

Passing It On...The Journey of An African-American Educator

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and  
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Leaving behind nights of terror and fear  
I rise  
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear  
I rise  
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave  
I am the dream and the hope of the slave  
I rise  
I rise  
I rise...

Maya Angelou

**Childhood Journey**

Mrs. Dorothy Baugh Green, an African-American educator who attended and later taught in segregated, rural Georgia schools until they were desegregated by court order during the 1960's, is the sixth of seven children. She was born December 12, 1925, in Cartersville, Georgia. Mrs. Green credits her father and mother with teaching her how to love, respect, and care for others. Their influence and her upbringing in the African Methodist Episcopal Church guided her later educational decisions and helped forge the philosophy that "all people should be treated with respect and be given opportunities in life to accomplish that which would enable them to be caring, sharing, and productive contributors to society." The following oral history is the story of her journey through life.

**C.B.:** Please give a description of your childhood and the type of lifestyle you were accustomed to.

**D.G.:** My father worked in a mine where ocher was excavated. He walked thirty miles a day to his job. Sometimes, in later years, he would walk to a pick up point in order to be able to ride in an open truck. When snow and ice would fall, he would wrap burlap sacks over his shoes in order to keep his feet from freezing. He was a strong man and loved his family. He taught us to work hard. We learned how to grow vegetables of all kinds. He raised chickens, turkeys, and hogs to help our family economy. It wasn't unusual to see the girls in our family helping to sow some of the seeds and set out tomato, potato, onion, and cabbage plants. It was great fun for us. There was never any anger or conflict shown in front of the children. I remember private conversations being held in another room but there was never any outward show of anger between my parents. My father was a strict disciplinarian. All he had to do in order to discipline us was to look us straight in the eye and clear his throat loudly. We

knew exactly what that meant. My mother and I were inseparable. She told me that the night my younger sister, Margaret, was born, I didn't want to be removed from the birthing bed with her. I was holding my mother's arm when my baby sister was born. My mother was my greatest role model. She was a Christian woman whom, I would say, was a saintly human being who loved everybody, was concerned about not only her family's well-being, but others in the community as well. She made sure we attended church each Sunday. All responsibilities of caring for the home were my mother's because my father was the only source of income for a nine-member family. My mother paid the bills and made and bought our clothing from my father's salary. She was, literally speaking, the business manager, even though she never was able to go any further than the third grade in school. She was a wise person. My older brothers and sisters helped us with our homework and chores. My mother was very supportive of the school we attended. She never missed parent meetings. She was instrumental in requesting that the 10th grade be added to our school. When my elder sister and brother were to finish the 9th grade, there was no school in our hometown with a high school program for black children. Mother walked through the white communities and spoke with officials asking for the addition of 10th grade in our school. If it had not been for her faith in God, I don't know what I would have done for my educational future.

**Educational Journey**

In 1911, state supervision was provided through the Division of Negro Education in the State Department of Education for Georgia. George D. Goddard, a white supervisor, was appointed to oversee efforts of the Jeanes, Slater, and Rosenwald funds (see endnote) and was instructed to focus on industrial training, manual arts, domestic science and agriculture in an effort to adapt to the needs of African-American children. As a result of the work of Goddard's successor, Walter B. Hill, about fifteen school buildings for African-American children were completed in 1921. (Orr, 1950) One of those fifteen schools, Summer Hill, was built in Cartersville, Georgia, and it had steam heat, electric lights, six classrooms, an auditorium, and a home economics room. It is this school that Mrs. Green attended during her youth.

**C.B.:** Describe your elementary school days.

**D.G.:** I attended a school called Summer Hill School. This school was a Rosenwald school. I enjoyed my school days very much. We were very proud of our school. Each Friday, we had morning assembly with all teachers and pupils. We marched in from the outside to piano music played by the principal's wife or another teacher. Our devotional consisted of a prayer, scripture readings, and two songs. Usually the principal was the main speaker, but occasionally he would get ministers, the superintendent, the local black doctor, or someone from the community to speak to us. We had a school chorus, drama, and basketball team. We even had field day events. There was a feeling of belonging, caring, and pride in the school. We were taught honesty, respect, moral values, and responsibility, as well as the three R's. Of course, there was corporal punishment for certain acts, such as being late for school, chewing gum, stealing, lying, and fighting. Nevertheless, I enjoyed school because there was never any danger or instances of violent crimes. Parents did what they could to work with the teachers for the overall development of the child.

**C.B.:** What grades were housed in this building?

**D.G.:** Originally grades 1-9 were housed and later the 10th grade was added. We had to travel to Marietta, Georgia or to Atlanta in order to complete our high school diploma.

