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# A Revisionist History of Andrew Carnegie's Library Grants to Black Colleges

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## *Chapter 1*

### **A REVISIONIST HISTORY OF ANDREW CARNEGIE'S LIBRARY GRANTS TO BLACK COLLEGES**

**Shaundra Walker**

#### **Introduction**

For American libraries and their constituents, philanthropy has been a significant influence. This has been especially true for African Americans in their pursuit of access to the library and the benefits associated with such access. While philanthropy has the potential to do enormous good, because such donations often reflect the values and interests of the benefactor, it also has the potential to do harm. Using critical race theory (CRT) as an analytical framework, this essay explores the role of philanthropy on the provision of academic library buildings for Black colleges. Specifically, it reviews several of the fourteen academic library buildings provided by Andrew Carnegie (and later the Carnegie Foundation) on Black college campuses.

Within the literature of library science, rarely has the embedded normal nature of racism been challenged. Our discipline is replete with “stock stories,” or narratives that explain the lack of racial progress in libraries in ways that affirm the prevailing culture. For example, most treatments of philanthropists’ contributions to libraries have failed to critique their positions on matters of race and social class and the

degree to which their donations reflected and strengthened existing class structures. This should not be surprising because, according to Richard Delgado, one of the primary architects of CRT, “racism is an ingrained feature of our landscape, it looks ordinary and natural to persons in the culture.”<sup>1</sup> This essay seeks to present a revisionist view of Carnegie’s library building grants to Black colleges, offering a counterstory to the prevailing narrative. Using a range of primary resources, it will argue that a critical view of industrial philanthropists’ influence on African American library access provides a prime example of the workings of Whiteness, “an ideology based on beliefs, values, behaviors, habits and attitudes, which result in the unequal distribution of power and privilege based on skin colour.”<sup>2</sup>

## Theoretical Framework

CRT is an appropriate analytical framework to explore and critique the allocation of resources, such as those provided by access to the library. Emerging in the mid-1970s out of critical legal studies (CLS), a movement that rejected the belief that the law was neutral, CRT uses race and racism as central points of analysis. Defining racism as “a structure in society that systematically advantages Whites and disadvantages people of color,”<sup>3</sup> CRT uses several key tenets or characteristics: the embedded normal nature of racism, the permanence of racism, a critique of liberalism, interest convergence, Whiteness as property, storytelling, and the goal of dismantling racism.<sup>4</sup> This essay will utilize Whiteness as property and interest convergence to bound an analytical framework

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1. Richard Delgado, *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1995), xiv.

2. “Understanding Whiteness,” University of Calgary, last accessed November 9, 2016, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/cared/whiteness>.

3. Sherry Marx, “Critical Race Theory,” in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, ed. Lisa M. Given (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2008), 163.

4. *Ibid.*

for reconsidering the role of philanthropy as it has historically shaped African Americans' relationship with and access to libraries.

CRT posits that the dominant group, in this case Whites, only permits racial progress when such progress also results in benefits for Whites. This tenet, interest convergence, is most notably associated with the *Brown v. Board of Education* case. Legal scholar Derrick Bell, in introducing CRT, opines as follows: "Civil rights advances for blacks always seemed to coincide with changing economic conditions and the self-interest of elite whites. Sympathy, mercy, and evolving standards of social decency and conscience amounted to little, if anything."<sup>5</sup> Another tenet that proves useful for this essay is the concept of Whiteness as property. Legal scholar Cheryl I. Harris explains the tenant this way:

As whiteness is simultaneously an aspect of identity and a property interest, it is something that can both be experienced and deployed as a resource. Whiteness can move from being a passive characteristic as an aspect of identity to an active entity that—like other types of property—is used to fulfill the will and to exercise power. The state's official recognition of a racial identity that subordinated Blacks and of privileged rights in property based on race elevated whiteness from a passive attribute to an object of law and a resource deployable at the social, political, and institutional level to maintain control.<sup>6</sup>

Library philanthropist Carnegie was familiar with the value of the property interest inherent within Whiteness. In speaking about the history and appropriateness of manual labor for African Americans, he opined that "there is no objection to negroes being craftsmen thruout the South because under slavery the clever slaves did the larger part of such work, white craftsmen being few. Manual labor was only for slaves. Poor whites were above that degradation. They were poor, but gentlemen – at least they were white."<sup>7</sup>

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5. Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 46.

6. Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (1993): 1734, doi:10.2307/1341787.

7. Andrew Carnegie, *The Negro in America: An Address Delivered Before the Philosophical Institution of Edinburgh, 16th October 1907* (Cheyney, PA: Committee of

The Whiteness as property tenet is based on the belief that being White affords one with inalienable and unearned rights, one of which is the right to exclude, as illustrated by Carnegie's quote above. The degree to which the exclusionary rights inherent within Whiteness operated within the Carnegie academic library grants to Black colleges has yet to be explored.

## Background and Context

A fuller understanding of the problem necessitates placing this topic within the context of educational history, specifically the history of Black higher education. As noted by Freeda Brook, Dave Ellenwood, and Althea Eannace Lazzaro, "academic libraries, as products and representations of their parent institutions, are situated within the well-documented systemic and institutional racism of higher education in the United States."<sup>8</sup>

Gaining a more useful understanding of the impact of philanthropists' contributions to the library field requires acknowledging the fact that their curiosity in Black academic libraries was secondary to their primary interest, which was to influence—and according to some, control—African American education and labor. Therefore, exploring this problem requires a detour into the history of education for African Americans, particularly higher education as represented in the historically Black college/university (HBCU).

### *Historically Black Colleges and Universities*

According to the Higher Education Act of 1965, HBCUs are accredited higher education institutions founded prior to the Civil Rights Act

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Twelve for the Advancement of the Interests of the Negro Race, 1908), 27.

8. Freeda Brook, Dave Ellenwood, and Althea Eannace Lazzaro, "In Pursuit of Antiracist Social Justice: Denaturalizing Whiteness in the Academic Library," *Library Trends* 64 no. 2 (2015): 246, doi:10.1353/lib.2015.0048

of 1964 with the expressed purpose of educating African Americans.<sup>9</sup> Today, there are 103 HBCUs; only two, Wilberforce University and Lincoln University, were founded prior to emancipation.

Historians generally divide Black higher education history into distinct time periods, each of which has been shaped by the hand of philanthropy. The first period, usually spanning from emancipation to Reconstruction, is marked by the interest and involvement of White Christian missionary philanthropists and African American church denominations.<sup>10</sup> Although these groups were not universally in agreement on all matters, they were united in their belief in the intellectual ability of African Americans and the appropriateness of a classical education, modeled after the liberal arts schools of the day, to uplift their race. They envisioned the development of a “talented tenth” of leaders who would guide others within their race.<sup>11</sup> While these schools offered some industrial course work and many started off only offering a grade school education, such offerings were not at the expense of a classical education. In the estimation of Christian missionary philanthropists and African American denominations, a curriculum including languages, mathematics, science, history, and philosophy was necessary to develop the mind of this new Black leadership.<sup>12</sup>

Following Reconstruction, Black higher education experienced its next phase, which lasted through the end of the World War I. Although the second phase was similar to the first in that it was also marked by philanthropy, it was distinct in that the philanthropy was driven by a different set of benefactors with different values, beliefs, and interests. The Christian missionary philanthropists and African American denominations were overshadowed by a powerful and resourceful group of White

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9. Higher Education Act of 1965, Pub. L. No 89-329, 79 Stat. 1219 (1965).

10. James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 240.

11. J. M. Stephen Peeps, “Northern Philanthropy and Black Higher Education – Do Gooders, Compromisers, or Co-Conspirators?” *Journal of Negro Education* 50, no. 3 (1981): 255-56, doi:10.2307/2295156.

