



Chapter Title: Grace under Pressure: The Black Home Extension Service in South Carolina, 1919–1966

Chapter Author(s): CARMEN HARRIS

Book Title: Rethinking Home Economics

Book Subtitle: Women and the History of a Profession

Book Editor(s): Sarah Stage and Virginia B. Vincenti

Published by: Cornell University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctv2n7jkd.21>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



Cornell University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Rethinking Home Economics*

JSTOR

10 Grace under Pressure: The Black Home Extension Service in South Carolina, 1919–1966

CARMEN HARRIS

The history of home demonstration work in the southern United States, like the history of all the region's institutions, is a story of legal segregation and disparate treatment for blacks. This essay is a case study of the black women who worked as home demonstration agents in South Carolina between 1919 and 1966. These agents achieved success practicing their profession despite a system of oppression under which white South Carolinians attempted to use black home agents as part of their social control mechanisms. The agents, through their approach to their work, managed to empower themselves and the rural blacks they served.

Three South Carolina colleges play a role in this story. In 1890 Clemson Agricultural College was founded and replaced South Carolina College as the land-grant institution for the state. The school operated in a military style and accepted only white men. Winthrop College, a private normal institute established in 1886 for white women, became Clemson's sister land-grant institution in 1890. In 1895 the South Carolina General Assembly voted to establish the Colored, Normal, Industrial, Agricultural and Mechanical College as a coeducational college for black men and women. Although all three schools had land-grant status, the General Assembly designated Clemson College as the institution to receive all federal monies derived from land-grant legislation.¹

I am deeply indebted to Stephen Lowe for his criticisms of this essay and to Adraine Jackson of Clemson University Special Collections in Clemson, South Carolina.

1. Various institutions served as South Carolina's land-grant college between 1865 and 1890. For a discussion of the history of the state's agricultural colleges, see Carmen Harris, "Blacks in Agricultural Extension in South Carolina" (M.A. thesis, Clemson University, 1990), pp. 11–15;

In 1904 agricultural extension work with white men and boys began in the South. The United States Department of Agriculture appointed Seaman A. Knapp, a former agriculture professor and president of Iowa State College, to direct a program to encourage diversified farming in southern states where the boll weevil threatened the already weakened cotton crop economy. By 1906 the work with white men and boys was well under way. At that time Knapp, with some reluctance and under pressure from the federal government and the philanthropists who paid for extension work, instituted extension work with black men.²

In 1907 J. Phil Campbell, a Georgian whom Knapp had appointed as the first extension agent in South Carolina, brought up the idea of employing women as home economics agents to do extension work with women and girls. Knapp agreed to begin club work with girls, but after two years such work was still in the planning stage. Local women, not federal officials, took the initiative in establishing girls' club work in their states. Marie Cromer, a schoolteacher from Aiken, South Carolina, established the first tomato club for girls in the United States. Cromer taught the girls how to raise and can tomatoes for home use and for sale. Knapp received the news of the club's accomplishments favorably and appointed Cromer a girls' club agent in 1910. Nevertheless, he refused to authorize broader extension work with women, appointing only girls' club agents before his death in 1911. By 1912, however, there were at least two white women agents in South Carolina whose title was home demonstration agent. There is no indication that these women did any work with black farm women.³

By 1914 two black South Carolinians advocated home demonstration work with women and girls. Mrs. Miller Earl promoted tomato clubs for black girls, and Ransom W. Westberry, one of the first black agricultural agents in South Carolina, suggested that work with black women and girls was essential to racial uplift. In a speech before black farm families in Anderson, South Carolina, in June 1914 he said: "No race of people can rise

Daniel Walker Hollis, *University of South Carolina*, vol. 2, *College to University* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1956), chap. 4; Yates Snowden, *History of South Carolina*, 5 vols. (New York: Lewis, 1920), 2:917–18; James F. Potts, *The History of South Carolina College* (Columbia, S.C.: R. L. Bryan, 1978), p. 2; Joel Schor, "The Black Presence in the U.S. Cooperative Extension Service to 1983: A Profile," author's manuscript, May 25, 1983, pp. 4–5.

In this essay the Colored, Normal, Industrial, Agricultural College is referred to as South Carolina State College or State College.

2. Schor, "Black Presence," p. 132.

3. Thomas W. Morgan, "The First Fifty Years of Smith-Lever," p. 7, n.d., typescript, Box 14, Agricultural Extension, Field Operations, Clemson University Special Collections, Strom Thurmond Institute, Clemson, S.C. (hereafter Clemson); Payroll roster, Box 4, South Carolina Records of the Federal Extension Service, Secretary of Agriculture, DC 1913–14, Record Group 33, National Archives; Oscar B. Martin, "The Beginning of Home Demonstration Work," p. 1, n.d., typescript, Box 31, Agricultural Extension, Administrative Files, Clemson.

above their women. They should be encouraged in their efforts to teach girls to raise tomatoes, and the next generation will understand the arts of farming better than we do. . . . I know of no other being who is more willing to learn new things than the females."⁴ Yet neither Westberry nor Earl had the status or power to require state extension officials to begin work with black women and girls.

The Smith-Lever Act, passed in May 1914, mandated that cooperative agricultural extension work be conducted jointly by land-grant colleges and the United States Department of Agriculture. Unlike the 1890 Morrill Act, the Smith-Lever Act made no explicit provision for allocation of money for use by African Americans. It placed the control of extension work and of all extension monies with the college or colleges designated by each state's legislature. The South Carolina General Assembly designated Clemson College as the cooperating institution.⁵

Implementing Smith-Lever proved difficult in South Carolina. Most of the state's farmers were landless blacks, either tenants or sharecroppers. Yet Clemson College officials decided to end their black agricultural agent program because, they argued, it "would injure the work with a certain class of our white people." When they proceeded to give notice to the state's seven black agents, officials at the United States Department of Agriculture along with Robert S. Wilkinson, president of South Carolina State College, protested. Eventually, Secretary of Agriculture David Houston insisted on the retention of the black agents. Clemson officials relented but placed them under the direction of the "State Negro College [South Carolina State College] at Orangeburg."⁶

During the debate between federal and state officials about the termination of the black agricultural agents, the issue of the black women's role in

4. Schor, "Black Presence," pp. 138, 140.

5. U.S. House of Representatives, *Hearings, Report and Debate: Smith-Lever Act of 1914* (reproduced October 1959 by Virginia Agricultural Extension Service, Blackburg, Va.), pp. 3063, 3146. See also Officers and Various Directors of the Chicago Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to David A. Houston, Secretary of Agriculture, September 12, 1913, Records of the Secretary of Agriculture, General Correspondence, Negroes, 1909–23, Record Group 16, National Archives; Earl William Crosby, "Building the County Home: The Black County Agent System, 1906–1940" (Ph.D. dissertation, Miami University of Ohio, 1977), pp. 56–57; Russell Lord, *The Agrarian Revival: A Study of Agricultural Extension* (New York: American Association for Adult Education, 1939), pp. 92–94; Schor, "Black Presence," pp. 34–35; Bradford Knapp to W. M. Riggs, President of Clemson Agricultural College, December 22, 1914, Riggs to Knapp, January 6, 1915 and Knapp to Riggs, January 27, 1915, Presidents' Papers, Riggs Series, Clemson.