**C.B.:** What types of educational materials were provided at Summer Hill School in the 1920's and 1930's?

**D.G.:** Concerning textbooks in those years, things were rather difficult due to the fact that our parents had to buy them from local bookstores or perhaps purchase used copies who may have had children older than we were. This was before the state issued textbooks. There were seven children in my family. Often, books were handed down from brother to sister. Neighbors in the community would get their children together in the evenings to share books and study. In later years, we received used books handed down from white schools. These were in bad shape by the time we received them. And there were never enough for the entire class. I remember we had one handwriting book that the teacher used to demonstrate penmanship skills. We had a library, yet no librarian. A few used or torn books were there to use. Going to get one of those books was considered a treat. I remember when the late Governor, Ed Rivers, signed into law that all Georgia schools be issued free textbooks. That was exciting news for us. We still didn't get complete sets, yet it did relieve a small bit of the burden of purchasing books from our parents.

**C.B.:** Considering the fact that in order to graduate from high school, many African-

Americans in your community had to literally leave town and travel to Marietta or Atlanta to complete their diploma, what influenced most of them to continue beyond the 10th grade?

**D.G.:** For many, there was practically not hope or opportunity to further their education. Many dropped out of school before even finishing the 9th grade. I've heard some say their parents couldn't afford to buy books or sufficient clothes. Some had to walk for miles to reach their schools. Others had to find odd jobs to help their families financially. If one decided to pursue finishing his or her diploma, families had to arrange alternative housing with friends or relatives in nearby counties or provide some means of transportation. Also, our parents had to pay three dollars a week for out-of-district tuition. This was a serious hardship.

**C.B.:** What or who influenced you to further your education?

**D.G.:** Several of my teachers inspired me to further my education. Mrs. Alva King taught us how to carry ourselves with dignity. She took us on outings to enlighten us socially. She also was our Sunday school teacher. She always reminded us that if we wanted to see social change take place, we must strive to be the best in our undertakings so that we could overcome negative stereotypes and prejudices that were in society. She told us to never give up on reaching our goals in life. My mother was very influential as well. As we grew up, she shared the hardships that she had encountered in trying to get an education. She didn't have the chance to attend school regularly due to the fact that she was born on a farm and had to stay out of school many days to help with cores at the house where her mother worked. She told of negative experiences that she had encountered while trying to walk to school. It was very dangerous for black children to be out alone. Because of some of the problems my mother had encountered, I didn't want to waste the opportunity that I had before me. My older sisters had gone off before me and returned home full of stories about how black people lived in the city. I wanted to experience this as well. So there were several reasons that were determining factors for me. I knew I would finish high school and go on to college.

**C.B.:** Where did you receive your formal training?

**D.G.:** I received my BA degree from Morris Brown College in 1956. Morris Brown is a privately owned African-American college primarily funded by the A.M.E. Church. It is located in Atlanta. I initially pursued a degree in Secretarial Science. I was very interested in working in the business world, but I was faced with limited opportunities being a minority and being female.

Typically, the only fields available to black women, and to many white females, were nursing, domestic work, or the field of education. My mother encouraged me to pursue a career in teaching. I had offers to teach in rural schools while I was still attending college. I decided to attend Atlanta University in the summers in order to become certified in Elementary Education.

**C.B.:** Did you receive your Master's Degree in Education?

**D.G.:** Yes. However, it was twenty years later, in 1976. For this degree, I attended West Georgia College in Carrollton.

### The Unknown Journey

Well, I'll tell you  
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair  
It's had tack in it,  
And splinters,  
And boards torn up,  
And places with no carpets on the floor,  
Bare.

But all the time  
I've been climbin' on  
And reachin' landin's  
And turning corners  
And sometime going on in the dark  
Where there ain't been no light.  
So don't you turn back.  
Don't you set down on the steps  
'Cause you find it's kinda hard.  
Don't you fall now--  
For I'm still goin', Honey,  
I'm still climbin'  
And life for me ain't been  
no crystal stair.

Langston Hughes

By 1940, there were 3,296 African-American schools in Georgia. Of those schools, 63 percent had only one teacher, 22 percent had two teachers, 5 percent had 3 teachers, and ten percent had more than three teachers. During the 1940's, African-American schools in 54 counties benefitted from Jeanes supervision, while only 19 counties employed supervising teachers for white schools (Orr, 1950).

