

Monroe Nathan Work
Director of Department of Research and Records
Tuskegee Institute, 1908

I think DuBois was the first man in the field. He received a Slater Fund Fellowship and went to Berlin. Returning to Harvard he wrote "The Suppression of the Slave Trade" as his doctor's thesis. The trustees of Atlanta University decided they wanted to make studies of the Negro. Richard R. Wright, Sr., an alumnus of Atlanta University and one of the trustees was a prime mover in this. The first study made in the Atlanta series was "The Mortality of Negroes in Cities". This study and the second one, which dealt with "Social and Physical Conditions of Negroes in Cities", were not made by DuBois. DuBois began with the third study and completed the first cycle of ten studies and directed the second cycle through the seventh study. Before coming to Atlanta he made the study of the Philadelphia Negro and two studies for the United States Bureau of Labor.

At about this time I was here studying to be a preacher. I was in the Chicago Theological Seminary which was located on the west side. Graham Taylor taught something he called Christian Sociology. It wasn't sociology as you know it today. I started with a study of the Negro in crime in Chicago as a sort of term paper. This was in 1897. Graham Taylor was very much interested in it. When I decided to come to the University of Chicago and study sociology in 1898, I brought this paper with me. After I had done some more work on it, it was published in the American Journal of Sociology for September 1900. I think this was the first article by a Negro published in the Journal. I graduated in 1903 specialising in sociology.

Richard Wright, junior, was here then and a fellow named Carney and a fellow named Young. We were the only colored students at the University. We would go around to the churches, Wright would read a little Hebrew, I would read a little French, Carney some German, and Young some Greek. We formed two debating teams; Wright and myself against Carney and Young. I learned the importance of facts. Wright and I had the facts and we would always get the decisions because the other fellows might say the facts we offered weren't so but they couldn't offer any against them. You can't argue with facts. Wright went to Berlin for a year and came back and took his Ph. D. at Pennsylvania, writing as his thesis, "The Negro in Pennsylvania". When we were here we talked together and decided the thing to do was to get the facts about the Negro before the country and the way to do it was to study the Negro. Wright made the study of the Negro in Xenia, Ohio in the Department of Labor series. I suppose we were the first men in the field. DuBois was not primarily a sociologist; his interest was history. Kelly Miller was a Mathematician. He had no formal training in sociology but

he introduced courses in sociology at Howard. We were the four originals.

My going to Tuskegee

Mr. Washington wrote to me and said he wanted to establish a department of history at Tuskegee in which there would be an opportunity for the study of the Negro. He had been urged to have a study made of graduates of Tuskegee. He wrote me that he wanted to see me and said that he was coming through Savannah. He was in his private car going to Beaufort, South Carolina to make a speech. I met him and said to him, "I have your letter". He said, "Yes, come over to Tuskegee and we'll talk it over." The conversation was just a minute and didn't consume as much time as it takes me to tell you about it. (Mrs. Work: Let me tell the story as Dr. Moton told it when Mr. Work received the Harmon Award. In making his speeches, Mr. Washington was sometime inaccurate and Mr. Thomas Jesse Jones spoke to Dr. Moton about it. Mr. Washington made another speech at Hampton and Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones came to Dr. Moton and said, "Major Moton, something must be done. Mr. Washington must have his facts accurate." Dr. Moton said, "He's at my house now, come and tell him about it." Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones saw Mr. Washington and told him what he needed for his speeches were facts. He told him he knew the man to get his facts for him. "He's at Georgia State; he can get your facts.")

Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones was teaching sociology at Hampton. He was coming south to visit the schools and he wrote President Wright that he was coming to Georgia State. President Wright didn't know what he wanted and didn't care to see him so he went off to town. I met Dr. Jones and took him in charge. He spent most of the time he was at the school talking with me.

The study of Tuskegee graduates gave me a definite job. I went over to Tuskegee. When Mr. Washington had anything important to discuss, he invited his brother, Mr. J. H. Washington, in to conference. Mr. Washington said very little; he let you do the talking. I had to begin the discussion. I said what you want is not somebody to study history but to get what the present Negro is doing. He let me do the talking to see what I had in mind. There was the question of where they were going to place me. They wanted to put me in the academic department as a teacher. I asked them not to do that and they turned me loose. When I went to work in July, they wanted to give a name to what I was to do. To cover the things I suggested they call it "Research and Records". Records would cover the graduates and Research the study of the Negro.

1908

At the Georgia State Fair in Macon in 1906, I had on display a set of statistics. Mr. Washington was speaking at the fair and Robert E. Park accompanied him. When Park returned to Tuskegee in September, I recognised him as a man I had noticed looking at my charts at the Georgia State Fair two years before. He was living in Boston at that time. He had the structure of the "Story of the Negro" completed then. He kept busy writing the book and Mr. Washington's

speeches. I supplied him information for these.