6. W. W. Long to Walter M. Riggs, June 22, 1914, Riggs to Robert S. Wilkinson, July 27, 1914, Long to "All Agents," March 19, 1915, Riggs to Secy. D. F. Houston, April 5, 1915 (telegram), Houston to Riggs, April 5, 1915 (telegram), Presidents' Papers, Riggs Series, Clemson. These protests came as President Woodrow Wilson was eliminating blacks from the federal work force in Washington, D.C.

extension work came up. Bradford Knapp, who had succeeded his father as director of extension work in the South, wrote to Clemson president Walter M. Riggs:

There are some things which the white County Agent and the white woman Home Economics Agent cannot do for the negroes . . . and that is when we come to touch on the negro home. The matter of moral, sanitary and economic conditions in negro homes under the Lever bill, is something which I would not want to tackle except with persons who could go into these homes. Therefore, in the home economics extension work for negroes, I should certainly use negro employees by putting a few to work and supervising them carefully.⁷

At the end of the first year after passage of Smith-Lever, federal and South Carolina officials had reached a deadlock. After being forced to retain black agents or risk federal action that would damage white extension work, Clemson officials kept the number of black agricultural agents at seven. Having preserved the jobs of the black agents, federal extension officials pushed no further. State College president Robert S. Wilkinson, who had fought hard to retain the black agricultural agents, turned his attention to home demonstration work.

Although Wilkinson was president of State College, the power in the institution lay in the hands of the Board of Trustees, which was all white. In 1915 the board authorized Wilkinson to enter into a cooperative agreement with Winthrop College for supervision of black women's work. The board allocated money to hire a black woman as home agent in Orangeburg County (where the school was located), but subsequent reports do not show that the position was ever filled.⁸

The confluence of several factors during World War I finally prompted extension officials to hire black women to work in the home demonstration service. With the coming of the war, many blacks left the South to fill jobs in northern industry, and many black men were drafted. Farming in the South remained labor-intensive. Not surprisingly, black flight alarmed southern white landlords and state officials. Editorials in black urban newspapers—urging migration—and by black and white southern leaders—urging whites to reform and blacks to stay where they were—agreed on only one point: blacks were not being treated fairly. White landlords and government offi-

7. Bradford Knapp to Walter M. Riggs, January 27, 1915, Presidents' Papers, Riggs Series, Clemson.

8. "Report of the President," in Colored Normal Industrial, Agricultural and Mechanical College of South Carolina (hereafter CNIAMC), *Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Colored Normal Industrial, Agricultural and Mechanical College of South Carolina* (Columbia, S.C.: Gonzales and Bryan, 1915), pp. 5, 11.

cials had little choice but to address the needs of black farm laborers if they wished to keep them on the farms.⁹

Since both Clemson and Winthrop extension officials knew that it was socially and politically impossible for white women to enter black homes and work with black clients, the only alternative was to engage black home demonstration agents. Thirteen black women became emergency home agents in 1919, although in official reports they were referred to as “assistants” in home demonstration. Christine N. South, state agent for home demonstration in South Carolina in 1919, described the agents as “sensible and practical women . . . all of them far above average in education” and remarked that “some of them were real leaders of their people.”¹⁰

The home demonstration agents’ work focused primarily on food production (winter gardens, canning, and bread making) and sanitation (prevention of malaria, typhoid, and tuberculosis). For the most part black South Carolinians received the program with enthusiasm, although some remained suspicious. “Ain’t foolin’ wid dat lady,” said one woman, “first thing we all know we’ll be canning in France.” The agents proved their worth, and by 1920 black home extension work finally became a permanent part of the South Carolina extension service; however, once the emergency appropriation ended, the length of their employment was cut to terms of only two and a half months. That summer fourteen black women went to State College, where Winthrop College home economics supervisors and staff from the tuberculosis association and state health department trained them.¹¹

One reason why extension officials decided to continue to employ black home agents after the war emergency was their concern about the spread of infectious disease, stimulated by the deadly influenza epidemic of 1918 and the widespread incidence of communicable diseases among rural blacks. The goals of the program toward eradicating these diseases among blacks meshed well with Christine South’s goals for white women’s extension work. In her 1920 report, South noted the increased contact between the white farm home and the “outside world.” “If the laundress has tuberculosis or lives in a house laden with tubercular germs,” she wrote, “the disease invades the [white] home.” Although she cited this example to illustrate the importance of extension work among white women, it certainly

9. *What the Agricultural Extension Service Is Doing for South Carolina, Annual Report for 1920* (Clemson College, S.C.: Clemson College, 1921), p. 96; “Report of the President,” CNIAMC (1912), p. 9; (1913) p. 16; (1914) p. 10; (1915) p. 5; David B. Johnson to Bradford Knapp, June 6, 1918, Records of the Federal Extension Service, Box 35, RG 33, Misc. S.C., 1917–18; Schor, “Black Presence,” pp. 39, 41.

10. *What the Agricultural Extension Service Is Doing for South Carolina*, p. 92.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 92–93.

underscored the necessity of work with black women as well because many of them worked as laundresses and other domestics for white families.¹²

Concern for black migration did not end with the armistice. A federal report on cooperative extension written in 1923 noted that blacks who remained impoverished migrated North at higher rates than blacks who owned their homes and practiced diversified agriculture.¹³ The black extension program emphasized subsistence—not independence—which suggests that at least from the perspective of white extension officials, the program had limited goals, which seemed reasonable to them given their low assessments of black aspirations. Rather than develop individualistic, capitalist-oriented activities among black families, the program attempted to improve the peonage that characterized southern agriculture. If blacks were satisfied within the framework that existed, whites believed they would stay where they were and work contentedly without developing greater expectations.

Black state leaders who viewed black home agents as blacks first and as women second opposed the organizational structure of South Carolina's home demonstration service. Black women worked under the white women agents and through Winthrop College. In other states all black extension workers, men and women, worked under the supervision of the black land grant colleges. Robert Wilkinson complained in his 1921 president's report, "We have no part whatever in the Home economics work. This is carried on entirely by Winthrop College. Our students therefore have no incentive to improve themselves along this line."¹⁴

Later Mattie Mae Fitzgerald, a black woman, became state supervisor of Negro work with headquarters at South Carolina State College. Fitzgerald's appointment proved mostly cosmetic. The actual planning and coordination of black home demonstration work continued to come from Winthrop College. Wilkinson's presidential reports testify to the limited role State College played in home demonstration work, even after Fitzgerald's appointment. Although he gave detailed examples of the accomplishments of black agricultural agents, he virtually ignored the women's work. Nor was Fitzgerald's position as state supervisor of Negro

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 78, 91–93; Mattie Mae Fitzgerald, "District Work: 2. Report of Negro District Agent," "Result of Home Demonstration Work in South Carolina, December 1922," pp. 1, 3–4, Box 2, Agricultural Extension, Field Operations, Clemson; Dora E. Boston, "Annual Narrative Report of State Supervisor of Colored Home Demonstration Work, 1923," p. 12, Box 2, Agricultural Extension, Field Operations, Clemson.

13. *Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, 1923* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1924), p. 57.