**C.B.:** When and where did you begin teaching?

**D.G.:** I began teaching in "The Mission" area of Bartow County in 1946 at a one-room school that was also used as a church building for an A.M.E. church. I was asked to teach by the Black Jeanes supervisor, Mrs. Susie Wheeler. She supervised all of the black rural schools in Bartow County. I taught only one semester there because I was trying to earn money to return to college the following semester.

**C.B.:** How long did a semester last?

**D.G.:** It would last for approximately 4 1/2

months.

**C.B.:** What grades and subjects did you teach at this school?

**D.G.:** I taught grades 1-4, all subject areas.

**C.B.:** Did you return to college as planned?

**D.G.:** Yes. I returned to Morris Brown in January of 1947. Later that same year, I taught in a two-room school in Pine Log, Georgia. There, I taught with another teacher. We worked in one room and stored coal, wood, old books, and children's coats in the second room. I taught there for two semesters and then returned to college.

**C.B.:** Who would replace you when you returned to college?

**D.G.:** The Jeanes supervisor would find other teachers to work in my place. We rotated work and college to earn money to pay for the next semester's tuition or supplies. In 1948, I went back to college and changed my provisional certificate to a four-year certificate in education. I had been teaching previously with a provisional certificate and would return to Atlanta University in the summers to renew it.

### The Rugged Journey

**C.B.:** Where did you teach in 1949?

**D.G.:** In 1949, some of the black schools had trustees who were assigned to look after the needs of the school. Two trustees from Gordon County asked if I would be interested in a teaching position that would be similar to a split session. Due to the local cotton picking schedules, in the fall children would stay out of school and pick cotton until the fields were empty. They would return to school around the last week in November. Summer school sessions would be held in July and August, and children would go back to the fields each September.

**C.B.:** What was the name of this school?

**D.G.:** The school was called Red Bud School because it was in Red Bud, Georgia, about eight miles east of Calhoun. It was a one-room school. There were no lights and there was no running water. The only heat we had came from what we called a pot-belly stove. The children or I would make the fire each morning. We picked up firewood on the way to school to supply us with heat for the day. Sometimes trustees would deliver "kindling" and the county would send coal ever so often. There was a wooden floor. I even remember that the ceiling had holes in it. Often, wasps would build nests in the holes. And as the stove warmed the room, the wasps would swarm. We often had to run outside in the middle of lessons to avoid being stung. I would bring in a hand pump

sprayer to help control this problem. We had one water bucket and one dipper for a while. I knew this was unhealthy. I asked the parents to help buy supplies, and they decided to sell "boxed suppers." With the money, we bought curtains, a tablecloth, paper cups, crayons, paper, and a wash pan and soap so the children could wash their hands after using the outdoor toilet. The boys would take turns walking three miles to a nearby farm to get water in the buckets. In the winter, they would do this in the evenings and bring the water back for the next day's use. Children would bring their lunches from home. For some, it would be only a piece of fruit or crackers or a baked sweet potato. A rolling store would come by once a week, and we could barter items in exchange for food.

**C.B.:** What was the typical day like at the one-room school?

**D.G.:** I would reach the school at about 7:30 each day after walking the five mile distance. This meant walking in all types of weather conditions and sometimes in the dark during winter hours. Sometimes people in the county would offer me a ride. Black and white people would stop to assist me. People were kind to me because they knew I was the school teacher there. When I arrived at school, I prepared the fire if wood was left from the day before. Sometimes I'd have to wait on the wood the children would bring in to make the fire. I'd also write assignments on the board for the older children. When the students arrived, we would begin with a devotional. I'd explain the work for the day with each grade level. I taught grades 1-8, all subjects. Each grade level knew what they were supposed to be working on while I worked with another group. Sometimes, only two, three, or four children were in a grade level. The older students who were good achievers would read or help the younger ones until I was available. We stressed the three R's.

**C.B.:** Do you remember being trained by a Jeanes supervisor?

**D.G.:** About once a month the Jeanes supervisor, Mrs. Wheeler, came to the school to see how things were going. She would observe and give me the notes she'd taken concerning things that were good and things that could be improved.

**C.B.:** What materials or textbooks were available at this school?

**D.G.:** I used the textbooks that were in the school when I arrived and those that were brought in by the supervisor. I tried to meet the needs of my students, and Mrs. Wheeler would give me advice. I also gathered materials from friends who taught. I'd collect newspapers and current event magazines to inform my students of local and

world events. The textbooks sent to us were often outdated. They didn't depict life in rural Georgia. There were hardly any pictures in those books that the children could relate to. We discussed the differences. Even though my children were young, they were well aware of the double standards in our society. At those times, I saw the faces of my children sadden, but I taught them to keep their faith in God and to pray for change. I shared stories of our slave ancestors and talked about how they had made it through their trials and hardships and that we could surely follow their courage.

