the family business J.A. Carney's Square Deal Service Station. Located at 619 East Market Street, the "main street for Black Greensboro", the service station and market served as a gathering place for the community. The service station was "a social place" for people to stop in when in town for doctor's appointments during the week or on their way home on Saturday after shopping or going to a movie. Many nights, James would keep the station open late so that neighbors had time to talk and share information before journeying home. From time to time, he provided rides to elderly community members:

Ms. Annie had been in town to visit the doctor. She had no way to get home. She was going to sit there all day until my daddy could take her home. Sit and wait for him all day. ...my father was a kind man in his way of showing kindness. Very good to people in the community, my grandparents and all that. He stopped his work and took her home.¹¹⁷

Vesona continued to manage the business after James' death in 1949.¹¹⁸ Her "deep sweetness" tempered James' strictness with Jessie and her siblings. She taught them how to be gracious and to share with others. Like her mother before her, she became a homemaker never working outside the home aside from assisting James in the market at the service station. Her work in the community was an outgrowth of what she did for her family, such as baking for church functions and making costumes for the elementary school's play. She made sure her daughters knew how to read, write and to cook her specialties of fried cabbage, fried chicken, and sweet potato pie.¹¹⁹ The Carney family had numerous books at home from which Vesona frequently read to the children and as they were able they began reading their father's old college textbooks. Her sister Oves also loved to tell stories to her nieces and nephews. On the weekends, Jessie and her family climbed into their "old midnight blue Buick" and drove through the countryside and to nearby towns. They often traveled into Greensboro to attend cultural events such as concerts and plays as a family affair at Bennett College and A & T College.¹²⁰

Child Rearing

In the Bigelow/Carney family, it was vital to prepare the children for the roles they would later play as adults in society. James and Vesona anticipated the traditional constraints that segregation in the public sphere would place on their children and

evaluated their eventual private sphere responsibilities as spouses and parents. The formula emphasized “appropriate behavior, dedicated preparation, hard work and community consciousness.”¹²¹

Jessie’s childhood revolved around family, community, church and the Mount Zion School. A quiet child, she enjoyed playing with her siblings and they could be found in their “playhouse” under the trees or playing circle games like “Sally go ‘round the sunshine.” All the children helped Vesona around the house cutting grass, tending the vegetable garden or planting flowers. As they grew older, the children started working at the family business. Jessie and Helena helped in the market with their mother and Jodie and Horatius in the service station with their father. For the girls, learning what was expected in the private sphere meant getting direct instruction from their mother on how to keep house and other domestic activities like quilting.

Quilting has been a vibrant part of the African American woman’s experience for generations. In addition to creating “useful objects” to warm families, the act of quilting afforded the opportunity for intergenerational fellowship and transmission of stories some old and some new. Women from the Mount Zion community frequently gathered in the Carney home to piece and quilt. As part of the Home Demonstration Agents projects of the 1930s and 1940s, Jessie’s passion for sewing and designing grew out of watching the women quilt

sewing always fascinated me...I liked to watch them. Watch how they would take the needle under the fabric. There were two layers of actual quilting. They weren’t piecing it at this time they were quilting...I found it more fascinating to watch them actually quilting. When they were finished, it was just a joy to see what these people had made.¹²²

Vesona often included little scraps from dresses she had made for Jessie that she knew to be her favorites. For Jessie, her mother's quilts told her own life story.

To preserve the safety of and to instill confidence in children in the segregated South, the Bigelow/Carney family elders as well as the adults in the Mount Zion community supported their young citizens by attending school functions, sponsoring church social events and keeping a watchful eye on them overall. They were prepared as to how to navigate the white power structure that existed beyond their relatively safe space within Mount Zion and black Greensboro. Certain teachings they just came to know like not walking on the highway or going downtown at night alone. Raising young black girls during this period presented another set of issues for parents.

Part of sheltering practice in the black community as Jessie and Helena were coming of age was the incremental unveiling of racial and gender differences. James was a strict disciplinarian but as little girls Jessie and Helena loved accompanying him into town to pick up car parts. They eagerly clambered into their daddy's "jazzy pickup" emblazoned with the logo "J.A. Carney's Square Deal Service Station." When he completed his business, he might get them a treat before heading back to the service station. One day, these trips to town came to an abrupt end. With no explanation, James began only allowing their brothers to accompany him on those excursions. As women, the sisters later recognized that the shift occurred when they entered adolescence and their bodies were starting to mature. "We realized later, he didn't want to be killed because if someone had said something to us he would have protected us and probably would have been killed and my mother would have had to raise children alone."¹²³ James was aware of how vulnerable black women of all ages were

concerning the “lecherous attention” of white men. In the segregated South, “black men took care of black women and children” and did their best to address this issue beforehand because they had little recourse after the fact.¹²⁴ As a result, James rarely explained his method:

when we got to high school... girls there were taking care of white children and we wanted to do that and our father would not allow that. He would not allow certain things and not tell you why. And we found out later why.”¹²⁵

Often black women and girls, particularly those who worked as domestics for white families, were sexually harassed and assaulted by the men present in those homes. John Bigelow had set the example in the family. He considered it a source of pride that his wife Minnie was a full time homemaker who did not work as a domestic. A family story goes:

Concerning his work on the farm, a local white farmer asked, ‘John, how much help do you have? Grandad replied, “Just myself.” “Doesn’t your wife work?” the other man asked, expecting that all black women worked the farm with their husbands. “No, does yours?” Grandad replied.¹²⁶

In a time when most black women worked as domestics for white families or on the farm alongside their husbands, Minnie Bigelow cared for her family and sold the produce harvested from their farm. The Bigelow daughters were, however, trained and educated to pursue a different set of choices. Outspoken and direct, John saw to it that his daughters had everything they needed to be self-sufficient and equipped them to give back to the community. Similarly, James worked hard to provide his daughters with enough resources where they would not have to work as domestics. Jessie and Helena’s desire to make their own money was not of necessity as was the case for many of their peers. Instead, James and Vesona encouraged them to focus on their

education and honed their work ethic by having them work in the family business after school. Unlike many of his neighbors whose livelihoods depended primarily on white employers (i.e. as domestics, mill workers and tenant farmers), James was able to provide different opportunities for his family because he was a business owner who served the black community.

EDUCATION

Mount Zion School & Dudley High School

In 1934, Jessie turned four and followed in her older siblings' footsteps to attend the local Rosenwald School that was the same age as she. A four-room brick schoolhouse for grades one to seven was built in 1930 under the auspices of the Guilford County Board of Education with the help of funds from the Rosenwald Fund and Mount Zion's black community, which provided the capital outlay for the project. Between 1917 and 1932 over 5,300 Rosenwald school buildings were erected throughout the South with North Carolina being home to more than 830 schools. As a result of Rosenwald's involvement, North Carolina's expenditure on educating black students rose from \$1.28 million in 1919 to \$4.53 million in 1927. While a seemingly substantial increase, during the same period, the investment in educating white students went from \$10.69 million to \$50.05 million. Mount Zion was a brick four-teacher schoolhouse (complete with furnace, auditorium, office and library) built on six acres with \$15,582.00 combined funding from Guilford County Schools (\$13,832.00) and the Rosenwald Fund (\$1,200.00). The black community also contributed \$550 as well as providing other supplies throughout the year like wood and coal for heating the building.¹²⁷ Parents, teachers and community members invested their money and their

time to the cause of educating their children. Under segregation, black school officials experienced a certain level of autonomy. Because white school boards fulfilled the bare minimum of which they were legally held to, black teachers and principals worked in concert with black parents to build institutions that not only fed the mind but also nurtured the spirit of students. Many people raised during the era of segregated education remembered the sub-standard physical facilities and funding but fondly recollected the interest and commitment of highly educated teachers and administrators to cultivate an environment to promote positive self esteem and high expectations.

One such teacher at Mount Zion was Clara Belle Rieves. A Greensboro native, Rieves attended Washington Street School (the predecessor to James B. Dudley High School), Bennett College in Greensboro and Livingstone College in Salisbury, North Carolina. She completed an undergraduate degree in Education from Winston Salem Teachers College (now Winston Salem State University) and later earned a Master's degree from Columbia University in New York. With such preparations, the position available to her was at the Mount Zion School then housed in a "3 room weatherboard building." When she took this, her first (and only), teaching position in 1930, she was one of three faculty members along with another teacher and Mrs. Lomax, the principal. Together they were responsible for teaching grades one through seven. Shortly after Rieves assumed her teaching post, she ushered the first class into the new brick schoolhouse.¹²⁸

In 1931, Bessie Avery replaced Mrs. Lomax as principal of Mount Zion School. Avery inspired both fear and confidence in her students. Along with teachers like Rieves, she encouraged healthy academic competition and facilitated learning

experiences to bolster student self-confidence. Each day began with a devotional, which served as an opportunity for students to learn public speaking and presentation skills. They took turns leading songs and reading Bible passages. Jessie and her fellow students were motivated to excel in standardized examinations, such as the California Achievement Test as well as in intra-school competitions between different classes. Plays and “operettas” were staged at the end of each school year to showcase students’ dramatic talents and other skills. One year, Helena performed the starring role of Peter Rabbit. The community came together to encourage and celebrate the students’ creative and intellectual successes. Smith’s mother Vesona often sewed costumes for the annual plays and programs. An audience filled with teachers, classmates, parents and community members enjoyed the dramatic talents of the Mount Zion School student body.¹²⁹

Mount Zion School was located not far from Palmer Memorial Institute in Sedalia, North Carolina. Founded in 1902, Palmer was the premiere black school in the area as its principal and founder Charlotte Hawkins Brown was often featured in the Greensboro newspaper for her successful fundraising efforts. Prior to the establishment of Greensboro’s James B. Dudley High School in 1929, Mount Zion School graduates had few opportunities for further education. During Jessie’s childhood, young men either stayed on the farm, were employed in the mills nearby like Huffine’s Mill where corn and wheat were ground, or found jobs elsewhere in the community.¹³⁰ Similarly, options for young women included marriage, staying home to care for their families, becoming a domestic or taking positions at black hospitals and schools. Those students who did go on to continue their education did so at private high schools like Imanuel Lutheran

College (1903-1961) and Bennett College in Greensboro or Palmer Memorial Institute (1902-1971) in Sedalia.

Jessie and her siblings continued their education at James B. Dudley High School in Greensboro. The high school was named after James Benson Dudley was President of The Agricultural and Technical College of North Carolina from 1896-1925. Born into slavery, he graduated from Shaw University and served as principal of the Peabody School in Wilmington, North Carolina for fifteen years. Dudley was appointed as President of A & T College in 1896. Dudley High School, the public high school for black students in Greensboro, opened in 1929 in response to the rising need for public secondary education for black citizens. By 1931, students from surrounding communities including Mount Zion were welcome provided they “transport themselves” to Dudley.¹³¹ By the time the Carney children were of age to attend Dudley in the 1940s school bus service had been established for black students in Guilford County. Concern that their rural four room schoolhouse education had not prepared them to compete with students educated in the city schools quickly faded. Jessie and her siblings soon realized their grammar skills and knowledge in certain subjects far exceeded their city counterparts. A good student, Jessie was well liked by her friends and schoolmates and was elected Miss Dudley High School in the 1940s. Both she and her sister joined numerous clubs like the Girl Reserves in hopes of demonstrating to their father they were well liked and responsible. But even with such a level of involvement, James was firm with them and did not allow them to participate in many social events outside of the school day. They were only allowed to attend daytime

football games and the occasional special events at A & T College. Home, school, homework, work was the pattern of their lives.

North Carolina A & T College

Like her grandfather John Bigelow, Jessie's father James had goals for his daughters, which included a college education and a professional career. It was the "rest of growing up." With college educated parents and five college educated aunts, Jessie "just knew" that she was going to college. When many young women were facing the choice of becoming domestics, mill workers or working the farm, Jessie had been prepared to earn a college degree and apply her knowledge to benefit the black community. Her teachers at Dudley High School also served as role models concerning higher education. Jessie had strong family ties to both Bennett and North Carolina A & T. Both of her parents and her aunts matriculated at these schools. Her decision to attend A & T was based on fiscal practicality. North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (A & T College) was established as the Agricultural and Mechanical College for the Colored Race by an act of the General Assembly of North Carolina ratified March 9, 1891. In 1915, under auspices of the state legislature the name was changed to The Agricultural and Technical College of North Carolina. When Jessie graduated in 1950 approximately 3000 students were enrolled at the College. Her sister recalled how it felt to be on A & T's campus in the 1940s:

We felt free on the college campus. We knew A & T because we were always on the campus. We saw many blacks and many things happened on the campus. And yes, it created a feeling of worth that you were really somebody. Not being afraid of anything. Being protected.¹³²

Jessie studied Home Economics because it was the closest thing to her dream of becoming a fashion designer. While at A & T College, she was active in the YWCA, a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, and she was named to the *Who's Who Among American Colleges and Universities*. Her “beauty, charm and personality” won her the crown of Miss A & T College in her senior year 1949-50 and she represented the school at official events on campus like Homecoming. That year, she presided over the “most colorful and elaborate [Homecoming] programs in the history of the College” with over 15,000 alumni, former students and visitors in attendance. She also had the opportunity to meet celebrities of the day-- Larry Doby, Don Newcombe, Roy Campanella and Jackie Robinson—who visited A & T during her time there.¹³³ In 1950, she graduated with her bachelor’s degree.

BECOMING DR. SMITH

After graduation, Jessie still had her sights set on becoming a fashion designer. A teacher voiced concern about the limited opportunities for black women in fashion design, especially in the South, and suggested Smith pursue a master’s degree in Home Economics instead. So in the summer of 1950, Jessie left her Greensboro hometown and set out for Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, to pursue a Master’s degree in Textile Design. Cornell was also Jessie’s first educational experience in the North and in an integrated setting. While she enjoyed the course content, she found it frustrating that many of her classmates and professors viewed southern blacks as a monolithic group. Unable to fathom the diversity of socio-economic, educational and cultural experiences even amongst southern blacks, White instructors and classmates would make statements like “you poor thing!” based on these erroneous assumptions

about her experience.¹³⁴ At the end of the fall semester, Jessie left school and married Frederick Douglass Smith on December 22, 1950 in Upper Marlboro, Maryland. The couple briefly lived in Delaware and Greensboro and then settled in Nashville, Tennessee where her husband established a veterinary practice. Jessie and her husband welcomed their only child Frederick Douglass Smith Jr. into the world on September 11, 1951. Being a wife and mother, however, did not quench Jessie's desire to attain higher learning. Of that desire she recalled "I was married so it wasn't about having to do it to make a living, it was something I just had to do."¹³⁵ Opportunities in Nashville, in Home Economics, however, were not forthcoming and Jessie (henceforth referred to as Smith) began looking for alternatives. Her search led her to Fisk University.

Fisk University

When Smith accepted her first part-time position in the English department at Fisk University in 1953, it had been heralded the "capstone of Negro education" since the turn of the century. From its inception, the founders of Fisk University (originally Fisk Free Colored School) envisioned an institution that provided "a liberal arts education of the highest quality" to newly emancipated African Americans. John Ogden, Erastus Cravath and Edward P. Smith of the American Missionary Association were among the scores of white teachers from the North who came South during Reconstruction to help facilitate the education of the newly freed African American population. Together with generous financial and political assistance from Colonel Clinton B. Fisk and others these men secured use of empty Union barracks to house the Fisk Free Colored School. Ogden resigned his post as superintendent of education of the Freedmen's

Bureau to see to the daily needs of the young institution. The school opened on January 9, 1866 and within four months of opening day, 900 students of all ages had enrolled at Fisk to claim the education that had been so long denied them.¹³⁶ In the midst of living in constant fear of mob retaliation from Nashville's white community, Fisk's Northern teachers passionately set about seeing to the religious and academic training of African American students. Ideals of education and sacrifice went hand in hand. Clothing and food needs went unmet as industrious Fisk students "gathered the rusty handcuffs from the city's former slave mart and sold them as scrap metal to earn money to purchase books." Dedicated teachers with missionary zeal spent the first years instructing at a basic elementary then secondary level. By 1867, Fisk had been incorporated as a university and was training teachers. Over the next forty years, Fisk graduates filled the majority of teaching posts in segregated elementary and high schools as well as colleges like Tuskegee, Hampton and Atlanta University throughout the Southeast. Fisk's continued expansion included a normal and high school, laboratory school as well as departments of theology and commerce. The smallest department was the college department where students were instructed in courses commensurate with the classical liberal arts education of the time. The rigid programs of study in the college department served as the foundation for establishing Fisk's reputation as a "black ivy league" institution by the mid-twentieth century.¹³⁷

Fisk University Library

As Fisk University grew so did its need for an adequate library. The Fisk University Library grew from a collection of books housed in the office of the university's first treasurer George L. White. Acutely aware of the school's persistent financial woes,

he organized the Fisk Jubilee Singers who in 1871 began traveling across the northern United States and Europe fundraising to sustain the growing African American university. This committed group of recently emancipated men and women endured racial discrimination, arduous travel schedules, illness, extreme physical and emotional exhaustion and sacrificed their own dreams for higher education over the next four years in order to contribute \$150,000 to Fisk. Their sacrifice provided the funds used to purchase land for a new campus and paid for the construction of its first building, Jubilee Hall. During their 1874 European tour, the Jubilee Singers received “gifts of books and of special sums for the library and for purchase of ‘philosophical apparatus’.”¹³⁸ Among Jubilee Hall’s first occupants when it opened in 1875 was the library. Originally established as a self-service reading room, the library collection was moved into its first permanent home in 1908 thanks to a building grant from Andrew Carnegie. Policies and library administration rested in the hands of a faculty library committee and interim library staff through the early 1920s. It was not until 1928 that the library had a professionally trained librarian.

Three men--Louis Shores, Carl M. White and Arna Bontemps; two white, one black--held the title Head Librarian at Fisk between 1928 and 1965. Fisk’s first professionally trained librarian was Louis Shores. Shores started his library career at Fisk in 1928. While unsuccessful in his attempts to establish a library school at Fisk, Shores encouraged African Americans to pursue librarianship as a professional opportunity by offering courses through the school’s Library. He also organized the first Negro Library Conference, which coincided with the dedication of Fisk’s Erastus Cravath Library in 1930.¹³⁹ Considered, at the time, to be “the South’s most beautiful

and modern library,” the library was built with a \$400,000 endowment from the General Education Board. Shores went on to become the dean of the Peabody College for Teachers Library School in 1933.¹⁴⁰ That same year, Fisk became the first historically black college to gain accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and School (SACS). Under Carl M. White’s directorship, the Negro Teacher Librarian Training Program was implemented through Fisk. He left to become Dean of the Library at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. By the time Arna Bontemps arrived at Fisk in 1943, he had already had a dynamic career as author, poet and teacher. The Harlem Renaissance luminary earned his master’s degree in library science from the University of Chicago and amassed impressive special collections and archives reflecting the African American experience during his tenure as Head Librarian from 1943 to 1965.

Bontemps’ Influence

The decade of the 1950s was one of academic and professional flux for Smith. Graduates from Fisk and Tennessee State University, a state funded HBCU located across town, provided the Nashville area with a significant number of African American women who, like Smith, had college degrees in Home Economics. The South’s segregated educational policies allowed those who were interested in teaching to only do so in African American schools. Thus, facing this competition in the job market, Smith found work as a clerk-typist first in Fisk’s English department in 1953 but then transferred to the Library’s catalog department later that year. Quickly tired of the tedium of her work as a clerk-typist, she decided to earn a master’s degree in Child Development at Michigan State University in East Lansing (1954-1956) in an effort to

make herself more marketable when applying for teaching positions in the Nashville City Schools. However, no teaching position awaited her after she graduated from Michigan State and she returned to Fisk, this time to work in the office of Head Librarian Arna Bontemps as a substitute for his secretary who was on maternity leave.¹⁴¹

Smith's decision to become a librarian was influenced by limited professional positions for African American women and by her experience working as a clerk-typist and part-time secretary for Arna Bontemps in the Fisk University Library. She found working with Bontemps (Mr. B as the staff called him) to be "like heaven." As a student at Mount Zion Elementary, she had encountered his writings in the rarely open but decently stocked school library. A prolific Harlem Renaissance writer, Bontemps earned his masters in library science degree from the Graduate Library School at University of Chicago in 1943. Upon graduation, he became Head Librarian at Fisk University. Smith found her new boss to be a "kind man...a real gentleman who was very respectful of people."¹⁴² As his secretary, she was privy to his professional correspondence and his distinguished visitors:

Letters to and from him...a letter from Langston Hughes to Arna Bontemps...my eyes would just get that big!...we had a fine arts festival. And there's Langston Hughes out there talking to Arna Bontemps. Or when you come into the library or you look up and here's somebody else you've read about coming to the library or visiting him.¹⁴³

Bontemps used his dynamic influence to acquire important collections for the library from fellow Harlem Renaissance luminaries such as his good friend Langston Hughes. In awe of his connections, she considered it "quite, quite, quite a big honor....to be able to work with him". Working with him helped change her image of librarians.

Her past encounters with librarians had been a mixture of good and bad experiences. At Dudley High School, her librarian managed a “collection [that] was considered good by the standards of our faculty” but was the “poster child for the ‘Shhh’ librarian.” This experience left her with the impression that “librarians just sat at the desk to check out books and growl.” While she had found her A & T College librarians to be very approachable and helpful, the library’s physical facilities and collections “left much to be desired.”¹⁴⁴ In Bontemps, she saw an active librarian who managed a dynamic collection and physical plant while keeping a full schedule of lectures, traveling, writing and publishing. Seeing how much she enjoyed the work in the Library, Fisk colleagues advised her to trade in her Home Economics and Child Development credentials for a degree in Library Science. They even joked that one day she would replace ‘Mr. B’. Once again, Jessie returned to school in 1956, this time to earn a Master’s in Library Science from Peabody College for Teachers at Vanderbilt University in Nashville.

George Peabody College for Teachers

George Peabody College for Teachers “dominated Southern educational networks” for the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁴⁵ Peabody owed its position in large part to the Summer Program which began in 1954 and prepared thousands of white teachers and school administrators for positions in school districts throughout the South. The schedule worked to accommodate teachers and superintendents as well as visiting faculty.¹⁴⁶ As a professional division of the Graduate School the Peabody Library School was the only nationally accredited library school in Tennessee and in 1928 became the third institution in the country to offer training in librarianship in the South following the University of North Carolina and the Carnegie Library School in

Atlanta. By 1940, the school was accredited to train public, school and college librarians. Its admission policies reflected those of the institution, which only began admitting African Americans for graduate study in 1954.¹⁴⁷ Between 1954 and 1959, “one or two Negro” students were admitted annually to the Library School because there was no library school at either Fisk University or Tennessee Agricultural & Industrial University (later Tennessee State University).¹⁴⁸

The success of the Summer Program established the precedent for the admittance of African Americans to graduate level study at Peabody. This included the Library School, which accepted its first African American student in fall 1954. The previous summer, Peabody began offering a six-week program providing advanced training for African American principals from black schools. The Southern Education Foundation (SEF), Southern Education Board (SEB) and the Southern States Cooperative Program in Education Administration (SSCPEA) subsidized this effort. The “ablest Negro educational leaders” were recommended by the white directors of their respective state departments of education for scholarship selection by the SEF in Atlanta. Peabody’s Board of Trustees had the final approval of who was to be admitted. The “mature and highly selective group” included educators from as close as Clarksville, Tennessee, and as far away as Port Arthur, Texas. Unable to live or eat in campus owned facilities, Summer Program students were responsible for securing and paying for their own accommodations (many rented rooms in homes within Nashville’s black community) and took their meals at the cafeteria of the Methodist Board of Education.¹⁴⁹

News of this decision to voluntarily desegregate their graduate programs appeared in *The Tennessean* on May 27, 1954, just ten days after the Brown vs. Board of

Education public school desegregation ruling by the Supreme Court. A member of Peabody's Executive Committee registered concern that admittance of Negroes would make fundraising difficult. While one alumnus' attitude was "with public schools now admitting the negro, it is only just and fair to the white race that they be provided with segregated private schools."¹⁵⁰ Peabody President Henry H. Hill responded swiftly and resolutely, stating that the change in admissions policy for the Graduate School did not signal a policy shift for Peabody's undergraduate school. In 1956, two African American women were admitted to the Library School: Carol Creswell and Jessie Smith.¹⁵¹ Adopting policies from the Summer Program, Peabody Trustees mandated that African American students admitted to any Graduate School program were allowed to attend classes and to use the library on campus but were not allowed to eat on campus or live in the school's dormitories. Even so, the change in admissions policy was still met with resistance from within the Peabody administration, the student body and from the alumni. An unnamed "devoted student" sent a letter to President Hill explaining how disturbed he was at the presence of the black students: "...every time I sat down in the library...one of those repulsive negroes soon appeared nearby. Please rid the school of them..."¹⁵² Smith and Creswell attended the majority of their classes and conducted their research in the Peabody Library building. The Library School occupied a suite of rooms in the Peabody Library. It included study rooms, a bibliography and typing room, two classrooms, a materials laboratory, four administrative offices and the Library School Library. Occasionally, they attended a class in the Joint University Library on Vanderbilt's campus. Fortunately, both Smith and Creswell lived in Nashville so they only had to make off campus dining arrangements:

We knew we were unable to have meals on campus and we found that irritating. But we could go just a few blocks away to the Methodist publishing house... they had a cafeteria and blacks were allowed to have lunch there. And that's where we went for our lunch. And then back to the library back to our classes.¹⁵³

After graduating from Peabody in 1957, Smith briefly taught first grade. Teaching first grade, however, proved not to be her calling. ("I hated it. I really hated it!")¹⁵⁴ Nashville school officials' response to Brown vs. Board was one of "inactivity and avoidance" so the elementary school was woefully underresourced. At the time, Nashville was home to approximately 174,000 citizens including 58,000 African Americans. A plan was adopted by 1957 for a gradual one grade per year integration. It was considered such a successful way to delay school desegregation that similar plans were adopted in cities like Dallas and Houston.¹⁵⁵ The Brown decision presented both a blessing and challenge for African American teachers. On the one hand, the impetus behind integration was to obtain better facilities and educational resources for African American students. The reality was that many black schools would close to facilitate this transition. As a result, many teachers would be without jobs because regardless of federal laws, societal norms in the deep South meant that black teachers would not be transferred to white schools where they would teach white students. Nashville teachers did not, however, meet this fate right away because of the delay by school officials. Instead, the Board of Education built several new schools in the black community after a century of fighting for better facilities and more funding by black teachers and parents.

In the fall of 1957, Smith's first opportunity as a professional librarian came from Tennessee State University (TSU). In addition to her duties as Head Cataloger, Smith served as an instructor for school librarians enrolled in TSU's School of Education. By

1960, challenges to the dual system of higher education in America prompted the state of Tennessee (and other states) to offer black educators and administrators at state supported HBCUs grant-in-aid funding to pursue doctoral study. In exchange for funding, recipients agreed to return to work at a state funded institution of higher learning upon completion of the doctorate. Taking advantage of this opportunity, Smith was accepted into and enrolled in the doctoral program of the University of Illinois Graduate School of Library Science (GSLIS) in 1960. She applied to GSLIS because of its reputation but soon found the segregated racial climate in Champaign-Urbana very similar to that which she had left behind in Nashville. Smith credited the early teachings of her community and family with instilling her with self-confidence and preparation and in 1964 she became the first African American to earn an LIS doctorate from the University of Illinois.