14. Wayman Johnson, "History, Growth and Transition of 4-H among Negroes in South Carolina," p. 19, n.d., Reference and Serials Center, Miller F. Whittaker Library, South Carolina State College Orangeburg, S.C. "Report of the President," CNIAMC (1921), p. 12.

work acknowledged by white extension officials, who refused to use her title, referring to her and to Dora Boston, who succeeded her in August 1923, as Negro "District" agent.¹⁵

The home demonstration program for white women in South Carolina grew slowly but progressively after the passage of Smith-Lever until by 1931 each of the state's forty-six counties boasted a white agent. In contrast, work among black women experienced restricted growth because of the limited financial resources white administrators allocated to the black program. In 1923 the length of the work year for black home extension agents increased from three and one-half to eleven months, but the number of agents declined proportionately. Whereas in 1922 thirteen agents under Fitzgerald worked an aggregate of forty-nine months, the following year only three agents and the supervisor worked an aggregate of forty-four months. Two more agents were added in 1924, not because of an increase in funds but because local officials in Charleston, Marion, and Richland counties valued the services of their agents enough to pay them, thus freeing funds used to hire two more agents.¹⁶

After 1923 South Carolina's black extension program increasingly emphasized practical aspects, which made it distinctive from the white women's program. Not surprisingly, programs that required little if any capital outlay proved the most successful among the state's black farm women. Food production and conservation constituted the most popular part of the extension program. In 1922 black home agents reported that more than seven thousand women were involved in home and winter garden demonstrations and estimated that the canned fruits and vegetables produced by these women were valued in excess of \$79,000. Statistics for 1924, 1925, and 1929 show that club members canned nearly 46,000 quarts of fruits and vegetables, made almost 1,400 quarts of fruit juices, 4,200 quarts of jelly and preserves, and 2,800 quarts of pickles, and dried over 37,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables. Agents encouraged farm women who participated in extension programs to use more dairy products and worked to incorporate milk into the diets of rural schoolchildren. Some progress was made in home improvements, but because money was so scarce most improvements simply involved more efficient re-

15. Johnson, "History, Growth and Transition," p. 19; Fitzgerald, "District Work"; Boston, "Annual Narrative Report, 1923"; Boston, "1924 Narrative Summary"; Dora E. Boston, "Report of Dora E. Boston, State Supervisor of Colored Demonstration Agents, 1925," Ser. 33, Folder 190, Home Demonstration Reports, Clemson.

16. Fitzgerald, "District Work," pp. 1, 3-4; *What the Agricultural Extension Service Is Doing for South Carolina*, pp. 91-93; Boston, "1924 Narrative Summary," pp. 9-12; Boston, "Report of Dora E. Boston, 1925," pp. 20, 22-23, 25, 27-28; "Report of the President," CNIAMC (1929), pp. 28-29.

arrangements of furniture. Some piecemeal repairs were made to homes by recycling wood from dilapidated outbuildings.¹⁷

Sanitation and hygiene continued to be important aspects of the black extension program. Activities to prevent disease, were, for the most part, well received. Agents supervised the cleaning and oiling of ditches to eradicate mosquitoes and showed their clients how to make garbage containers. Agent Connie Jones reported that she distributed disinfectant. White state officials assisted the agents in their efforts to fight disease. While Dora Boston served as agent in Colleton County in 1922, she referred several clients to the county's health nurse for treatment. Local authorities helped her establish a two-day clinic. The state tuberculosis association sent two speakers to the clinic, and one of its nurses attended meetings with Boston to make speeches on tuberculosis prevention. In 1924 the Richland County agent obtained free medical treatment for her clients.¹⁸

Working to improve rural blacks' health was not always an easy task because some had become resigned to their fate. Dora Boston recalled that when she approached a man about cleaning a ditch to prevent malarial mosquitoes from breeding, he remarked, "I've had this fever for years and most people around here have it. I'll just have to work before it comes on because I am not much good afterwards." His, however, was not the general response. During Health Week in 1924 participants cleaned yards, livestock pens, and homes, and more than 430 schoolchildren wrote and read papers on health.¹⁹

Developing a community ethos among rural blacks proved crucial for the success of home extension work. In her 1922 report, Fitzgerald noted the popularity of club activities among both women and girls. She said they enjoyed giving "club yells" and singing "club songs." Agents gave club members instructions in parliamentary procedures, and the clubs elected their own officers. The report noted the "zeal and great willingness" of women club members, which "demonstrat[ed] the fact that the one great necessity is leaders." Club leaders kept the interest in extension alive by holding meetings and doing demonstrations while the agent was working in another part of the county. Agents organized community-based contests through which members "unconsciously . . . learn[ed] the necessity of a community

17. Fitzgerald, "District Work," pp. 1, 3–4; *What the Agricultural Extension Service Is Doing for South Carolina*, pp. 91–93; Boston, "1924 Narrative Summary," pp. 9–12; Boston, "Report of Dora E. Boston, 1925," pp. 20, 22–23, 25, 27–28; "Report of the President," CNIAMC (1929), pp. 28–29.

18. *What the Agricultural Extension Service Is Doing for South Carolina*, p. 93; Fitzgerald, "District Work," p. 3; Boston, "Annual Narrative Report, 1923," p. 6; Boston, "1924 Narrative Summary," pp. 10, 12; "Report of the President," CNIAMC (1929), p. 29.

19. Boston, "Annual Narrative Report, 1923," p. 6; Boston, "1924 Narrative Summary," p. 10; "Report of the President," CNIAMC (1929), p. 29.

center” and to interest people in the extension program. In 1924 agents established sixty-five clubs and created the Head to Foot Club to improve personal appearance. Dora Boston insisted that emphasis on appearance helped in forming “the habit of cleanliness,” and in this way “homes would be affected.” Agents taught club members how to wash and comb their hair, how to care for their skin and teeth, how to make clothes (including underwear), and how to dress properly. Club members made 2,978 pieces of underwear and more than 2,600 dresses and coats. Boston also noted that the Richland County agent held “two community fairs and two meetings which she called popular days” to bring half of the county together. County fairs provided another way of reaching rural blacks. Speakers on public health attended the fairs to provide information on health issues. At these fairs black clubsters would show off the products of their labor. Canned foods and fresh produce were displayed in abundance. Many blacks initially suspicious of extension work became converts when they attended these fairs. The early reports also suggest that black extension agents were becoming integrated with other community leaders. Local churches served as gathering places for large meetings. In 1923 Boston reported that she secured the cooperation of teachers and preachers whenever she began to develop community projects.²⁰

In his report to the state General Assembly in 1924, Robert S. Wilkinson noted the effect of black extension work in South Carolina. “The Negro work,” he wrote, “is an influence in the right direction in the matter of Negro migration to Northern industrial centers.” Dora Boston echoed his sentiment. She noted that agents had demonstrated how community cohesion “stabiliz[ed] rural life.” She pointed with pride to the way homes and out-buildings had been painted or whitewashed, family nutrition and clothing had improved, and family incomes had increased. “The homes are more comfortable and women have broader visions, a greater income, better living and community conditions, . . . and a rural society that will produce satisfaction,” she wrote. “Home Demonstration workers have as an aim an efficient, satisfied rural State and are working toward that goal.”²¹

These successes seem all the more remarkable when one considers the obstacles created by black poverty and white bigotry. White extension officials believed that the lion’s share of funds spent on extension work should go to white extension programs because whites provided most of the tax dollars. As a result, the black extension program remained understaffed and underfunded. Dora Boston wrote that black home agents “may be compared

20. Fitzgerald, “District Work,” pp. 2, 4; Boston, “1924 Narrative Summary,” pp. 2–3, 9–12; Boston, “Report of Dora E. Boston, 1925,” pp. 20, 22–23, 25, 27–28; “Report of the President,” CNIAMC (1929), pp. 28–29.

21. Boston, “Annual Narrative Report, 1923,” p. 2; “Report of the President,” CNIAMC (1924), p. 28; (1929), p. 29; Boston, “1924 Narrative Summary,” pp. 12–13.

to a farmer without farm implements; they have no equipment"—no pressure cookers for canning, no projectors to show motion pictures. When black agents were lucky enough to have offices, they were often located in their own homes or provided by black businesses. Most had no office furniture, and none had clerical help.²²

Despite their limited numbers, the agents' message got through. Boston had a professional vision for black home agents. She recommended that agents be given furloughs to attend summer school because "paramount preparation makes one fit for service." Of the home agent program itself she wrote, "Although the negro work is still in its experimental stage, good work has been done and it has a bright and promising future. The agents are making their way by adapting their work to the actual needs of the community."²³ Despite these successes, Clemson officials did not increase their commitment to the black home extension service. The number of black home agents did not increase as extension funds, by law, increased each year. The actions Clemson extension officials took in 1928 offer an example of how they attempted to keep the number of black agents as low as possible.