**C.B.:** What year did you leave Redbud School?

**D.G.:** In 1951, the county schools consolidated with the city schools in Calhoun. I was assigned a 7th grade class teaching all subjects at Stephens School. Stephens was a brick school with ten rooms and a gymnasium. It had a cafeteria in a separate building that looked like an old army barrack. Hot the principal served as the gym teacher. I taught there until 1955, when I returned to Morris Brown College. I received my degree in 1956.

**C.B.:** Were materials at Stephens School better than those you had used in Redbud?

**D.G.:** Materials were somewhat improved. We continued to use some handed down textbooks, but we did get a few class sets. We did have a record player and one reel-to-reel projector and screen. We could check out maps from the library.

**C.B.:** Where did you teach after you got your degree?

**D.G.:** I was a substitute teacher at my old alma mater, Summer Hill School. I married during this year.

**C.B.:** Did you substitute there for long?

**D.G.:** No; in 1957, my husband had a job in Gainesville, and I taught at Gaines High School. This school housed grades 1-12. Gaines was a nice school. It had about three classrooms per grade level, a nice library, gym, and lunchroom. Materials were improving a great deal by this time in my career. I made more money teaching at this school than I had ever made before, because now I had a professional Elementary Education degree. In addition to my regular pay, the county provided a supplement to their teachers.

### The Sentimental Journey

Mrs. Green resigned from Gaines High in October of 1958 and moved to Cartersville, Georgia, where she and her husband had built a new home. She was hired to teach at Bartow Elementary, a newly built school that

consolidated all of the county's rural black schools into one central location. Bartow Elementary had a gym; a cafetorium; a library and a librarian; and a music, a health, and a physical education teacher. A full staff of teachers, administrators, and teacher assistants were present. Grades 1-8 were housed in this complex until later a federally-funded kindergarten was added to the site. For the first time in her career, Mrs. Green taught at a school that also had a full janitorial and cafeteria staff. Dr. Walter Johnson, Sr., was the principal of Bartow Elementary, and Margaret Baugh Johnson, Mrs. Green's younger sister, was the school counselor.

**C.B.:** What grade levels did you teach at Bartow Elementary?

**D.G.:** I taught sixth grade for two years and later taught seventh and eighth grade language arts and social studies. This was a well-structured school. The principal was a well-educated man who had attended and graduated from several universities. We were required to write and often type our lesson plans for each content area. We used text books that were much more current. Reference materials and audio-visuals were available in a media center like none that I had used before. We had a full-time media specialist. We went on field trips to the state capitol and many other places that the children of rural schools had not seen before. It was in this school setting that I was really able to accomplish some of the goals that I thought my former teachers were trying so hard to stress in my formative years. We held weekly programs in our school cafetorium to provide the students with an opportunity to experience cultural aspects of our society that they were previously unaware of. Self-esteem, respect, responsibility, and academic achievement were encouraged through our weekly assembly programs. I taught at Bartow Elementary until 1968, when mandatory desegregation occurred.

#### **Freedom's Journey**

I couldn't tell fact from fiction  
Or if my dream was true  
Will you dare me?  
Will you scare me?  
Walking into this world so new.

Faces and more I remember  
Some smiling, other rejecting  
Now is the time, my moment, reflecting.

Should I sip the tears my eyes fight to hold?  
Is your anger still there?  
Is it black?  
Is it cold?  
I know many who died  
For this right, for this gift.  
On the wings of their souls  
Now proudly I lift

My head to the sky to thank God above  
For deliverance  
For freedom  
For mercy  
and love.

Cheryll Barney

The Supreme Court ordered Southern school boards to desegregate their schools with "all deliberate speed" in 1955. Georgia, Virginia, Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina, and North Carolina school boards refused to comply. By 1963, fewer than 10 percent of African-American students in the seventeen Southern and border states attended integrated schools. Congress enacted the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in an effort to hasten desegregation. Federal funds could be withheld if a school district did not comply with court orders or submit a satisfactory desegregation plan. (Bennett, 1971)

**C.B.:** Do you remember how the desegregation process was handled in your school district? Were teachers transferred before the students were totally integrated?