12. *Ibid*, 244.

industrial philanthropists. Historian J. M. Stephen Peeps maintains that this second period of philanthropy was distinguished from the first by “its tendency to accommodate the wishes of white supremacy.”<sup>13</sup>

### *The Industrial Philanthropists*

The turn of the century saw the birth of the first major industrial philanthropy, the General Education Board (GEB), which was established in 1902 through a \$1 million donation from John D. Rockefeller, Jr. The board, which consisted of “all white businessmen, educators, and clergymen,”<sup>14</sup> is said to have had more influence over African American education than any of its contemporaries; of the \$325 million it contributed to education before it ceased to operate in 1960, \$63 million went toward improving education for African Americans.<sup>15</sup> The GEB is said to have held “virtual monopolistic control of educational philanthropy for the South and for the Negro.”<sup>16</sup>

The sentiment of some key representatives of the GEB provides insight into their beliefs, values, behaviors, habits, and attitudes regarding African Americans. GEB member and president William H. Baldwin, Jr. had this to say about African Americans in 1899: “The Negro should not be educated out of his environment. Industrial work is his salvation; he must work . . . at trades and on the land . . . Except in the rarest of instances, I am bitterly opposed to the so-called higher education for Negroes.”<sup>17</sup> J. M. L. Curry, a GEB board member from the South who was previously involved with the Peabody Education Fund, shared a similar perspective: “The White people are to be the leaders, to have the

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13. *Ibid.*, 256.

14. Waldemar A. Nielsen, *The Big Foundations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 334.

15. *Encyclopedia of African-American Education*, s.v., “General Education Board.”

16. Louis Harlan, *Separate and Unequal: Public School Campaigns and Racism in the Southern Seaboard States, 1901-1915* (New York: Athenum, 1968), 86.

17. Nielsen, *The Big Foundations*, 355.

initiative, to have the directive control in all matters pertaining to civilization and the highest interests of our beloved land. History demonstrates that the Caucasian will rule. He ought to rule. This white supremacy does not mean hostility to the Negro, but friendship to him.”<sup>18</sup>

Dr. Wallace Buttrick, who served as the first executive leader of the GEB was in agreement: “The Negro is an inferior race . . . The Anglo-Saxon is superior. There cannot be any question about that.”<sup>19</sup>

Although he did not use such strong language, Carnegie expressed a similar opinion. Speaking in 1903, he said:

We cannot produce cotton enough for the entire world. We should be in the position in which South Africa is today but for the faithful, placable, peaceful, industrious, lovable colored man; for industrious and peaceful he is compared with any other body of colored men on the earth—not up to the standards of the colder North in continuous effort, but far in advance of any corresponding class anywhere. South Africa has just had to admit contracted Chinese workers, although there are between five and six million or colored people who will not work. We should be in the same position but for our colored people, who constitute one of the most valuable assets of the Republic, viewed from an economic standpoint. It is certain we must grow more cotton to meet the demands of the world, or endanger our practical monopoly of that indispensable article. Either the efforts of Europe will be successful to grow in other parts, even at a greater cost for a time, or the world will learn to substitute something else for it. We cannot afford to lose the Negro. We have urgent need of all and of more. Let us therefore turn our efforts to making the best of him.<sup>20</sup>

In a classic manifestation of Whiteness, the industrial philanthropists’ collective behavior resulted in the very “unequal distribution of power and privilege based on skin colour” that is inherent in the ideology.<sup>21</sup> Beginning in the 1880s and continuing until after World War I, they

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18. *Ibid.*, 355.

19. *Ibid.*

20. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks*, 92-93.

21. “Understanding Whiteness,” University of Calgary.

practiced an informal policy of “fiscal disinterest” in Black colleges that did not embrace an industrial educational curriculum.<sup>22</sup> This powerful group, which included Carnegie and the Carnegie Foundation, was unified in their beliefs about Black education and worked collectively to promote an industrial-vocational model for African Americans.<sup>23</sup> The evidence to support such a claim is difficult to refute. In 1915, the two Black colleges that most strongly identified with the industrial education model, Hampton Institute and Tuskegee Institute, possessed endowments of \$2.7 and \$1.9 million respectively. Collectively, their endowments totaled more than half of the endowments of all the Black private colleges combined. Ten years later, Hampton Institute, the prototype for industrial Black higher education and a favorite of the industrial philanthropists, boasted an endowment of \$8.5 million, making it first among Black colleges and seventeenth among the 176 colleges in the United States holding an endowment of more than \$7 million.<sup>24</sup>