The Capper-Ketcham Act of 1928 provided funds to all states to enlarge their extension programs. The act required that 80 percent of the funds distributed to a state be spent to hire new agents. The remaining 20 percent was for hiring new Negro agents. At first, South Carolina's director of extension, William W. Long, ignored the act's provisions. He set aside 75 percent of the money for white men's work and hired three white home agents out of the 25 percent he put aside for white women's work. When federal officials objected that he had shortchanged both women and blacks, he attempted to circumvent the law by transferring the black women's headquarters from Winthrop College to South Carolina State and replacing the Smith-Lever funds appropriated for their salaries with Capper-Ketcham funds. He insisted that by giving State College \$2,500 (half of the first-year Capper-Ketcham appropriation) he had carried out "the principle of the law." Federal officials disagreed, observing that "changing the supervision from Winthrop to the negro college does not make it a new piece of work." In 1929 Long belatedly agreed to hire three new black women agents, bringing the total to eight, compared to thirty-eight white women agents.²⁴

State College's new role in supervising black women agents no doubt pleased President Wilkinson, who included a section on the women in his

22. Boston, "1924 Narrative Summary," pp. 5-6, 11, 13-14.

23. *Ibid.*

24. W. W. Long to C. B. Smith, July 28, 1928; Smith to Long, August 1, 1928, Long to J. A. Evans, August 29, 1928 (telegram); Evans to Long August 30, 1928 (telegram); Evans to Long, August 30, 1928; Long to Evans, August 30, 1928 (telegram); Evans to Long, August 31, 1928; Long to Smith, May 3, 1929, all in Box 187, Records of the Federal Extension Service, Director, S.C., 1928-29, Record Group 33, National Archives.

1928 report and praised their “outstanding accomplishments.” Thanks to Long’s duplicity, State College finally gained official control over all black extension work, although for some time Winthrop College continued to play the role of silent partner in administering black women’s work. But Winthrop’s role diminished as personnel changes in the black home extension service brought a woman with professional acumen to the helm of the black women’s program.

In 1930, when Dora Boston married Harry Daniels, the state supervisor for Negro men’s work, extension officials fired her from the service. Wilkinson selected Marian B. Paul, whose husband was not in extension work, to succeed Boston as the state supervisor of Negro home demonstration work. Paul, a home economics graduate of Pennsylvania State College, had worked in the service as an emergency agent in 1920–22. Marian Paul would bring to fruition the aspirations Dora Boston had spelled out for women’s home demonstration work. Paul presided over the flowering of the black home extension service. During her thirty years as the leader of the program, she guided the development of a professional extension force and the creation of a professional ethos for black home extension workers.

When Paul became the state supervisor, there were eight agents in the field. The staff had not grown since the increase mandated by Capper-Ketcham in 1929. The Depression brought calls for cutbacks. In January 1931 a bill to eliminate all home demonstration work failed in the General Assembly. Nevertheless, Greenville County’s legislative delegation discontinued the funding for its black home agent. Marian Paul, Lonnie I. Landrum (the white state supervisor for home economics work), and President Wilkinson worked together to keep the agent on the job. Although they could not convince state authorities to continue funding the position, they were able to keep the agent working for another five and a half months by reallocating some of their own funds. Blacks in Greenville County also pledged money for her salary and raised \$300 through personal donations and fund-raising. Through their own efforts, they were able to retain the services of their agent for another three and a half months. In 1932 extension officials reduced the seven remaining agents’ work year to eleven months.²⁵

Under Paul’s leadership the number of black agents grew by fits and starts between 1933 (the year that black women began working year-round) and 1961 (see Table 10.1). Ironically, the only time during the period that each county had a black home agent was in 1933–34, during the depths of the Depression, when emergency funds became available and women who qualified for relief were hired as agents. Early in World War II the number

25. “Report of the President,” CNIAMC (1929), pp. 28–29; Marian B. Paul, “1932–33 Narrative Annual Report of Marian B. Paul,” pp. 2–3, Box 12a, Agricultural Extension, Staff Development, Clemson.

TABLE 10.1. Census of black home demonstration agents in South Carolina, 1919–1961^a

Year ending	Agents	Supervisors	Assistant supervisors	Assistant agents	4-H club agent	Specialists	Emergency agents
1919	13	0	0	0	0	0	0
1920	14	1	0	0	0	0	0
1922	13	1	0	0	0	0	0
1923	3	1	0	0	0	0	0
1924	5	1	0	0	0	0	0
1929 ^b	8	1	0	0	0	0	0
1931 ^b	8	1	0	0	0	0	0
1932	7	1	0	0	0	0	0
1933	7	1	0	0	0	0	0
1934	8	1	0	0	0	0	37 ^c
1935	9	1	0	0	0	0	37 ^c
1936	13	1	0	0	0	0	0
1937	14	1	0	0	0	0	0
1938	15	1	0	0	0	0	0
1939	15	1	0	0	0	0	0
1940	16	1	0	0	0	0	0
1941	18	1	0	0	0	0	0
1944 ^b	14	1	0	0	0	1	12
1945	20	1	0	0	0	1	16
1946	26	1	1	0	0	0	0
1947	26	1	1	0	0	0	0
1948	28	1	1	0	0	0	0
1949	29	1	1	0	0	0	0
1950	29	1	1	0	0	0	0
1951	29	1	1	0	0	0	0
1952	30	1	1	1	0	0	0
1954 ^b	32	1	2	4	0	0	0
1955	33	1	2	4	0	0	0
1956	33	1	1	6	1	0	0
1957	33	1	1	6	1	0	0
1958	33	1	1	6	1	0	0
1959	31	1	1	4	1	0	0
1960	33	1	0	2	1	0	0
1961	33	1	0	1	1	0	0

^aIn 1966 the black and white services integrated. Fifteen agents ranked as associate agents, nineteen as assistants in the new program. The supervisor's title was changed to assistant in home economics, and the 4-H Club leader's title was changed to assistant girls 4-H Club agent.

^bDenotes break in annual sequence.

^cThe emergency agents worked for eighteen months, probably all of 1934 and through June of 1935.

of agents doubled to thirty-four, but in 1943 extension officials reduced the force. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s the number of county agents never reached forty, while the number of assistant county agents fluctuated between two and six. In contrast, the permanent staff of the white women's program grew steadily. In 1923 thirty-eight white home demonstration agents worked in South Carolina, and by 1931 there were forty-six—one for each county. Over time, more counties also hired assistant white home agents.²⁶

Paul constantly pressed for more black agents. Much of her time was spent lobbying state leaders for more funds and pressuring counties to provide funds to help pay agents' salaries. She personally visited the General Assembly to ask white legislators to vote appropriations for their counties. She detailed the countless additional visits she made to legislators' homes and places of business. Although her efforts were not always successful, Paul persevered.

Over time her lobbying paid off and she was able to secure funds from every county in which there was an agent (thirty-eight of forty-six in the state). As agents proved their mettle and as social and economic policies changed, more and more counties made appropriations for extension work. By the 1940s Paul had more pledges for county funds than Clemson officials were willing to match with federal and state Smith-Lever funds.²⁷

Procuring money for extension work was only one of Paul's duties. As supervisor, she visited the agents monthly to evaluate their work and to help them in planning their programs and with record-keeping. In her second annual report Paul noted that she held the positions of "Supervisor, specialist, 4-H leader, and county Home Agent." In this last capacity Paul conducted extension work in three counties that had no agent and organized six clubs in an effort to demonstrate to tightfisted officials the need to fund agents in those counties. By 1935 Paul no longer did county work, but she continued to assist the agents in their fieldwork.²⁸ Over the years her job did not become easier, but it became more diverse.

As an administrator, Paul devoted a large percentage of her time to attending meetings of black farm councils and other county-wide meetings.