**D.G.:** Our school system did not totally integrate until 1968. I believe it was tried both ways. Some parents volunteered to send their children first. I remember some of the black students who were bused to Bartow Elementary from Adairsville began going to the previously white schools in that area before I was transferred. Many of the children did not want to go. Their parents carried them to assure their safety and ease their fears. Just a few children were sent at this time. I also remember several white teachers coming to teach at Bartow Elementary before I left. We were a county school. The Cartersville City system integrated before the county system. I believe the city integrated around 1966-67. I was transferred to Cloverleaf Elementary in 1968, the year the county schools integrated. I went to a predominantly white school. I was interviewed by the principal and was assigned a third grade class. Administrators tried to work with teachers in assigning them to schools relatively close to their homes if possible. Sometimes, they were able to accommodate the teacher's needs.

**C.B.:** Was going to total integration a smooth transition in the county?

**D.G.:** Well, in some places it could have been smoother. All down through the years, there had been so many negative things said about black teachers in the white community, and likewise, there had been negative comments made about the black community. Black students and teachers were unsure about how they would be treated. White students and teachers expressed similar concerns. Administrators' attitudes and type of leadership really determined whether

the transitions were smooth or somewhat rough. Our principal at Cloverleaf was from Mississippi. We were really unsure as to what type of person he would be. We had heard many negative things about how blacks were treated in Mississippi by whites. I remember on the first day, when we entered the school, the principal and some of the teachers introduced themselves and were very friendly. Others kept to themselves. Our principal tried to be fair in dealing with situations as they occurred. He tried to abide by the law of the land, because if he had not, monies would have been cut off by the federal government and court cases would have ensued. The school needed federal funds. Desegregation really occurred in 1968 because of the intervention of the federal government. It wasn't because of love for us; it was because of the fear that the schools would be hurt economically.

**C.B.:** How did the administration of Cloverleaf deal with problems that were race-related?

**D.G.:** Parental concerns and race issues were discussed as the individual need arose. We also provided time at PTA meetings to discuss concerns peaceful and to ease tensions and fears. One-on-one or three-way conferences that included the principal were held to discuss individual concerns in extreme situations.

### Unforgettable Journey

It is in loving, not in being loved,  
the heart is blessed; It is in giving,  
not in seeking gifts, we find our quest;  
Whatever be your longing or your need, that  
give;  
So shall your soul be fed, and you indeed  
shall live.  
Unknown

**C.B.:** Do you remember any stories in particular that you would like to share?

**D.G.:** Yes--two very vividly. On the first day of registration, as I prepared for the students to arrive, I had many mixed emotions. I wanted my students to think positively and learn, despite all the tensions and fears that were probably filling their minds. My first student to enter the classroom was a small, pale little girl. She was escorted by her mother to the classroom. I looked at the child as she entered, and she was terrified. I can't tell you the pain I felt for her as she entered the room. I knew that she had probably heard stereotypical things concerning black people. I immediately put my arms out and extended her a welcome and a hug. She looked up at me with tears in her eyes. I also felt like crying, yet I wanted to reassure her that she would be loved and taken care of. I asked her if she would help me throughout the day with my new environment, and I told her that I would do

my best to make sure that she had a good day. She stayed by my side throughout the day, and, at the end of the day, I held her hand as I walked her to the bus. We hugged and she smiled. The next morning, she was the first one off the bus, holding a bouquet of flowers in a vase for me. She ran up to me, smiling, and exclaimed, 'Good morning, Mrs. Green!' As long as I live, I'll never forget that smile.

**C.B.:** And the other story?

**D.G.:** There was a small package waiting on my chair later that same year. The gift was wrapped in newspaper and attached to it was a small card that read, 'This is all I have to give. I love you.' I asked my students who had left the gift, but no one answered. I carefully opened the wrappings to find a penny book of matches inside. I held them up high as if they were a cache of jewels, and I praised the unknown giver for knowing exactly what I needed and wanted most. A child stood at that point, chest poked out, eyes beaming with pride over his selection.

For we must share if we would keep  
That blessing from above;  
Ceasing to give, we cease to have  
Such is the law of love.

Unknown

Mrs. Green taught at Cloverleaf Elementary School until her retirement in 1984. She touched the lives of many African-American and European-American children. Many of these students have come back to visit her since her retirement. Some wrote letters of appreciation and others held special recognition ceremonies with their communities to thank her for her dedicated efforts and encouragement. The authors acknowledge with gratitude her contributions.

### Words Like Freedom

There are words like freedom  
Sweet and wonderful to say  
On my heartstrings freedom sings  
All day everyday.

There are words like liberty  
That almost make me cry.  
If you had known what I know  
You would know why.

Langston Hughes

### ENDNOTES

For a complete explanation of the funding of African-American schools, see *Jeanes Supervision in Georgia Schools*, Georgia Association of Jeanes Curriculum Directors and the Southern Education Foundation, Inc. Athens, Ga.: Graphic Composition, Inc., 1975.

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