Although it was strongly supported by industrial philanthropists, the industrial-vocational educational model did not go unchallenged. A network of private Black liberal arts colleges was chiefly responsible for Black higher education between Reconstruction and the Great Depression. Despite the fact that sixteen Black land-grant colleges and seven Black public colleges were established between 1870 and 1915, the schools existed as colleges in name only. As late as 1917, only one of the Southern Black land grants offered college-level classes.<sup>25</sup> Supporters of a classically-oriented model of education were outspoken in their beliefs about its appropriateness for African Americans. In the May 11, 1901 issue of *Outlook*, James G. Merrill, president of Fisk Institute (later Fisk University), a private Black liberal arts college, described the need for classical education this way: “When the time comes that White students who planned to become teachers, doctors, lawyers, ministers

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22. Peeps, “Northern Philanthropy,” 261.

23. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks*, 247.

24. Peeps, “Northern Philanthropy,” 262.

25. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks*, 238.

and professors should learn to hoe and plow and lay bricks rather than go to literary and classical schools, it will be the right policy to shut off all of our literary and classical schools for Negroes in the South.”<sup>26</sup>

It must be acknowledged that, although the industrial philanthropists preferred industrial-vocational education for the masses of the African American race, they conceded that a limited number of leaders, such as teachers, doctors, and ministers, were both necessary and allowable. While speaking on the status of the “Negro” in Edinburgh, Scotland, Carnegie described the proper balance between Black manual laborers and Black professionals as follows:

All the signs are encouraging, never so much so as to-day. One is quite justified in being sanguine that the result is to be a respectable, educated, intelligent race of colored citizens, increasing in numbers, possess of all civil rights, and who in return will by honest labor remain notably the chief factor in giving the world among other things its indispensable supply of cotton and, to no inconsiderable extent, of the products of cotton, while individual members gifted beyond the mass will worthily fill places in all of the professions. Nor will the race fail to be distinguished? from time to time in the future as in the past by the advent of great men, fit successors of Frederick Douglas and Booker Washington.<sup>27</sup>

A few schools that could develop teachers, ministers, and doctors were therefore necessary, but industrial-vocational education was the preferred path for the masses of African Americans.

The philosophical struggle regarding African American education has been personified by the beliefs of two African American leaders, Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois. A formerly enslaved man born in 1850 in Virginia, Washington was educated at Hampton Institute, the model industrial-vocational school for Blacks. His autobiography, *Up from Slavery*, details his experience pulling himself up by his bootstraps. In 1881, Samuel Chapman Armstrong recommended Washington to serve

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26. James G. Merrill, “Literary Education for the Negro,” *Outlook*, May 11, 1904.

27. Carnegie, *The Negro in America*, 30-31.

as the first leader of Tuskegee Institute, an industrial-vocational school modeled after Hampton. Based largely on his experience at Hampton, Washington argued that an industrial-vocational education was best suited for the masses of the descendants of a formerly enslaved people. In his infamous 1895 “Atlanta Exposition Speech,” which took place at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta, Washington explained the fate of African Americans this way:

Our greatest danger is, that in the great leap from slavery to freedom, we may overlook the fact that the masses of us are to live by the productions of our hands and fail to keep in mind that we shall prosper in proportion as we learn to dignify and glorify common labor and put brains and skill into the common occupations of life . . . no race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem.<sup>28</sup>

While Washington’s achievements are significant in their own right, a key factor in his rise to fame was the support of industrial philanthropists, including Carnegie and his ilk. The industrial philanthropists virtually developed Tuskegee Institute and played the central role in propelling Washington onto the national scene as the new leader of the Black race.<sup>29</sup> In 1903, the president of the GEB, James Baldwin, was a central figure in helping Washington secure a \$600,000 endowment from Carnegie. Carnegie was impressed with Washington’s story and the work he performed to develop Tuskegee into a model industrial-vocational school. He described Washington as “the modern Moses, who leads his race and lifts it through Education, to even better and higher things than a land overflowing with milk and honey. History is to tell of two Washingtons, one white, the other black, both Fathers of their people. I am satisfied that the serious problem of the South is to be solved wisely only through Mr. Washington’s policy of Education.”<sup>30</sup>

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28. Booker T. Washington, “Atlanta Exposition Speech” (speech, Cotton States and International Exposition, Atlanta, GA, September 18, 1895).

29. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks*, 103.

30. Andrew Carnegie to William Henry Baldwin, Jr., April 17, 1903, in *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, ed. Louis R. Harlan (Urbana: University of Illinois

Famed historian and sociologist W. E. B. DuBois emerged as the Black antithesis to Washington's beliefs regarding industrial-vocational education for Blacks. Born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts in 1868 and a graduate of Fisk, DuBois was the first African American to earn a doctorate from Harvard. He maintained that a classical, liberal arts education, one that would prepare a "talented-tenth" for leadership roles within their communities, was necessary for African Americans to improve their place in society. In contrast to Washington's argument in the "Atlanta Compromise," DuBois advocated for equal rights for African Americans.

In addition to their contrasting views on education for African Americans, DuBois and Washington had conflicting beliefs about the role of philanthropy in Black education. Suspicious of their motives, DuBois was an outspoken critic of the industrial philanthropists throughout his career, reflecting late in his life that "education is not and should not be a private philanthropy; it is a public service and whenever it becomes a gift of the rich it is in danger."<sup>31</sup>

These divergent philosophies would not only influence the trajectory of African American higher education, but would also significantly shape the industrial foundations' interest in and influence on academic libraries for African Americans. The degree to which these philosophies influenced African American library access has not fully been explored.

### **Andrew Carnegie and the Black College Libraries**

Carnegie, the Scottish-born steel magnate, is perhaps the best-known library philanthropist. Initially on his own, and later through the charitable arm of his corporation, Carnegie is credited with establishing a large number of libraries throughout the United States. He is most often acclaimed for donating public library buildings, while his contributions

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Press, 1972-1989), 122.

31. W. E. B. DuBois, June 10, 1946, "The Future and Function of the Private Negro College," W.E.B. Du Bois Papers. Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

to build academic libraries are lesser known. Even more obscure are his donations of library buildings on the campuses of HBCUs. David Kaser provides the most thorough retelling of these donations, detailing Carnegie's library gifts to fourteen Black colleges between 1900 and 1907.<sup>32</sup>

When Carnegie began his academic library grant program in 1900, only sixty-two American colleges and universities possessed freestanding library buildings that were built specifically for that purpose.<sup>33</sup> The situation among Black colleges was even more dire; only four Black colleges, all private, possessed freestanding libraries at the turn of the century.<sup>34</sup> Each of these four libraries was funded through the donation of a wealthy White patron. To be clear, not one of the Black land-grant schools or Black state colleges had a dedicated library building in 1900. This lack of access is particularly significant because African Americans were barred by law from attending Southern White land-grant schools and White state colleges. It is fairly safe to say that at the turn of the century, the rights to grant, access, use, enjoy, and dispose of a freestanding academic library building were enjoyed almost exclusively by Whites. The Carnegie Library Grant program that started in 1900 followed this pattern; only fourteen of the 108 library buildings that were awarded went to Black colleges. More interesting still is the fact that among the fourteen, slightly more than one-third of the Black college library grant recipients leveraged the agency and influence of Washington.

It was under these conditions that Tuskegee's Washington became the first president of a Black college to secure a library building grant from Carnegie and one of the first, period.<sup>35</sup> When Carnegie's 1900 library donation to Tuskegee Institute is placed against the backdrop

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32. David Kaser, "Andrew Carnegie and the Black College Libraries," in *For the Good of the Order: Essays in Honor of Edward G. Holley*, ed. Edward G. Holley and Delmus Eugene Williams (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1994), 131.

33. *Ibid.*, 119

34. *Ibid.* The HBCUs with freestanding libraries in 1900 were Lincoln University (PA), St. Augustine's College, Claflin College, and Hampton Institute. Notable among these is the Collis P. Huntington Library at Hampton, a \$100,000 gift of the railroad tycoon's widow following his death in 1900.