26. *A Year of Progress: Annual Report of the Extension Service for 1925* (Clemson College, S.C.: Clemson Agricultural College, 1925), p. 37; William W. Long, "Program of Extension Work, South Carolina, 1931," p. 2, Box 2, Agricultural Administration, Staff Development, Clemson; Marian B. Paul, "Plan of Work, 1945," p. 2, Box 9, Agricultural Extension, Field Operations, Clemson; Marian B. Paul, "Home Demonstration Plan of Work for Negroes, 1946," p. 2, Box 35, *ibid.* See Table 10.1.

27. Marian B. Paul, "South Carolina Annual Narrative Report, 1948," p. 5, Box 70, Agricultural Extension, Field Operations, Clemson, and Marion B. Paul, "Annual Report of Cooperative Extension Work in South Carolina, 1936, Negro Home Demonstration Division," p. 6, Box 8, *ibid.*

28. Paul, "1932–33 Narrative Annual Report of Marian B. Paul," p. 7.

During the Depression, she was called on continually to help blacks find jobs and to recommend blacks for positions in the Youth Administration and for Works Progress Administration programs. State health officials, social workers, bureau chiefs, and state New Deal officials enlisted her aid in providing services to black clients. Charities also sought her assistance in soliciting black participation in fund-raising drives.²⁹

To free herself for the many duties required of her, Paul worked to change the top-down planning that had characterized extension work in the 1920s and to grant agents greater autonomy. Because she expected them to be able to act independently, Paul insisted that all agents hired after 1930 hold a college degree. By 1930 State College had begun to grant bachelor's degrees, and Paul, with an office on the campus, actively recruited graduates. These young women were usually South Carolina natives familiar with local conditions and racial mores. Paul also preferred that they have teaching experience and own an automobile, a tall order for recent college graduates anywhere, but especially for black women in the rural South during the Depression.³⁰

Paul constantly emphasized the importance of education for extension work. She encouraged agents who lacked degrees to attend State College, where the Department of Home Economics provided short courses during the summer. And she urged her agents to pursue postgraduate education, even though racial segregation meant they had to do so outside the South. Paul herself attended summer schools at Columbia and Cornell universities. Several other agents attended Cornell, Iowa State, and other eastern and midwestern land-grant colleges. Beginning in 1930, black agents received training through Rosenwald Summer Schools. That year the Rosenwald Fund, endowed by Sears, Roebuck executive and philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, began funding regional summer institutes for black extension workers. State College in South Carolina was among three regional sites selected for the inaugural conferences.³¹

Paul looked for women who "possess[ed] culture, skill, training, experience, tact, a pleasing personality, and physical soundness." Given the high status home agents enjoyed within the black community, it is not surpris-

29. Marian B. Paul, "Annual Report, Negro Home Demonstration Work, 1937," pp. 19–20, Box 8, Agricultural Extension, Field Operations, Clemson.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 4; Paul, "South Carolina Annual Narrative Report, 1948," p. 5.

31. Prairie View A&M in Texas, Hampton Institute in Virginia, and State College were the three sites selected. See Paul, "1932–33 Narrative Annual Report of Marian B. Paul," pp. 5, 14; Marian B. Paul, "Annual Narrative Report of State Supervisor of Negro Home Demonstration Work, 1937–8," p. 20, Box 9, Agricultural Extension, Field Operations, Clemson; Marian B. Paul, "South Carolina Narrative Annual Report, 1938–39 of [State of] South Carolina," p. 19, Box 11, *ibid.*; Marian B. Paul, "South Carolina Narrative Report, 1946," p. 4, Box 35, *ibid.*

ing that Paul desired these traits. The agent took her place among black leaders in the county where she worked. To do so successfully, she had to gain the confidence of other black leaders and of white leaders as well. Agents worked closely with black teachers and clergy and often used black churches as forums to promote extension programs. The support of white leadership was also crucial. Paul's agents forged links with white organizations such as the Red Cross, with local nurses and health organizations to get services for their clients, and with white women's farm councils to press for the hiring of more black agents. Landlords who saw the benefits of the program for their own sharecroppers or those of their neighbors often took the lead in getting their tenants interested in the program.³²

Despite the high standards, the hard work, and salaries that were too low even with county supplements, Paul successfully recruited top-notch agents, and she gave them great latitude in their work. Her agents made their own contacts with community leaders and constructed their own individualized programs of work. Paul encouraged them to tailor their programs to the needs of the people they served. The agents took a demographic survey of the county, which included population counts, patterns of farm ownership, health and sanitary conditions, cash crops produced, home industries and marketing possibilities, and the number of families already following some improved practices.³³ Armed with these facts, they then developed programs uniquely suited to the needs of the communities they served. No wonder the agents were held in such high esteem by their clients. In her 1932 report Paul noted, "The Home Demonstration Agent is looked upon by the County as a sort of 'Fairy God Mother' or 'Magician.' She is often called upon to do the impossible, such as to prescribe for those who are ill, to patch up family quarrels, to find employment for the idle, to aid in building churches and school houses—and . . . to bury the dead. . . . [I]t shows that the Agent has gained the confidence and love of her people and her County."³⁴

The general enthusiasm with which blacks greeted home extension work demonstrated its importance to whites as a possible means of controlling their agrarian work force. The "Live-at-Home" program sounded the keynote in their efforts. The name formalized a program in existence and largely unchanged between 1919 and the 1930s. Aptly titled, Live-at-Home worked to raise the standard of living among the rural poor and not coincidentally to slow migration to the North. The program targeted very poor

32. Paul, "Annual Report, Negro Home Demonstration Work, 1937," p. 4; Paul, "South Carolina Annual Narrative Report, 1948," p. 5; Paul, "1932-33 Narrative Annual Report of Marian B. Paul," p. 6.

33. Paul, "Annual Narrative Report, 1937-8," pp. 25-26.

34. Paul, "1932-33 Narrative Annual Report of Marian B. Paul," p. 4.

whites and all blacks. Its goal, according to State Home Agent Lonnie I. Landrum, was to make “tenant families more self-sufficing.” During the Depression, agents encouraged farmers to cultivate year-round gardens, keep a cow and other food-producing livestock, and can vegetables and fruit to prevent families from seeking government assistance. This work received enthusiastic white support. Since southern cash crops remained labor-intensive into the 1940s, whites encouraged the Live-at-Home program. Some landlords required their tenants to enroll in “plantation programs.” More than 80 percent of those enrolled were black. White home demonstration agents in eight counties designed plantation programs to show “tenant families that in South Carolina it is possible for the low-income group of farmers to have balanced adequate diets, and better standards of living than they may now have.” The agents never discussed for-profit work, such as marketing surplus food, unless tenants specifically requested it.³⁵

In many ways the programs Paul and her agents carried out were similar to the plantation program or the Live-at-Home work. The general aims of South Carolina’s extension program were “proper and sufficient food for every family,” “appropriate and comfortable clothing,” “sanitary and attractive houses,” and “adequate cash income.” The order in which Paul presented her objectives for black demonstration work suggests that her priorities differed from those of white administrators. Her objectives were to achieve higher standards of living for rural families, to help rural families become self-supporting and independent, to enable farm families to live at home, and to ensure the proper condition of the soil. She also listed goals far beyond those described for plantation work, which included keeping “all children in school”; promoting “economical management, rural libraries, home ownership, [and] better education,” providing “marketing information and advantages,” and “instilling frugality.”³⁶

The agents, like other black elites, were well aware of the linkage between racism and the economic deprivation of rural blacks. Paul’s annual reports declare that whites intended blacks to be backward, turning back upon whites their own stereotypes of black inferiority. “The rural Negroes of South Carolina,” she conceded, “for the most part are ignorant, timid, unambitious, uncultured and poor.” Why? “*Ignorant* because of the deficient facilities of rural education, *timid* because of the brow-beating methods of his financial and intellectual superiors, *unambitious* because of his discouragements and discriminations, *uncultured* because of his lack of opportunity, his meager contacts and limited advantages, because of his

35. *Extension Work in South Carolina 1937: Review of Agricultural Progress* (Clemson, S.C.: Clemson Agricultural College, 1937), p. 104; *Extension Work in South Carolina 1938: Review of Agricultural Progress* (Clemson, S.C.: Clemson Agricultural College, 1938), pp. 128–29.