QUILT PIECES

This dissertation demonstrates how Smith's life lessons and experiences as an African American woman are inextricably linked to the type of scholarship she chose to pursue throughout her career as a scholar-librarian. African American women's professional choices and achievements during the era of Jim Crow were a complex mix of societal parameters regarding race and gender and the values imparted to them by parents and concerned community members. Historian Stephanie Shaw characterized the process of race and gender socialization within the upbringing of young African American women born between 1880 and 1930 as "socially responsible individualism." Black families and their respective communities implemented hopeful yet realistic child-rearing strategies that prepared young black women in these generations to

successfully navigate “the debilitating aspects of the Jim Crow system.”¹⁵⁶ They sheltered their children in such a way that helped to inculcate black children of segregation with self worth. To varying degrees, being sheltered both protected them while gradually exposing them to the pains of racist policies and practices. Middle class African American women brought up during this period were strongly encouraged to manifest their educational opportunities and talents into professional careers that allowed them to provide for themselves and for the greater African American community. Like Smith, many of these African American women came to librarianship as daughters of a community that instilled in them a distinct work ethic, respect for education and a responsibility to contribute to the uplift of the race.¹⁵⁷

Careful not to romanticize, blacks raised during the era of Jim Crow frequently recall that one upside to segregation was being surrounded by such an array of role models for young African Americans. Themes of strength and hard work flow throughout Smith’s memories of her upbringing. From her Grandad John Bigelow she recalls hearing stories about her free-born great grandmother Fannie Harvey Bigelow. There were also several family stories about how John stood up for himself and his family to white people. Many African American communities maintained a degree of self-sufficiency because laws and tradition segregated blacks and whites. Residents of the predominantly black enclave of Mount Zion spanned the socio-economic and educational spectrum, from Ms. Annie, the washerwoman, to teachers to land and business owners like John Bigelow, Smith’s grandfather and her father James Carney. In a time when the “average annual income of black families never came close to that of white families” Smith’s grandfather John Bigelow was a landowner and managed his

own twenty-one acre tobacco farm.¹⁵⁸ When they were old enough, Smith, her brothers and sister worked alongside their parents in the family business, J.A. Carney's Square Deal Service Station. Regardless of what type of work they did, many of the adults whom Smith observed during her childhood worked diligently to provide for their families and to be active contributors to the community.

Smith notes that "strong black women" taught her culturally relevant gender roles and expectations both inside the home (domestic sphere) and within the segregated professional sphere. Her Grandma Minnie and her mother Vesona taught her to treat people fairly, how to be a gracious hostess and how to creatively and efficiently manage a household. While she had limited in-person influence from her father's sister, Lottie Dickens, Smith remembers Sis. Lottie (short for sister) as having been a very strong woman who ruled her home with a firm hand. Smith respected her resourcefulness and emotional fortitude. The process of quilting was a way women from both sides of her family communicated love and history within the family. It also provided opportunities for older women to dialogue with one another and to share life lessons with the younger women present. In addition to being taught the basics of stitching, basting and which needle to use when, Smith caught lessons about emotions, expressiveness and the capacity for empathy that were interrelated elements of African American womanhood.

Outside her family, she has reflected on two other women who impacted her life: Bessie Avery and Ms. Annie. Everyday from the first to the seventh grade, Smith came in direct contact with Bessie Avery, the principal of Mount Zion School. Avery "scared [her] to death" but looking back on her school days, Smith appreciated the principal's

high academic expectations, which contributed to her passion for learning. Ms. Annie added to Smith's nascent ethos of caring already under cultivation by both the women and the men in her family. A washerwoman, she took in laundry and ironing for a few dollars a week. Yet, whenever Smith and her siblings came to visit, she always said "you chillun look hungry" and then proceeded to give them one of her "big biscuits."¹⁵⁹

Education was very important to Smith's family. Both her parents attended college and Smith and her siblings practiced their reading skills using their father's old textbooks. Indeed, few southern families, black or white, could claim three generations of college graduates by 1950 when Smith finished A & T College, her father's alma mater. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, more Black women attended college than either white women or black men. They received 62.4 percent of all degrees from Black colleges.¹⁶⁰ Historically, education has played a vital role in the growth and development of the African American community. After Emancipation in 1865, formerly enslaved men and women, free blacks and sympathetic whites from the North worked diligently to create opportunities to educate their children and themselves by organizing schools, obtaining Negro teachers and pushing for state supported public education in the South. (It would be ten years before poor whites pushed for the same educational reforms.)¹⁶¹ Smith's Grandma Minnie briefly taught school in her home community of Mebane, North Carolina. Having successfully completed elementary and some variation of high school, she probably became a schoolteacher in the tradition of the earliest non-degreed teachers in the African American community. Ideals of education and sacrifice went hand in hand. Members of the newly freed community understood that choosing education for one meant the sacrifice of another. Money from extremely

limited pockets provided coal for the schoolhouse or paid a teacher for a few more months. With only an elementary school education, Smith's Grandad John moved his family to Guilford County in pursuit of better education for his six daughters: Imogene, Vesona, Cozy, Oves, Therone and Euphrey. Watching her aunts matriculate at Bennett College and A & T College (both located in Greensboro), Smith learned that going to college was just the "rest of growing up."

Pretty, popular and smart, her positive learning experiences and accomplishments from Mount Zion School to A & T College made her very secure in the strength of her academic, social and cultural acumen. In addition to her aunts, Smith also considered her elementary and high school teachers as role models not only for how to carry herself as a professional but also in terms of pursuing higher education, as many of them had master's degrees. Smith's higher education goals sent her into integrated learning settings: Cornell, Michigan State, Peabody and the University of Illinois. She followed their examples and summoned the strength to face challenges when they arose.

Schools like the University of Illinois had a long history of admitting African American students. For example from 1929 to 1936, fifteen African American librarians (thirteen women and two men) earned either the BLS or MLS from Illinois' Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS). These students, however, were not allowed to eat in the cafeterias, live in campus housing or socialize in the student union. Although Brown vs. Board mandated that predominantly white institutions open their doors to African American students, policies, such as these, were still in practice while Smith was completing her doctorate at the University of Illinois between 1961 and

1965.¹⁶² While she was able to acquire an on-campus apartment (her young son had accompanied her), Smith found the racial climate in Urbana-Champaign to be quite similar to that of the segregated south. Recalling her experience at Illinois Smith used a contemporary phrase: “I kept my ‘eyes on the prize.’” Faced with such an environment, Smith’s single focus attitude towards racist and sexist attitudes and policies was a blend of confidence and knowledge instilled in her from childhood.

Lessons from growing up also prepared her to be a wife and mother. Amidst her academic pursuits in the 1950s, Smith became both. She spoke very little about her marriage to Frederick Douglass Smith from 1950 to 1963. Our first conversation provided a few hints as to how marriage and graduate school fit together for Smith:

I just knew I had to get that degree. Of course, things interfere like marriage but I kept my eye on the prize to get that degree.¹⁶³

Subsequently, I chose not to pursue this aspect of her personal life further. Smith spoke more freely about the challenges of motherhood:

One of the challenges was remaining a good mother. That was always in my mind. Am I neglecting my child? Because it was hard being away from him. Even at Michigan State. Here [in Nashville] I wasn’t really away from him as I told you but still had to have time to care for him and find a way to blend work, school and motherhood. That was a challenge. But, I never found it impossible.¹⁶⁴

Smith relied on her husband and a network of family and friends to care for her young son while she attended Michigan State. Along with her decision to pursue the doctorate in LIS, she also decided to take her son with her to Champaign-Urbana where she managed to balance single motherhood with her academic workload. This balancing

act deepened Smith's empathy for other women who also worked diligently to achieve professional goals.

The Mount Zion community offered a multitude of role models. Families, teachers and community members actively supported her personal growth and academic development. Her family shared their practical knowledge about how to navigate Jim Crow while maintaining integrity. Teachers not only provided instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic but also focused on African and African American contributions throughout history. Succeeding Arna Bontemps as Head Librarian at Fisk University in 1965, Smith began research that has encompassed several dimensions of Black Studies for more than four decades. When she took the helm, Smith encountered a college community in transition. As shouts of "Black Power!" replaced "We Shall Overcome" on college campuses, black studies programs were gaining national attention. Smith's involvement across these activist movements spanned the personal and the professional. As a community member, she responded to the call for boycotts of local businesses engaged in discriminatory practices both in Champaign and in Nashville. She was part of an inter-racial coffee club that met monthly across Nashville. Smith also was an active part of the black community in Nashville as a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and as president of the Links, Incorporated Hendersonville Area Chapter.

Smith's activity across the various social movements (black power, women's and civil rights) was primarily demonstrated through her professional work and scholarship at Fisk. Inheriting Fisk's significant special collections gave her unparalleled access to resources by and about African Americans. She was resolute in her efforts to actively

engage Fisk students with the materials as well as making the resources available to scholars nationwide. Recalling these decisions:

'Let's see that these resources are used in our classes.' We had classes in black history...that's what they called it...black literature. We had the Race Relations Institute that had been going on for years. We opened up the resources making all this available. That's the way to bring about change.¹⁶⁵

The majority of Smith's activism, however, occurred through her scholarship and commitment to support the learning of African American young people at Fisk.

According to Smith, Fisk had "never been black in the modern sense of the word."

Rather, it had built its academic foundation on the classic liberal arts curriculum of the day. Historical contributions by African Americans were rarely discussed beyond the history classroom even at an HBCU like Fisk. By the 1970s, however, students like Nikki Giovanni were agitating for an overhaul of the University's curriculum. Smith recounted:

That's when people started pushing for black universities. Blackness in all our curriculum. That's when the Big 8 came into play. Trying to get things passed in the faculty that would allow us to be black and to add more. Even in mathematics....talk about some black mathematicians. There's no such thing as black math but there are black mathematicians. The Big 8 got together at least once a week to plan out a strategy of how to get things through in the faculty meetings.¹⁶⁶

During this pivotal time in America's history, Smith began her work for social change by situating African American librarians at the forefront of the discourse concerning access to information on the African diaspora. During her first decade at Fisk, her scholarship broke new ground in the areas of African Studies, black bibliography, and black studies librarianship. Smith was awarded over a quarter of a million dollars in federal funding to prepare library personnel to select, organize, and disseminate materials by and about African Americans, and to integrate African American materials into mainstream

American life and culture. In her second decade at Fisk, Smith turned her focus to ethnic genealogy, black Americana (memorabilia), and black academic libraries and research collections. It is Smith's work with African American women's history—*NBAW*--during her third decade at Fisk that is the focus of this dissertation.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

When it comes to knowledge, Black women's empowerment involves rejecting the dimensions of knowledge that perpetuate objectification, commodification and exploitation. African American women and others like us become empowered when we understand and use those dimensions of our individual, group, and formal educational ways of knowing that foster our humanity.¹⁶⁷

INTRODUCTION

My examination of the development process of *Notable Black American Women (NBAW)* illustrates the construction of cultural memory and knowledge through the acts of researching and writing African American women's history. Quilting and quilts hold a special meaning particularly for many African American women scholars. In a challenging cultural environment that only in recent decades acknowledged the value of African American women's history, the quilt has also become a creative symbol of enduring strength. As a literary story quilt, *NBAW* was crafted from pieces of Smith's experiences as a woman, an African American, a southerner and a librarian. Of this dynamic black feminist poet Nikki Giovanni wrote

Quilts are our mosaics...Michelle Angelo's contribution to beauty...Quilts are the way our lives are lived...we survive on patches...scraps...the leftovers from a materially rich culture...We do the far more difficult job of taking that which nobody wants and not only loving it...but making it lovable...and intrinsically worthwhile.¹⁶⁸

Story quilts are used as resources for reconstructing the cultural and political pasts of African American women.¹⁶⁹ A "creative legacy" of African American women, story quilts embody cultural memory, which connects a cultural group with its collective experience. Often the experience of conveying cultural memory includes a ritual

process that instructs both through text and through performative acts such as quilting.¹⁷⁰ In this dissertation, *NBAW* represents the story quilt and quilting acts as a cultural metaphor for Smith's professional practice. Utility is a key characteristic of both the process and the product of quilting. Social conditions of the quiltmaker's life are reflected in the materials, designs and techniques used in her quilts. Similarly, Smith, influenced by her personal and professional experiences as an African American woman librarian, crafted *NBAW* to be a user-friendly reference work.

This chapter is divided in two parts. In part one, I discuss the research methods and approaches for gathering and analyzing data from Smith's life. In part two, I explain and model the interpretive framework, black feminist epistemology, with which I examine *NBAW*. To do this, I explore three literary quilting projects--*MAW*, *CBWA* and *IBAC*--that provided the pattern pieces for crafting *NBAW*.

PART ONE: RESEARCH DECISIONS & DESIGN

An examination of *NBAW* and its development is important because there are few critical interpretations of the scholarship of African American women librarians. The specific parameters of this study focus on the historical and socio-cultural aspects of African American women's intellectual production. Information from Smith's personal and professional life as well as administrative details of her forty-five years at Fisk have been integral to this study. Yet, rather than attempting a full biographical study, this dissertation serves as a starting point for analyzing her role, one story at a time, as an agent of knowledge in recent American history. Like many contemporary African American women scholars, I turned to quilting as a creative metaphor for my examination of *NBAW* as well as to give meaning to my own academic experience.

Story Quilt as Metaphor

For the purpose of this dissertation, I situate *NBAW* as a product of black women's knowledge within the metaphor of the story quilt. To do this I begin with the basic phases inherent to quilting. Making a quilt involves: piecing the quilt, which is the collecting, cutting, and creating the pattern from the cloth scraps; putting in the batting or filling the quilt; and finally doing the quilting, that is, sewing together the top, the filling and the base. Each phase can be accomplished alone or with a group. For African American women scholars such as Smith, the quilt "represents herstory, history and tradition, binding women... to the past and the past to the present."¹⁷¹ bell hooks opened her memoir:

Mama has given me a quilt from her hope chest. It is one her mother's mother made. It is a quilt of stars--each piece taken from faded cotton summer dresses--each piece stitched by hand.¹⁷²

Smith's remembrances were remarkably similar. She warmly recalls a quilt made by her mother:

...the quilt...told my story...because there was a little scrap of dresses that I wore because my mother saved scraps...never threw them away. I'd look in there at this scrap from a dress I had two years ago that I'd dearly loved.¹⁷³

Most quilts implicitly tell stories while others are crafted to tell specific stories. I draw on Smith's memories of watching her mother quilt as a child and on her own experience making a quilt as an adult and focus on the narrative quality of the African American story quilt. While Harriet Power's bible quilts have been the standard for these types of metaphors, I desired a more contemporary model to use in my research. My search led me to "Sepia Song" (1984) created by the Gotham Quilters Guild. Each quilt block celebrates an achievement of African American women in New York (See Figures section after endnotes).¹⁷⁴ Oriented to women's accomplishments and women's issues,

art historian Eva Grudin interpreted this story quilt as a womanist quilt. Created by eight African American women quiltmakers, it embodies all the symbolic parallels needed for this study: piecing, stitching, quilting.¹⁷⁵ Using quilting terminology and image of the story quilt, I have crafted a historical study that incorporates diverse methodological approaches and interpretive frameworks. First, the biographical approach required the collection and analysis of all related archival material. The second approach involved narrative analysis of oral history interviews with Smith and *NBAW*'s contributors. Still actively engaged in making African American women's history available, Smith is a living witness to the information uncovered in the archival record.

BIOGRAPHICAL APPROACH

Smith has made her most 'notable' contributions to the fields of African American women's history and librarianship through biographical research. Her personal records, oral history transcripts and Fisk archival materials provided the bulk of primary sources and are key to this process of understanding her response to cultural and societal changes. This study also provides an opportunity to assemble information about an African American woman librarian's life that will serve as a foundation for future research. An extensive collection of papers on African American women librarians is a rare find. Smith's private collection located at Fisk University contains over forty manuscript boxes filled with correspondence files and manuscript drafts as well as speeches, grant proposals and awards, which by their very existence indicates that, as Shaw states, Smith is "in some ways extraordinary and not necessarily representative of all black women in the profession."¹⁷⁶ While Smith intends to donate the collection to the Fisk archives when she retires, the materials included have yet to be processed,

thus, limiting access to researchers. Fortunately, she had arranged the boxes by topic. The collection materials range from onionskin carbon copies of personal and professional correspondence to photos from her days as a model in Nashville. My first task was to create a reference list of the files in order to navigate the collection. I then selected the approximately fifteen boxes pertaining specifically to the development of *MAW*, *CBWA*, *IBAC* and *NBAW*. Initial examination of these boxes revealed that they included copies of correspondence with each *NBAW* contributor and advisory board member, *CBWA*' newsletter updates and original biographical data sheets gathered for the post-fire *MAW*. Smith granted me full access to these materials as well as to her administrative files from 1976-1992. In addition to secondary sources and her oral history, I used her handwritten notes, manuscript drafts, speeches and correspondence to determine patterns and re-create the period of social change under analysis in this study.

Doing biographical research on Smith demonstrates the connection between an African American woman's life and her scholarship. Yet, as Barbara Ransby describes, biography is "a profoundly personal genre of historical scholarship and the humbling but empowering process of finding our own meanings in another person's life poses unique challenges."¹⁷⁷ As I embarked on this study with an African American woman who is alive, among the challenges facing me were balancing professional admiration and cultural closeness, dealing with the issue of memory in oral history and negotiating the narratives that emerged from oral history interviews and archival evidence.

Balance

At the very heart of black feminist research methodology is the intricate balance of the personal, professional and political. My reasons for doing this research particularly my choice to do oral history interviews embody these standards: 1) focus on an African American woman's experience, and 2) creation of a reflective research process.¹⁷⁸ The work of biographical study promotes the creation of bonds across generations. Once a bond is established it becomes more likely that members of the current generation will be more willing to learn from mistakes and celebrate triumphs of those who have gone before. My interviews of Smith established an intergenerational dialogue through which I am able to provide knowledge for a new generation of black women scholars. Studying Smith's professional trajectory answered a personal question that had been repeating itself in my mind since I started the doctoral program at the University of Illinois: "How did I--an African American woman librarian from the South--get here?" As the first African American to earn a doctorate at GSLIS, Smith paved the way for those men and women who followed. My first contact with Smith was via a phone conversation in early 2006. Indeed, my breath caught in my throat as I began explaining my reason for calling. In a warm, gracious manner (which I later learned was her trademark), she quickly put me at ease and agreed to having her experience crafting *NBAW* as the focus of my dissertation.

In July 2007, I spent two weeks conducting research at Fisk. During this visit, we established how we would honor the balance between our personal and professional selves. This negotiation of "personal and structural power" played out in our relationship in several ways. I deeply respected the sacrifices made and challenges

overcome by women of her generation to achieve such high degrees of success in the professional sphere. In order to establish a peer-to-peer tone to our recorded sessions, I chose to refer to her by her first name during our times together. My decision to address her by her first name was based on cues I gleaned from Smith. In an early interview, I asked about the convention signing her name (Mrs.) Jessie Carney Smith (even though she was Dr. Jessie Carney Smith) on official library correspondence in the late 1960s. Agreeing it was a convention used by women professionals at the time, she mentioned that she has always preferred to be called Jessie by colleagues saving 'Dr.' for when she "needed to make a point." My decision to take her up on her indirect invitation was also supported by our email correspondence, which she has consistently signed—"Jessie". I weighed this decision heavily as I had been raised to use professional titles as a sign of respect especially when referring to a community elder. For the purposes of the scholarly record that this dissertation represents, I address her using her last name Smith.

Next, I met the challenge of reconciling black feminist ideals that Smith and I would be co-creators in this project with the reality of the research experience. Anne Marie Turnbull discussed how the issues of collaboration and censorship impact every aspect of research work. The two interrelated issues are "inevitable in the practice of feminist oral history" because of differences in worldviews that can lead to interpretive conflict. On a practical level, these issues figured most prominently regarding the interview transcripts. Initially, I shared verbatim transcriptions of our interviews with Smith. She immediately voiced concerns that the narratives needed extensive editorial work due to the memory gaps, thought duplication, shifts in narrative directions as well as the

occasional use of filler terms like 'um', 'well' Overall, she did not feel comfortable with the way she was presented in the transcripts. To address her concerns, I edited for spelling, deleted fillers and redundant passages choosing to keep whichever offered the most complete version of a story. To assist her in filling in information gaps as she reviewed the next batch of revised transcripts, I also re-arranged interview contents by topic to create a more seamless narrative. I agreed to only include specific corrected quotes within the body of the dissertation.

On a theoretical level, issues arose because Smith does not consider herself a black feminist in the political sense. I shared my desire to analyze her scholarship from this vantage point early in our conversations. She shared that while she did not label herself a black feminist she highly respected women who did such as *NBAW* Advisory Board members Johnetta B. Cole and Beverly Guy-Sheftall. While I made all transcripts available for her to examine in order to ensure the accurate wording of her stories, the choice to study her work with African American women's biography within the framework of black feminist thought rested solely with me.¹⁷⁹ Well aware of the intricacies of the dissertation research and of the interpretive process, Smith understood my desire to fill a gap in library literature regarding the critical analysis of the scholarship of African American women librarians. Thus, she agreed to give me the cognitive space to achieve a critical stance regarding her work. Doing so moved this study beyond simply telling the story of her accomplishments and into the realm of critical interpretation of her intellectual practice and production as a scholar-librarian. I believe that these factors enabled me to resist becoming hagiographical in my accounting of her work and experience.

Oral History and Memory

Within traditional library history, oral history is extremely valuable for reconstructing the fabric of the historical landscape regarding African American women librarians. Oral history works especially well for documenting African American women's history when 1) time is a factor in compiling and producing, 2) archival materials are limited, and 3) storytelling is an active part of the cultural tradition. As keepers of information, African American women scholars have relied on oral history to create and to preserve culture and tradition. What becomes oral history has its origins within the oral tradition of a people. For people of African descent, the oral tradition has survived an excruciatingly painful physical, emotional and spiritual transatlantic dislocation. Family values and cultural history have been conveyed from one generation to the next within this oral tradition. When captured for more permanent analysis (whether in audio or transcript form), these songs, stories and poetry become oral history. Oral history helps create a new type of material concerning African American women's lives, validates women's experiences and offers intergenerational communication.¹⁸⁰

Oral history is the only way some stories get told. Well into the twentieth century, black women's voices were the marginalized of the marginalized. Mainstream historians did not recognize women's history as an independent field until the late 1960s. Gerda Lerner defined the history published during this time as "description of the conditions of women written from the perspective of male sources." Historians trained in this tradition typically examined the experiences of notable women within a patriarchal paradigm and produced much of what was published. This paradigm mainly focused on the 'who, what and how' of a woman. Who was the woman? What

contribution did she make? How did that contribution support a greater historical movement? Ostensibly, men led the greater movement. By the mid-1970s, the field of women's history was maturing and beginning to expand to focus more specifically on the experience of women to include those experiences of black women and other women of color. Women were now able to share their own words through letters, diaries, autobiographies and oral history. Gluck asserts "women's oral history is a feminist encounter even if the interviewee is not herself a feminist."¹⁸¹

By the 1970s, women scholars were using oral history to further expand the field of African American women's history concerning civil rights, black power and feminism. In doing so, they made room for the untold stories of African American women from all walks of life, including librarians. Most notable was the Schlesinger Library's Black Women Oral History Project that started in 1976. This project developed in response to the need to record the lives of black women whose contributions to American history had been overlooked. Many of the participants in this groundbreaking project ranged from 70-90 years of age, making oral history the most expedient way to document their stories. The Black Women Oral History Project also drew attention to the "dearth of existing reference sources" by which to conduct preliminary research on the women's lives.¹⁸² In 1986, the American Library Association's Committee on the Status of Women in Librarianship initiated the collection and publication of oral histories from women of color in librarianship.¹⁸³ These oral histories illustrated the resourcefulness, creativity and resiliency of African American women (including California librarian Miriam Matthews) in crafting positive perceptions of self and for their community to counter an environment negatively charged with racism and sexism.¹⁸⁴ In 2004, Smith

participated in an oral history project conducted by the National Visionary Leadership Project (NVLP).¹⁸⁵ I have reviewed the transcripts of Smith and the other African American women librarians included in each of these previous oral history projects to enhance my discussion of her specific experience in relation to the overall history of African American women in the profession.

Preparation for my interviews with Smith included watching her NVLP video, reading her profile in Rhodes' dissertation and studying various biographical and autobiographical essays. My only expectation regarding doing oral history with Smith was that she would extend her personal and professional narratives beyond what had previously been recorded. Our initial interview fell short of this expectation. She basically retold elements that I had studied prior to our conversation. What I came to understand was that first interview was more about getting acquainted and establishing a rapport. As Few points out black feminist researchers are "aware of the possibility that our color, speech, and body language could affect how we are accepted as trustworthy confidants." As a result, in addition to the technical preparations for data collection, I made personal preparations. I consciously dressed in conservative business attire when meeting Smith in her office. Mindful that my natural hairstyle might be interpreted as political statements, I fashioned it too in a conservative bun. Indeed, elements such as "clothing, hairstyles, makeup and personal adornment [can] influence the tempo of the informant researcher relationship."¹⁸⁶ As we exchanged experiences, Smith became more comfortable with me and began to share more deeply. By the time I completed interviews with Smith, we had fulfilled my expectation that we would traverse beyond the purview of previous interviews. She shared

extensively about Fisk's administrative history, her early family life and her passion for chronicling minority women's history.

After our first interview, I realized that I needed access to additional materials to further stimulate Smith's memory beyond the surface. Using the areas of interest outlined in the Black Women Oral History Project, I crafted open-ended interview questions to solicit further details pertinent to the development of *NBAW*.¹⁸⁷ I also used photographs and newspaper clippings from her personal records as well as materials discovered in the Vanderbilt archives like the *Kat-Log*, the Peabody Library School newsletter, to prompt memory and to elicit a fuller story. If there was a conflict between Smith's memory (i.e. she had not remembered that she was working part-time while attending Peabody) and a written record (i.e. the *Kat-Log* profile documenting that she indeed did work part-time), I deferred to information cited in the written record. This was similar to the method Smith applied when reconciling memories of the women included in *NBAW*.

In another effort to deal with the issue of memory, I asked Smith to provide a list of people to interview ranging from family members to former colleagues. Interviewees were selected based on their experience with her as a young woman in the segregated South and her work with African American women's history. The following questions were used to facilitate these oral history remembrances of *NBAW*'s contributors:

1. Describe your professional career during the time you were a contributor to *Notable Black American Women* (1988-1992).
2. How did you become involved in the project? (How did you hear about it? Were you recommended or did you volunteer?)

3. Describe your personal and/or professional experience with/knowledge of Jessie Carney Smith prior to becoming a contributor to *Notable Black American Women*.
4. To the best of your recollection, discuss the writing, submission & editing process. What challenges did you face i.e. collecting data, meeting deadlines, etc? Did you connect with other contributors about *Notable Black American Women* during the process? If so, please list names and briefly describe your interactions.
5. Describe your overall experience working with Jessie on *Notable Black American Women*.

Individuals interviewed included: Edwin Gleaves (former Peabody Dean), Helena Lambeth (sister), Christine Nasso (former Gale editor), and John Mark Tucker (former student). I also solicited interviews from Advisory Board members and contributors regarding the process of crafting volume one of *NBAW*. With help from my personal network of practicing librarians, I interviewed the following *NBAW* contributors: Violet Harris, Diane Newman-Ham, Janet Sims Wood, Jenifer Lyn Grady, Adrienne Lash Jones and Simmona Simmons-Hoda. (I interviewed Gleaves at his home in Nashville and Harris at her office in Urbana. All others were by telephone.) I used all of these interviews as a means of triangulation between archival, secondary sources and Smith's remembrances. Overall, everyone had positive recollections of their participation with *NBAW*. Challenges they faced with the project included managing deadlines and editorial expectations. Correspondence revealed, however, that some contributors to *NBAW* were challenged by the post-production use of their essays. From *NBAW*, Smith and Gale's Visible Ink imprint crafted *Epic Lives: One Hundred Black Women who Made a Difference*. Some essays that had previously appeared in *NBAW* were edited to

accommodate a shorter format. A few contributors voiced their displeasure at how the entries were edited as well as for not being notified beforehand that their entries were to be republished in another book. Contractually, Gale owned the rights to the entries but Smith took responsibility for the editing citing that it had been done to best suit the shorter format.