35. *Ibid.*, 121.

of Black higher education, his selection of the industrial-vocational institution as the first of the Black colleges to receive a freestanding library building takes on a deeper meaning. In his request to Carnegie for the Tuskegee library grant, Washington played on the millionaire's beliefs about the value of Black labor by stating: "All the work for the building, such as brickmaking, brickmasonry, carpentry, blacksmithing, etc., would be done by the students. The money which you would give would not only supply the building, but the erection of the building would give a large number of students an opportunity to learn the building trades, and the students would use the money paid to them to keep themselves in school."<sup>36</sup>

Washington was not content to gain a library for Tuskegee alone. In a letter encouraging another Black college president, Henry W. Goler of Livingstone College, to apply, he described his interest in Carnegie's library grant program as follows: "I am very anxious that while Mr. Carnegie is giving away his money that our race be benefited as much as possible."<sup>37</sup> Washington remained true to his word, assisting Atlanta, Benedict, Fisk, Livingstone, Wilberforce, and Wiley in their successful applications for Carnegie library building grants. He understood well the power of Whiteness, was able to tap into it due to his affiliation with the industrial philanthropists, and used it to his and his allies' benefit when he could. In general, Black colleges were able to tap into the resources of industrial philanthropists when they could affirm that their interests converged with those of the industrial philanthropists. As illustrated above, when it came to academic library buildings, assurance of philosophical alignment would often come through the endorsement of Washington, the leading Black advocate for industrial-vocational education.

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36. Booker T. Washington to Andrew Carnegie, December 15, 1900, Carnegie Corporation of New York Records. Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Columbia University Libraries, Series II.A.1.b Reel 39.

37. Booker T. Washington to William Harvey Goler, July 4, 1904, Carnegie Corporation of New York Records. Series II.A.1.b. Reel 38.

Another example of the of the exclusionary power of Whiteness as it operated within the Carnegie library building grant program is the difficulty that several of the Black colleges faced in meeting the matching requirement of the grants. In addition to leveraging their relationship with Washington to obtain library grants, several schools also received his help in having Carnegie's matching requirement waived. For example, at Fisk, which received a building grant in 1905, the Carnegie library building initiative languished for two years because the school could not make the match. Washington, whose wife Margaret James Murray Washington was a Fiskite, convinced Carnegie's secretary, James Bertram, to waive the matching requirement. Likewise, when private Wiley College struggled to come up with the necessary endowment to match Carnegie's gift, Washington interceded, mentioning that his own secretary, Emmett J. Scott, was an alumnus of the school and that Wiley was worthy of investment. Although the schools did not receive intervention from Washington, Carnegie library buildings at Cheyney and Johnson C. Smith also languished as the schools struggled to come up with their portions of the match.

Certainly Washington's ability to persuade Carnegie to forego the matching requirement illustrates both his influence on Carnegie and Carnegie's confidence in his recommendations. Yet the need for such intervention also reveals much about the financial status of the classically-oriented Black colleges that required Washington's assistance, and the endowments of Black colleges in general. It is worth remembering that in 1915, the endowments of Hampton Institute and Tuskegee Institute totaled \$2.7 and \$1.9 million respectively, which represented more than half of the endowments of all the Black private colleges combined. During the second historical era of Black higher education, private Black colleges such as those mentioned above were ill-prepared to match Carnegie's donations, as many faced an uncertain existence. Because the giving decisions of industrial philanthropists were based largely on the way an institution's curriculum fit into their plans for the Black race, the ability of Black private colleges to access the Carnegie academic library grant program was limited. Black colleges needed

help and an association with Washington, however loose, proved to be advantageous in several instances.

In addition to Tuskegee Institute and the six colleges that received Carnegie donations through the assistance of Washington, eight other Black colleges received Carnegie libraries.<sup>38</sup> A cursory review of those colleges would seem to contradict the basic argument of this essay, as many failed to strongly identify with the industrial-vocational model that was promoted by Washington and that was the preference of industrial philanthropists such as Carnegie.