36. Paul, “Annual Report, Negro Home Demonstration Work 1937,” pp. 11–12.

illiteracy, his economic inefficiency and his confined benefits.³⁷ She concluded, "The rural Negro is not shiftless" as was so often claimed in the "propaganda of those wishing to exploit him. . . . He has been, however, a victim of circumstances."³⁸

When white southerners attempted to blame South Carolina's blacks for the state's lack of progress, Paul responded in a defensive salvo certainly reckless for her day:

No. 1. The Negro is not the problem, but rather the problem is the white man's attitude toward him. . . . Some, due to ignorance and circumstances are held almost in peonage. The poor, inadequate school facilities, plus the landlord's attitude toward education are partly responsible for the illiteracy among Negroes. The great majority of the people with whom we work . . . are a people forgotten by many. Nevertheless, they are individual beings with hopes and longings. It is true that many of these people have accepted the dreary existence that seems to be the lot of the Negro sharecropper, perhaps because that seems to be the simplest and easiest solution to an almost useless struggle.³⁹

Paul's reports also show that she and her agents encouraged resistance to the status quo. For example, she noted that many black children had misshapen feet caused by ill-fitting shoes, and she encouraged their parents to buy shoes only in stores that permitted them to try them on first, even though such a demand violated the standard practice of white merchants.⁴⁰

When the United States entered World War II, Paul used the occasion to demonstrate the contradiction between fighting for foreign freedoms while blacks were denied freedom in America. "The Negro stands ready, as always, to serve his country," she wrote in 1941. "And the Negro Home Demonstration agents of South Carolina have pledged themselves to wage war against ignorance, hatred, poverty, and indolence." In her plan of work for 1945 Paul wrote that blacks "see a ray of hope for liberation from economic slavery, from tenancy, from ignorance—they have hope for the 'four freedoms.'"⁴¹

In the immediate postwar years Paul continued her outspoken push for a better life for South Carolina blacks. "Education, the recent war where many of our boys gave their lives, and the plea for democracy and world

37. Paul, "Annual Narrative Report, Negro Home Demonstration Work, 1937–8," p. 1.

38. *Ibid.*

39. Paul, "South Carolina Narrative Annual Report, 1938–39," p. 1.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 101; Marian B. Paul, "South Carolina Narrative Annual Report, 1940–1941," p. 116, Box 7, Agricultural Extension, Field Operations, Clemson.

41. Marian B. Paul, "South Carolina Annual Narrative Report, 1939–1940, of Marian B. Paul," p. 1, Box 14, Agricultural Extension, Field Operations, Clemson; Paul, "Plan of Work, 1945," p. 2, Box 9, *ibid.*

peace, have made the Negro dissatisfied with the status quo," she declared in her 1948 annual report. "For eighty-two years," she wrote, "he [the Negro] has 'with crumbs from the table' patiently waited for a better opportunity, for justice, for citizenship. . . . Now, with recent court actions a new era is approaching."⁴²

Times were changing. By 1949 the white primary had been successfully challenged in South Carolina and other southern states, and President Harry Truman had issued his executive order to desegregate the military. Yet these victories created a backlash. Paul noted that Clarendon County had discontinued its appropriation and forbidden the continuation of black extension work because the state senator representing that county was "annoyed by political trends."⁴³ In the face of the backlash, intensified by the rise of anticommunism and the McCarthy witch-hunts, Paul muted her criticisms. After 1949 her annual reports, once outspoken, became more cautious and circumspect. They provide examples, both distinct and subtle, of the increasing pressure brought to bear on southern black leadership as the South closed ranks in the face of pressure to desegregate.

During the early 1950s, Governor James F. Byrnes determined to stave off federal intervention by making separate but equal a reality. The state built new schools for black children. Black extension workers also benefited. For several years Paul had requested more administrative staff. In 1954 extension officials approved a position for a second assistant supervisor. Paul also tried to get a 4-H club leader for blacks, but rather than hire another person, extension officials changed the second assistant supervisor's title to Negro girls' 4-H leader. Some counties scrambled to hire black home agents. In 1954 Chesterfield and Clarendon counties paid the full salary of an agent even though no matching funds were available.⁴⁴ The fact that *Brown v. Board of Education* (of which *Briggs v. Elliott*, a case originating in Clarendon County, formed a part) was being deliberated by the Supreme Court probably influenced that county delegation's change in attitude.

In Paul's estimation, black demonstration agents' ultimate goal was to change rural blacks' behavior to encourage them "to assume responsibilities which will enlarge their capacities and fit them for worthwhile citizenship." Paul claimed that the agents exerted a strong influence on black leadership and on their clients as well. The respect the agents enjoyed in their communities, she suggested, made them models of conduct. "It is, therefore, [the agent's] duty to direct all of her clear thinking into channels for harmony, progress and for the well being of the nation. She must be alert

42. Marian B. Paul, "Plan of Work, 1948," pp. 7, 9–10, 13, Box 28, Agricultural Extension, Official Operations, Clemson.

43. Paul, "South Carolina Annual Narrative Report, 1948," p. 6.

44. Marian B. Paul, "Annual Narrative Report, Home Demonstration Work among Negroes in South Carolina, 1954," p. 6, Box 129, Agricultural Extension, Field Operations, Clemson.

to sense danger and tactful not to offend." This theme of controlling public sentiment appears consistently in Paul's annual reports. Some clients perhaps perceived the agent's work as social control. Paul wrote that agents "must not become discouraged when [rural blacks] doubted their sincerity and leadership."⁴⁵ It is also evident from her narratives that she believed black South Carolinians should be accorded more equality in society. She wrote of the importance of teaching blacks to learn to "respect the rights, privileges, and properties of others," but she also suggested the importance of providing equality to all citizens. The home agent's task was to help blacks understand "county, state national and international affairs" so that they, and the United States, could take their place in the new order.⁴⁶

As the southern social system came under greater attack during the mid-1950s, extension officials retaliated by reducing the autonomy of black extension workers. After 1954 Paul no longer went to county legislative delegations to request appropriations for agents. Rather, she met with white supervisors to discuss the merits of each funding request. Those deemed acceptable were sent on to Clemson, where the Board of Trustees reviewed them. After that review, the state director submitted all approved requests to the legislature. Paul's status had been reduced to the equivalent of a white district agent, the same as Fitzgerald's and Boston's status in the early 1920s. Until 1954 Paul had visited legislators to solicit funds for black home extension work as part of her job. In later reports she noted that if she felt it necessary to make a personal appeal, she was "granted that privilege." Paul continued to eschew overt political rhetoric. She wrote that her task was to convince county delegations that blacks "considered the economic problem #1."⁴⁷

45. Marian B. Paul, "South Carolina Annual Narrative Report, 1949," pp. 5, 24, 41, Box 158, Agricultural Extension, Field Operations, Clemson; Marian B. Paul, "Annual Report, County Home Demonstration Work, State of South Carolina, 1951," pp. 20, 32, 46, Box 17B, *ibid.*; Marian B. Paul, "Annual Report, County Home Demonstration Work, State of South Carolina, 1952," p. 37, Box P56, *ibid.*; Marian B. Paul, "Annual Narrative Report, Home Demonstration Work among Negroes in South Carolina, 1955," p. 40, Box 93, *ibid.*; Marian B. Paul, "Annual Report, Cooperative Extension Work, South Carolina, 1957, Home Demonstration Division, Negro Home Demonstration Work Project," p. 7, Box 101, Agricultural Extension, Field Operations, Clemson. Paul also stressed the need for racial harmony and cooperation between black and white extension agents. She repeatedly mentioned the lack of tension in the working relationships between white and black officials. Indeed, in one report she wrote that the black and white agents shared "bonds of friendship and mutual understanding . . . which, I dare say [are] not excelled elsewhere in the United States of America" (Paul, "Annual Narrative Report, Home Demonstration Work among Negroes in South Carolina, 1955," p. 17).