PROCEDURES

I conducted five oral history interviews with Smith each approximately 1.5 hours in length.¹⁸⁸ These interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. I facilitated these interviews based on a list of general questions created from my extensive research of secondary sources such as biographical essays, journal articles and book prefaces. Questions were organized chronologically according to the timeline of her personal life and professional career. I chose questions that I hoped would prompt Smith to expand on what had been previously captured either in interviews or in print. (See Appendix C). I transferred voice files onto my computer to make transcription using Windows Media Player, Audacity and Microsoft Word easier. Each interview was transcribed verbatim with accompanying notes describing the tone, pauses, and mood shifts during the interview session. After the initial transcription, I compiled the interviews as narratives and organized them according to the major themes of Smith's lived experience: Growing up, Higher Education, Fisk, *CBWA-MAW* and *NBAW*. Flattening the narratives in this manner enabled me to analyze for redundancy and contradictions in Smith's remembrances across time. Upon completion of this study, I will also offer a copy of Smith's edited interview transcripts (with her permission) to the Fisk archives to expand access to the oral history materials concerning African American women librarians. By

agreeing to submit only the edited transcripts, I reconcile the issues of identity, Voice and dissemblance, which are an inherent part of doing biographical work on/with African American women. (These elements will be discussed further in the following section.)

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

In narrative analysis the focus is on the story, which is our most basic way to communicate and to make meaning of the human experience.¹⁸⁹ With black feminist epistemology, I take into account that African American women's worldview places high value on the dialogue, oral tradition and community. Thus, personal credibility and awareness were essential to this information sharing process. To achieve this, Smith and I exchanged stories regarding our experiences as southerners, African American women and as librarians over the course of our recorded conversations. As a method, narrative analysis "simultaneously attends to the lives told and the process of telling."¹⁹⁰ It is particularly suited for this study of a living African American woman because of the value placed on the oral tradition of storytelling. Similarly, the process of oral history, when seen as a relationship, "refers to what the source and the historian do together at the moment of their encounter in the interview."¹⁹¹ Learning to listen to a woman's oral history will further sharpen my ability to process the simultaneous conversations of the personal, political and professional.¹⁹² Listening to Smith talk at length about her grandmother's generosity or about respected colleagues, however, I learned to listen for names of places, people and their relationship to her and her work and then to prompt her to share her memories of that person or place in order to open a place for her to insert herself into the story. Take for example her description of Edwin Gleaves, Director of the Peabody Library School, with whom she worked during the 1970s:

I never regretted working with Ed. He was extremely fair. Exceptionally well liked by everybody. He worked with local librarians. He stayed that way even when he became the state librarian. He's just that kind of person. I enjoyed working with him very much.¹⁹³

Interestingly, Smith's description of Gleaves was very similar to his description of Smith:

I don't remember when I first came to know Jessie Smith. It seemed like I always knew her. She was a good friend from way back in the early 1960s. So many people knew her and thought highly of her. She is an amazing woman to have done what she's done at Fisk and for Fisk.¹⁹⁴

In the course of these interviews, neither Smith nor Gleaves knew what the other had said. Listening to and subsequently reading these interviews gave me insights into the characteristics Smith valued like professionalism, compassion, fairness and hard work. With growing information about the people and places of her work and access to artifacts from specific projects, we moved into having more in-depth conversations.

One of the main roles of the oral historian is to decide whether what this relationship yields is to be considered as standalone evidence, situated alongside other written works or within a larger historical context. A personal narrative was crafted from interviews with Smith about specific aspects of her life and professional experience. Like Riessman, I term these personal narratives "to describe a compelling topical narration."¹⁹⁵ Narrative analysis of data looks for common themes, omissions and gaps. Narrative analysis helped me to organize events in a meaningful way in order to better understand Smith's motivations and actions across time.

Negotiate

Smith's discussion of racism demonstrated how I use oral history to describe interviews that focused not only on historical events but also the "meanings that events hold for those who lived through them."¹⁹⁶ This topic featured most prominently within her remembrances of her matriculation at PWIs: Cornell, Peabody and Illinois. Cornell marked Smith's first educational experience in an integrated setting. She found it frustrating that when she got to graduate school at Cornell many of her classmates and professors viewed southern blacks as having one monolithic experience. Too often, based on erroneous assumptions about her experience, they would make statements like "you poor thing!"¹⁹⁷ Even in the face of such attitudes, Smith often recalled her overall experiences in these educational environments in a positive light and attributed to her ability to successfully navigate to her "single focus" on earning her respective degrees.

Smith's return to a positive assessment of the overall experience speaks to the ingrained nature of certain stories within the human memory and to the culture of dissemblance in which African American women deliberately omit the painful, shameful or hurtful parts of their experience. I soon discovered, however, that with patience (on my part), she would often voluntarily return to discuss a challenging experience later in the interview. Smith's time as a student at Peabody in the 1950s occurred while she was also working part-time at Fisk. Recalling her time as a student at Peabody, Smith first said she did not experience fear about attending the school because of her familiarity with the practices of segregation. She further explained:

My experiences at Fisk often sheltered me from the horrid realities of Nashville life for this institution historically has sponsored race relations institutes and has had a faculty of scholars who were well mixed racially.¹⁹⁸

Conversely a few minutes later she revealed her experience with Peabody's hostile racial climate:

One time we had difficulty...Someone posted a sign that said something about 'N's'-- niggers. I was trying to remember what the sign said... you know how you see something and you don't believe it? ...one of our professors who discussed it with us and apologized...Very very, very compassionate person. But that left us a little fearful as to was somebody watching us? Or is somebody going to be lurking around the corner when we leave?¹⁹⁹

In order to negotiate the narratives Smith shared with me, I was extremely sensitive to the impact of the immediate storytelling environment, careful to compare themes across interviews and mindful to review stories for "conspicuous absences and silences."²⁰⁰ Known for her warmth and professionalism, I chose to conduct our interviews at her office in the Fisk University library as a matter of comfort for her and convenience for me such as access to her records. Usually, we are seated facing one another in the seating area adjacent to her desk (she in a chair, me on the sofa) with the digital recorder positioned between us on an end table. To give her time to prepare, I emailed her the topics I was interested in exploring before each interview session. By paying close attention to Smith's "Voice" within our conversations, I was able to extract deeper meaning from the information she shared.

Williams argues, the "Voice", is not just what an African American woman says but "how she says it" as intonations and silences can speak volumes.²⁰¹ Because a large part of communication is nonverbal, it was important for me to be mindful of the subtle

shifts in Smith's tone and demeanor during our interviews. Having studied a video interview of Smith for the National Visionary Leadership Project, I was familiar with the warm, calm, in-control demeanor that was her trademark. This enabled me to quickly gauge changes in facial expressions, gestures, and inflections. Attention to Voice also unveils various layers of knowing. Her face visibly softened when she spoke of her mother and grandmother and she became almost giddy describing Ms. Annie's big homemade biscuits. The most distinct example of Voice, however, occurred during our conversation about her experience at Peabody.

Naturally soft-spoken, Smith returned to the Peabody sign incident multiple times during an hour-long session. Each time she revealed more about the impact of the experience by her shifts in body language, facial expressions and tone:

I knew my quote 'place' I knew where not to go. But I never had anything so blatant as that. [Intense silence. Very pensive thoughtful look on her face]

[Shift to lighter tone] I actually had no other difficulties. And I felt comfortable with the students with the faculty. Even doing our work in the library doing research for the classes nobody else...the other people using the library didn't bother us. Except for that one occasion... There were no problems.

These shifts served as my cues to restate questions, redirect the conversation or to just wait on her to complete the story. By sharing the details of the sign incident at Peabody, Smith also provided new knowledge not previously disclosed in oral history interviews nor in written biographical essays.

My interview experience with Smith further helped me craft a more balanced story concerning her experiences with racial and gender biases. Exposure to her nuances of language, both physical and rhetorical, brought her autobiographical writings to life:

At meetings with southern whites, it is not uncommon for me and for other black people to be totally ignored. It's interesting to play along with being ignored, and then to witness the change in attitude when such people discover my educational qualifications and professional background. I would prefer to be liked and respected (or disliked and disrespected) as a person than because of my position. It is apparent that, because I am black, I would not be likely to be accepted by many of these persons other than on the basis of my experience and background.²⁰²

While African American women comprised the bulk of library leadership at historically black institutions like Fisk, Smith's statement addresses the challenge of acknowledgement by their southern white colleagues. She, however, refused to let this attitude stifle her scholarly creativity and professional contributions. With the rise of Black Studies in the 1970s, African American librarians, many of whom were women, proved to be the liberators of information, institutions and of a profession. Fisk had librarians with the expertise and access to resources to address the rapid proliferation of Black Studies programs across the country. In response to the need for more materials, Smith initiated cooperative efforts through consortia building and resource sharing for reprint programs and microform projects. By offering consulting services to academic librarians at predominantly white institutions, African American librarians influenced collection development and strategies for the coordination of library services to meet the requirements of new Black Studies curricula and research.

Criteria for Inclusion

A key aspect of this dissertation is to share Smith's story in her own words.

Quotes from Smith's interviews and writings were included that:

- 1) mirrored recollections of other interviewees (i.e. her sister Helena)
- 2) added emphasis to analysis
- 3) were worded in a particularly powerful manner

- 4) repeated across interviews
- 5) offered new information or a different perspective than previous interviews.

The use of dialogue (both in how she presented her own oral history and how she employed it in her scholarship) by African American women scholars like Smith is intricately connected to how women are traditionally socialized and to the oral tradition in African American culture.

PART TWO: INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORK

The question of who creates and validates knowledge is at the heart of Collins' black feminist epistemology. Black feminist thought equips African American women scholars with an alternative to historically white, patriarchal knowledge validation processes. To critically assess *NBAW* as a black feminist knowledge product, I analyze aspects of Smith's lived experience as African American woman librarian in the South, her use of dialogue throughout the process, her demonstrated ethos of care and accountability in creating scholarship about African American women. In the following sections, I model this interpretive framework by examining the literary quilting projects, which provided the design template for *NBAW*.

BLACK FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY

At first glance, little difference exists between the editorial processes for *MAW*, *CBWA* and *IBAC* and that of a traditional reference resource. Examination through the lens of black feminist thought, however, revealed Smith's process was imbued with a commitment to understanding women's lives and building coalitions. As an African American woman scholar, she engaged in dialogic practices to connect people and resources and to encourage women to share their stories. The more she came to know

the women's stories, the more she cared for them and was even more determined that their voices be heard in these volumes. Smith's work as well as that of other African American scholars demonstrated how a history of socio-cultural inequality informed and influenced the lives of African American women. Historically, formal education has always been greatly respected within the African American community, but those who have lived through "the experiences about which they claim to be experts" are deemed to have the most credibility.²⁰³ Concerning the racial and gender inequalities of the Jim Crow south, Smith's lived experience both motivated and added to the credibility of her work with African American women's history.

Both African Americans and women value dialogue as a means of establishing connectedness. For African American women, knowledge has often emerged as the result of dialogue with other members of their community. Storytelling and "call and response" have been modes of discourse used in the African American community to invoke connectedness and create a "safe space" where ideas were tested and validated.²⁰⁴ Similarly, women were socialized to seek connectedness through speaking and listening. Correspondence has revealed that through Smith's dialogue with an advisory board consisting of ten other African American women scholars, *NBAW* evolved from the vision of one black woman to the shared vision of over 200 like-minded contributors. Even with a shared vision, there is room for unique expression of an individual's talents, a strongly held value within the African American community. West African author Sonbufu Some wrote:

The goal of the community is to make sure that each member of the community is heard and is properly giving the gifts he has brought to this world. Without this giving, the community dies.

And without the community, the individual is left without a place where he can contribute. The community is that grounding place where people come and share their gifts and receive from others.²⁰⁵

For generations, quilting offered African American women a means of individual creative expression. With skilled ingenuity and artful eye, these women designed quilts that not only expressed their cultural knowledge but also promoted communal identity and created a tool for connecting across generations. Indeed, the work of African American women scholars is a combination of expressiveness, emotion, empathy and intellect as illustrated in their efforts to eliminate stereotypical depictions in literature and to preserve, to record and to disseminate the rich history of African Americans.²⁰⁶

Knowledge built upon lived experience and centered on an ethic of caring is linked to an individual's values, beliefs, character and ethics. Such a close connection to one's beliefs implies personal responsibility (or accountability) toward knowledge production and community service. What follows is a discussion of Smith's literary quilting projects that provided the experiential and information pieces for the pattern of *NBAW's* development.

Directory of Significant Twentieth Century American Minority Women:

The Gaylord Years

Lived experience: The first of its kind, *MAW* focused on women who at the time represented the largest minority groups in America: American Indian, Asian American, Hispanic, and Black women. As a woman of color, developing *MAW* was Smith's response to her frustrating experience locating minority women to serve as consultants for classes and training workshops on ethnic bibliography in the 1970s. It was to be the

inaugural volume in the *Major Minorities Series* published by Gaylord Professional Publications (Gaylord). Personally aware of intersecting challenges as an African American woman, Smith compiled *MAW* in a direct response to the marginalization of women of color within mainstream reference resources.²⁰⁷ In the manuscript's introduction, she wrote:

For minority women in America the problem is compounded: they face a double bind--that imposed on them by virtue of their sex, and that imposed on them by virtue of their heritage. Thus, this landmark work illuminates the emerging role of minority women in America and illustrates some of the primary forces that have helped forge their lives.²⁰⁸

In addition to serving as a reference resource for academic, school and public libraries, the main purpose of this biographical *MAW* was: 1) to identify a representative sample of women of color to serve as role models for young people; 2) to identify organizations, associations and societies related to these groups; and 3) to bring attention to library collections, oral history collections and grassroots projects related to minority women. Most importantly, the resource was to establish communication between women from diverse ethnic backgrounds.²⁰⁹

MAW was an editorial first for editor Smith and publisher Gaylord. Neither had had experience compiling a reference work of this magnitude.²¹⁰ Gaylord Professional Publications was the publishing program of library supplier Gaylord Brothers, Incorporated. Gaylord Brothers got its start in 1896 in Syracuse, New York when brothers, Willis E. and Henry J. Gaylord, developed gummed parchment. Employed in the banking industry the Gaylord Brothers needed a product to improve the efficiency of mending torn currency. Over time, the brothers noticed that librarians, too, were

purchasing their product for mending books. Thus, began Gaylord's century-plus long relationship as a primary innovator and supplier of library products. Their expertise lay in finding "solutions to practical, everyday problems identified by librarians."²¹¹ In the mid 1970s, however, Gaylord took a step beyond their area of expertise in an effort to capture a share of the growing library reference market with the launching of Gaylord's publishing unit.²¹²

Use of dialogue: Smith began research for *MAW* by identifying and obtaining biographical reference sources (general and specialized) on women. Next, a comprehensive list was prepared of minority women's organizations and agencies on the local, regional and national level. Additionally, leaders from across the country were identified to assist in contacting women. A mailing list was compiled and letters were sent announcing the project and requesting nominations. Letters were sent to over 1,500 civil rights, women's, political, ethnic, and civic organizations. Response to this approach was further increased by word of mouth as one agency leader or individual discussed the project with others. More than 1,000 organizations and individuals sent in nominations for "significant" minority women living in their respective communities at the time.²¹³

Ethic of caring and personal accountability: A pivotal event in December, 1976 illustrated the convergence of the personal, professional and political which are distinguishing characteristics of black feminist practice. That winter, Smith and her staff were actively researching and processing information from across the nation in response to her call for nominations. On Thursday, December 30 at 1:30 am, a fire gutted the 17th Avenue home of Sarah H. Maye, Smith's project assistant, completely

destroying the mailing list, correspondence files and several reference works associated with *MAW*. Tragically, two of Maye's family members died a few days later in a local hospital due to smoke inhalation.²¹⁴ Smith's response to the tragedy of Maye's family members passing was one of heartfelt sorrow and compassion, "I was heartbroken...I couldn't even look at my loss really when I think about what...happened to her family. We decided that we would do it again." Indeed, Maye supported restarting the project.²¹⁵

The loss of Smith's *MAW* materials was also recognized nationwide. Responses from the general community as well as the library and publishing communities were overwhelming. When the smoke cleared, Smith led her staff to repeat their efforts in January 1977 and a new publication date was set for fall 1978. With insurance covering only part of the lost work, Smith combined her own financial contribution with a \$10,000 advance from Gaylord in order to restart the project. She secured donations from Advisory Board members, colleagues and supporters like Betty Lee Sung, James Leigh and Maria Garcia. *Black Scholar* editor Robert Chrisman provided free advertising space. The *New York Times* "called for national assistance to help restore the work" which prompted other newspapers and magazines to publish similar articles about the fire and significance of the research.²¹⁶ As editor, Smith was catapulted onto the national scene and conducted several interviews with local and national radio stations in an appeal on behalf of continuing the work. The heightened exposure also brought Smith in contact with other scholars involved in similar biographical projects. Response after the fire from the community and financial support from the publisher had demonstrated high audience demand for the book. By October 1978, Smith and her

staff had compiled 700 women's biographies and the manuscript was submitted for publication. *MAW* had even piqued the interest of other publishers large and small like G. K. Hall and Garrett Park Press in Maryland. Yet, while correspondence between Gaylord and Smith indicate the work being on track for publication, *MAW* was delayed "due to some technical difficulties at Gaylord."²¹⁷ At some point in the winter of 1978-1979, Gaylord made a "sudden decision to discontinue its publishing program" and Smith purchased her release from her contract and the rights to *MAW*'s manuscript for one dollar in October 1979.²¹⁸ She cared too much for the women who had participated to allow *MAW* to languish further. As an illustration of her personal accountability to the women, she took ownership of the manuscript in hopes of finding a publisher in the future.

It can be surmised that Gaylord did a cost benefits analysis of its publishing unit and its core business--library equipment and supplies. While Gaylord's leadership was initially very excited about the project when they approached Smith to edit *MAW*, Gaylord was not a reference book publisher. It had published more than twenty books on specialized topics but never a reference resource. Smith was passionate about the opportunity to produce a work about women of color and eager to hone her skills as an editor. She and her staff had amassed a list of 1,000 potential women when a terrible fire swept through the home of the project's assistant, Sarah H. Maye; an unforeseen tragedy that destroyed all of their collected data. Such an occurrence would be daunting for the most experienced editor, but Smith was determined to make the accomplishments of minority women known to mainstream America. To do this, she reorganized and re-implemented her efforts to "rebuild and restore the original vigor

which the project had seen earlier.”²¹⁹ To further illustrate her ethic of personal accountability, she invested her own money into the renewed project. Perhaps, Gaylord underestimated the resources necessary to produce a reference resource such as *MAW* and subsequently keep it up-to-date. Regardless of the real answer to ‘why’, Gaylord’s dissolution of the publishing unit meant a more streamlined focus on improving its core business firmly establishing its reputation as an innovator in libraries.

Contributions of Black Women to America

Lived experience: Disappointment with the progress of her own work, however, did not keep Smith from collaborating on other projects documenting contributions of women of color to American culture. In August 1978, she, too, streamlined her focus and joined a project led by another African American woman scholar, Dr. Marianna Davis at Benedict College (an HBCU in Columbia, South Carolina). This groundbreaking project, *CBWA*, addressed the gap in school textbooks concerning black women’s achievements. Both Smith’s and Davis’ scholarship were influenced by their experiences as African American women. *CBWA* developed from Davis’ concern that young black women needed an “inspiring...accurate account of American history” in the textbooks they used in the classroom. She envisioned a collective biography (ten booklets) that chronicled black women’s 200 years of contributions in ten research areas: the arts, media, business and commerce, law, sports, civil rights, education, medicine, politics and government and science. Davis’ words in the Preface to *CBWA* echoed a classic black feminist theme of the 1970s: “To be Black and female is to be emotionally involved in this project.”²²⁰ Though timely and important, many of the works documenting black women’s history continued to meet resistance from mainstream

publishers during this period. Rather than waiting for existing textbook publishers to include African American women, Davis decided to craft one of her own.

Use of dialogue: From her experience with *CBWA*, Smith refined her project management skills, expanded her professional network and acquired another piece in the design for *NBAW*.²²¹ On the recommendation of colleagues from California and Tennessee, Davis invited Smith to join the *CBWA* project as a field supervisor. As one of ten field supervisors for the project, Smith was charged with managing field researchers in Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, South Dakota, North Dakota and Montana.

Ethics of caring and personal accountability: In addition to providing the best information for the project, Smith observed Davis' expressions of caring and personal accountability. To finance her dream, *CBWA*, Davis sought and was awarded funding from the Women's Educational Equity Act program (WEEAP) of the United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Part of the Special Projects Act within the Education Amendments of 1974, the purpose of WEEAP was to promote equality and equity for girls and women in education. It also authorized federal funding for the development and evaluation of textbooks and curricula in an effort to improve gender content. *CBWA* was such an effort.

Written in a narrative style similar to *When and Where I Enter* (1984) and *But Some of Us are Brave* (1982), *CBWA* is characterized by Smith as one of the pioneering efforts by black women intellectuals too often overlooked by academic researchers and historians.²²² *CBWA* had challenges similar to those faced by Smith and *MAW*. Both projects encountered: 1) extreme difficulty locating primary sources

and information about black women, 2) issues with the funding and 3) precarious publisher relationships. Regardless, the resulting two volumes provided an impressive array of information about black women in the arts, media, business and commerce, law, sports, civil rights, education, medicine, politics and government and science.

Davis was granted \$193,913 for a two-year project, which ran from 1978 to 1980. WEEAP funding, however, was cut drastically during the politically conservative 1980s. Just as Davis was completing the research and writing phase of *CBWA*, she was notified that the publishing division of the WEEAP, Educational Development Center (EDC), could not publish the manuscript. Due to rapidly diminishing funding, the EDC only completed publication of projects already at press.²²³ When the EDC told Davis the work was not going to be published in May 1981, letting the manuscript languish on their shelves awaiting new federal funding was not an option. Davis actively pursued contracts with mainstream publishers. With no publisher expressing interest, Davis established Kenday Press and self-published the work. Having already given her heart to the project, Davis mortgaged her home and secured a loan to raise enough capital to publish 2,500 two-volume sets of *CBWA* in 1982.

MAW: The Neal-Schuman Years

Lived experience: With her role with *CBWA* complete, Smith continued her search for a mainstream publisher for *MAW*. Her contract with Gaylord ended in 1979 and almost immediately Neal-Schuman Publishers expressed interest in the manuscript. In 1980, Smith entered into a new contract and the book was renamed *Minority American Women: A Biographical Directory*. Founded in 1976 by Patricia Glass

Schuman and John Vincent (Jack) Neal, Neal-Schuman was a young company that had made a name for itself packaging books for library reference and professional book publishers like Oryx Press, John Wiley, and Gale. Three years later, they decided to publish titles of their own. To help establish their catalogue and reputation as a publisher, Neal-Schuman acquired titles previously under contract with Gaylord.²²⁴ Under the new contract and with a budget of approximately \$8,000, the directory was expanded to feature 1,000 women. In order to update the manuscript, Smith and the project staff sent out over 2,000 letters to civic, cultural and women's organizations re-announcing the project and soliciting nominations for additional women and spent the next year gathering and editing biographies. (See Figures 2-5 after endnotes.)

Use of dialogue: Issues concerning this iteration of *MAW* were format and persistent delays in the editorial process. Discussions concerning the format of biographies started during the summer of 1981 after Smith sent drafts of sample biographies to Neal-Schuman for initial review. She favored a more narrative approach to the entries while the publisher preferred more concise entries filled with abbreviations and acronyms. While voicing concerns about typographical errors, certain omissions of information (i.e. birth dates), need for entry uniformity and use of abbreviations, Jack Neal did not consider them to be serious issues.²²⁵ In response to Neal's observations, Smith stated that biographies were crafted according to information the women supplied and were corrected as the entries were finalized. To address these issues, Smith drafted the Author's Guide and made the suggested corrections to the manuscript. The work entered the final stages in late 1981 and new book announcements were sent out

in January 1982.²²⁶ Eager to complete the project, Smith submitted “a very rough draft” of the manuscript for review in July.²²⁷

The main goal for the directory was to promote intergenerational communication amongst minority women. Smith had purposely sought women who represented diversity across geography, professions, political affiliations and area of contribution. The first anonymous reviewer to examine the draft manuscript, however, did so without having read the book’s introduction or the criteria for selection. As a result, her critique 1) questioned the selection process, 2) took issue with the inclusion of personal statements and 3) drew attention to format inconsistencies and overall readability. She pointedly asked “Why would anybody look up these hospital and school administrators, librarians, college professors and business women...there are thousands more like them...What’s the point?”²²⁸ According to the reviewer, a book solely dedicated to contributions of everyday women seemed trivial and in order to make the book more appealing the reviewer submitted a list of “important” minority women such as Barbara Jordan, Joan Baez and Yoko Ono for inclusion.

In her written response to the reviewer’s comments, Smith defended the importance of her choices by emphasizing that these women included in *Minority* served as “role models for young people” within their geographic and ethnic communities.

Aware that these choices might raise eyebrows, she wrote in the Introduction

By no means does the final list indicate that these are the most significant and most notable minority women. The editor also realizes that some readers might question the seemingly arbitrary decisions made in the selections.²²⁹

The women who responded were carefully screened and Smith, as editor, took full responsibility for final selection. She further explained that a reference resource that gave young women access to mentors was critical to expanding participation of minority women within fields like education, healthcare and business.

The reviewer also raised concern about inconsistencies throughout the manuscript. She found the entries to be too long-- filled with extraneous information-- and the bibliographies (included in the entries) to be "impossible to read". "Does anyone care that a woman of some prominence today started out as secretary in the 40s?" she inquired.²³⁰ Her remedy was to limit a woman's civic, community and professional positions and affiliations to those currently held by the individual. While Smith agreed with the reviewer's observations regarding length of categories and order of information, she had addressed these challenges in a letter that accompanied the manuscript when she sent it to Neal-Schuman for review.²³¹

Ethic of caring: Smith was committed not only to sharing the biographical information of diverse women but also to providing an opportunity for them to define themselves in their own words. Neal-Schuman's suggestion to reconfigure the overall format of the book concerned Smith. Difficulty finding writers and typists to facilitate the revisions had already led to a change in *MAW's* release date from Fall 1981 to late 1982. In Smith's opinion, retyping all the biographies into a new format would potentially delay publication-- now four years past its original release--again. The last major point of contention addressed by the reviewer involved the personal statements. Included to "illuminate the facts and give the book its inspirational quality and insights into cultural pride and difficulties overcome", the personal statements were the *MAW's*

most distinguishing feature.²³² They were also opportunities to infuse the voices of these diverse women throughout the work. The reviewer's response to the personal statements was decidedly less favorable. In her words, she found them to be "a mess", "far too long" and "embarrassing." With many poorly written personal statements, the reviewer suggested they be deleted from the final product.²³³ Through this experience, however, Smith more clearly defined her commitment to including the voices of women in their own words. This commitment materialized in *NBAW* in the form of oral history interviews and quotes from the women's writings, manuscripts and speeches.

With a significant financial investment at stake, Neal-Schuman began to question the purpose of the book and was anxious for Smith's response to the critique. Smith had acknowledged the technical issues facing the manuscript's "very rough draft" from the start. Not in favor of changing the format or including more "important" women, she offered: "either we should make the appropriate technical corrections, reduce the statements and publish the work immediately or cancel the project." The publisher responded by having a second reviewer evaluate a different portion of the manuscript. To ensure the next reviewer had the proper background materials, Smith sent copies of the criteria for selection, manuscript introduction and a sample summary statement on Hispanic women to Neal-Schuman in October 1982. By year's end, the second reviewer had examined the section of the manuscript on Hispanic women. However, even with the benefit of these documents, her comments were strikingly similar to those of the first reviewer. She characterized the manuscript as a "shotgun approach" that was difficult to use and lacked depth. Understandably, this second review raised more questions for the publisher. In her response to the reviewer's comments, Pat Schuman

suggested the book “be recast in light of the information we were able to get.”²³⁴ Indeed, this project was proving to be extremely challenging for the editor and young publisher.