While there is no direct evidence that Carnegie or his corporation explicitly stated a preference for funding Black college libraries at institutions that subscribed to an industrial-vocational curriculum, the degree to which some of the classically-oriented colleges felt the need to “put on industrial blackface” in their applications and communications with Carnegie (and later the Carnegie Corporation) is quite telling. Some of the applications bore an uncanny resemblance to Washington’s 1900 appeal to Carnegie on behalf of Tuskegee. For example, at Wiley College, President Matthew Dogan included the following statement with his application: “Our students are noted for their efforts at self-help. A large administration building was built largely by their efforts during the last three years.”<sup>39</sup> Likewise, in a letter urging Washington to intercede on Wiley College’s behalf, Washington’s secretary, Wiley alumnus Emmett J. Scott, wrote: “You will note that they are doing industrial work and I can testify it is all of a high character.”<sup>40</sup> When Biddle University (now Johnson C. Smith) applied for a grant, its president tried

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38. The Black colleges that received Carnegie library grants were: Alabama A&M, Atlanta University, Benedict College, Biddle University (now Johnson C. Smith), Cheyney State University, Fisk University, Florida A&M University, Knoxville College, Howard University, Livingstone College, Talladega College, Tuskegee Institute, Wilberforce University, and Wiley College.

39. Matthew W. Dogan to Andrew Carnegie, January 20, 1905. Carnegie Corporation of New York Records. Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Columbia University Libraries, Series II.A.1.b. Reel 39.

40. Emmett J. Scott to Booker T. Washington, February 24, 1906, Carnegie Corporation of New York Records. Series II.A.1.b. Reel 39.

to assuage Carnegie with this statement: "We are at this time planning for the purchase of a farm in the neighborhood of the university where the students can be trained industrially and given an opportunity for self support. All of this makes it necessary to call upon our friends to increased benevolence."<sup>41</sup> Wilberforce University's president also used this style in the private, church-affiliated school's application, stating: "All the work of the building such as brickmaking, brick masonry, carpentering, blacksmithing, etc., would be done by the students."<sup>42</sup> Likewise, in writing to Carnegie to appeal for additional funding, Talladega College's President B. M. Nyce stressed that "we are putting considerable student labor in the building, much of the furniture will also be made by our students."<sup>43</sup> At Atlanta University, a private classically-oriented school, mention was made of the school's contribution of teachers to work in the "state industrial colleges for Negroes" and of its graduates who had found work at Washington's famed Tuskegee Institute.<sup>44</sup> In reality, Wiley, Talladega, Wilberforce, and Atlanta never acquiesced to the industrial-vocational model. Although these colleges remained true to their classical roots, they felt inclined to suggest that their work was in line with the industrial philanthropists' preferred philosophy in order to participate in the library building grant program.

Relatedly, obtaining a Carnegie academic library building grant sometimes required Black colleges to reference cordial relationships with well-respected White citizens within their local communities. Talladega's president affirmed its favorable position in the community by stating, "you will observe that our application receives the hearty endorsement of the leading white citizens of Talladega, who are well acquainted

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41. D. J. Sanders to Andrew Carnegie, February 24, 1906, Carnegie Corporation of New York Records. Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Series II.A.1.b Reel 37.

42. Horace Talbert to James Bertram, April 16, 1903, Carnegie Corporation of New York Records. Series II.A.1.b. Reel 39.

43. B. M. Nyce to Andrew Carnegie, August 12, 1904, Carnegie Corporation of New York Records. Series II.A.1.b. Reel 39.

44. Horace Bumstead to Andrew Carnegie, February 5, 1904, Carnegie Corporation of New York Records. Series II.A.1.b. Reel 37.

with the history and work of the College.”<sup>45</sup> Washington employed this type of reference himself when he appealed to Carnegie on behalf of Atlanta University, revealing that the school had “the confidence and good will of the leading white people in Atlanta. Several of the leading white people are on its board of trustees.”<sup>46</sup>

The situation at Florida A & M highlights the unique struggles experienced by Black state colleges along these lines. Although the school received a \$10,000 library building grant in 1905, it lacked the ability to meet the matching endowment requirement. Carnegie agreed to forego the match if the school produced a letter of support from the chairman of its controlling board, which it did.<sup>47</sup> Further evidence from the college’s bulletin indicates that outside assistance from another influential White man, the son of Ralph Waldo Emerson, also influenced the decision.<sup>48</sup> Another letter in the school’s file came from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction of Florida, who affirmed its adherence to the industrial-vocational model, stating: “There are conducted sixteen industrial departments in this school. It is the most important factor for the development and salvation of the colored race in this State.”<sup>49</sup>