46. Paul, "South Carolina Annual Narrative Report, 1949," p. 17; Paul, "Annual Report, County Home Demonstration Work, 1951," p. 46; Paul, "Annual Narrative Report, Home Demonstration Work among Negroes in South Carolina, 1955," p. 40.

47. Paul, "Annual Narrative Report, Home Demonstration Work among Negroes in South Carolina, 1954," p. 5; Paul, "Annual Report, Cooperative Extension Work, 1957, Negro Home

By 1957 Clemson officials had completely implemented central planning at the county level. The white agricultural agent became the supervisor of all other agents in the county. Administrative requests from black home agents had to be approved by both the white home agent and the white agricultural agent. Paul wrote that this new system brought about more uniformity in delivering extension services, but at the same time it tended to “crush initiative” among black agents.⁴⁸ Extension professionals, like members of other government-dependent black professional classes, increasingly came under the scrutiny of white officials. These new restrictions must have been bitter for Paul to swallow. By 1959, sixty-three-year-old Marian Paul had had enough. She retired, stating that she had “worked long enough and wished to have peace and quiet.”⁴⁹

Two women who began work in the extension service in the late 1940s and early 1950s carried on the struggle for black rights within the extension program. Sara Aiken, who came into the extension service immediately after she received her B.S. in home economics from South Carolina State College in 1947, had worked in Darlington County for seven years before accepting a position at State College as assistant state supervisor in 1954. In 1955 she became Negro girls’ 4-H leader. Aiken did some postgraduate work, including summer study at Cornell University. In 1960 Aiken, by then Sara Waymer, succeeded Marian Paul as state supervisor of Negro work. Altamese B. Pough began work immediately after graduating from State College in 1951. She worked in Berkeley County until 1954, when she left extension work to have a child. She returned to work in Colleton County and later transferred to Berkeley County, where she remained until she was named state 4-H agent for girls in late 1961.⁵⁰

By the 1960s significant changes had occurred in the lives of rural blacks. Mechanization, begun in the mid-1940s, transformed black farm life. Mechanical cotton pickers alleviated whites’ needs for manual laborers. Blacks became expendable. Waymer noted that the home agent of the 1960s had to consider the changing trends that affected blacks’ lives in designing a program. The ills of the early part of the century had by no means been completely eradicated. But the average client of the 1960s was a “middle-class” farm wife who worked off the farm to supplement the family’s income. Although some of the drudgery of farm life had been eliminated, blacks still

Demonstration Work Project,” p. 19; Marian B. Paul, “Annual Narrative Report, Extension Work among Negroes in South Carolina,” 1956, p. 2.

48. Paul, “Annual Cooperative Extension Work, 1957, Negro Home Demonstration Work Project,” p. 19.

49. Marian B. Paul, Resignation form, November 10, 1959; Marian B. Paul to G. H. Bonnette, Administrative Assistant, December 18, 1959, Clemson.

50. Interview with Rosa Odum, Altamese B. Pough, and Sara A. Waymer, retired home demonstration agents, Orangeburg, South Carolina, July 1988, pp. 2–3.

struggled against the same kinds of oppression that had existed since Reconstruction. It remained the task of the agent of the 1960s, wrote Waymer, to “enlighten our people from economic, educational and social bondage.”⁵¹

By 1960 the route to enlightenment was political. Extension officials, like other black state civil service employees in the South, found themselves in a precarious position. Any person who openly advocated or participated in civil rights protests would, in all probability, lose his or her job. In the 1950s, Clemson officials inaugurated a policy prohibiting agents from becoming involved in political organizations. Black agents had to sign a letter stating whether they belonged to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The wise agent was not a member. According to Pough, extension officials insisted the NAACP was “subversive” and “communist-inspired.” She believed that these McCarthy-era charges prevented black extension agents from participating in the organization’s civil rights activities.⁵²

The 1960s proved a difficult time for home extension workers, especially those on the front lines of integration like Waymer and Pough. The NAACP had not only challenged the separate school system in South Carolina in the *Briggs* case, but its Legal Defense Fund lawyers had also challenged the unequal salaries of black teachers and included black extension agents in that challenge. By the 1960s the NAACP used legal means to force the extension service to open its files. As the disparities of the segregated system came under further attack, southern state directors coordinated resistance efforts. At their 1961 meeting the directors discussed the pressure the NAACP was putting on the administration of President John Kennedy to integrate extension work. South Carolina extension officials hurried to upgrade facilities and training in an attempt to avoid integration. They even removed the word “Negro,” which black agents had been required to include in their titles since the 1920s.⁵³

In South Carolina the transition to integration was not easy, even though Clemson had managed to integrate the student body without violence in 1963. Pough recalled that at a staff meeting George Nutt, the director of extension work, had told her “there’s nothing in the law that says you have to have black extension workers.” She responded, “That may not be, but

51. Sara A. Waymer, “Annual Cooperative Extension Work, South Carolina, 1960, Home Demonstration Division, Negro Home Demonstration Work Project,” p. 8, Box 31, Agricultural Extension, Field Operations, Clemson.

52. Interview with Rosa Odum et al., pp. 35–36; *Clemson University Extension Service: Some Notes and Statistics Relating to Negro Participation* (Frogmore, S.C.: Penn Community Services, 1967), p. 12.

53. Interview with Rosa Odum et al., pp. 35–36; “Southern Directors, Minutes of Meetings, September 11–13, 1961,” pp. 7–8, Box 4, Agricultural Extension, Field Operations, Southern Directors, Clemson.

inasmuch as you have them you have to do something about them.” After the Civil Rights Act passed in 1964 and it became evident that the extension program had to integrate, Nutt called the white agents to Clemson College and told them about the law. But integration did not follow immediately. When Clemson president Robert C. Edwards found out that integration had not occurred, he made extension officials summon all agents—black and white—to Clemson on a Sunday to explain the integration process. Edwards even attended the meeting at which the extension officials explained the changes.⁵⁴

Waymer and Pough made the “historic” move to Clemson when extension was integrated, both at great personal cost. Waymer brought her six-year-old daughter, but her husband remained in Orangeburg. Pough left her daughter in the care of a housekeeper. Waymer recalled that she and Harvey Gantt, who had sued the school for admission and successfully matriculated in 1963, were the first blacks on campus. “As I look back on it now, I was a pioneer,” she said. After two years Waymer returned to Orangeburg, where she continued to work for the extension service until she retired in 1978. Pough went to Clemson in 1966 and resigned from the service after one year. She returned to Orangeburg to raise her daughter. She later recalled, “I thought about it [moving 130 miles to Clemson] long and hard because I did have a child. But I felt like, in a way, that I was sort of obligated to go for many reasons. . . . I wanted to see firsthand what it would be like.”⁵⁵

Whites punished blacks—sometimes intentionally, sometimes unconsciously—for seeking full participation in the extension program. Both Waymer and Pough experienced subtle discrimination at Clemson. Pough recalled that when she spoke to whites she met in the halls or in the lounge, on numerous occasions they would open their mouths to speak but nothing came out. Pough felt “sorry” for the whites; “I guess they really hated themselves for not being able to relate.” There was also discrimination in the job assignments that Waymer and Pough were given at Clemson. Their assignments, according to Pough, were “simple things.” They spent a great deal of their time judging contests.⁵⁶

White officials used integration as an excuse to demote and dismiss black agents. Extension officials had already begun to decrease the number of black agents by 1959. In that year Clemson administrators cut four positions from the black home demonstration service. After Marian Paul retired, they eliminated the position of assistant state supervisor, as well as two agent and one assistant agent positions. Extension officials justified the cuts by pointing out that the black farm population had declined and arguing that

54. Interview with Rosa Odum et al., pp. 7–8, 53.

55. *Ibid.*, pp. 2–3, 5, 51.