Personal accountability: Smith acknowledged that the process of gathering, assembling and reconfiguring information had become overwhelming. She and her staff made every effort to encourage the women nominated for inclusion in *MAW* to respond to appeals for information. Certain women received invitations multiple times and personal letters requesting their participation. Yet, unlike with previous requests, many women did not respond. This could be attributed to a fatigue of sorts with the process. For many of the women, this was the third time Smith had requested information for a book that had yet to materialize. Further complicating matters, authors did not always follow the guidelines and women often provided incomplete information causing the format in some instances to vary from entry to entry. Schuman acknowledged that “doing more at this point must be overwhelming” and left it to Smith to decide how to proceed. Smith’s response to the publisher came almost six months later. Citing the need to complete “other pressing projects,” she stated she had had “absolutely no time to give to the work on minority women.”²³⁵ It is possible that Smith, like the women she wanted to see included in *MAW*, experienced fatigue and disappointment with the process. Seven years had elapsed since the first iteration of *MAW*. At times, the ethic of personal accountability translates as acknowledging your limits and taking a break. Regarding the future of the work, she agreed to re-examine the manuscript and asked Schuman for ideas for re-launching the project. Records indicate that a letter dated January 3, 1983 was the last written correspondence between Smith and Neal-Schuman. Further mentions of *MAW* appeared in letters between Smith and other

scholars inquiring about the publication's expected release date. To these inquiries, Smith simply replied she did not know when the work would be available. Smith shared few details as to why she felt *MAW* was never published. Her consistent answer to the question was "I don't really know."

***MAW* Reframed: United Negro College Fund**

Lived experience & ethic of caring: Although efforts languished to publish *MAW* with Neal-Schuman, demand for the biographical information Smith and her staff had collected did not. Throughout the 1980s, inquiries arrived almost monthly from interested scholars and files were frequently used to answer research questions at the Fisk Library.²³⁶ Extremely disappointed but still believing in the viability of a biographical *MAW* for minority women, Smith searched for new avenues to publish the work. Her search led her to the United Negro College Fund (UNCF). UNCF was established in 1943 as a means for black college presidents to consolidate their collective asking power when approaching corporate donors, foundations and individual philanthropists. On September 11, 1980, UNCF implemented the Distinguished Scholars Program with a \$2,500,000 grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The program was designed 1) to identify distinguished scholars among faculty at UNCF member colleges and universities and 2) to encourage the scholarly endeavors of UNCF faculty scholars through research in the areas of economics, history, communications, political and social theory, the sciences, humanities and interdisciplinary studies. The program was administered in two phases: Phase One-UNCF Faculty Scholars and Phase Two-UNCF Scholars at Large.

Successful faculty candidates submitted creative projects that demonstrated high standards of scholarly research, were nominated by the president of their institution and were willing to render two years of service to that institution following the grant period. In her grant proposal, Smith reframed *MAW* emphasizing her strong desire to focus on women who were “molders of their culture.”²³⁷ She defined these women as pioneers of new themes in the lives of women who by virtue of their race, sex, or position in local or national communities have been denied equal access to the rewards afforded others. Further, the work was significant because it deliberately seeks to identify women who are grassroots, or who are keepers of the folk traditions characteristic of their ethnic group.²³⁸

As a UNCF Faculty Scholar, Smith was awarded up to \$25,000 (renewable for a second year) between 1986 and 1988. She planned to use the UNCF funds to select a new Advisory Board, redefine selection criteria, publicize the project, to build new networks and new data gathering instruments (i.e. questionnaires) and to create a computer database on minority women. While the *MAW* proposal was accepted, experience had shown Smith that “considerable staff, funds and time” were “required for research and preparation of the results for publication.”²³⁹ She decided instead to complete another project, *Images of Blacks in American Culture* (IBAC). It, too, was “off schedule” but a more manageable project to bring to completion within the two-year grant period.²⁴⁰

Use of dialogue and Personal accountability: Like much of her scholarship, *IBAC* evolved as a combination of Smith’s professional expertise and personal interest. In the 1980s, while developing “Images in Black Artifacts: Negative & Positive” she

discovered an overwhelming interest in the topic by audience members.²⁴¹ To this point, existing research guides were scattered or limited to specific fields of study. Thus, Smith took the opportunity to begin work on the reference resource to “help the reader interpret more accurately and comprehensively what has been identified.”²⁴² As a reference work, *IBAC* was the answer to a gap in the reference literature that focused on black Americana. On the one hand, *IBAC* explored the creation and proliferation of negative images and stereotypes of blacks in American culture. In ten chapters, Smith compiled answers to questions concerning the origin, evolution and impact of images such as Mammy, Sambo, Aunt Jemima and Uncle Tom. The book traced these “negative and stereotyped views” through the depiction of black men and women in American art, in television, film and musical theatre as well as in children’s literature.²⁴³ Contributors who also later contributed to *NBAW* included David C. Driskell, Arlene Clift-Pellow, Nagueyalti Warren and Janet Sims-Wood.²⁴⁴ In addition to their multi-layered discussions of imagery, Smith assembled a comprehensive reference guide on black Americana that included dealers and collectors (by state), exhibits as well as an extensive bibliography of publications on the topic. According to reviews in the *Journal of Southern History and Research Quarterly*, *IBAC* was considered to be a valuable resource for public, school and university libraries.²⁴⁵

Even with the decision to complete *IBAC* instead of the reframed directory of minority women, Smith crafted *IBAC* into a work that sought to address and to correct the historically negative images of African American women in American culture. A clear assessment was made that persistent mainstream images of black women were defined by others rather than of their own devising.²⁴⁶ Within this work, Smith along with nine

other African American scholars (men and women) provided a revised positive view of black womanhood for a mainstream audience.²⁴⁷

QUILT PATTERN

Research concerning African American women in library history reveals that more in-depth studies are necessary and this study will serve to fill existing gaps in American library history and black women's studies. Within the African American woman's worldview, mind, body and spirit function together to benefit the individual and the greater community. A key principle of black feminist thought emphasizes the influence of this worldview on the knowledge production by black women intellectuals. This study follows Shaw's example and examines how Smith's socialization and educational experiences during the era of Jim Crow informed her professional choices and practice. The work of African American women scholar-librarians like Smith reflects the merging of personal ambitions, professional acumen and commitment to their community.

With the rise of black studies and women's studies programs on college campuses, mainstream culture witnessed a growing interest in "all things black" and in women's issues in the 1970s. Initially, this resulted in increased availability of titles about white women's history and on the historical achievements of African American men. Interest from mainstream publishers to financially support the development of comprehensive historical resources by and about African American women, however, remained elusive. Many publishers still considered resources by and about minority women in general, African American women in particular, to be a "poor sales risk in the market".²⁴⁸ This pivotal period was also marked by unprecedented access to funding from the federal government as well as private foundations to collect the primary data of

black women's history (i.e. Black Women Oral History Project).²⁴⁹ Both Smith and Davis were successful in securing grant funding to develop cultural programming and to conduct historical research pertaining to African Americans and African American women. In 1973, Smith applied for and was awarded over a quarter of a million dollars in Higher Education Act Title II-B funding to address the challenge of overhauling library collections to meet new curricular demands at predominantly white institutions (PWI). Many academic librarians at PWIs often lacked expertise and resources for the selection of materials on black history, literature and culture.²⁵⁰ With this grant, she developed training programs to teach her colleagues at PWIs how to select, organize, and disseminate materials by and about African Americans, and to integrate African American materials into mainstream American life and culture.

Both *MAW* and *CBWA* provided the inspiration and information for Smith's award-winning reference resource *NBAW*. With *MAW*, she was able to fine-tune the criteria for selection and to make contacts with women who would later serve on the advisory board for *NBAW*. After her disappointments with Gaylord and Neal-Schuman, *IBAC* was Smith's first opportunity as an editor to experience all the details of the editorial process of a narrative reference work from idea to publication. It also served as an effort to correct the negative images and stereotypes about black womanhood in America.²⁵¹ Her work on *CBWA* came in the midst of her own challenging efforts to publish the biographical *MAW* of minority women. She expanded her network of black women scholars as well as her knowledge of where to locate information on black women. The experiences with both projects created the pattern from which Smith crafted *NBAW*. Sometimes due to time or issues with materials, a quilt piece that is created does not

end up as part of the quilt for which it was originally intended. An expert quiltmaker learns from “the project[s] that didn’t work out.”²⁵² From the persistent issues in seeing the works to completion, Smith learned to better assess time needed to gather information, to create more efficient data gathering tools as well as designing ways to give women a voice in the final product. Smith filed away the pieces for future use and transferred her skills and lessons learned to the next project--*NBAW*.

CHAPTER FIVE: CRAFTING *NOTABLE BLACK AMERICAN WOMEN*

There are many great women out there. These are really our relatives--if not by blood then by spirit. People need to know about them.²⁵³

INTRODUCTION

The decades of the 1970s and 1990s witnessed a dynamic shift in publishers' receptivity and support for African American women's history. Jessie Carney Smith's *Notable Black American Women* (1992) provided two key interventions to the fields of Library and Information Science and African American women's history. It was 1) the first reference work on African American women's history compiled and edited by an African American woman librarian in conjunction with a mainstream reference publisher and 2) distinguished by its inclusion of specific locations of archival collections (personal papers, manuscripts and speeches) by African American women. Like a story quilt, *NBAW* was crafted from Smith's collection of "every sliver of information she found about black women" over the course of twenty years. Of her massive files of handwritten notes and newspaper clippings she said, "I knew that one day it would help fill in the pieces and we could get a more complete look at the contributions of black women."²⁵⁴ Smith's mission, reclaiming black women's lives, was an extension of the professional culture espoused by many African American women librarians.²⁵⁵

Experienced both as editor and as a quilter, Smith developed an eye for which materials worked and which did not. Typically done in blocks, piecing a quilt involves the creating, arranging and adjusting of the pieces by a quilter before the final stitching and quilting. Describing this process, a venerable quilter once wrote, "I just get the

ideas and pin them on, can't tell what they will look like at the beginning. As a block comes to me, I do it as I go along."²⁵⁶ Thanks to her extensive files on African American women and her knowledge of archives and collections, *NBAW*'s development benefited from more efficient data collection. *NBAW* also received financial and editorial support from an experienced reference publisher, Gale Research (Gale). Ultimately, each block emerged as the result of experimenting with content and composition. For two decades, Smith rearranged the pieces to her dream to develop a pattern for the literary story quilt, *NBAW*. With pattern (and people) in place, Smith began the process of piecing, stitching and quilting each of *NBAW*'s entries.

This chapter explores the quilting metaphor on three levels. Piecing a quilt involves collecting materials, cutting and arranging pieces to create a pattern. First, I explain how *NBAW* came to be and Smith's relationship with Gale. Then, I discuss the pieces Smith used to create the pattern for designing the literary quilt. Through her work on *MAW*, she experimented with Advisory Board composition and criteria for inclusion. With *CBWA* and *IBAC*, she honed her editorial skills for managing multiple contributors. Next, I examine how *NBAW*'s data collection and writing process reflected characteristics of black feminist epistemology. Finally, I compare *NBAW* to its ancestors: *Noted Negro Women: Their Triumphs and Activities (NNW)*, *Women of Distinction: Remarkable in Works and Invincible in Character (WD)*, *Homespun Heroines and Other Women of Distinction (HH)*, and *Profiles of Negro Womanhood (PNW)*.

How *NBAW* Came to Be

NBAW was the product of Smith's dream and Gale's vision. By the mid-1980s, mainstream publishers were finally responding to the need for biographical resources that appealed to scholars conducting research on African American women.²⁵⁷ Recognizing the need for resources reflecting this diversity, Gale's New Product Development department was charged with developing new materials and acquiring existing reference titles in need of revising from smaller publishers who did not have the financial resources to make major revisions. Gale's departmental staff gathered information from librarians concerning their reference needs during informal conversations at American Library Association annual conferences and through formal market research. Gale got the creative spark for the *NBAW* concept after Christine Nasso (then director of New Product Development) read an article entitled "Missing & Wanted: Black Women in Encyclopedias."²⁵⁸ Nasso asked school, public and academic librarians to assess the concept. Smith submitted an assessment in support of the concept.²⁵⁹ By going to the reference book buyers--librarians--Gale ascertained the "most fruitful and accurate research" concerning the viability of new reference resources.²⁶⁰ With overwhelmingly positive responses, approval was granted by Gale's publishing committee and the *NBAW* concept was on the way to becoming Gale's first biographical dictionary on African American women.

An important part of Gale's new product development has been its "direct knowledge of end-user requirements." Founded in 1954, Gale Research was the brainchild of Frederick G. Ruffner, research director for General Detroit Corporation. In an effort to target new customers, he compiled a directory of all labor and professional

associations in the United States. Crafted from the end-user perspective, the directory entitled the *Encyclopedia of American Associations* became the cornerstone of Gale's success in reference publishing. Ruffner frequently visited libraries to "listen to reference librarians so that he could fill the gaps on their reference shelves."²⁶¹ As a result, a culture was established at Gale that focused on providing librarians with quality reference tools, becoming one of the largest publishers of library reference information worldwide. By 1988, *NBAW* was Gale's first major reference work about African Americans completely researched, compiled, edited and produced in-house.²⁶² Without an established network of authors to choose from as with previous projects, Nasso and her team started from scratch in their search for an African American woman scholar to lead the project. Within another group at Gale, Smith was completing work on the reference resource *Statistical Record of Black America (Statistical)*. Although she was not involved in the production of *Statistical*, Nasso was familiar with Smith's *IBAC* and decided to contact her for help identifying scholars interested in being the managing editor from amongst her extensive professional network of authors and researchers. "Surprisingly and delightfully" Smith voiced her desire to serve as *NBAW*'s editor. In addition to Smith's skill and heart for the work, *NBAW*'s success also involved 222 passionate people (212 contributors plus 10 advisory board members) and one purposeful publisher.

NBAW succeeded where projects like *CBWA* struggled because of key timing, ample resources and efficient planning. Describing the dynamic growth in black women's studies in the 1970s and 1980s, one scholar recalled "the community of black women's studies was beginning to bear fruit with substantive works that provide the

public with central characters in African American culture.”²⁶³ Scholars and public intellectuals like Patricia Hill Collins, Clenora Hudson-Weems, Barbara Smith, and bell hooks were demanding a broader understanding of the intersecting tensions and conflicts of race, class and gender in the lives of black women. By 1988, Smith had published *IBAC* (also with Gale) in which scholars like Nagueyalti Warren and Janet Sims-Wood discussed the influences of negative stereotypes of black women.²⁶⁴ As a publisher, Gale was supportive and eager to make its mark on reference book history. Unlike *MAW*'s publishers Gaylord and Neal-Schuman, it had the infrastructure to develop and publish *NBAW*. In Gale, Smith had also finally found a publisher who understood the value of prose narrative in the biographical work of African American women. With *MAW*'s manuscript as the pattern, the literary quilt *NBAW* featured 425 contemporary women like singer Jennifer Halliday and approximately 75 foremothers like poetess Phillis Wheatley. The biographical essays ranged in length from five to fifteen pages averaging 1,200-3,500 words and were arranged alphabetically by surname. Approximately 175 essays included a photograph of the woman.

NBAW offered previously unpublished bibliographies and lists of reference links to archival collections about African American women. To assist in navigating the resource, Smith crafted a table of contents, a list of contributors and their professional affiliations, a subject index as well as a list of the featured women arranged by area of endeavor. Each essay included a woman's: full name, birth and death dates, family background (slave or free), education, work, community and political experiences, well known friends, companions and contemporaries, physical appearance and personality, as well as excerpts from her major writings, speeches, statements, or from interviews.

Smith's primary challenge with Neal-Schuman concerning *MAW* had been about the presentation of information. The publisher wanted a "cut and dried" informational entry while Smith advocated for a narrative biographical entry. Her rationale was a narrative entry was more "attractive" and made the information more accessible for the users. Smith also felt strongly that the women's voices be featured prominently within the essay. The personal statements were the opportunity for the women to share their life philosophies and wisdom with the young women of color who were the intended audience for *MAW*. For *NBAW*, she encouraged contributors to do oral history interviews with the women when possible and also gave each woman featured the opportunity to review her entry for misinterpretations and gaps in information.

With Gale's in-house support, Smith kept in constant contact with and received frequent feedback from the editorial staff which over the course of the project included: James Lesniak, Diane Dupuis, Christine Nasso, Christie Hammes and Lawrence Baker. Smith worked closely with the editorial team to establish the timelines, to control quality of submissions and to address formatting preferences. Gale assigned some of their best editors to *NBAW*. Yet, many were not familiar with African American history and culture and relied on Smith to instruct them on details such as:

If I use... 'Colored Methodist Episcopal church' don't change that because that's the name of the church.' And they'd think 'we've gotten away from colored now.' [I said] 'No, this is the name of the church.' So, it took...teaching them things to leave in because it's correct.²⁶⁵

This was a markedly different experience from what Smith witnessed of Davis' experience with *CBWA*. That project operated under a funding shortfall for the span of the project that was exacerbated when the WEEAP funding was cut at the dawning of

the politically conservative 1980s. Davis' decision to use her own money to self-publish meant a limited print run and marketing on a shoestring budget. Lack of funding highlighted the lack of general support and regard for this kind of work. Hers were challenges faced by many minority presses during this period. In addition to difficulty attracting sufficient capital, too often they also encountered resistance from mainstream review media in efforts to garner exposure for their publications.²⁶⁶ Along with Gale's reputation, *NBAW* had the financial, editorial and marketing support needed to positively position the reference book and to expose the work to the mainstream review media. The idea to publish a second (and subsequently a third) volume of *NBAW* came on the heels of the book's unprecedented success. According to Nasso, "you don't do two more books like we did if the first one isn't successful."²⁶⁷

Timing, resources and planning also contributed to challenges Smith faced during *NBAW*'s development. When Gale asked her to edit *NBAW*, Smith embarked upon a project with ambitious goals. With an initial target publishing date of 1990, her plan for *NBAW* required a significant amount of people power as well as the identification and coordination of primary source materials such as oral interviews, family papers, and church records. After she and the advisory board agreed on the 500 women for inclusion, she quickly realized the time allocated to produce the work was not sufficient. Smith's biggest struggle was coordinating 212 contributors. When potential writers cancelled their agreements, Smith rearranged pieces and people to write biographical essays. Gale did not budget for honoraria for the contributors leaving the editor to firmly cajole writers to complete the essays in a timely manner. Addressing this issue of time and the writers, Christie Hammes, Senior Developmental Editor at Gale wrote, "Given

your struggle to just get contributors to complete the writing...it's most important to concentrate on getting the 'raw material' to us."²⁶⁸ By the time the "raw material" arrived, many essays were much longer than the Gale's editors expected and *NBAW* was one year beyond its intended date of publication. The size of the book alarmed Gale's marketing department for two reasons: money and money. A 1,334-page book had to have extra heavy binding which incurred additional expense for the printing process. Smith was adamant about *NBAW* being affordable especially for institutions with small collections and even smaller budgets. Thus, the \$75 price tag was negotiated despite the marketing department's sentiment "you're giving this away."²⁶⁹ In total, Gale invested over \$245,000 to develop, print, and market the first volume of *NBAW*.²⁷⁰ Overall, Gale and Smith were both "very happy" about their relationship. Gale's approach to Smith as editor: "Trust the expert to do what they know how to do."²⁷¹ Indeed a skilled quiltmaker, Smith assembled a diverse quilting guild (advisory board and contributors) to assist her in crafting *NBAW*. What follows is an examination of how lived experience, dialogic practices and the ethics of caring and personal accountability materialized in the process of *NBAW*'s development.

LIVED EXPERIENCE

Smith's Role as Quiltmaker

Arguably, the surface details of *NBAW*'s editorial process were not unique or remarkable in terms of how reference books were compiled. What stands out is Smith's commitment and personal attachment to the women written about in *NBAW*. Articles describing Smith's work ethic concerning *NBAW* tell the same story:

Most days began at 4 am, Smith's usual time for rising. But instead of taking an hour long walk and leisurely reading the paper, she'd sit down at the computer placed on her kitchen table and write for two hours or so.²⁷²

Smith wrote and made calls during lunch and would stay at her office at the Fisk library after 5 pm "for a few hours of uninterrupted concentration." This focus intensified on the weekends. Describing the first two years as "hard labor," Smith made writing assignments, cajoled writers to meet deadlines and researched and authored forty biographies in addition to editing each biography. As editor, she was the first to choose about whom she would write and based her selection on whom she was most curious about as well as her level of expertise. For example, thirteen of the women she wrote about were educators/writers.²⁷³ Smith's experience with *NBAW* embodied several characteristics of the black feminist tradition. Her investment in the project was cultural, emotional as well as intellectual and financial. What Collins refers to as the ethic of caring demonstrates how the merging of these elements with intellect within African American communities parallels with the feminist perspective regarding the role of personality in connected knowing. Personal expressiveness, emotion and empathy are highly valued in the process of knowledge production by African American women. Challenges she faced concerning *NBAW* stemmed from this connection to the work. She often wondered about making it a wonderful work, how was it going to be received and had she made the right choices? One example (of many) of her connectedness to her work was her reactions to what she learned about the women as she edited entries. Of the death of Fanny Jackson Coppin, activist and educator, she recalled

I just didn't want her to die. She was very loved and respected, and when I read about her dying it just got to me...The sadness stayed with me for about seven days.²⁷⁴

Some say that this type of connection is dangerous and not wise considering the magnitude of the work. According to black feminist thought, however, this type of connection is vital to their work. Smith felt very much a part of everything, which was published within *NBAW*. Unable to pay the contributors for their work, she asked them to consider their contribution a “labor of love.” Working on *NBAW* became a deeply personal endeavor for many contributors like Juanita Karpf who wrote “This project was a labor of love for me and I am honored to be part of it.”²⁷⁵

African American women librarians have a special relationship with the community of African American women that demonstrates the interrelated existence of two levels of knowledge: taken for granted knowledge and specialized knowledge. Collins defines taken for granted knowledge as the ideas and skills developed within the everyday African American cultural context. Smith was fortunate to have strong black women role models within the Mount Zion community. Her mother Vesona, grandmother Minnie as well as the stories of her great grandmother Fannie were the “strong women” she knew growing up in the segregated South. Shaw discussed how important the lessons learned were as young women transferred to their professional choices and practices. In Smith’s life, her foremothers helped to nurture a positive self-image within her. She felt her mission as an African American woman scholar was to provide that opportunity for other young women. Feeling a deep connection to the work, Smith added her knowledge and expertise as a librarian to craft a resource to empower a new generation of African American women. Indeed, Smith became a knowledge specialist with the creation of *NBAW* and she articulated a distinct African American woman’s worldview through her professional practice and intellectual production.

USE OF DIALOGUE

The Quilting Guild: Advisory Board

For *NBAW*, Smith purposely chose an advisory board of well-known and well connected African American women. The proliferation of ethnic women's studies programs prompted more women to develop and lead women's research projects. The prototype on which she modeled *NBAW's* board was the all-woman advisory board for *MAW*. Composed of eleven representatives from each of the ethnic groups to be included in the book, the board included: Henrietta V. Whiteman (American Indian/Native American); Shirley Sun and Betty Lee Sung (Chinese American); Mary Watanabe (Japanese American); Nikki Giovanni and Gwendolyn Cruzat (African American); Lupe Auguiano and Lourdes Casal (Chicana/Mexican American); Dorita Marina (Cuban American); Hilda Hildalgo and Carmen Votaw (Puerto Rican American). Smith appreciated how the women shared information and resources during the course of the project. They were instrumental in restarting the nomination process for *MAW* after the devastating fire in 1976. With their assistance, Smith reconnected with the organizations previously solicited for nominations and re-compiled the women's biographical information and personal statements.

Smith had an extensive network of colleagues and scholars. As a founding member of the National Association of Black Professional Women in Higher Education, Smith wanted African American women who shared her passion for African American women's history to help her lead this project.²⁷⁶ These advisory board members were as follows: Johnetta B. Cole, Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Darlene Clark Hine, Gloria Randle Scott, Susan L. Taylor, Jean Blackwell Hutson, Dorothy Porter Wesley, Elinor

DesVerney Sinnette, Arlene Clift Pellow, and Bettye Collier-Thomas. Each shared Smith's passion for black women's history and represented various academic disciplines and educational institutions. Their positions and affiliated institutions at the time included: Cole, president of Spelman College, a historically black women's college in Atlanta; Guy-Sheftall, director of Women's Research and Resource Center at Spelman College; Hine, professor of History at Michigan State University; Scott, president of Bennett College (another historically black women's college) in Greensboro; Taylor, editor-in-chief of *Essence Magazine*. Other board members included: Hutson, retired director of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture; Wesley, director emerita of Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University; Sinnette, then acting director of Moorland-Spingarn; Pellow, director, Division of Humanities and Fine Arts at Fisk University; and Collier-Thomas, director of the Center for Black Culture and History at Temple University. Smith recruited sister African American women librarians Sinnette, Hutson and Wesley (whom Smith called "dean of black collections") to her cause. Some women she knew personally (Cole, Hutson and Sinnette) while others she knew by reputation like Guy-Sheftall and Taylor. Connecting *NBAW* with their names and networks helped bring the book to national visibility.

The role of the advisory board was to support and assist Smith with *NBAW*'s initial development details. Smith adapted *MAW*'s advisory board roles to accommodate the busy schedules of *NBAW*'s board members. She removed the responsibility of setting goals for the work from the advisory board (to the editor) and the revised roles offered more flexibility for how board members contributed to the project. The dialogic practice

at work in Smith's relationship with the advisory board was evident in their 1) reviewing nominees and suggesting deletions/additions, 2) making suggestions for refining selection criteria, 3) proposing improvements to the biographical form and 4) recommending other scholars to write specific biographies. They also had the option to write one or two entries if they desired.²⁷⁷ To Smith's invitation, Cole enthusiastically replied, "If you ask something of me, of course, I will do it." Other board members like Taylor happily lent her name in support of the "landmark work" and submitted names of women for inclusion.²⁷⁸ As with most advisory boards on a project of this nature, the members never met together as a group but kept in communication with Smith via email, phone and by letter as to *NBAW's* progress.

Criteria for Inclusion

NBAW highlighted the lives of women born between 1730 and 1960 who achieved despite the challenges brought about by the intersecting oppressions of gender, ethnicity, class, sexual politics and religion. A daughter of the segregated South, Smith learned that a washerwoman's contribution to the community was just as important as that of her elementary school principal. Her voice still warms recalling how Miss Annie, a woman who took in laundry, shared generously from her meager larder with neighborhood children. Smith's schoolteachers were among her first role models who demonstrated the importance of using one's education to uplift the community. Many of the women like these had languished in obscurity among published sources. Inspired by these interactions, she crafted *NBAW's* criteria for selection to extend beyond the actions of women with formal education or who were nationally well known to those who had "done something notable in their communities or in the streets."²⁷⁹ Even so, Smith

was unable to chronicle the lives of many “everyday” women due to the lack of reference materials, time and resources. Smith’s extended criteria developed from her work on *MAW* specified:²⁸⁰

pioneer in a particular area, important entrepreneur, leading businesswoman, literary or creative figure of stature, leader for social or human justice, major governmental or organizational official, creative figure in the performing arts, noted orator, distinguished educator, noted scholar, a leader, pioneer or contributor in other fields or areas who meets the basic criteria suggested above for selection as an outstanding black American woman.²⁸¹

The sources Smith used to compile the initial list ranged from the obscure to the well-known: *Herstory Silhouettes*, *Profiles of Black Womanhood*, “Checklist of Afro-American Women Who Began their Careers Prior to the Twentieth Century and Have Made Significant Achievements in the United States”, *Dictionary of American Negro Biography*, *Notable American Women* as well as *Noted Negro Women: Their Triumphs and Activities*, *Homespun Heroines and Other Women of Distinction*. Smith’s *MAW* files also served as the basis for the women to be included in *NBAW*. Among the women who ultimately made it from *MAW* into *NBAW*: Camille Billops; Alexa Canady; Lois Mailou Jones; Anna Julian; Julia Perry; Annie Koontz; Georgia Powers; Jean Blackwell Hutson; Molly Moon; Ethel Nance; Ersa Poston; Norma Sklarek; C. Delores Tucker; Ann Tanneyhill and Esther Scott. Smith included these women because 1) updated information was available and 2) she was able to finally honor the women who had been waiting for almost two decades to see their lives highlighted in a reference publication.

Taking her cues from *NNW*’s 300 entries, Smith set the goal to reclaim the history of 500 African American women within *NBAW*. With the board’s input, Smith

thoughtfully trimmed the list from 1000 to 500 names. Smith clearly acknowledged the limitations of the selection process. Time, space or available resources were all factors in the selection process. *NBAW* did not include “the five hundred most important African American women” rather it offered a representative group that was historically, professionally and geographically diverse. As an illustration of the ethic of accountability, Smith took full responsibility for final selection. She told the advisory board, “If someone came along and said...”why am I not in this book?” Just put it on me.”²⁸² In letters and in *NBAW*'s Introduction, Smith succinctly explained the who, how many and why of her final decisions on inclusion.