Collectively, these experiences illustrate the extension of White men’s property rights to Black colleges which they deemed worthy of investment. With the exception of Washington, a powerful black man whose educational philosophy closely aligned with the will of industrial philanthropists, Black college presidents were inclined to leverage their

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45. G. W. Anderson to Andrew Carnegie, December 17, 190, Carnegie Corporation of New York Records. Series II.A.1.b. Reel 39.

46. Booker T. Washington to Andrew Carnegie, November 13, 1909. *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, 196.

47. Kaser, “Andrew Carnegie,” 127-28.

48. Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College. *Bulletin of the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College (for Negroes)*. University of Florida Digital Collections. George A. Smathers Libraries. October 1911, last accessed November 9, 2016, <http://ufdc.ufl.edu//AM00000096/00001>.

49. William N. Sheats to Andrew Carnegie, December 16, 1904. Carnegie Corporation of New York Records. Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Columbia University Libraries, Series II.A.1.b. Reel 37.

associations with and the approval of White “friends” in their attempts to gain library grants. Even though local whites did not grant libraries outright, they were able to influence the colleges’ access to libraries. Black colleges existed within a racial caste system that placed powerful men such as Carnegie on top, local White citizens in the middle, and Black colleges squarely on the bottom. Obtaining resources such as those offered by an academic library required successful negotiation of both local as well as national beliefs and attitudes about the type of education that was appropriate for African Americans.

## Conclusion

Over a three-year period from 1904-1907, the Carnegie library building grant program invested \$240,490 into the physical plants of Black colleges.<sup>50</sup> One way to measure the value of an investment is to consider its appreciation, or increase in value over time. Several studies of the status of Black education that emerged in the years following the end of the library grant program provide glimpses into the state of Black college libraries. When Thomas Jesse Jones surveyed the status of Black high schools and colleges in 1917, he concluded that only Howard and Fisk were proficient enough to offer college-level course work. His overall assessment of Black college and high school libraries was dismal, with most of the schools having no library at all and “only 11 . . . known to have a fair collection of books, arranged and managed so as to contribute to the education of the pupils.”<sup>51</sup> Ten years later, conditions had improved little; a 1927 assessment of the situation stated that books in Black colleges were scarcer than in rural communities.<sup>52</sup>

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50. Kaser, “Andrew Carnegie,” 131.

51. Thomas Jesse Jones, the Phelps-Stokes Fund, and the United States Department of the Interior, *Negro Education: A Study of the Private and Higher Schools for Colored People in the United States*. (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education, 1917), 173.

52. Edwin R. Embree and Julia Waxman, *Investment in People: The Story of the Julius Rosenwald Fund* (New York: Harper, 1942), 63-64.

Similarly, a 1942 study added the challenge of insufficiently trained staff to the list of problems plaguing Black college libraries.<sup>53</sup> If these findings are accepted as true, they suggest that, while the Carnegie academic library building grants did improve the physical plants of the recipient campuses, their overall impact on the educational output of Black colleges is questionable.

The “stock stories” that dominate discussions of diversity in library science frequently seek to illuminate progressive explanations for the lack of racial progress within the profession, ones that do not indict the dominant culture. Meanwhile, CRT argues that, rather than following a linear progression, racial progress often sputters back and forth. Advances, such as the provision of library buildings through the Carnegie library building grant program, are often followed by digressions into topics such as the lack of quality library collections and insufficiently trained library staff described above. The root cause of many of the challenges faced by Black college libraries was, and is, a lack of resources. Most often this lack of access to resources has been driven by racism, and more specifically Whiteness—a system of resource allocation based on skin color. In keeping with the ultimate goal of CRT, which is to dismantle racism, this essay endeavored to call out one manifestation of Whiteness within the history of the library profession, to highlight the lived experiences of an oppressed group, and perhaps to inspire similar interrogations of library “stock stories.”

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