56. *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 52.

“because their work is restricted to Negro farm families, in some counties their work-load may become too small to justify them.”⁵⁷

By late 1961 extension officials devised a new organizational chart that reinforced the racial hierarchy. At the administrative level Waymer’s title became assistant in home economics and Pough’s title changed to assistant girls 4-H club agent. The changes followed the same pattern at the county level. In every county, regardless of the black agent’s years of experience and training, a white home agent became the senior or supervisory home economics agent. In seventeen counties black assistant or associate agents had more experience than their white supervisors. Thirteen white women who were appointed supervisory home agents had between zero and four years’ experience. Blacks were designated “associate or assistant” depending on the number of years in the service and received a salary \$700 lower than that of white agents with the same title. Table 10.2 shows some of the more egregious examples of the disparity between the years of experience of the black agents and those of their white supervisors. Twenty-five of the thirty-four black agents had more experience than their white counterparts, yet not one was appointed the head agent in her county.⁵⁸

Passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 gave the agents an effective weapon with which to defend their rights. By 1966 both Pough and Waymer

TABLE 10.2. Comparison of the years of work experience of supervising agents and their subordinates

County	Supervising agent (white)	Assistant or associate agent (black)
County 3	8	21
County 33	2	16
County 15	4	9
County 18	4	18
County 26	3	17
County 27	1	20
County 29	2	23
County 35	4	30

57. “Organization of the Clemson College Extension Service in Districts and Counties of South Carolina,” ca. 1962, pp. 2, 6, Box 3, Agricultural Extension, Field Operations, J. K. Williams, “Report on Extension Work, 1960,” pp. 6–7, Box 2, *ibid.*; George B. Nutt to Robert C. Edwards, December 27, 1961, Box 1, *ibid.*

58. Clemson University officials attempted to legitimate these disparities by employing a rating system instituted in 1962. The 0–4 ranking system (four being the highest) supposedly provided merit raises to university employees. While nearly 87 percent of all agents got a rating of 3 or 4 (65.6 percent and 21 percent respectively) only 46 percent of black agents got that rating (45 percent and 1.4 percent respectively). Nearly half, 48 percent, of the black agents received a rating of 2 while only 13.4 percent of white agents received that rating. No white agent received a rating below 2 but three black agents received a 1 and one agent a 0 rating. The rating

had tested the effectiveness of the new law. At a state extension meeting held at the Wade Hampton Hotel in Columbia, a waitress refused to serve Pough. After talking it over with her husband, she wrote to the hotel manager and sent copies to Nutt, President Edwards at Clemson, and her other immediate supervisors. In her letter she threatened to sue the hotel for punitive damages. Nutt responded by trying to intimidate her, but Pough recalled, "I didn't back down not one iota from the director." Nutt talked to the management at the hotel, and Pough received a profuse letter of apology. Nevertheless, she recalled the episode as a "humiliating experience." "I guess you learn to be thick-skinned," she concluded. "I knew it was a new experience for them. . . . I usually tried to be tolerant."⁵⁹

Sara Waymer became a "watchdog" for civil rights violations out of personal conviction and at some professional risk. "I had a strong feeling that 'right is right,' I hoped that if we pointed out that a black agent was being treated unfairly that the federal authorities would back us up." When she went to work at Clemson, Waymer often found that the extension program operated contrary to federal law. But although she and Pough pointed out violations of the law, extension officials responded that they would continue their programs until they were legally challenged.⁶⁰

Before Waymer left State College to move to Clemson in 1965, she began a log of the adjustments Clemson officials would need to implement to comply with the Civil Rights Act of 1964. She kept the log during the two years she worked at Clemson. The list covered all aspects of the extension program. Waymer's notations indicate that extension officials not only failed to make equal opportunity a reality, but that some of the overt vestiges of racial segregation, such as separate entrances for blacks and whites, also remained in place.⁶¹

Waymer trusted in federal authorities to support her and push for integration. In September 1966 she complained to the Justice Department about an agent who was being treated poorly in one lower-state county. Federal officials came to South Carolina to interview the agent's clients and spent two weeks in the state before Clemson officials became aware that an investigation was under way. When the investigators came to Clemson, they interviewed Pough, who had worked with the agent at one time during the

system may also explain the disparity between black and white salaries despite the adjustments made in the 1950s. See *Clemson University Extension Service*, p. 12.

59. Interview with Rosa Odum et al., pp. 13–16.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 17; telephone conversation with Sara Waymer, May 24, 1993.

61. Interview with Rosa Odum et al., pp. 6–7; "Checklist of Adjustments by Clemson University Extension Service to Comply with Civil Rights Law of 1964," December 30, 1964 (copy marked by Sara Waymer in the author's possession).

1950s. The complaint succeeded, and the agent enjoyed a long career in the extension service. That a black agent could successfully protest unfair treatment marked a “revolution in extension [work],” according to Pough.⁶²

Integration, however, did not always work to the benefit of black extension. When she retired in 1959, Marian Paul said that her only regret was that she had not succeeded in having an agent appointed to every county. Her dream was never fulfilled. Indeed postintegration policies worked to erase many vestiges of black institution-building. Some of the projects and organizations that represented decades of labor for black home demonstration were absorbed; most were eliminated. The camps that black home and agricultural agents personally constructed and paid for were turned over to counties for their use or fell into decay. When asked if the fight for integration was worth it, Pough responded: “That all depends on how you look at it. I’ll have to say it like that because there are some things that were worthwhile that went out of existence—were not continued and yet other things came in. . . . It all depends on how you look at it. But I think, oh I would think overall, that it was more beneficial.”⁶³

The black home extension program left many legacies. The agents encouraged 4-H club members, boys and girls, to attend college. Agents established a 4-H student loan program through which club members could borrow money to attend State College. Agent Cammie F. Clagett of Spartanburg County influenced several of her students to attend the college. Pough took State College students into her home, where they worked for their upkeep when they could not afford to live on campus. Many of these 4-H club members went on to hold professional positions in a variety of fields. Club elections, in use since the early 1920s, familiarized blacks with the democratic process and developed leadership skills. Pough noted that as a result of politicking for statewide offices, club members learned lessons that helped them as they moved into government.⁶⁴

These activities and lessons were not the expected outcomes of the Live-at-Home program. Despite the efforts of whites to keep blacks in an economically subordinate position and outside the political arena, agents helped their clients to challenge and not just to survive the system. Waymer recognized that agents were more than just extension workers. “We were leaders in the community. And we did as much on Sunday as on Monday.” When state officials forbade agents to organize politically or push openly for integration, they acquiesced, but through the grass-roots leaders they had trained, they encouraged others to carry on the fight. Although they

62. Interview with Rosa Odum et al., pp. 11–12.

63. *Ibid.*, pp. 55–61.

64. *Ibid.*, pp. 40–44.

stood in the shadows of pro-integration leadership, black agents had prepared the troops for battle. Indeed, one might argue that the program ultimately succeeded in its own demise. Although integration by no means signified full citizenship, Paul's declaration that "an enlightened people could save themselves" had certainly been demonstrated.