The accounting of minority women's lives--either by other minority women or in their own words--was just emerging in the academic canon in the late 1970s.²⁸³ This new area included the work of academicians and artists alike whose passion for, experience as and/or scholarship about African American women's history qualified them to contribute. (This was also Smith's approach to recruiting contributors for *NBAW*.) Smith's idea of creating a publication that allowed minority women to participate in the creation of knowledge about themselves was revolutionary. With *MAW*, Smith pieced together her own pattern as to how to craft a reference work centered on the positive achievements of women from diverse ethnic backgrounds. For generations, the perceptions and histories of women of color in America were crafted by the limiting values and social constructs of a white male dominated culture. Having taken its cues on race and gender from mainstream culture, the publishing industry had rendered women of color virtually invisible and silent. Smith sought to remedy this invisibility and silence with the publication of *MAW*. By including the personal

statements, Smith wanted to empower each woman to define her identity in her own words and to claim her respective place in history. In the instances where a woman did/could not write her own statement, Smith requested that a family member, colleague or close friend write a statement on the woman's behalf. With this as option, she hoped to empower women who may not have been able to write their own due to time, age or literacy issues. Smith's favorite ancestor to *NBAW*, *HH*, used a similar approach. With *NBAW*, Smith expanded on the idea of featuring the voice of each woman. Contributors were 1) encouraged to conduct oral history interviews with living women, 2) asked to include quotes from the women's poetry, music or other written records and 3) the women featured reviewed the completed biographical entry as part of the editorial process before *NBAW* went to press.

The Quilting Guild: Contributors

The study and writing of black women's history has been shaped by two "conflicting paradigms": one that black women (and men) helped to create through the bonds of slavery and the other they "willingly struggle to transform and change" towards a more inclusive, balanced representation within America's historical narrative.²⁸⁴ For African American women, this has meant transforming the negative images of black womanhood. Through literature, music, art, dance and crafts like quiltmaking, black women have sought to redesign their self-image and interject their voices into the mainstream cultural conversation. Black studies coupled with the rise of black feminism in the 1970s gave birth to pioneering black women historians who actively began documenting black women's history using "a combination of historical voices, spiritual consciousness, and liberation politics within creative mediums and works designed to

empower and enlighten.”²⁸⁵ For the first time in American history, a cohort of black women were formally trained as historians in the Western intellectual tradition. Black women historians like Rosalyn Terborg Penn and Deborah Gray White brought to their chosen discipline a worldview particular to African American women from which they wrote “black women into history.” Having endured the multi-layers of prejudice in America, they set about the work of revealing the diverse historical experiences of African American women.

By the 1980s, in concert with other black women scholars, artists and writers, they manifested a “black woman’s cultural and literary renaissance” with interdisciplinary collaborations like *NBAW*. Smith relied heavily on her academic and social networks to find other scholars with the same passion for documenting African American women’s history. Smith’s reputation as a knowledgeable scholar interested in black women’s history preceded her. Her approach for assembling a quilting guild of contributors for *NBAW* was reminiscent of the quilting bees Smith witnessed in her home community of rural Mount Zion. Throughout the women’s movements and the civil rights movements, working class and college educated African American women alike quilted to satisfy the need for personal creative expression, for community, for warmth and/or for financial gain.²⁸⁶ She recruited and managed 212 like-minded students, librarians, college professors and academic program administrators to assist her in this massive quilting project.

Using the information and organizational skills from previous projects, Smith also mined her prolific personal and professional network of scholars to assemble a quilting guild diverse in ethnicity, gender, age and research experience. As editor, she chose

contributors based on scholarly or professional area of expertise, availability and passion for the project. For example, she offered Theresa A. Leininger an opportunity to contribute while Leininger was conducting her dissertation research on African American artists at the Fisk special collections in July 1990. Eager to secure her first scholarly publication, Leininger authored the essays on Barbara Chase-Riboud, Margaret Taylor Burroughs, Elizabeth Catlett, Samella Lewis and Nancy Elizabeth Prophet for *NBAW*. Leininger quickly accepted and immediately began research on her assigned artists before leaving for a year in Paris. While she researched and wrote many of the entries before going abroad, Leininger found bits and pieces of research in libraries including the Bibliothèque Nationale, the Sorbonne and the American Library in Paris. Leininger's experience also illustrated the excitement shared by many of the contributors such as unearthing new sources about a woman's life. While conducting research on Nancy Elizabeth Prophet, she encountered a rare journal kept by the artist during her stint in Paris. Further, she connected with Prophet's second cousin as well as an "old woman who was a sculptor and knew Prophet in Paris in 1936."²⁸⁷ As editor, Smith was constantly readjusting the pieces to ensure the best coverage of a woman's life story. In this instance, having previously assigned Prophet to another contributor, Smith decided that Leininger's discoveries gave her more intimate insights into the artist's experience and thus, reassigned the essay to Leininger. *NBAW* is an illustration of black feminist thought because the process of knowledge production embodied the philosophy that invited the participation of other gender, ethnic or class groups in the creation of the work.²⁸⁸

Leininger's contribution to *NBAW* is an illustration of Collins' idea that those who are neither black nor feminist can conduct black feminist type work. Leininger was a young white, Catholic woman from Cincinnati, Ohio. Her interest in African American history was sparked after reading *The Color Purple* as an undergraduate at Xavier University.²⁸⁹ Her interaction with Smith exuded what James describes as "black feminist sensibilities." Leininger's letters with Smith suggest a feeling of collegial respect and warmth. Her use of dialogue not only communicated the facts of the situation at hand but shared in the decision making process if there were gaps in the biographical information or if a detail did not fit well within the flow of the essay. For example, Leininger felt a physical description of Chase-Riboud was "awkward" and suggested a photograph be used instead. Furthermore, the international scope of Leininger's research in the addition of new knowledge to the study of Prophet's life also illustrated the diverse experiences of the African American women included in *NBAW*.

ETHIC OF CARING

Regarding the ethic of caring, both Leininger and Smith developed empathy and respect for the other's position and experience. Within their written dialogue, various emotions also emerged about how Leininger felt about the work: "The enormity of the project staggers me and I'm deeply appreciative." The dialogue between the editor and contributor not only detailed corrections and suggestions for the entries but also Leininger shared the details of her life with Smith. This was common in much of the correspondence between Smith and the contributors. In terms of personal accountability, review of Leininger's letters help to situate her within the context of her lived experience in Paris. This was demonstrated by the lengths she went to ensure

that the most accurate information was included in the entries. Once in search of an *Essence* article on Barbara Chase-Riboud, she paid \$10 for access to the American Library to access copies of the magazine to find information.²⁹⁰ Overall, contributors collected information in three ways: 1) primary sources (letters, diaries, journals), 2) secondary sources (newspaper/magazine articles, biographical sketches in other published works) and 3) oral history which included actual interviews between *NBAW* contributors and the women as well the use of transcripts from the Schlesinger Library Black Women Oral History project.²⁹¹

Another principle of black feminist thought is the ethic of personal accountability. This notion was translated in *NBAW*'s development through Smith's desire for the living women to have a say in what was included in their biographical entry. She held them accountable for the information they provided and she in turn held herself (and the contributors) accountable for providing accurate supplemental research. A new Doctor of Social Work, Linda Anderson Smith wrote the entry on Jacquelyne Johnson Jackson. The experience of Anderson Smith and Jackson was an example of the collaboration between the woman and the contributor in the use of oral history and archival records. Anderson Smith interviewed Jackson in her home in Durham, North Carolina on March 5, 1990. By welcoming Anderson Smith into her home, Jackson provided the young scholar with an intimate view of her life. From the family photos prominently displayed to the key to the city of Tuskegee, Alabama (her hometown), Anderson Smith was able to observe the intangibles that gave Jackson's life meaning. Of her observations she wrote: "The swirl of activity, the generosity of spirit, the love and appreciation of family and friends, and the ability to focus on more than one project at a time are typical of

Jackson's life."²⁹² After she completed the biographical entry she sent it to Jackson for review. Jackson noted that Anderson Smith had done a "commendable job" crafting the entry.²⁹³ The only major exception Jackson had was with use of African American. Taking her cues from Carter G. Woodson, Jackson wrote: "I do not call myself an African American, nor do I refer to other blacks as African Americans...I also decided that I am not going to change anymore the nomenclature I use for my nationality-race."²⁹⁴ At her request, then, Anderson Smith used black instead. By asking the living women to review their entries, Smith gave them the freedom of self-definition.

PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The experience between Julianne Malveaux and Phyllis Ann Wallace highlighted the complexities of identity in the research relationship between a living subject and a researcher. Malveaux's collaboration with Wallace resonates with the ethic of personal accountability of black feminist epistemology. While conducting oral history interviews with Wallace, Malveaux ran into a few "sensitive matters". First, Wallace did not want her actual date of birth listed. Typically, lack of date of birth was the result of lack of verifiable data. In this case, Malveaux honored Wallace's request and noted in her letter to the editor: "I'm not sure why she is sensitive about this." The other issue was about Wallace's professional involvement between 1958 and 1965. During this period, Wallace served as an economic analyst in intelligence for the federal government. Much of the work had been classified and Malveaux's inclusion of this part of her career was a first as it appeared in no other biographical profile about her. As researcher, Malveaux had to gain Wallace's trust before she began to even discuss this part of her professional experience. As an African American woman with a doctorate in

economics, Malveaux shared the same credentials as Wallace. While this gave her instant credibility, she still had to gain Wallace's trust. Only in a second interview did Wallace share the details of her work with federal intelligence on Soviet economic development between 1958 and 1965. After much negotiation, the contributor and Wallace decided what would appear in the finished work.²⁹⁵ By taking time to gain Wallace's trust and respect, Malveaux validated Wallace's contribution by making new knowledge available about herself.

Malveaux's experience also highlighted what Hine defined as the culture of dissemblance where a black woman only shares the parts of her history that she wants to share. Often used as a coping mechanism, this usually meant leaving out the hurt, pain or shame of an experience. In the case of Wallace, she was protective of her age (real reason still unknown) and of the classified nature of her federal work assignments. Neither Malveaux nor Smith pressed Wallace to include her actual birth date because it was more important to have accurate information about her pioneering life experiences. Although Smith and many of the contributors were often awestruck by the lives of the women about whom they wrote she encouraged a balanced tone. Her desire was to present all aspects of a woman's life. Achieving this was at times difficult as contributors were dependent on available archival resources and the validity of memories recorded by living women in oral history data. Smith took the women at their word concerning the information they disclosed of themselves and supplemented with the written record of their lives. Conflicting information was exhaustively compared across written records to ensure a scholarly product. (See story of Deborah Sampson below.) Similar to Gale's position on her work, Smith trusted the experts to do their jobs

well especially experts like Malveaux, an accomplished journalist and black feminist author, who had published several articles and a book chapter on race and gender prior to writing for *NBAW*.²⁹⁶

Intergenerational Scholarship: The “Perfect Assignment”²⁹⁷

Crafting *NBAW* was an intergenerational affair similar to quilting. An intergenerational connection that illustrated this diversity was Smith’s personal and professional relationship with Adrienne Lash Jones. Jones first met Smith in the 1950s while a student at Fisk. Working in the library after graduation, Jones transitioned from being Smith’s student to being her colleague and friend. Jones recalled, “she made my first maternity dress.” One of the two people interviewed for this dissertation who can attest to her skill with needle and thread (Smith’s sister was the other), Jones agreed that quilting was the best metaphor for describing Smith’s approach to creating *NBAW*.

NBAW gave colleagues like Jones not only an opportunity to share her knowledge of African American women’s history but also to create a learning opportunity for a new generation of scholars. In 1988, Jones was a new associate professor of African American Studies at Oberlin College. When approached by Smith to help her piece a new quilt for African American women’s history, Jones immediately considered it the “perfect assignment” for her Research and Writing Black Women’s History course. Due to the intense writing, students were required to have taken a black history course prior to Jones’ course. Writing biographical entries for *NBAW* was an opportunity for her undergraduate students to learn how to conduct graduate level research and to

potentially be published. Working with Oberlin's librarians, Jones highlighted the library's African American women's history resources while crafting a dynamic learning experience for students like Jenifer Grady. In her sophomore year at Oberlin, Grady took Jones' course to further pursue her interests in Black Studies. She researched and co-authored an essay on Dorothy Height with fellow student Maalik Edwards. Grady felt deeply connected as a result and was "pleased to be identified with something [about] other women."²⁹⁸ Jones edited and critiqued the essays before forwarding them to Smith for consideration in the publication.

Contributors for *NBAW* ran the gamut from undergraduates to well known African American women scholars like Julianne Malveaux whom she matched to their area of expertise or research interest. *NBAW* also benefitted from having several key African American women historians among its contributors. Six members of the Association of Black Women Historians (ABWH) wrote for *NBAW*: Adrienne Lash Jones, Janet Sims-Wood, Darlene Clark Hine, Diane Newman Ham, Violet Harris and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn. Actively writing black women's history for other publications during the time they were writing for *NBAW*, these scholars frequently met with each other at conferences.²⁹⁹

Reception by the Review Media

As previously described, *NBAW* was not without its editorial challenges. While Smith took every precaution to ensure that information was accurate "perfection [was] is an unattainable goal."³⁰⁰ One such issue was the inclusion of Deborah Sampson (Gannett) who served as a soldier in the Revolutionary War. Sampson's ethnicity was a source of inquiry during the writing process. Smith asked the author of Sampson's

biographical essay whether she was black or white. After considerable research, Martin assured her that Sampson was, indeed, a black woman. Steve Ellis noticed the mistake and wrote to Gale “even assuming the naïveté on Ms. Smith’s part, that she could have written that Sampson ‘...could trace her ancestry back to old Pilgrim stock...’ and not be suspicious about Sampson’s ‘black’ heritage is beyond me.”³⁰¹ (Ellis also noted a misattributed photograph.) In her response, Smith thanked Ellis for “calling these problems to our attention” and invited him to write essays for the second volume of *NBAW*. In addition to typos and misprints, other critiques of the *NBAW* included the lack of cross reference between subject headings, lack of cross reference between married, maiden and professional names, omissions in the index by endeavor or occupational index (for example, Alice Childress is listed as a writer but not also listed as a playwright.) Reviewers also wondered as to the potential overlap with another series released by Gale at the same time as *NBAW--Contemporary Black Biography*.

For the most part, reviewers found *NBAW* to be a resource composed of clearly written, well-documented essays that were accessible and straightforward. The span of women’s lives as well as the prolific use of photographs, quotations from personal interviews and autobiographical writings were the most comprehensive to date. Critics applauded the inclusion of lesser known women like Louise Thompson, communist social reformer and a contemporary of Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes of the Harlem Renaissance, and Ethel Ray Vance who served as secretary to Charles S. Johnson (later President of Fisk) while he was editor of *Opportunity* magazine. Also, a positive attribute of *NBAW* was the inclusion of women for whom oral interviews with family, friends or themselves were the only available source for information. Reviewers

like librarian Craig Bunch found *NBAW* to be easy enough to be understood by the “junior high student” doing basic research “yet scholarly enough for college students and professors” interested in a summary of a woman’s life.³⁰²

Critics also identified the inclusion of specific locations of full collections (personal papers, manuscripts and speeches) by African American women as one of *NBAW*’s significant features. As part of *NBAW*’s data collection, contributors identified numerous personal and institutional archives, thus providing scholarly threads for future researchers. Smith knew firsthand the difficulty of finding information about African American women. As she experienced with *MAW* and with *CBWA*

It was hard just getting to the information. You suspect... it’s buried somewhere because the fact that it later came out means it was buried somewhere...in obscure publications and libraries or in family archives and news clippings...places like that.³⁰³

Finding women, particularly those without national reputations, took time and scholarly finesse. For women who had an established record, ninety-three had deposited (or had arranged for deposit on their behalf) their collections with libraries nationwide. For example, the papers of prominent nineteenth century physician Caroline Still Wiley Anderson could be found in the Archives and Special Collections, Medical College of Pennsylvania, Berean Institute, Temple University, Historical Society of Pennsylvania and the Oberlin College Archives. In addition to Fisk’s special collections, *NBAW* highlighted the collections housed at other HBCUs and public libraries such as Voorhees College, the Schomburg Center for Research and Culture, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Memphis State University, Carter G. Woodson Library, King Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Atlanta University Center, Tuskegee University,

and Spelman College. A significant amount of secondary sources were also used to complete the research. Smith also asked the contributors to make note of which women's records were either in the possession of an executor or solely in the woman's possession. Examples include: Flemma Kitrell, family welfare advocate and nutritionist, whose personal records were in the possession of her niece Jacqueline Tynes of New York or science fiction author Octavia Butler had sole possession of her personal papers and manuscripts at the time of *NBAW's* development. These were threads Smith deliberately left visible to encourage future research on African American women's lives.

Finding Phillis: From *Noted Negro Women* to *Notable Black American Women*

Building on the work of *NBAW's* ancestors Smith and her contributors crafted a volume that surpassed them all in terms of number of entries and scholarly detail. In the Literature Review (Chapter Two), four biographical works were identified as *NBAW* ancestors published between 1893-1964: *NNW*, *WD*, *HH* and *Profiles*. *NBAW* was different from its ancestors in three ways: 1) *NBAW* was developed with the aid of an advisory board, 2) it used expansive, inclusionary criteria, and 3) its release and distribution far exceeded previous efforts. Scruggs self-published his work while Majors and Brown's books were printed by small regional publishers. Part of the *Negro Heritage Library* reference series, Dannett's work was published by Educational Heritage Publishers which provided nationwide exposure for a title about African American women's history for the first time. The substantial financial and editorial support from Gale was an important factor in *NBAW's* success. In order to see how

NBAW fits within the lineage of black women's history it is necessary to briefly review the historiographical trends.

Many of the biographical works published through the 1970s followed the contributionist model.³⁰⁴ Highly hagiographical in nature, these biographical dictionaries and collective histories chronicled the accomplishments and activism of black women with various social movements: anti-slavery, suffrage, Civil Rights and feminist. This was necessary and important because black women were virtually unseen in the traditional renderings of these historical narratives. Not without its flaws, the contributionist model led to tomes filled with intensely hagiographical entries. The women profiled in books such as *NBAW*'s ancestors were considered noteworthy because of their ability to persevere despite the overwhelming dynamic of being black and female in America. For example, in *WD* Scruggs offered this lyrical ending to his treatment of Phillis Wheatley

The whole life of Phillis Wheatley, while rising to the highest point of sublime grandeur in her day, also constitutes one of the large number of witnesses that we place...in defense of Afro-American capabilities and success with which we challenge the civilized world to produce a parallel.³⁰⁵

African American women's complex relationship with historical perception was an important factor in the tone of these early works. *WD*, *NNW*, *HH* and *PNW* arose from a need to transform the image of African American women who for generations were known only by the names: Mammy, Jezebel or Sapphire. Created to redefine black womanhood, these works presented African American women as respectable, conscientious members of society. Some might argue the lack of critique of the women's experience but I assert that these works were exactly as they needed to be.

Although they were mainly designed to inspire black women towards a more positive self-image, they also informed mainstream culture of the important contributions to American history and culture.

With the emergence of black feminism, the 1970s also witnessed the entrance of a growing number of African American women scholars in the academic fields of history and women's studies. During this period, Smith's work focused on researching, documenting and connecting women of color culminating with the publication of *NBAW*. While many of *NBAW*'s essays continued in the contributionist tradition, others did offer more nuanced discussions of a woman's life. For example, *NBAW*'s essay on Phillis Wheatley critically examined past biographical writings and analyzed her poetry within the context of her African heritage. Within its pages, *NBAW* traversed the full expanse of this historiography, thereby transforming African American women's historical research.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

I found it more fascinating to watch them actually quilting. When they were finished, it was just a joy to see what these people had made.³⁰⁶

NOTABLE KNOWLEDGE

This study of Jessie Carney Smith's *Notable Black American Women* (1992) is significant because it illustrates knowledge production as the result of the complex nature of African American womanhood, distinctly informed by historical precursors regarding race, culture and gender. Watching her mother make quilts as a young girl, Smith's favorite part was the actual quilting when the needle passed through the layers of fabric and batting bringing them together as a beautiful and functional tapestry. Overall, one word guided Smith's professional scholarship: Utility. Debates about the format and audience for the work with Gaylord (the original publisher of *MAW*) served to strengthen her commitment to crafting a transformative biographical dictionary. Her response to rejection: try and try again. Even after Neal-Schuman failed to release *MAW* in the mid 1980s, she pursued other avenues of funding (UNCF grant) to reposition the work for a new generation. In Gale, she finally found a supportive publisher. Fueled by Smith's passion for the project and her lived experience as an African American woman librarian, *NBAW* emerged as a user friendly resource full of well researched, narrative essays. As an 'agent of knowledge,' Smith's process for crafting *NBAW* resonates with Collins' four dimensions of black feminist thought.

Collins' first dimension centers on lived experience as criterion for meaning. *NBAW*'s diverse tapestry benefitted from Smith's lived experience of having come from a family as different as the quilts they crafted. On one end of the spectrum was her father's family, sharecroppers who lived in Tarboro, North Carolina. The quilts from that side of the family were coarse, utilitarian strip quilts. At the other end of the spectrum was her mother's family who were landowners before the turn of the century and whose legacy included being descended from a free-born African American woman. The stories of her great grandmother Fannie and of her Grandad John were always present. Quilts crafted by her mother Vesona were more refined reflecting her different way of life. Where her father did his best to provide for her physical safety, her experiences with both sides of her family provided her with security of another kind:

I came from a family of educators, businessmen, and quick thinking, industrious, enterprising people who taught me to be proud, independent, and as enterprising and industrious as they were. Some of my family were sharecroppers, uneducated, and mortgaged to the owners of the farms on which they worked...They taught me love and to give to others. They taught me to be kind and to be proud and independent.³⁰⁷

As a daughter of the segregated South, Smith's life experiences mirrored those of many of the women included within her literary story quilt, *NBAW*.

NBAW included women born between 1730 and 1960. Born before the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, racism and sexism were part of their daily lives. During segregation, the culture of African American communities like Mount Zion was to teach children early how to navigate prevailing racist and sexist attitudes. Her earliest memory of the challenges of being black and a woman involves going on errands with her father, James, to scrap yards in Greensboro. Both she and her sister Helena enjoyed those

excursions but as they entered adolescence their father stopped taking them. The reason: if a white man said something inappropriate to his daughters, Carney would have surely protected them. Unfortunately, in the Jim Crow south, however, it was not uncommon for such a natural fatherly response by a black man to be met with hostility. These lessons served Smith well as she was able to empathize with women from other ethnic minorities who shared a similar experience in American society.

Another life lesson that Smith gained during her youth was the importance of using her education to uplift the community. Historian Stephanie Shaw terms this socialization socially responsible individualism and connects these early life lessons to the professional practice of these women years later. Young Jessie was inspired by her aunts, four of whom were teachers, her elementary school principal Bessie Avery and school founder Charlotte Hawkins Brown whose school was located in a small town near where she grew up. Armed with disciplined work ethic, she followed in her parents' footsteps and attended North Carolina A & T. By 1957, she had earned Master's degrees from Michigan State University and Peabody Library School where she and Carol Creswell were the only African American students enrolled at the time.

When Smith arrived in Champaign-Urbana in the early 1960s, she encountered a racial climate quite similar to what she had experienced in Nashville. Today, when describing that time, she uses a more contemporary phrase: "I kept eyes on the prize." She recalled wanting to originally do her dissertation on bibliotherapy, which was pioneered by African American woman librarian Sadie Peterson Delaney. She was encouraged, however, to follow the research interest of her advisor Robert Downs. Downs piqued her interest in resources resulting in her dissertation: "Patterns for

Growth in Library Resources in Certain Land Grant Universities.” With a successful defense of her dissertation, Smith became the first African American PhD in Library Science from the University of Illinois in 1964. These overlapping experiences of being African American and a woman gave Smith a distinct lens through which to view her scholarship. Having grown up surrounded by strong women, Smith recognized the need for biographical resources on minority women and then used her scholarship to bear witness to African American women who have persevered in the face of overt gender and racial prejudice.

Next, the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims speaks to how dialogue promotes connectedness, which is integral to the knowledge validation process of African American women scholars. For African American women, knowledge has often emerged as the result of dialogue with other members of their community. With *NBAW*, this manifested on two levels. The first level involved the dialogue initiated by Smith concerning the project. Her files include letters and other correspondence that reveal how Smith appealed to her extensive network of colleagues for nominations as well as editorial content. But, the dialogic process extended well beyond Smith and her direct contacts. Colleagues like Adrienne Lash Jones then professor at Oberlin College extended the conversation to undergraduate students like Jenifer Grady and doctoral students like Theresa Leininger whose first scholarly publications were essays in *NBAW*. The second level involves oral history interviews and letter exchanges that occurred between over fifty biographees and their authors. Smith encouraged contributors to use the women’s own words to tell their stories. Whenever possible quotes from interviews supplemented archival records and in a few cases, authors cite

a woman's oral history as the sole source of information. Engaging in dialogue such as this across the generations led to the exchange of information and served as "an example of women helping women."³⁰⁸ Dialogue between various contributors and advisory board members fostered sharing of information of mutual benefit. Through correspondence and phone conversations, she and other contributors shared ideas and suggestions. For example, her relationship with Betty S. Leonard, project coordinator of Black Women Oral History Project at Radcliffe College led to Smith recommending several women to be interviewed as part of the project. On both levels, knowledge was created and validated through the use of dialogue.³⁰⁹

The ethic of caring, the third dimension of black feminist thought, is highly valued in the process of knowledge production by African American women scholars. Barbara Ransby writes "biography is a profoundly personal genre of historical scholarship."³¹⁰ On her approach to understanding the women about whom she wrote, Smith recalled

I found myself trying to be that person for a while. Living within their time or within their body almost. Mourning with them if someone died. Rejoicing with them if they had a beautiful wedding. Rejoicing with them if they were the first to graduate from college ...I just like the feeling I get when I do that. That's why I do it.³¹¹

As editor, Smith encouraged *NBAW* contributors to be more expressive in their treatment of a woman's life beyond the birth, married, children, death model. The goal was to craft entries that made connections to various elements of the women's lives such as their relationships to the community, with their friends and family within their respective historical contexts.

Leading by example Smith demonstrated that emotion had a place in this work. Smith's sense of empathy was evidenced by her effort to compile *MAW*, a biographical reference resource. Having built relationships with many of the American Indian/Native American, Asian American, Hispanic American and African American women profiled and in learning about their lives, she marveled at how similar their experiences were as women and as minorities. Even after a fire destroyed the initial data, she was compelled to make their contributions and achievements known. By 1978, Smith had completed a manuscript containing the biographies of 700 minority women. Unfortunately, *MAW* was never published but it was that deep empathy and love for the work that served as a motivating factor in her beginning work specifically about African American women almost a decade later. Smith's work with African American women's history was a combination of expressiveness, emotion, empathy and intellect as illustrated in her efforts to eliminate stereotypical depictions in literature and to preserve, to record and to disseminate the rich history of African Americans in general and specifically African American women. Collins' fourth dimension is the ethic of personal accountability. Knowledge built upon lived experience and centered on an ethic of caring is linked to an individual's values, beliefs, character and ethics. *NBAW* was the product of Smith's memories of the strong women who inspired her growing up in the segregated South, her belief that African American women's history was significant, and her discipline. She held her contributors to the same standards which she followed herself. Such a close connection to one's beliefs implies personal accountability regarding knowledge production.