I started in Chicago to file information on the Negro. I put the material I had in plain correspondence size envelopes and in small note-books. There was no library at Georgia State but I found out that I could get books from the Library of Congress and I kept up the study of Africa. I bought the cards on Africa from the Library of Congress and paid for them myself. I became a subscriber for future cards and began the building of a bibliography. I had this bibliography when I came to Tuskegee. I had some material on the Negro in America but no extended bibliography as the one on Africa. There was no place quite like Tuskegee. You had world contacts in a day. It was at its highest when I went there. It was the center of things relating to the Negro. People wrote asking all sorts of questions. Emmett Scott and Park had been answering them. Their practice if the information was in a magazine article, just to cut out the article and send it. When I took this over I would send a letter and keep the article.

The Year Book.

In 1910-11 I began to look at the material I had assembled. I asked why couldn't this be made up in some form. Park suggested an almanac. I got the material up and it took the form of the first Year Book. I talked to Emmett Scott and Park. It was more than an article and more than an almanac. Then I went to see Mr. Washington and suggested getting it published. Andrew Carnegie had given Mr. Washington a sum of money to use in publicity in reference to the Negro. The Committee of Twelve was formed and published pamphlets for this purpose. There was about a thousand dollars left of the fund. Mr. Washington said we might use it. The Committee of Twelve had printed and given away their material but I suggested instead of giving this away we would sell it. Emmett Scott had been having the Sunday School Union in Nashville publish the annual reports of the Business League. We sent this material to them and for the thousand dollars the Sunday School Union printed five thousand copies of nearly three hundred pages. We put the price at twenty-five cents and people bought it. With the thousand dollars capital we published four annual editions before the cost of printing rose during the World War and wiped out the capital.

The Lynching Record.

I came to consider lynching when I was working on the Negro in crime. At that time the Chicago Tribune had the information about lynching. They got out an annual statement just as I do at the present time. When I went to Tuskegee I began keeping a record of lynching. In 1913 I prepared a report on the lynchings for the preceding year and decided to send it out. Park said we couldn't compete with the Tribune; we didn't have the facilities. I showed it to Mr. Washington. He said, "we'll publish it; I'll send it to the Chicago Herald." They were glad to get it to compete with the Tribune. Still Park and Scott

were unconvinced about the record being kept at Tuskegee. The next year it was sent to quite a number of papers. They published it and the number of papers was increased. The South accepted the Tuskegee Institute report as the report on lynching. When they wanted to talk about it they preferred to talk about the record that came out of the South. In a few years it was generally accepted as the official record on lynching. The N. A. A. C. P. prepared a report but they were not interested so much in accuracy as they were in propaganda. In time I became the clearing house as a final court to decide the accuracy of the reports. The N. A. A. C. P. sent their record to me before it was published for approval. The Chicago Tribune stopped publishing their record of lynchings.

Sociological Influence.

I was influenced by William I Thomas. I had been here nearly a year when I met him. I happened to meet him while looking after a laundry agency I had. Thomas was living in Graduate Hall (now Blake Hall). I went to get his laundry and we entered into a conversation. I had been taking the courses offered by Small, Henderson, and Vincent, which were really the history of sociology and had no bearing on the Negro. I saw what Thomas was doing with social origins had connection with the study of the Negro. I began taking Thomas' courses. My work was largely on African materials. I wrote papers on the African Medicine Man, Agriculture, Music, and the Family. These were published in the Southern Workman when I went south.

Statement made
in Chicago May 15, 1932
to Lewis A. Jones, Graduate
Student in Sociology -
The University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

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He was a modest man. Concerning his proposed trip to Europe, he wrote Mrs. Work: "I saw Dr. Stokes today and what do you suppose he is proposing? To send me to Europe the first of January to work on the bibliography in London, Paris, Geneva, Berlin, Hamburg and Brussels....How would you like to go with me? Thei bibliography gets to be a greater and greater affair. I am awed and humbled rather than proud and puffed up."

Mr. Work was a far-sighted man. His accomplishments grew out of the fact that he was able to look into the future and see the outcome of proper planning. No one felt a greater responsibility in so presenting information about Negroes that the world might view them in their proper perspective.

He was a pioneer, venturing into intellectual areas practically untouched. He cut a path through the forest of ignorance concerning the Negro that younger feet may follow.

Institute Chapel
February 6, 1949

Address during NEGRO HISTORY WEEK
In commemoration of Dr. Monroe N. Work
First Director, Department of Records and Research
Tuskegee Institute, Alabama

By

Jessie P. Guzman, Director
Department of Records and Research

Jnl of Negro History
July 1945