QUILTING LESSONS

In designing a quilt, quilters consider the speed of the effort, the amount of preplanning, involvement of others and the emphasis they will give to difficult pieces. The same approach can be observed in Smith's development of *NBAW*. She deliberately crafted an easy to access volume filled with useful information. The most successful ventures are those where these choices are consistent within the work and allow for change. Reference resource design that ignores these factors inevitably encounters problems. Despite Smith and Davis accounting for these factors, they could not always account for the persistent thread of disenfranchisement and negative perceptions of African American women that plagued their efforts in the 1970s. Publishing of biographical resources about African American women was based on changing variables and tended to run into predictable challenges. For example, *CBWA* and *MAW* both experienced challenges with money (publisher supported vs. grant funding), time and availability of primary resources. These situational factors had implications for the editor making more complicated the dynamic for getting published. The more people needed to obtain information and commitment to design and implement an effort, the more time is needed for completion.

NBAW's success was a mixture of being the right resource for all parties involved (audience, publisher, editor) created at the right time. While library reference publishers like Gale closely monitored the needs of librarians through market research, there was an element of serendipity as to how Gale's catalog became more diverse. As editor, Smith improved the chances for *NBAW's* success by conducting analysis and by monitoring the creative process. By conducting analysis of her previous experiences,

Smith was able to identify possible causes of problems: data collection, available resources, time required, financial support, publishers' interest, societal perceptions. Extending that analysis, she identified the relevant pieces for implementing a new pattern towards completion of her work on African American women. Related to *NBAW*'s development, this analysis focused on who should be involved (advisory board and contributors), criteria for inclusion, format and editorial flow of the entries. Finally, her main role as quiltmaker involved monitoring *NBAW*'s overall creative process. No matter how much preplanning and previous experience, Smith had to stay vigilant to the evolving process of piecing, stitching and quilting *NBAW* at each level of its development. Her interpersonal skills and knowledge were key to negotiating with everyone connected with *NBAW* from the editors at Gale to the women who were featured in the volume.

The development of *NBAW* also highlighted the contributions of African American women librarians to African American women's historical research. Her decision to write about African American women's lives was supported by her "Fisk family" and elevated the visibility of the library and the campus as a whole. Among African American women librarians, Smith's scholarship has demonstrated coalition building across disciplines. *NBAW*'s advisory board included educators, librarians, historians, black feminist theorists and writers. Together, they crafted the goals and developed the criteria that contributed to the final product. Approximately 170 of the 212 contributors were women. Since *NBAW*'s development follows the tradition of African American women's collective biographies and African American women's historical studies of the past, it is likely a significant number of these were African American women.

As quiltmaker in the process of crafting *NBAW*, Smith served as librarian, archivist and women's historian all at once. As librarian, she connected with librarians nationwide in order to provide information for her contributors. As archivist, she kept her own clippings files and worked closely with other archivists at Fisk, Moorland-Spingarn and elsewhere to unearth details about the women's lives. As historian, she thoroughly researched the lives of the women about whom she wrote. She assigned biographies to other women's historians whose expertise centered on a particular woman. For example, she had Nell Irvin Painter write the biography on Sojourner Truth. In the case of *NBAW*'s process it illustrates the critical role of African American women librarians in making African American women's historical resources accessible. This study of *NBAW* returns us to the site of historical collective educational and professional experience for African American women scholars and librarians who held leadership positions prior to desegregation in the 1970s.

FUTURE QUILTING PROJECTS

My dissertation brings Hine's third grid to life: a critical and historical analysis of an African American woman scholar by an African American woman scholar.³¹² Like Smith and Alice Walker, I am guided to research and write that which interests me most. My future quilting projects span library and information science and African American women's studies. My study of Smith's experience with *NBAW* is the first block in a story quilt that will offer a more exhaustive biographical study of her professional career as an African American woman librarian. Next, I consider a comprehensive content analysis of *NBAW*'s Ancestors (*NNW*, *WD*, *HH* and *Profiles*) in order. Their significance to the research of African American women's history must be remembered. This content

analysis will include an examination of the concepts of respectability, heteronormativity and black feminism within these works. Finally, I continue to research the lives of other African American women who paved the way for me. I am eager to reclaim their voices within the history of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science here at the University of Illinois.

ENDNOTES

¹ Jessie Carney Smith, Interview by Christa V. Hardy, Fisk University Library, March 7, 2008.

² Volume II was published in 1996 followed by volume III in 2003.

³ Nora Ezell, *My Quilts and Me: The Diary of an American Quilter* (Montgomery, Ala.: Black Belt Press, 1999), 15.

⁴ Taking my cues from Patricia Hill Collins' *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2000), I will be using the terms 'African American' and 'black' interchangeably as reflected in the literature.

⁵ Jessie Carney Smith, interview by Christa V. Hardy, Fisk University Library, October 23, 2006.

⁶ Smith and the advisory board clearly stated that the women selected did not "constitute a list of the five hundred most important African American women." See Jessie Carney Smith, *Notable Black American Women* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1992), xxxvi.

⁷ "Notable Black American Women," *Booklist*, April 15, 1992; M. F. Jones, "Review of *Notable Black American Women* by Jessie Carney Smith," *Choice: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries* 29, no. 10 (1992): 1525–26; M. Elaine Hughes, "Review of *Notable Black American Women* by Jessie Carney Smith," *RQ* 32, no. 1 (1992): 121.

⁸ Elaine M. Smith to Jessie Carney Smith, July 13, 1990, Jessie Carney Smith (JCS) private collection.

⁹ The collective number of biographical essays authored by Smith in *NBAW* I, II, & III totals over 100.

¹⁰ Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell-Scott, and Barbara Smith, eds. *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies* (Old Westbury, N.Y.: Feminist Press, 1982), 227.

¹¹ Edwin Gleaves served as Director of the Peabody Library School from 1967-1987. During the 1970s, Gleaves successfully secured numerous Title II scholarships from the U.S. Department of Education to recruit and train minority librarians. He considered this work his main contribution to Peabody.

¹² As the decade progressed, the course broadened its focus and underwent several name changes: Black Bibliography (1971-1973), Ethnic Bibliography (1973 -1978), and Minority Bibliography (1978-1981).

¹³ Jessie Carney Smith, "Introduction" in *Directory of Significant Twentieth Century American Minority Women* (Syracuse: Gaylord Professional Publications, 1977), 7.

¹⁴ By the mid-1970s, Smith had expanded the course to include other ethnic groups. Students like John Mark Tucker were forever changed by their time in Smith's class at Peabody. In an article saluting the African American women who influenced his life, Tucker wrote: "This course had a radical impact on my intellectual, professional and spiritual life, providing these missing links in my undergraduate liberal arts education." John Mark Tucker, "Six Black Women Who Influenced My Life: A Journey in Spiritual and Intellectual Formation," in *Restoring the First-Century Church in the Twenty-First Century: Essays on the Stone–Campbell Restoration Movement*, ed. Warren Lewis and Hans Rollmann (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006), 323–34.

¹⁵ *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896).

¹⁶ Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary; Hallie Quinn Brown, *Homespun Heroines and other Women of Distinction* (Xenia: Aldine Publishing Company, 1926), vii.

¹⁷ Jessie Carney Smith, *NBAW*, xxxv.

¹⁸ Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 275-90.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 169; Janell Hobson, *Venus in the Dark: Blackness and Beauty in Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2005). Hobson discusses the legacy of Sara (Saartjie) Baartman, a Khoisan woman from South Africa. Dubbed "Hottentot Venus" by European traders, she was brought from England to France and placed on public exhibit between 1810 and 1815. The "Hottentot Venus came to symbolize both the presumed ugliness and heightened sexuality of the African race during her era." In death, a plaster cast of her body, her genitalia and brain were preserved and exhibited in nineteenth century freak shows.

²⁰ Eva Ungar Grudin, *Stitching Memories African-American Story Quilts* (Williamstown, Mass.: Williams College Museum of Art, 1990), 13.

²¹ Ezell, *My Quilts and Me*, 15.

²² Stephanie J. Shaw, *What a Woman Ought to Be and to Do: Black Professional Women Workers During the Jim Crow Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

²³ Laurel A. Grotzinger, James V. Carmichael, Jr., and Mary Niles Maack, *Women's Work: Vision and Change in Librarianship: Papers in Honor of the Centennial of the University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science*. Occasional papers, nos. 196/197 (Urbana–Champaign: University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science, 1994).

²⁴ Allison Sutton, "Bridging the Gap in Early Library Education History for African Americans: The Negro Teacher-Librarian Training Program (1936–1939)," *Journal of Negro Education* 74, no. 2 (2005): 138–50. The first library school for African Americans was established at Hampton Institute in 1925. To address this need, the Carnegie Corporation, General Education Board and the Rosenwald Fund made plans in conjunction with Hampton to also lead the development of the Negro Teacher-Librarian Training Program, which trained 279 African American librarians representing sixteen southern states from 1936 to 1939. These summer sessions took place at four HBCUs: Atlanta University, Hampton Institute, Prairie View Normal & Industrial College, and Fisk University. These trained librarians quickly took their positions and set about the task of building useful high school library collections in black communities across the South. Hampton University was closed in 1939 due to lack of funding. The Carnegie Corporation had funded the lion's share of expenditures for the school since its inception. It had slowly begun tapering off support a few years before with hopes that the school would develop a way to support itself. Two years elapsed between the closure of the Hampton Library School and the opening of the Library School at Atlanta University in 1941. By the mid-1970s, Atlanta University, the only accredited library school at an historically black college, graduated over half of African American school, public and academic librarians in the country.

²⁵ Dorothy Porter Wesley is an example of the first generation of degreed African American women librarians. She earned her master's in Library Science from Columbia University in 1932. As head of the Moorland-Spingarn Collection at Howard University from 1929–1973, she grew the collection from 3,000 titles to over 200,000 titles concerning the black experience in America and in the African diaspora. An avid collector of personal papers and manuscripts of African American women, Wesley authored several bibliographies on such women as Mary Church Terrell.

²⁶ Smith served as Director for the following grant-funded projects throughout the 1980s: Images in Black Artifacts program grant, Fisk University, 1980–1981; Themes in the Black American Experience: A Learning Library Program, funded by the Public Programs Division, National Endowment for the Humanities, Fisk University, 1980–1982; The Chicago Renaissance: Themes in the Black American Experience, planning grant, Humanities Projects in Libraries and Archives, National Endowment for the Humanities, October 1, 1988–March 31, 1989; "A Zora Neale Hurston Festival," funded by the Tennessee Humanities Project, September 1–December 31, 1991.

²⁷ Kimberly Springer's work *Living for the Revolution: Black Feminist Organizations 1968–1980* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005) was among the first to examine black feminist organizations: Third World Women's Alliance, Black Women Organized for Action, the National Black Feminist Organization, the National Alliance of Black Feminists, and the Combahee River Collective. Her method of inquiry combines black feminist, sociological, and historical approaches to explore these organizations whose contributions have been previously overlooked in African American, social movement, and women's history. Shaw's *What a Woman Ought to Be and to Do: Black Professional Women Workers During the Jim Crow Era* explores

the socialization of African American women born between 1858 and 1930 and their subsequent professional contributions in highly feminized professions: teaching, nursing, social work, and librarianship. She examines the women within their generational and historical contexts.

²⁸ Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 13-14.

²⁹ Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (San Diego, Calif.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 13.

³⁰ Jessie Carney Smith, Interview with Christa V. Hardy, Fisk University Library, October 25, 2007.

³¹ Since my original inquiry, I have located two speeches and one book chapter that include autobiographical remembrances.

³² Ruth Edmonds Hill, "The Black Women Oral History Project," *Behavioral & Social Sciences Librarian* 4, no. 4 (Summer 1985): 3-14.

³³ Joy James and T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *The Black Feminist Reader* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 5.

³⁴ Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 27.

³⁵ Historically, those trained in the West African tradition as storytellers (griots) and textile makers were young men. As a result of the division of labor instituted by American slaveholders, these traditions continued at the hands of black women. See: Gladys-Marie Fry, *Stitched from the Soul: Slave Quilts from the Antebellum South* (New York: Dutton Studio Books, 1990); Cuesta Benberry, *Always There: The African-American Presence in American Quilts* (Louisville: The Kentucky Quilt Project, 1992); Roland L. Freeman, *A Communion of the Spirits: African-American Quilters, Preservers, and Their Stories* (Nashville, Tenn.: Rutledge Hill Press, 1996).

³⁶ The historical context within which I examined Smith's work borrows intellectual elements from secondary sources in African American history, library history, women's studies, and black feminist thought. Concerning the literature of African American history, higher education in the South and African American women's history, I consulted the scholarship of historians John Hope Franklin, James Anderson, Gerda Lerner, Darlene Clark Hine, and Stephanie Shaw. I have built on the work of Phyllis Dain, Donald G. Davis, Laurel Grotzinger, Mary Niles Maack, John Mark Tucker, and Wayne Wiegand to illustrate the treatment of the contributions of African American women librarians within the mainstream historiography of American librarianship. Suzanne Hildenbrand's *Reclaiming the American Library Past: Writing the Women In* (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing, 1996) and Christina Baum's *Feminist Thought in American Librarianship* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1992) provided insights into the feminist perspective in general and in the field of librarianship specifically. My understanding of black feminist thought has been drawn mainly from Collins' *Black Feminist Thought*.

³⁷ Kinohi Nishikawa. "Publishers and Publishing," in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of African American Literature*, eds. Hans Ostrom and J. David Macey, Jr. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2005), 1331–36.

³⁸ Donald Franklin Joyce, *Gatekeepers of Black Culture: Black Owned Book Publishing in the United States, 1817–1981* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983), 140.

³⁹ Nishikawa, "Publishers," 1331.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 1-2.

⁴² Donald Franklin Joyce, "J.A. Rogers Publications," *Black Book Publishers in the United States: A Historical Dictionary of the Presses, 1817–1990* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1991), 188–93. Joel A. Rogers (1883–1966) emigrated from Jamaica to the United States in 1917. His passion for black history led him to write and publish his first book that same year. *From Superman to Man* (Chicago: M. A. Donohue Co., Printers) was a "well documented treatise refuting white superiority." He wrote weekly columns for A. Philip Randolph's *Messenger* and the *Pittsburgh Courier* and frequently traveled to Africa and Europe (on tips from friends like Arthur A. Schomburg) to research black history. Books published under J.A. Rogers Publications included *As Nature Leads* (1919), *World's Greatest Men of African Descent* (1931), *World's Greatest Men and Women of African Descent* (1935), *Sex and Race* (3 vols. 1940–1944), and *World's Great Men of Color* (1946, 1947).

⁴³ Joyce, *Gatekeepers*, 139.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ James W. Ivy, "Negro Heritage Library," *The Crisis*, May 1964, 322–23.

⁴⁶ "Publisher Gives Capital Rights Probers 'Go South' Challenge," *New Pittsburgh Courier* June 8, 1963, National edition; "Rev. King's Aide to Heritage, Inc.," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, June 27, 1964, National edition. An active supporter of the Civil Rights Movement, Marder, at the request of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., served as an observer to the tensions during the civil unrest in Birmingham and gave his testimony to the Committee on Civil Rights Legislation in May 1965. Negro Heritage Library titles included *Profiles of Negro Womanhood* by Sylvia G. L. Dannett (1964, 1966), *Emerging African Nations & Their Leaders* by Lancelot Evans (1964), *A Martin Luther King Treasury* (1964), *The Winding Road To Freedom* by Alfred E. Cain (1965), *Negro Heritage Reader for Young People* edited by Alfred E. Cain (1965), *The American Negro Reference Book* edited by John P. Davis (1966), and *Negroes in Public Affairs & Government* edited by Walter Christmas (1966).

⁴⁷ Wyatt Tee Walker (1929-) served as Martin Luther King, Jr.'s chief of staff and as the first full-time executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference from 1960 to 1964. He became vice president and later president of Educational Heritage publishers of the Negro Heritage Library, a publishing venture "devoted to getting African American history into school curricula." (<http://whospeaks.library.vanderbilt.edu/search.php?record=60>).

⁴⁸ "Books," *Jet*, October 7, 1965, 20.

⁴⁹ Advertisements for Negro Heritage Library in *Baltimore Afro-American*, November 13, 1965.

⁵⁰ The Negro Heritage Library was the sole product of Educational Heritage. The publishing house dissolved in 1966. Thus, I do not consider Educational Heritage a major mainstream reference publisher on par with Gale.

⁵¹ Constance A. Fairchild & Richard E. Bopp, "Biographical Sources," in *Reference and Information Services: An introduction*, 3rd ed., ed. Richard E. Bopp and Linda C. Smith (Englewood, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, 2001), 381.

⁵² Joan M. Reitz, *ODLIS: Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science* (Santa Barbara: Libraries Unlimited, 2007). <http://lu.com/odlis> (accessed May 28, 2008).

⁵³ Biographical works for juveniles were not considered as *NBAW* ancestors. I only included books that are considered in current taxonomy (i.e., WorldCat) to be for adult readers (even though all of them make the statement of creating a work that would educate and inspire young black people especially girls). Randall K. Burkett, Nancy Hall Burkett, and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., eds., *Black Biography 1790–1950: A Cumulative Index* (Alexandria, Va.: Chadwyck–Healey, 1991), x–xi, contains one of the most succinct discussions on the different types of collective biographies devoted only to African American women. Its list included Majors, Scruggs and Brown as well as other shorter volumes published according to geography or published by sororal organizations, women's clubs, and religious institutions. Some African American women were included in larger biographical reference works such as *Who's Who of the Colored Race: A General Biographical Dictionary of Men and Women of African Descent* (1915) followed later by *Who's Who in Colored America (1927–1950)* or were the sole focus of smaller publications such as *Women of Achievement: Summary* written for the Fireside School. Geographical and organizational designations made up other collective biographies that included sketches of the women's lives: Benjamin Brawley's *Women of Achievement* (Chicago: Women's American Baptist Home Mission Society, 1919); and *Lifting as They Climb* (Washington D.C.: NACW, 1933). The challenge faced by books of this nature was the sentimentality and localized coverage. Still, these books were very useful and shared the stories of African American women who were doing important work.

⁵⁴ H. T. Kealing, "Introduction" in *Noted Negro Women: Their Triumphs and Activities* by Monroe Majors (Donohue & Henneberry Printers, Binders and Engravers, 1893), ix–x.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Josephine Turpin Washington, writer of the Introduction to L. A. Scruggs' *Women of Distinction* (Raleigh, N.C.: Author, 1893) wrote of Scruggs "Afro American womanhood may be congratulated on the entrance into the lists on her behalf of so worthy and zealous a knight as Lawson Andrew Scruggs" (Scruggs, *WD*, xx). Scruggs dedicated his work to "in part to his first wife, who had died during preparation of the manuscript and whose biography is included among its sketches. He met his first wife, Lucie Johnson (14 Oct. 1864-28 Nov. 1892), while both were students at Shaw University. They were married on 22 Feb. 1888 in New York, where she and her sister taught at a school for young girls, both black and white, and where she was correspondent for the *Richmond Planet* and other journals. They had two children, a son Leonard and a daughter Goldie. While in New York Lucie Scruggs wrote an elementary school textbook, *Grammar-Land*, and a drama, *Farmer Fox*, later performed in Raleigh. She was the organizer and first president of the Ladies' Pansy Literary Club at the Second (Blount Street) Baptist Church, Raleigh." (<http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/scruggs.html>)

⁵⁷ Contributors included Rev. A. G. Davis, E. A. Johnson, L. G. Penn, E. E. Cooper, Mrs. Christine S. Smith, Mrs. F. W. Titus, Mr. James M. Trotter, Mrs. N. F. Mosell, and Mr. W. H. Council.

⁵⁸ Randall Burkett, introduction to *Homespun Heroines and other Women of Distinction* by Hallie Quinn Brown (New York: Oxford University Press, reprint 1988). In 1893, Brown accepted a faculty appointment at Wilberforce and instigated the founding of the first national organization representing the interests of black women. The Colored Women's League of Washington, D.C. was founded in response to the stipulation that only representatives from national organizations could participate in the planning of the 1893 Colombian Exposition. This was the forerunner to the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), which got its start the same year. As the 7th president of NACW, Brown spoke before the Republican National Convention in Cleveland in 1924. Mamie E. Locke, "Hallie Brown," in *Notable Black American Women*, ed. Jessie Carney Smith (Detroit: Gale Research, 1992), 116-120.

⁵⁹ Among the contributors to *HH* were Mrs. Dovie K. Clarke, Maritcha R. Lyons, Amy Logan, Mary T. Mosell, Mrs. John Brown, Willie A. Wagner, Mary E. Lee, S. C. Evans, Charlotte E. Stephens, Sarah L. Fleming, Emma V. Gossett, Joan S. Porter, Anna H. Jones, Eva N. Wright, Ernestine W. Green, Pearl S. Smith, Frances R. Keyser, Nettie L. Ransom, Jennie B. Moton, M. M. Marshall, Deliliah L. Beasley, and Ora B. Stokes.

⁶⁰ Ibid., v.

⁶¹ Biographical information about Dannett was gleaned from WorldCat notes fields and from email correspondence from her son Ken Dannett (Ken Dannett, email message to author, March 3, 2010). Sylvia and Emanuel Dannett married in 1933 and were parents to a son, Ken, and a daughter, Wendy. They were founding members of the Beth Am Shalom Synagogue in

White Plains, New York. Dannett wrote primarily about white women's history. Her other titles included *Down Memory Lane: Arthur Murray's Picture Story of Social Dancing* (1954), *Nor Iron Bars* (1940), *A Treasury of Civil War Humor* (1963), *Defy the Tempest* (1944) as well as a film entitled "The Undercover Woman" (1946).

⁶² Sylvia G. L. Dannett, *Profiles of Negro Womanhood*, Vol. 2, (Yonkers, N.Y.: Educational Heritage, 1966), 11.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Maxine D. Jones, "Review of *Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*, by Darlene Clark Hine," *Journal of American History* (March 1996): 1663–67.

⁶⁵ Marianna Davis, *Contributions of Black Women to America*, Vol. 2 (Columbia, S.C.: Kenda Press, 1982), 335–38. Librarians profiled in *NBAW* and in *CBWA* include Charlemae Hill Rollins, Sadie Peterson Delaney, Eliza Atkins Gleason, Virginia Lacy Jones, Augusta Baker, Effie Lee Morris, Clara Stanton Jones, Annette Lewis Phinazee, and Jean Blackwell Hutson.

⁶⁶ James and Sharpley-Whiting, *Black Feminist Reader*, 5; Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 7; Beverly Guy-Sheftall, *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought* (New York: New Press, 1995), xiii.

⁶⁷ Dayo F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard, *Want to Start a Revolution? Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 1–23. For Black women's critiques of various feminism(s) see Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Watertown, Mass.: Persephone Press, 1981); Hull, Bell-Scott, and Smith, eds., *All the Women Are White*; Barbara Smith, ed., *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1983).

⁶⁸ Bettina Aptheker, *Woman's Legacy: Essays on Race, Sex, and Class in American History* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982), 2–5. Collins notes that standpoint theory remains controversial because of the potential toward essentialism and ethnocentrism. She defends her use of it as organizing theory concerning Black women's cultural experience by stating, "U.S. Black culture continually created via lived Black experience with racial segregation provided a social context for the emergence of a Black woman's standpoint." (Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 292). While the environments in which this collective standpoint has historically developed are changing, the need for such a particular theoretical construct has not. For further discussion of standpoint theory see *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*, edited by Sandra G. Harding.

⁶⁹ Alma Garcia, "The Development of Chicana Feminist Discourse 1970–1980," *Gender & Society* 3, no. 2 (1989): 219–21. Additional readings on multiethnic feminisms include Andrea

Smith, "Native American Feminism, Sovereignty and Social Change," *Feminist Studies* 3, no. 1 (2005): 116–32; Dalia Rodriguez, "Un/Masking Identity: Healing Our Wounded Souls," *Qualitative Inquiry* 12, no. 6 (2006), 1067–90; Esther Ngan-Ling Chow, "The Development of Feminist Consciousness Among Asian American Women," *Gender & Society* (1987), 284–99.

⁷⁰ Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 4-5; Gerda Lerner, *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), xviii.

⁷¹ Bonnie Thornton Dill, "Race, Class and Gender: Prospects for an All-inclusive Sisterhood." *Feminist Studies* 9 (1983): 131-50. "The cry 'Sisterhood is powerful!' has engaged only a few segments of the female population in the United States. Black, Hispanic, Native American and Asian American women of all classes, as well as many working class women, have not readily identified themselves as sisters of the white middle class women who have been in the forefront of the movement."

⁷² Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 2-19.

⁷³ Alice Walker introduced the term 'womanist' in *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983). Contrasting black feminism with mainstream feminism, her ideology of womanism includes black feminism but extended beyond African American women by asserting that all women of color have a collective experience that is definably different from women in the dominant culture. Walker's womanism captured the imaginations of many black women like theologian Renita Weems who came of age during the Black Power and post Civil Rights Movements. Expressing her appreciation to Walker, Weems wrote: "My colleagues and I in the academy have Walker to thank for proposing "womanist," a term deriving from southern black folk culture, as an alternative to "feminist" to distinguish headstrong, justice loving black women from other women advocating for women's rights". See: Renita Weems, comment on "Black Women Writers: As Purple is to Lavender," Something Within blog comment posted on June 12, 2007, <http://somethingwithin-rjweems.blogspot.com/2007/06/black-women-writers-as-purple-is-to.html> (accessed October 30, 2007).

⁷⁴ Darlene Clark Hine, "Gender, Race and Rights in African American Women's History," Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, October 2003. http://athome.harvard.edu/programs/gar/gar_video/gar_4.html (accessed June 30, 2009).

⁷⁵ Clara Stanton Jones, "The Black Librarian," in *The Black Librarian in the Southeast: Reminiscences, Activities, Challenges*, ed. Annette L. Phinazee (Durham: North Carolina Central University School of Library Science, 1980), 18.

⁷⁶ Julie Des Jardins, *Women and the Historical Enterprise in America: Gender, Race, and Politics of Memory, 1880–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 17.

⁷⁷ Jean Fagan Yellin, "Afro-American Women 1800–1910: A Selected Biography," in *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies* eds. Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell-Scott, and Barbara Smith (Westbury: Feminist Press, 1982),

221–44; Martha H. Brown, “A Listing of Non-print Materials on Black Women,” in *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women’s Studies* eds. Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell-Scott, and Barbara Smith (Westbury: Feminist Press, 1982), 307–20.

⁷⁸ Ann Allen Shockley, *Afro-American Women Writers, 1746–1933: An Anthology and Critical Guide* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1988).

⁷⁹ Guy-Sheftall, *Words of Fire*, xiii.

⁸⁰ Subrina J. Robinson “Standing in Solidarity with My Sistas: Oral Narratives of Black Women in Academia” (PhD diss., Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, 2005), 8.

⁸¹ Collins uses the terms ‘knowledge claims’ and ‘knowledge validation’, which I interpret simply as intellectual production. (Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 253-56).

⁸² Edwin Gleaves, Interview with Christa V. Hardy, Nashville, Tennessee, April 4, 2008.

⁸³ Julie Des Jardins, “Black librarians and the search for Women’s biography during the new Negro history movement,” *OAH Magazine of History* (January 2006): 15-18.

⁸⁴ Wayne Wiegand’s “American Library History Literature 1947–1997” in *Library History Research in America: Essays Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Library History Round Table*, ed. Andrew B. Wertheimer and Donald G. Davis, Jr. (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress Center for the Book, 2000), 12–13.

⁸⁵ Hildenbrand, *Reclaiming*, 3; Kathleen Weibel, Kathleen M. Heim, and Dianne J. Ellsworth, *The Role of Women in Librarianship, 1876–1976: The Entry, Advancement, and Struggle for Equalization in One Profession* (Phoenix, Ariz.: Oryx Press, 1979); Baum, *Feminist Thought in American Librarianship*, xi; Kathleen M. Heim and Katherine Phenix, *On Account of Sex: An Annotated Bibliography on Women in Librarianship, 1977–1981* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1983).

⁸⁶ Clara Stanton Jones, “The Black Librarian,” 19.

⁸⁷ Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 270.

⁸⁸ Lelia Rhodes, “Profiles of the Careers of Selected Black Female Librarians,” in *On Account of Sex: An Annotated Bibliography on the Status of Women in Librarianship 1977–1981*, ed. Kathleen Heim (Chicago: American Library Association, 1984), 191–205.

⁸⁹ Alma Dawson, “Celebrating African American Librarians and Librarianship,” *Library Trends* 49, no. 1 (2000): 49–87. The theme of this issue of *Library Trends* was “Ethnic Diversity in Library Science.” From McCook’s introduction: “this issue presents an overview of the “efforts of African-Americans, Asian/Pacific Islander-Americans, Chinese Americans, Latinos, and Native

Americans to develop services, identify important issues, foster leadership, and establish inclusive definitions of identity. Without these narratives, there would be insufficient philosophical, intellectual, or emotional bases on which to develop future programs and collections.” Kathleen de la Peña McCook, “Ethnic Diversity in Library Science,” *Library Trends* 49, no. 1 (2000): 1–5.

⁹⁰ One notable exception is Ann Allen Shockley. Smith hired Shockley in 1969 as special collections librarian and she established the black oral history program at Fisk in 1970. A prolific writer of women-centered fiction, Shockley and her writing have been the subject of three dissertations using a black feminist/womanist theoretical framework: Tomeiko Rashun Ashford, “‘Daughters of Zion’: Spiritual Power in Black Womanist Narrative” (PhD diss., The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2000); Psyche Aletheia Williams-Forsen, “‘Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs’: African American Women, Material Culture, and the Powers of Self-definition” (PhD diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 2002); Trimiko C. Melancon, “Disrupting Dissemblance: Transgressive Black Women as Politics of Counter-representation in African American Women’s Fiction” (PhD diss., University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2005). Her nonfiction works include *Living Black American Authors: A Biographical Directory* (editor, with Sue P. Chandler, New York: R. R. Bowker, 1973), *Handbook of Black Librarianship* (editor, with E. J. Josey, 1977). Rita Dandridge compiled an annotated primary and secondary bibliography of Shockley’s work (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1987), which includes excerpts of published reviews of Shockley’s individual works.

⁹¹ Wiegand, “American Library History Literature,” 12.

⁹² Donald G. Davis and John Mark Tucker, “Before the Waters Parted: Minority Leadership in Academic and Research Libraries,” in *Academic Libraries: Achieving Excellence in Higher Education*, ed. T. G. Kirk (Chicago: American Library Association, 1992), 51.

⁹³ These sources (with the exception of *Negro Almanac*) did not identify ethnicity; thus, Rhodes relied on her knowledge of names of black sororities and black institutions of higher education.

⁹⁴ Rhodes, “Career,” 213–24.

⁹⁵ Shaw, *Ought to Be*, 75; Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swidler and Steven Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Middle America Observed*, (London: Hutchinson, 1975).

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Jones, “The Black Librarian,” 19.

⁹⁸ Marilyn Nelson, “Seven Library Women Whose Human Presence Enlightened Society in the Harlem Renaissance Iconoclastic Ethos” (PhD diss., Graduate School of State University of New York at Buffalo, 1996), 10. The key distinction between my work and that of Nelson is that I

examine in-depth the process and product of an individual African American woman librarian through the lens of black feminist thought.

⁹⁹ Flannery Davis, "Recording the Past, Creating the Future: Dr. Jessie Carney Smith," *Nashville Woman* (February 2000): 14-15.

¹⁰⁰ Jessie Carney Smith, Interview with Christa V. Hardy, Fisk University Library, April 13, 2007.

¹⁰¹ Barbara Omolade, *The Rising Song of African American Women* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 84.

¹⁰² Helena Carney Lambeth, telephone interview with Christa V. Hardy, March 24, 2008.

¹⁰³ W. H. Gamble and Class in Rural Sociology, *The Socio-economic Status of Negro Families Living in Mount Zion Community, Guilford County* (Greensboro, N.C.: Agricultural and Technical College of North Carolina, 1940).

¹⁰⁴ Jessie Carney Smith, "Daughters Salute Noble Mothers," *Tennessee Tribune*, May 1992, 3: Winzer Carney died January 9, 1958. Death Certificate for Winzer Carney, January 9, 1958, North Carolina State Board of Health <http://www.ancestry.com>.

¹⁰⁵ Caswell County Historical Association.

¹⁰⁶ Jessie Carney Smith, "John Harvey Bigelow," in *Grand Fathers: Reminiscences, Poems, Recipes, and Photos of the Keepers of Our Traditions*, ed. Nikki Giovanni, 14–16.

¹⁰⁷ "Index to the 1880, 1900, and 1910 United States Federal Census," Ancestry.com (Online: The Generations Network, Inc., 2009), <http://www.ancestry.com> [Digital copy of original records in the National Archives, Washington, D.C.], subscription database, accessed January 2010. Records show Egbert Lea to have been born August 1833. The exact date of Maria(h) Lee's birth is unknown. She died February 19, 1928.

¹⁰⁸ Edward Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1957), 45.

¹⁰⁹ Nikki Giovanni, *Grand Fathers: Reminiscences, Poems, Recipes, and Photos of the Keepers of Our Traditions* (New York: Henry Holt, 1999), 17

¹¹⁰ The Bigelow Women: Imogene McKeever. January 22, 1902--September 9, 1996; Vesona Erill. December 11, 1903--November 29, 2006; Therone Estimo. 1906--May 22, 1966; Oves L. October 16, 1909--October 1, 2009; Cozy Uzette. December 16, 1912—August 13, 2007; Euphrey Tankersley. 1914--April 22, 1985. Giovanni, *Grand Fathers*, 19; Jessie Carney Smith family records.

¹¹¹ Claudette Burroughs-White, "Laughlin Memorial United Methodist 100th Anniversary Church History 1908-2008," Guilford File, Greensboro Public Library; Giovanni, *Grand Fathers*, 19.

¹¹² Giovanni, *Grand Fathers*, 13-17.

¹¹³ Leonard Wilson, ed. *Makers of America: Biographies of Leading Men of Thought and Action, the Men Who Constitute the Bone and Sinew of American Prosperity and Life* (Washington D.C.: B. F. Johnson, Incorporated, 1915), 261. Buying power of \$1,725.00 in 2008: \$38,687.26 had the same "purchasing power" as \$1,725 in the year 1913. (calculated at <http://www.measuringworth.com/>)

¹¹⁴ John H. Bigelow & George Richmond Guilford County Deed December 20, 1913, Book 256 Page 229.

¹¹⁵ Giovanni, *Grand Fathers*, 19.

¹¹⁶ J.A. Carney and Vesona E. Carney Guilford County Deed June 2, 1932, Book 694 Page 21; Giovanni, *Grand Fathers*, 23.

¹¹⁷ Jessie Carney Smith, interview with Christa V. Hardy, Fisk University Library, October 25, 2007.

¹¹⁸ James Ampler Carney passed away on November 16, 1949.

¹¹⁹ Smith, "Daughters Salute Noble Mothers," 3.

¹²⁰ Lambeth, Interview, March 28, 2008.

¹²¹ Shaw, *What a Woman Ought to Be*, 13.

¹²² Smith, Interview, October 27, 2007.

¹²³ Lambeth, Interview, March 28, 2008.

¹²⁴ Shaw, *What a Woman Ought to Be*, 24.

¹²⁵ Lambeth, Interview, March 28, 2008.

¹²⁶ Giovanni, *Grand Fathers*, 17.

¹²⁷ Rosenwald Fund Card File Database, Fisk University Special Collections; Patricia Staino, "Where Were the Rosenwald Schools?" *Carolina Country* (July 2003): 14–16.

¹²⁸ Opal Winchester Hawkins, *From Brush Arbor to Bricks and Mortar: An oral history of the Mount Zion Community of Greensboro, North Carolina* (Greensboro: Mount Zion Project Committee, 1984), 116-120.

¹²⁹ Lambeth, Interview, March 24, 2008.

¹³⁰ Hawkins, *From Brush Arbor*, 20.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Lambeth Interview, March 24, 2008.

¹³³ "Homecoming Celebration," *The Register of A&T College*, November 1949, 9. This article included a picture of Smith with Brooklyn Dodgers Jackie Robinson, Don Newcombe, and Roy Campanella, 1949 Champs National League and the Cleveland Indians' Larry Doby, 1948 American League World Champs.

¹³⁴ Lelia Rhodes, "A Critical Analysis of the Career Backgrounds of Selected Black Female Librarians" (PhD diss., Florida State University, 1975), 136.

¹³⁵ Smith, Interview, October 23, 2006.

¹³⁶ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The College Bred Negro* (Atlanta, Ga.: Atlanta University Press, 1900).

¹³⁷ Joe M. Richardson, *A History of Fisk University, 1865–1946* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1980), 10–15.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 26-39.

¹³⁹ O. R. Shiflett, *Louis Shores: Defining Educational Librarianship* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1996).

¹⁴⁰ When Louis Shores left Fisk in 1931, he left to pursue the doctorate in Library Science at the University of Chicago. He returned to Fisk without completing the program but left again to help develop the Library School program at the Peabody College for Teachers across town in Nashville. He earned his doctorate in Education from Peabody in 1934 and his dissertation on the origins of the American college library was considered to be a "cornerstone in the historiography of American library history." Shores is best known for his tenure as Dean of the Library School at Florida State University from 1941 to 1967. (Richardson, *History of Fisk*, 118).

¹⁴¹ Rhodes, "Black Female Librarians," 136.

¹⁴² Jessie Carney Smith, Interview with Christa V. Hardy, October 23, 2006.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid; Jessie Carney Smith, “Four Cultures” in *The Black Librarian in America* ed. E. J. Josey, (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1970), 192.

¹⁴⁵ Founded in 1785, Peabody has been through seven name changes: Davidson Academy (1785–1806), Cumberland College (1806–1826), University of Nashville (1827–1875), State Normal College (1875–1889), Peabody Normal College (1889–1911), George Peabody College for Teachers (1911–1979), and Peabody College of Vanderbilt University (1979–present).

¹⁴⁶ Sherman Dorn, “George Peabody College For Teachers, Race Relations, and Education” (Paper prepared for the Annual Meeting of the History of Education Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, October 24, 1997).

¹⁴⁷ The earliest documented discussion concerning admitting African American students to Peabody appeared in August 13, 1951 when a “confidential poll” was sent by Peabody President Henry H. Hill to senior faculty members. Sixty-three assistant, associate, and full professors were invited to participate anonymously and to make comments as to their personal beliefs and attitudes toward possible policy implementation. The conversation reappeared in October 1953 with a proposal to admit 14 African American principals to Peabody’s post-M.A. Summer Program in 1954.

¹⁴⁸ J. M. Tucker to Dr. Henry H. Hill, November 18, 1958, Peabody Administrative Files, F1-N 2110, Negroes Admitted to Peabody Summer 1954, Vanderbilt University Archives. “Southern States Cooperative Program in Education Administration Proposals of Consideration in Reaching a Decision on Whether or Not to Extend Opportunities for Admission of Negroes to the Graduate School of George Peabody College for Teachers” October 10, 1953; undated document from the Files of the Southern Education Foundation; Memorandum, “Advanced Professional Study for Selected Negro Principals February 6, 1954; Curtis Dixon to Dr. Henry Hill December 5, 1953 (reference to first Negro LIS student); “Peabody to Admit 14 Negroes for Graduate Study,” *The Reflector* (alumni magazine), May 1954.

¹⁴⁹ Memorandum, Gene C. Fusco Department of Education to Dr. J. Curtis Dixon July 17, 1959, (Peabody Administrative Files F1-N 2110). Between 1954 and 1959, 46 African American school administrators participated in the summer program with many of the original 14 returning each year. There were less than 20 black students on campus during the entire summer session, which had a total enrollment that had reached 2,861 by 1958. Students admitted to the Summer Program 1954: Malvin E Moore, Jr., A & M & N College, Pine Bluff, Ark. (first AA to earn the Ed.D in 1959 from Peabody); Robert E. Howard, Wilkinson High School, Owensboro, S.C.; Kathlene M. Carroll, Lincoln Institute, Lincoln Ridge, Ky.; Dorothy M. Ingram, Carver Elementary School, Port Arthur, Tex.; George W. Brooks, Burt High School, Clarksville, Tenn.; Lawrence E. McKellar, Carver Junior High School, Tulsa, Okla.; Wilbur Leon Hayes, Webster High School, Minden, La.; General James Gholson, Prince George’s County High School,

Fairmont Heights, Md.; Edward E. Pitts, Calvin Donaldson Junior High School, Chattanooga, Tenn.; Kenneth E. Whitlock, Mary M. Scott Elementary School, Richmond, Va.; Furney G. Shipman, Southside High School, Rowland, N.C.; Holland Walthall, Akron Junior High School, Akron Ala.; Albert J. Martin, Herring Street High School, Decatur, Ga.; Lee E. Williams, Laboratory School-Jackson College, Jackson, Miss.

¹⁵⁰ President Henry Hill to Dr. J. Curtis Dixon, December 5, 1953, Peabody Administrative Files F1-N 2110, Vanderbilt University Archives. Hill's approach to desegregation was distinctly incremental and black students were not admitted into the Peabody's undergraduate program until almost a decade later in 1963.

¹⁵¹ Carol Creswell was the daughter of Isaiah and Pearl Creswell. Her father was the comptroller at Fisk University. Her mother was a 1932 Fisk graduate and served as the first curator of Fisk's Van Vechten Art Gallery, which was founded in 1949. Creswell attended Palmer Memorial Institute and graduated from Fisk University with a bachelor's degree in psychology in 1955. After completing the MLS at Peabody she worked in an exchange program for teachers in Germany. She returned to Nashville, earned a doctorate in psychology, and married jazz drummer John Thomas Betsch, Jr.

¹⁵² "A devoted student" to Henry H. Hill February 12, 1955, Peabody Administrative Files Fi-N 2110, Vanderbilt University Archives.

¹⁵³ Smith, Interview, March 7, 2008.

¹⁵⁴ Rhodes, "Careers," 136.

¹⁵⁵ Sonya P. Ramsey, "'We Will Be Ready Whenever They Are': African American Teachers' Responses to the Brown Decision and Public School Integration in Nashville, Tennessee, 1954–1966," *Journal of African American History* 90, no. 1 (2005): 30.

¹⁵⁶ "In spite of this self-affirming socialization, the debilitating aspects of the Jim Crow system cannot be ignored. The average annual income of black families never came close to that of white families between 1870 and 1950. Between the 1870s and the 1890s, African Americans were effectively disenfranchised by force throughout the South, where more than 90 percent of them still lived." (Shaw, *Ought to Be*, 2).

¹⁵⁷ According to Hill, African American families have survived because of several central attributes: "strong kinship bonds, strong achievement orientation, adaptability of family roles, strong religious orientation, and strong work orientation." Robert Hill, *The Strengths of Black Families* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2003), 170.

¹⁵⁸ Shaw, *Ought to Be*, 2.

¹⁵⁹ Smith, Interview, October 25, 2007.

¹⁶⁰ “In a study of Black women graduates of this period, educator Jeanne Noble found that of the 412 graduates in her sample ... 73 percent had studied beyond their bachelor’s degree and 48 percent had received their master’s degree.” When “in all colleges [black or white], the percentage of women graduates was 33.4 percent.” Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: W.W. Morrow, 1984), 244–45.

¹⁶¹ Shaw, *Ought to Be*.

¹⁶² Segregated policies were in place until 1968 when the University of Illinois administration initiated Project 500 to recruit and retain African American undergraduates. Joy Ann Williamson. *Black Power on Campus: The University of Illinois, 1965–75: An Intellectual and Cultural History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

¹⁶³ Smith, Interview, October 23, 2006.

¹⁶⁴ Smith, Interview, March 7, 2008.

¹⁶⁵ Smith, Interview, April 13, 2007.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 289.

¹⁶⁸ Nikki Giovanni, “Hands: For Mother’s Day” in *Those Who Ride the Night Winds* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1983), 17.

¹⁶⁹ Floris Barnett Cash, “Kinship and Quilting: An Examination of an African-American Tradition,” *Journal of Negro History* 80, no. 1 (1995): 32.

¹⁷⁰ Yolanda Hood, “African American Quilt Culture: An Afrocentric Feminist Analysis of African American Art Quilts in the Midwest” (PhD diss., Columbia: University of Missouri-Columbia, 2000), 30. In her article “Kinship and Quilting: An Examination of an African American Tradition” Floris Barnett Cash emphasizes how relevant quilting is to the social and intellectual history of African American women: “It permits us to focus on the lives and creativity of working class women, as persons with minds and voices. It explores the history of leisure for middle class women, and especially working class women whom we know very little about” (Cash, “Kinship and Quilting,” 36).

¹⁷¹ Sam Whitsitt, “In Spite of It All: A Reading of Alice Walker’s ‘Everyday Use,’” *African American Review* 34, no. 3 (2000): 443–59.

¹⁷² bell hooks, *Bone Black: Memories of Girlhood* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1996), 1

¹⁷³ Smith, Interview, October 25, 2007.

¹⁷⁴ The image of “Sepia Song” appears in this dissertation courtesy of Theobald Wilson. Wilson’s wife was a member of the Gotham Quilters Guild.

¹⁷⁵ Womanism was emerging at the time Grudin published this work. It is possible that in the art community it was a more readily embraced ideology than black feminism. (Grudin, *Stitching Memories*, 90).

¹⁷⁶ Shaw, *Ought to Be*, 8-9.

¹⁷⁷ Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 1.

¹⁷⁸ Adapted from Sandra Harding, ed., *Feminism and Methodology. Social Science Issues* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press and Open University Press, 1987), 9.

¹⁷⁹ As noted earlier, Smith, as many of the women of her generation, did not self-identify as black feminist, but, as Joy James and T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting write, she embodies “black feminist sensibilities.” See “Editors’ Introduction” in the *Black Feminist Reader*. My use of black feminist thought as a theoretical framework is in keeping with Collins’ thoughts regarding missing “the complexity of how black feminist practice actually operates.” (Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 31).

¹⁸⁰ Sherna Gluck and Daphne Patai, eds., *Women’s Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 2; Gerda Lerner, *Why History Matters: Life and Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 199–211.

¹⁸¹ Sherna Gluck “What’s so Special About Women? Women’s Oral History,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women’s Studies* 2, no. 2 (1977): 3–17.

¹⁸² Hill, “The Black Women Oral History Project.” 6.

¹⁸³ Kathleen de la Peña McCook, ed. *Women of Color in Librarianship: An Oral History* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1999).

¹⁸⁴ Hill, “Black Women Oral History,” 3-14.

¹⁸⁵ The Library of Congress acquired this collection as of November 2007.

¹⁸⁶ April Few, Dionne Stephens and Marlo Rouse-Arnett, “Sister-to-Sister Talk: Transcending Boundaries and Challenges in Qualitative Research with Black Women,” *Family Relations* 52, no. 3 (2003): 207.

¹⁸⁷ Categories from Black Women Oral History Project: “1. Family background--parents, their education, occupations, etc., also grandparents and their forebears if the interviewee knew or recalled them; date and place of birth; how many brothers and sisters and their exact birth order; interviewee’s relationship with siblings. 2. Childhood--geographical location and whether urban or rural; some indication of socioeconomic level of family; significant events and influential persons in childhood. 3. Education--elementary, secondary, college, professional, where and when, including types of schools e.g. public or private, co-ed or single sex; parents view towards education of a daughter. 4. Significant influences of life, including reasons or circumstances determining the choice of primary career or activity. 5. How being black and female affected option available and choice made. 8 Place of religion or church in interviewee’s life. 13. Personal circumstances--...if married, marriage(s), divorce(s),...children,..”

¹⁸⁸ Interviews with Smith took place over a two-year period: October 23, 2006, April 13, 2007, October 25, 2007, March 7, 2008, and July 31, 2008.

¹⁸⁹ Susan E. Chase “Taking Narrative Seriously: Consequences for Method and Theory in Interview Studies,” in *Interpreting Experience: The Narrative Study of Lives*, ed. Ruthellen Josselson and Amia Lieblich (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1995), 1–26.

¹⁹⁰ Jane Attanucci, “Narratives of Women’s Professions: Collaborative Tellings Across Differences of Generation, Race, Culture and Religion,” review of *My Soul Is My Own: Oral Narratives of African American Women* by Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis, *Qualitative Sociology* 18, no. 1 (1995): 98; Catherine Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Analysis* (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1993), 5.

¹⁹¹ Alessandro Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Madison, Wis.: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 6.

¹⁹² Darlene Clark Hine, “Rape and the Inner Lives of Southern Black Women: Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance” in *Southern Women: Histories and Identities*, ed. Virginia Bernhard, Betty Brandon, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, and Theda Perdue (Columbia: University of Missouri Press 1992), 177–89. Ever mindful of how Smith shared her story, I encountered what historian Darlene Clark Hine terms the “culture of dissemblance” when conducting oral history interviews. Hine defines this dissemblance as “the behavior and attitudes of black women that created the appearance of openness and disclosure but actually shielded the truth of their inner lives and selves ...” For Smith, dissemblance took a slightly different manifestation. While she talks very easily about her work, Smith does not talk in depth about herself. Requests for descriptions of herself or her role in a specific endeavor often yielded brief, straightforward responses.

¹⁹³ Jessie Carney Smith, Interview with Christa V. Hardy, March 7, 2008.

¹⁹⁴ Edwin Gleaves, Interview with Christa V. Hardy, April 4, 2008.

¹⁹⁵ Catherine K. Riessman, "Analysis of Personal Narratives," in *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method*, ed. Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2002), 695–710.

¹⁹⁶ Susan E. Chase "Narrative Inquiry: Multiple lenses, Approaches, Voices" in *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2008), 57–94; Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 3rd ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

¹⁹⁷ Rhodes, "Career", 136.

¹⁹⁸ Jessie Carney Smith, "Four Cultures: Twenty Years Later," in *The Black Librarian in America Revisited*, ed. E. J. Josey (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1994), 150.

¹⁹⁹ Jessie Carney Smith, Interview with Christa V. Hardy, March 7, 2008.

²⁰⁰ JoAnne Banks-Wallace, "Talk that talk: Storytelling and Analysis Rooted in the African American Oral Tradition," *Qualitative Health Research* 12, no. 3 (2002): 410-426. ---. "Beyond Survival: Storytelling as an Emancipatory Tool among Women of African Descent," *The Womanist* 1, no. 1(1994): 5-8.

²⁰¹ Rhonda Y. Williams, "I'm a Keeper of Information': History-Telling and Voice," *The Oral History Review* 28, no. 1 (2001): 41–63. Williams purposely capitalizes the 'V' to distinguish it from the voice in the text because the performative Voice embraces the "unspoken acts" present during a dialogue. I also find her use of oral history in *The Politics of Public Housing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) as a compelling model for my work.

²⁰² Jessie Carney Smith, "Four Cultures," in *The Black Librarian in America*, ed. E. J. Josey (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1970), 200.

²⁰³ Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 258.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 98-102.

²⁰⁵ Sonbufu Some, *The Spirit of Intimacy: Ancient African Teachings in the Ways of Relationships* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), 22.

²⁰⁶ Shaw, *Ought to Be*, 206.

²⁰⁷ As a project, *MAW* underwent several name changes over the years. It is referred to in archival documents as *Significant Minority Women of the 20th Century*; *Directory of Significant 20th Century Minority Women in the USA*; *Ethnic Women in America: A Biographical Directory*; *Directory of Significant 20th Century Minority Women in America* and *Minority American Women: A Biographical Directory*.

²⁰⁸ Smith, *MAW*, 7.

²⁰⁹ James, *Black Feminist Reader*, 5.

²¹⁰ *Black Plots and Black Characters: A Handbook of Afro-American Literature* was the only other African American title in Gaylord's catalogue at the time.

²¹¹ Other early innovations included the first "folded and sealed" book pockets (1912) and the "Model C" Electric Book Charging Machine (1930). *And it all began ...* (Syracuse: Gaylord Brothers, Incorporated, 1950). John Berry, "The Past Defines the Present at Gaylord," *Library Journal*, 116, no. 7 (April 15, 1991): 65–67.

²¹² Between 1973 and 1979, Gaylord published twenty-nine titles on topics ranging from school library media center design to illustrations of plants and mammals. To facilitate *MAW*'s progress, Virginia H. Mathews and Jewel H. Harris served as managing editors for the project. Smith's on-site project staff at Fisk included project assistant Sarah H. Maye, printer Jodie S. Carney, writers Vallie P. Pursley and Dorothy G. Lake, and correspondence secretary Charlene Matlock.

²¹³ *Directory of Significant 20th Century Minority Women in the U.S.A* publicity notice. Private collection of Jessie Carney Smith.

²¹⁴ Memorandum, Michael Zavelle to Members of Fisk Community. Re: Fire Relief Fund. January 3, 1977. Two elderly family members were trapped inside the burning home but were rescued by firemen. They were transported to George W. Hubbard Hospital for smoke inhalation but both passed away due to complications on January 1 & 2, 1977, respectively.

²¹⁵ Jessie Carney Smith, Interview with Christa V. Hardy, April 13, 2007. Smith along with the Fisk University community actively assisted Maye and her family, emotionally and financially, during that time. Donations were given in response to the tragedy.

²¹⁶ Similar articles appeared in the *Nashville Tennessean*, *Nashville Banner*, *Harvard Crimson*, *American Libraries*, *College & Research Libraries* as well as in numerous newsletters and publications of various federal agencies and organizations.

²¹⁷ Merrill Sterns to Jessie Carney Smith May 25, 1977, JCS private collection; Robert Calvert, Sr. to Jessie Carney Smith, December 5, 1977, JCS private collection; Jessie Carney Smith to Roy G. Lillard, September 10, 1979, JCS private collection.

²¹⁸ Jessie Carney Smith to Women's Educational Equity Communications Network, Sept. 30, 1980; Letter from JCS to Colleague January 12, 1981; General Release from Contract dated October 22, 1979.

²¹⁹ Smith, "Introduction" in *MAW*, 10.

²²⁰ Davis, Preface in *CBWA* vol. 2, ix. Davis was the first African American woman to serve on the South Carolina State Commission on Higher Education and a charter member of the Black Women's Agenda, a national group.

²²¹ Projects with a similar theme: National Council of Negro Women Archival project; Heritage Series published by Alpha Kappa Alpha; Black Women: Past, Present, Future a videotape produced by Delta Sigma Theta.

²²² Jessie Carney Smith, Interview with Christa V. Hardy, October 25, 2007.

²²³ Irwin N. Gertzog, "Women's Educational Equity Act," *Dictionary of American History* (Detroit: Gale Group, 2003), <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3401804583.html>. The official project was entitled "Contributions of Black Women to America: 1776–1977." Marianna Davis to Jessie Carney Smith, January 8, 1982, JCS private collection.

²²⁴ Jessie Carney Smith to Patricia Schuman, March 12, 1980, JCS private collection; Jessie Carney Smith to June Marable, May 20, 1980, JCS private collection. Publisher information for books published in this manner reads: Gaylord Professional Publications, in association with Neal-Schuman Publishers.

²²⁵ Jack Neal to Jessie Carney Smith, December 3, 1981, JCS private collection.

²²⁶ Jessie Carney Smith to Jack Neal, December 21, 1981, JCS private collection.

²²⁷ Jessie Carney Smith to Patricia Schuman, October 4, 1982, JCS private collection.

²²⁸ Patricia Schuman to Jessie Carney Smith, September 27, 1982. JCS private collection.

²²⁹ Smith, *MAW*, 12.

²³⁰ Ibid. Schuman to Smith, September 27, 1982.

²³¹ Jessie Carney Smith to Patricia Schuman, July 30, 1982, JCS private collection.

²³² Gaylord Professional Publications publicity piece, JCS private collection.

²³³ Ibid. Schuman to Smith, September 27, 1982.

²³⁴ Jessie Carney Smith to Patricia Schuman October 4, 1982. JCS private collection; Patricia Schuman to Jessie Carney Smith, January 3, 1983, JCS private collection.

²³⁵ Jessie Carney Smith to Jack Neal, December 21, 1981. Jessie Carney Smith to Patricia Schuman July 30, 1982, JCS private collection; Pat Schuman to Jessie Carney Smith, January 3, 1983, JCS private collection.

²³⁶ Jessie Carney Smith to Cynthia Morrison, January 24, 1984, JCS private collection.

²³⁷ Jessie Carney Smith, "UNCF Research Proposal" Undated. JCS private collection.

²³⁸ Ibid. Smith, 7.

²³⁹ Jessie Carney Smith, "Images of Blacks in American Culture: A Project supported by the UNCF Distinguished Scholars Program Project Report" September 1, 1986-June 10, 1987.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Lecture Series was funded by the Tennessee Committee for the Humanities (later the Tennessee Humanities Council) in conjunction with Fisk University.

²⁴² Smith. *IBAC*, xv. Smith acknowledged the response to the growing popularity in the topic of black Americana included the publications P. J. Gibbs, *Black Collectibles Sold in America* (Paducah, KY: Collector Books, 1987); Dawn Reno's *Collecting Black Americana* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1986).

²⁴³ Ibid, *IBAC*.

²⁴⁴ Contributors to *IBAC* and their positions when working with Smith on this reference book: Lois Fields Anderson, Librarian; T. J. Anderson, Composer; Jessie M. Birtha, Children's literature consultant, McGraw-Hill Publishers; Joseph Boskin, Professor and Director of Urban Studies and Public Policy, Boston University; Arlene Clift-Pellow, Professor and Director of the Division of Humanities and Fine Arts, Fisk University; David C. Driskell, Professor, Art History, University of Maryland; Thomas Riis, Associate Professor, Music History, University of Georgia; Janet Sims-Wood, Assistant Chief Librarian, Moorland-Spangarn Research Center; Nagueyalti Warren, Professor and Chairperson, Department of English, Fisk University; Doris Y. Wilkinson, Professor, Sociology, University of Kentucky.

²⁴⁵ Walter J. Komorowski, "Review *Images of Blacks in American Culture: A Reference Guide to Information Sources*," RQ 28, no. 3 (1989): 417–19; Leonard A. Slade, Jr. "Reviewed work(s): *Images of Blacks in American Culture: A Reference Guide to Information Sources* edited by Jessie Carney Smith and Nikki Giovanni," *Journal of Southern History* 56, no. 4 (1990): 789–90.

²⁴⁶ Smith, *IBAC*, xv.

²⁴⁷ Nikki Giovanni in *IBAC Forward* quotes Waring Cuney's poem "No images" "dishwater gives back no images." *American Negro Poetry*, ed. Arna Bontemps, rev. ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), 98–99.

²⁴⁸ Marianna Davis to Jessie Carney Smith, January 8, 1982, JCS private collection; The number of African Americans age 18–24 attending college reached 417,000 by 1970. With an infusion of federal funding to sustain new politically driven initiatives, approximately three-fourths of these students were attending predominantly white institutions (PWIs). Manning Marable, *Living Black History: How Reimagining the African-American Past Can Remake America's Racial Future* (Cambridge: Basic Civitas Books, 2006), 190–91. Between 1968 and 1971, this shift in black student enrollment from HBCUs to PWIs coupled with the creation of over 500 Black Studies departments, programs and institutes nationwide increased the need for supportive library collections and librarians who were knowledgeable of African American resources. Noliwe M. Rooks, "The Beginnings of Black Studies," *The Chronicle Review*, February 10, 2006; Fabio Rojas, "Social Movement Tactics, Organizational Change and the Spread of African-American Studies," *Social Forces* 84 (June 2006): 2147–66. For the first time, mainstream publishers turned en masse to librarians at HBCUs for assistance. Fisk, like many HBCU libraries, held impressive African American literature, art, and archival research collections. These collections served as the basis for the reprint catalogs of many mainstream publishers at that time.

²⁴⁹ Funding for the Black Women Oral History Project came from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Blanchard Foundation of Boston and the National Institute of Aging.

²⁵⁰ Dorothy B. Porter, "Bibliography and Research in Afro-American Scholarship," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 2 (1976): 77–81.

²⁵¹ By 1988, Smith had also published: *Black Academic Libraries and Research Collections: An Historical Survey* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977) and *Ethnic Genealogy: A Research Guide*. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983).

²⁵² Ezell, *My Quilts and Me*, 82.

²⁵³ Jessica Pasley, "Black women who make a difference," *Nashville Banner*, February 13, 1992.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Davis "Tome documents."

²⁵⁵ Deborah Gray White, *Telling Histories: Black Women Historians in the Ivory Tower* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008). African American women scholars in various disciplines discuss the intersecting challenges they encounter regarding their choice to study black women's history.

²⁵⁶ Ezell, *My Quilts and Me*, 14.

²⁵⁷ Susan E. Searing. "Biographical Reference Works for and about Women, from the Advent of Women's Liberation Movement to the Present: An Exploratory Analysis," *Library Trends* 56 no. 2 (2001): 469–94. It is interesting that Gale would be the first mainstream publisher to help transform the image of African American women. Located in the heart of Detroit, members of Gale's staff had no doubt witnessed the rise of the city's chapter of the National Black Feminist Organization. In the 1970s, the Detroit chapter (along with chapters in Washington, D.C. and Chicago) publicly decried the representation of black women on television. For more see Kimberly Springer, "Good Times for Florida and Black Feminism," *Cercles* 8 (2003): 122–35.

²⁵⁸ Smith, *School Library Journal*, 25-29.

²⁵⁹ Christine Nasso, telephone interview with Christa V. Hardy, October 10, 2008.

²⁶⁰ Dedria Bryfonski in Elizabeth Geiser, ed., *The Business of Book Publishing: Papers by Practitioners* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1985).

²⁶¹ Marydee Ojala, "Behind the Scenes at Gale Research," *Database*, 21 no. 1 (1998): 50–54.

²⁶² Frank Lincoln Mather, ed., *Who's Who of the Colored Race: A General Biographical Dictionary of Men and Women of African Descent*, Vol. 1 (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1976, c1915). Following the example of its founder, members of Gale's New Product Development team also frequently met with the leadership and librarians of the Detroit Public Library. Gale purchased its first major reference title focused on African Americans and published the *Negro Almanac* 5th edition in 1989. It was after one of these meetings in the late 1980s that prompted Gale to purchase the *Negro Almanac*. Listening to Detroit's librarians also led to the creation of *Contemporary Black Biography (CBB)*. Published in 1991, *CBB* filled the gap in biographical information about a more diverse group of current and controversial people that were not covered in Gale's *Newsmakers series*.

²⁶³ Kimberly McLarin, "A Librarian who Saved Her Lives," *Philadelphia Inquirer* April 19, 1992. Howard Dodson, then Chief of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

²⁶⁴ Janet Sims-Wood, "The Black Female: Mammy, Jemima, Sapphire and Other Images," and Nagueyalti Warren, "From Uncle Tom to Cliff Huxtable; Aunt Jemima to Aunt Nell: Images of Blacks in Film and the Television Industry," in *IBAC*.

²⁶⁵ Smith, Interview, July 31, 2008.

²⁶⁶ Additionally, correspondence between Davis and the project's personnel indicated she experienced a strained relationship with Benedict's leadership. (Memorandum to My Professional Colleagues and Associates, Re: My Dispute with Benedict College & Henry

Ponder, President, November 1983, JCS private collection) Aware of her struggle to publish *CBWA* "Benedict College" she wrote "refused to undertake the publication" (In a letter to Project Participants dated January 5, 1984).

²⁶⁷ Ibid., Nasso.

²⁶⁸ Christie B. Hammes to Jessie Carney Smith, December 28, 1990, JCS private collection.

²⁶⁹ Nasso, telephone interview, October 10, 2008.

²⁷⁰ Estimate \$150,000 for permissions fees, typesetting, printing and binding, and royalties plus \$96,000 for in-house editorial costs and overhead equals \$246,000 (Christine Nasso email October 22, 2008).

²⁷¹ Ibid., Nasso.

²⁷² Ibid., McLarin.

²⁷³ Biographical entries written by Smith: Elreta Alexander Ralston, Marguerite Ross Barnett, Jane M. Bolin, Josephine Beall Bruce, Coralie Copper, Camille Cosby, Elizabeth Lindsey Davis, Lucy A. Delaney, Anna Murray Douglass, Sarah H. Mapps Douglass, Ophelia Settle Egypt, Mary Fields, Irene McCoy Gaines, Nora Antonia Gordon, Marcelite Harris, Elizabeth Ross Haynes, Anna Arnold Hedgeman, Amanda Gray Hilyer, Addie Hunton, Ruby Hurley, Mae Jemison, Beverly Johnson, Eunice W. Johnson, Halle Tanner Dillon Johnson, Anna Johnson Julian, Jewell Jackson McCabe, M.A. McCurdy, Mollie Moon, Ethel Ray Nance, Nettie Langston Napier, Diane Nash, Frances E. L. Preston, Augusta Savage, Gloria Scott, Mary Ann Shadd, Althea T. L. Simmons, Ella P. Stewart, Lucinda Thurman, Geraldine Trotter and Lelia Walker.

²⁷⁴ Quote from Sandra D. Davis "Tome Documents: Accomplished Women," in *The Orange County Register*, February 6, 1992: "Coppin taught hundreds of freedmen and women to read after the Civil War and was dean of the female section of the Institute of Colored Youth in Philadelphia in the 1880s."

²⁷⁵ Juanita Karpf to Jessie Carney Smith, September 1990, JCS private collection.

²⁷⁶ Geraldine Rickman to Jessie Carney Smith, April 13, 1977, JCS private collection. National Association of Black Professional Women in Higher Education (NABPWHE) was founded on April 6, 1976 in Racine, Wisconsin. The goal of the organization was to involve more women in policy, management and leadership positions in higher education and other related organizations i.e., government, foundations and corporations. Smith served on the Board of Trustees in charge of Higher Education and Management. Sixteen of the charter participants in NABPWHE were featured in *NBAW*: Sadie T. M. Alexander, Mary Berry, Jewel Plummer Cobb, Marian Wright Edelman, Patricia Roberts Harris, Anna Arnold Hedgeman, Jacquelyne Jackson,

Eudora Pettigrew, Willa Player, Gloria Scott, Althea Simmons, Mabel Smythe, Phyllis Wallace, Eva Dykes, Lorraine Williams, Jane Cook Wright.

²⁷⁷ Jessie Carney Smith to Darlene Clark Hine, May 4, 1989, JCS private collection; Johnetta B. Cole to Jessie Carney Smith, May 18, 1990 JCS private collection.

²⁷⁸ Jessie Carney Smith to Susan L. Taylor, May 17, 1989, JCS private collection.

²⁷⁹ Janice Smith, "Essence Women" Profile, *Essence*, September 1977, 14.

²⁸⁰ "Living pioneer in a particular field or outstanding contribution in artistic, cultural, scientific, social or other areas; or served as community leaders; or accomplished a task that "makes them stand apart from others" (Smith, *MAW* proposal, 18).

²⁸¹ Smith, *NBAW*, xxxvi.

²⁸² Smith, Interview, October 25, 2007.

²⁸³ Jessica Millward, "More History Than Myth: African American Women's History Since the Publication of *Ar'n't I a Woman?*" *Journal of Women's History* 19 No. 2 (2007), 161–67.

²⁸⁴ Omolade, *Rising Song of African American Women*, 106.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 111.

²⁸⁶ Due to the rising number of black women attending college, better paying jobs and the rise of manufactured bedding during WWII, the number of African American women who quilted dwindled. See Cash, "Kinship and Quilting."

²⁸⁷ Theresa Leininger to Jessie Carney Smith, October 4, 1990, JCS private collection.

²⁸⁸ I agree with Collins' thought that "sharing a common cause fosters dialogue and encourages groups to transcend their differences." (Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 238).

²⁸⁹ Theresa Leininger-Miller, telephone conversation with Christa V. Hardy, April 5, 2010.

²⁹⁰ She and her husband endured a less than scrupulous landlord, difficulty finding a reasonably priced printer cartridge and the death of a family member. Theresa Leininger to Jessie Carney Smith, October 2, 1990; October 4, 1990; May 18, 1991.

²⁹¹ Thirty-six essays cited *Black Women Oral History* transcripts. Fifty-four contributors referenced having corresponded with the women either in an interview or by written correspondence.

²⁹² Smith, *NBAW*, 554.

²⁹³ Jacquelyne Johnson to Linda Anderson Smith Jackson, May 28, 1990, JCS private collection.

²⁹⁴ Ibid. In Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-education of the Negro* (Washington, D.C: Associated Publishers, 1933, 200), described that he was not African American because he was not born in Africa nor had he immigrated to the United States from the continent. Hence, he considered black an adequate descriptor for the race.

²⁹⁵ Phyllis Ann Wallace to Julianne Malveaux, August 15, 1990, JCS private collection.

²⁹⁶ Julianne Malveaux, "Comparable Worth and Its Impact on Black Women." In *Slipping Through the Cracks: The Status of Black Women*, eds. Margaret C. Simms and Julianne Malveaux (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1987); Julianne Malveaux, "Current Economic Trends and Black Feminist Consciousness," *The Black Scholar* 16, no. 2 (1985): 26–31; Julianne Malveaux, "Race and Class in Nursing Occupations," *Sage: A Scholarly Journal on Black Women* 3, no. 1 (1986): 41–45.

²⁹⁷ Adrienne Lash Jones, Interview with Christa V. Hardy, November 29, 2007.

²⁹⁸ Jenifer Grady, telephone interview with Christa V. Hardy, May 4, 2008.

²⁹⁹ The Association of Black Women Historians (ABWH) was founded in 1979. In addition to *NBAW*, members were also writing for projects like *Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia* (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, 1993), edited by ABWH member Darlene Clark Hine. Smith authored biographical essays on Julia Ringwood Coston, Charlayne Hunter-Gault, and Halle Tanner Dillon Johnson for this work.

³⁰⁰ Smith, *NBAW*, xxvii.

³⁰¹ Steve Ellis to Research Staff Gale Research, April 1, 1992, JCS private collection.

³⁰² See: Erik S. McDuffie, "A 'New Freedom Movement of Negro Women': Sojourning for Truth, Justice, and Human Rights during the Early Cold War," *Radical History Review*, 101 (Spring 2008): 85-106. Craig Bunch, "Review of *Notable Black American Women* edited by Jessie Carney Smith," *Popular Culture in Libraries* (December 1992).

³⁰³ Smith Interview, March 7, 2008.

³⁰⁴ Leslie Alexander, "The Challenge of Race: Rethinking the Position of Black Women in the Field of Women's History." *Journal of Women's History* 16, no. 4 (2004): 51.

³⁰⁵ Scruggs, *WD*, 6.

³⁰⁶ Smith, Interview, October 25, 2007.

³⁰⁷ Jessie Carney Smith, "Women---A Research Imperative," (speech prepared for Training Workshop XV, Consortium on Research Training, March 27-29, 1980).

³⁰⁸ Smith, "Introduction" to *MAW*, 15.

³⁰⁹ Other minority women's oral history projects in the 1970s & 1980s: These projects include the Oral History of Puerto Rican Women in the United States and in Puerto Rico being prepared by Virginian Sanchez Korrol; the Women's History Sources Survey, Social Welfare Archives Center, University of Minnesota, University Libraries, Minneapolis; Women Political Leaders Oral History Project, Regional Oral History Office, the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; *Notable American Women, biographical directory* in preparation at Radcliffe College; Women in American Music: A Bibliography, City University of New York, and the Black Women Oral History Project, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College.

³¹⁰ Ransby, *Ella Baker*, 1.

³¹¹ Smith, Interview, October 25, 2007.

³¹² *Ibid.*, Hine

FIGURES



Figure 2. Sepia Song quilt photograph courtesy of Theobald Wilson

9. CAREER SUMMARY _____

Positions, organizations, locations, dates in chronological order; *Begin with present*

10. ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL, COMMUNITY OR BUSINESS ACTIVITIES, AFFILIATIONS _____

11. CIVIC SERVICE OR OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERSHIPS, POSITIONS, INTERESTS _____

12. HONORS, AWARDS, PRIZES, SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENTS _____

Please give full titles and dates where applicable

13. WRITINGS _____

Please give full citations, e.g., full title of book or article, publisher, date, etc.

Figure 4. MAW Biographical Questionnaire (reverse)

SAMPLE BIOGRAPHY

AMERICAN INDIAN
LAW
MEDICINE & HEALTH

KREPPS, ETHEL CONSTANCE (Kiowa Nation of Oklahoma), lawyer.

PERSONAL INFORMATION: born October 31, 1937, Tulsa, OK; parents, Pearl
(Moore) and Howard H. Goomda; married George Krepps, Sr.; children,
George Jr., Edward Howard Moore Krepps; religious affiliation, Baptist.

EDUCATION: R. N., St. John's Medical Center, 1971; B. S., University of
Tulsa, 1974; J. D., University of Tulsa College of Law, 1979.

PRIMARY OCCUPATIONAL AREA OR FIELD OF CONTRIBUTION: LAW; medicine & health.

CAREER SUMMARY: Private practice, attorney-at-law, Tulsa, OK; attorney/project
manager, Native American Coalition of Tulsa, 1979-.

ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL OR ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND AFFILIATIONS:

Vice President, Native American and Alaskan Native Nurses Association;
tribal secretary, Kiowa Nation of Oklahoma; secretary, Indian Health
Care Resource Center; member Tulsa County, Oklahoma, American and Federal
bar associations.

CIVIC, COMMUNITY OR BUSINESS POSITIONS AND INTERESTS: Secretary, Native American
Chamber of Commerce.

HONORS, AWARDS, PRIZES, SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENTS: National Essay Award Winner,
1978, American Trial Lawyers Association (biographee must identify the award).

WRITINGS: A Strong Medicine Wind, Western Publications, 1979; excerpts in
Indians of Oklahoma, University of Oklahoma Press, 1980 chapter
in Oklahoma Memories, University of Oklahoma Press, 1981.

BIOGRAPHICAL LISTINGS: Indian Women's Resource Directory, 1980; Oklahoma
Nurses Association Directory; American Indian Lawyers Association
Directory, 1980; Guide to Native American Businesses, 1980.

Figure 5. Sample MAW Biographical Essay

KREPPS, ETHEL CONSTANCE (American Indian)
Page 2

BUSINESS ADDRESS: Ethel C. Krepps, Attorney-at-Law, 6363 East 31st Street,
Tulsa, OK 74135

PREFERRED MAILING ADDRESS: Native American Coalition of Tulsa, 6539 East
31st Street, Tulsa, OK 74145.

PERSONAL STATEMENT: I have been involved for the past several years
with Indian issues. In my capacity as an Indian attorney I have
been involved on a national level on legal Indian issues. As a
tribal leader I have been a representative of my tribe on the
national level as a spokesperson addressing a wide variety of Indian
issues and addressing tribal government issues on all levels. As a
registered nurse I have been quite active in the health issues which
have affected Indian people in regard to their health concerns.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Nashville, Tennessee

Special Collections, John Hope & Aurelia Franklin Library, Fisk University

Arna Bontemps Collection

Jessie Carney Smith Private Collection

Julius Rosenwald Collection

Radcliffe College Black Women Oral History

Nashville, Tennessee

Special Collections, Vanderbilt University

Edwin S. Gleaves Papers

Peabody Teachers College School of Library Science Records

Greensboro, North Carolina

Special Collections/University Archives, Ferdinand D. Bluford Library, North Carolina

A&T State University

Greensboro Community Collection

University Yearbooks 1946–1950

Urbana–Champaign, Illinois

University Archives, University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign

Board of Trustees Reports, 1960–1964

Graduate School of Library and Information Science Director's General

Correspondence 1960–1964—Alumni Files

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NEWSPAPERS and MAGAZINES

Arizona Republic

Black Issues in Higher Education

Carolina Peacemaker

Chicago Tribune

Choice

Ebony

Essence

Fisk Expositor

Fisk Herald

Fisk University News

The Fisk Record
Houston Chronicle
Jet
Metropolitan Times
Nashville Banner
Nashville Scene
Nashville Woman
Philadelphia Inquirer
Philadelphia Sun
Philadelphia Tribune
Tampa Tribune
The Tennessean
Wilson Library Bulletin

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Williams-Forson, Psyche Aletheia. "'Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs': African American Women, Material Culture, and the Powers of Self-definition." PhD diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 2002.

APPENDIX A: JESSIE CARNEY SMITH CHRONOLOGY

- 1930 Born September 24 in Greensboro, NC youngest daughter of James Ampler and Vesona (Bigelow) Carney; siblings Helena, Horatius and a twin brother Jodie.
- 1934-35 Began formal education, at age four, as a 'primer' student in a four-room Rosenwald schoolhouse in nearby Mount Zion.
- 1942 Entered eighth grade at James B. Dudley High School in Greensboro.
- 1946 Enrolled in North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College (A & T College).
- 1948 Crowned Miss North Carolina A & T College.
- 1950 Graduated from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University with a B.S. in Home Economics; Attended Cornell University one semester.
- Married Frederick Douglass Smith, December 22 in Maryland.
- 1951 Gave birth to one child, Frederick Douglass Smith, Jr. on September 11.
- 1953 Accepted clerk's job at Fisk University to work with Arna Bontemps.
- 1954 Enrolled at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan.
- 1956 Earned M.A. in Child Development from Michigan State University.
- 1957 Earned M.A. in Library Science from George Peabody College for Teachers.
- Accepted teaching position with Nashville City Schools. Later that year, she accepted employment at Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial College (now Tennessee State University) in the capacity of Head Cataloger and Instructor.
- 1960 Enrolled in Library Science doctoral program at the University of Illinois.
- 1961-63 Worked as Teaching Assistant at University of Illinois.
- 1963 Divorced Frederick Douglass Smith in April.

- 1964 Became the first African American to earn a PhD in library science from the University of Illinois.
- 1965 Named Head librarian at Fisk University succeeding Arna Bontemps.
Served on the nominating committee of the Southeastern Library Association.
- 1966 Author of *Introduction to Special Collections in the Erastus Milo Cravath Library*, Fisk University Library.
- 1967 Member ALA Committee on opportunities for Negroes in Librarianship.
- 1968 Vice chairperson of Tennessee State Library Association.
- 1969 Awarded Council on Library Resources Fellowship.
Lecturer at George Peabody College for Teachers of Vanderbilt University.
Published Bibliography for Black Studies Programs, Fisk University.
Contributor: Proceedings of the Workshop on Afro American Culture, University of Iowa. Contributor: Proceedings of the Workshop on Negro Life and Culture in the Liberal Arts Curriculum, Fisk University. Member of Editorial Board of *Choice* (1969-75)
- 1970 Contributor: *The Black Librarian in America*.
- 1971 Served as Associate professor and part-time consultant at Alabama A & M University until 1973.
Published A Handbook for the Study of Black Bibliography, Fisk University Library.
- 1973 Served as Director of the librarians' conference workshop in Tokyo Japan, for the United State Army in the Pacific.
Visiting lecturer for one year at the University of Tennessee School of Library Science.
Published Minorities in the United States: Guide to Resources, School of Library Science, George Peabody College for Teachers.
Contributor: Library and Information Services for Special Groups, American Society for Information Science in cooperation with Science Associates International.

- 1974 Appointed Expert to the Library of Congress Processing Department.
Participated on the visiting team to the American Library Association Committee on Accreditation from 1974-80.
Author: Dictionary Catalog of the Negro Collection of the Fisk University Library, Proceedings of the Black Caucus of the American Library Association and Alabama State University, Institute for Training librarians for Special Black Collections and Archives, 1974.
- 1975 Served as the director of the Research Program in Ethnic Studies Librarianship.
Served on the staff of the Institute in Multicultural Librarianship at the University of Michigan during the summer of 1975.
- 1976 Became the first African American Vice President of the national library honor society, Beta Phi Mu.
Served as consultant to the Oak Ridge National Laboratory Central Research Library, through an Urban League Fellowship.
Fire destroys majority of research data for The Directory of Significant Twentieth Century American Minority Women in late December.
- 1977 Became Beta Phi Mu's first African American President.
Published Black Academic Libraries and Research Collections: An Historical Survey through fellowship from Council on Library Resources.
- 1978 Contributor: *Dictionary of American Library Biography.*
- 1979 Director: Fisk Institute on Ethnic Genealogy for Librarians Consultant to the United States Office for Civil Rights.
- 1980 Began two-year term on the Task Force on Cultural Minorities.
- 1981 Author of forward to Bibliography of *Black Music by Dominique-Rene de Lerma, Volume 1: Reference Materials.*
- 1982 Contributor: *Reference Services and Library Education.*
Consultant Association of College and Research Libraries National Endowment for the Humanities workshops.
Editor: Ethnic Genealogy: A research guide.

- 1984 Took month long educational tour of Dakar, Senegal.
- 1984-86 Director: "I've Been to the Mountain Top: A Civil Rights Legacy, federally funded lecture program in conjunction with prominent Civil Rights leaders Coretta Scott King, Lerone Bennett and James Farmer.
- 1985 Academic/Research Librarian of the Year, Association of College and Research Libraries.
- 1986 Distinguished Scholars Award, United Negro College Fund.
- 1987 Distinguished Alumni Award, Peabody College of Vanderbilt University.
- 1988 Editor: *Images of Blacks in American Culture: A Reference Guide to Information Sources*.
- 1990 Distinguished Alumni Award Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois Urbana Champaign.
Editor (with Carrell P. Horton): *Statistical Record of Black America*.
- 1992 Editor: *Notable Black American Women*.

APPENDIX B: JESSIE CARNEY SMITH ABRIDGED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Smith, Jessie Carney. "A Statistical Study of the Birth-Rate of Children Born out of Wedlock in the State of Tennessee, 1944–1954." Master's thesis, Michigan State University, 1955.
- . "Patterns of Growth in Library Resources: In Certain Land-Grant Universities." PhD diss., University of Illinois, Urbana–Champaign, 1964.
- . "Great Research Collections in Negro Life and Culture," *Proceedings of the Workshop on Negro Life and Culture in the Liberal Arts Curriculum*. Nashville, Tenn.: Fisk University, 1969.
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- . “The Four Cultures: Twenty Years Later.” In *The Black Librarian in America Revisited*, edited by E. J. Josey, 143–51. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1994.
- , ed. *Black Firsts*. Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1994.
- , ed. *African American Heroes*. Detroit: Visible Ink Press, 1997.
- , ed. *Powerful Black Women*. Detroit: Visible Ink Press, 1997.
- , ed. *Black Heroes of the Twentieth Century*. Detroit: Visible Ink Press, 1998; reissued 2002.
- . “Black Women, Civil Rights, & Libraries.” In *Untold Stories: Civil Rights, Libraries, and Black Librarianship*, edited by John Mark Tucker, 141–50. Urbana: Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois, 1998.
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- . “John Harvey Bigelow.” In *Grand Fathers: Reminiscences, Poems, Recipes and Photos of the Keepers of Our Traditions*, edited by Nikki Giovanni, 13–25. New York: Henry Holt, 1999.
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APPENDIX C: INITIAL ORAL HISTORY QUESTIONS

1. Describe your upbringing in Greensboro/Mt. Zion, NC. How was it similar/dissimilar to other African American women of your generation?
2. Home, church, and school have historically been the cornerstones of the African American community. Describe your family environment; the Mt. Zion community; the Rosenwald School you attended as a child and the James B. Dudley High School you attended as a teenager; and your home church, Laughlin Memorial United Methodist. How did teachers/community members impact your development?
3. Following in your parents' footsteps, you enrolled at North Carolina A&T State University, where you earned a B. S. in Home Economics in 1950. Describe your experience at A & T such as your being crowned Miss A&T 1948.
4. In 1950, you made your first move away from home to attend Cornell University in pursuit of your dream of becoming a fashion designer. How did it feel to be in a predominantly white academic setting for the first time? Describe life for you in Ithaca, NY during that time. Why did you decide not to complete the degree?
5. At what point did you meet Frederick Douglass Smith? Share how your marriage, motherhood and subsequent divorce influenced your professional decisions.
6. Describe your move to Nashville the first time. What did you expect? What prompted you to pursue the Master's in Child Development? Describe your experience at Michigan State University from 1955-1956. What reaction did Nashville City Schools have to Brown vs. Board of Education? How did this affect your experience as a first year teacher?
7. Your first job at Fisk University actually was as a clerk-typist in the library's cataloging department. What do you recall from that experience? What were the most significant influences on your becoming a professional librarian? How did working with Arna Bontemps at Fisk University affect your perception of librarianship?
8. Describe your experience at Peabody College Library School at Vanderbilt from 1956-1957. How did you come to know Edwin S. Gleaves?
9. Describe your experience at Tennessee State University (TSU). How would you describe your activism during the Civil Rights Movement?