“GIVE THE WOMEN THEIR DUE”: BLACK FEMALE MISSIONARIES AND
THE SOUTH AFRICAN-AMERICAN NEXUS, 1920s-1930s

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

In the early twentieth century, women travelers, primarily as spouses and students, but more importantly, as missionaries, helped to deepen connections between South Africa and the United States. This paper explores how exposure to American curricula, most often gained through enrollment at black institutions and social activism in the larger sphere, led Charlotte Maxeke and Sibusisiwe Makhanya, two international students from South Africa, and Susie Yergan, an African American, to champion philosophies of self-help and women’s centrality in racial and social uplift. This discussion uncovers complexities that developed in their activism and ideological perspectives as returnees and journeyers to South Africa. More often than not, the focus, aim, and extent of these women’s work was influenced by the South African environment as well as by the tangled relationship between Africans and African Americans as the latter begun to concentrate on domestic issues in hopes of obtaining American citizenship.

As the women in this study continued their work in South Africa, which aimed to guarantee Black South Africans’ progress in a world characterized by European standards, Yergan, Maxeke, and Makanya nonetheless stood in defense of many African customs and beliefs, arguing that the arrival to modernity did not necessarily mean a complete break with the past. By focusing on these female missionaries, who frequently
labored without recognition or remuneration, and the ways in which they upheld and contributed to ideas about progress and culture, we discover how women too shaped cultural interchanges and ideological interconnectedness in the trans-Atlantic world.
Dedicated to my dear siblings, with whom I have shared much laughter and tears. May we continue our journeys onward and upward, closer to our dreams.
Although the following thesis is an individual work, I never could have completed it without the guidance and the help of several individuals. I am grateful for having received much assistance from the librarians and archivists at the Ohio State University, Wilberforce University, and Oberlin College, all located within the United States. My research was also made efficient through the electronic resources provided by archivists at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, and the Campbell Collections at the University of Kwazulu in Natal, South Africa.

I owe my deepest gratitude to my adviser, Dr. Stephanie J. Shaw, for her diligence and dedication to both the project and my scholarly development. She was always readily available to read and to respond to drafts of each chapter of my work, often more quickly than I could have hoped. Each time, her comments were beneficial and perceptive. Along similar lines, I would like to thank my thesis committee members, Dr. Kenneth Goings and Dr. Judy Wu, whose invaluable feedback also have helped this project to grow. Their insight will continue to be of value in this and other future projects.

No less important to the completion of this thesis has been the support and advice of many other individuals, including Dr. Stephen G. Hall who helped me to move my research in a new direction by encouraging me to consider connections as well as
comparisons. His criticism and guidance in earlier stages of the project is much appreciated. I would also like to thank Dr. Jeremy Popkin, Dr. David H. Anthony, and Dr. James T. Campbell, who believed in my project and provided support in multiple ways.

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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AME</td>
<td>African Methodist Episcopal Church</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANC</td>
<td>African National Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPL</td>
<td>Bantu Purity League</td>
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<td>BWL</td>
<td>Bantu Women’s League</td>
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<td>BYL</td>
<td>Bantu Youth League</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICU</td>
<td>The Industrial and Commercial Workers’ Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAACP</td>
<td>National Association for the Advancement of Colored People</td>
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<tr>
<td>NACW</td>
<td>National Association of Colored Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCAW</td>
<td>National Council of African Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSF</td>
<td>Phelps-Stokes Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SANNC</td>
<td>South African Native National Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>UHC</td>
<td>Unity Home-Makers’ Club</td>
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<tr>
<td>YMCA</td>
<td>Young Men’s Christian Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>YWCA</td>
<td>Young Women’s Christian Association</td>
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INTRODUCTION:

From late September in 1937 to early January of 1938, Ralph J. Bunche, a political scientist and one of the few African Americans to have earned a Ph.D. at the time, conducted field study in South Africa as a part of his two-year, international research odyssey funded by the Social Science Research Council. Since its formation in 1910, South Africa had become rigidly defined by legislative efforts to “to make it a white man’s land.”¹ Although Bunche set out to be a “detached chronicler,” he was soon called on to deliver speeches about the progress of African Americans and their contributions to world civilization. It was then that he realized that “Any Negro American visiting South Africa is a missionary whether or not he wills it. But he doesn’t have to be a religious missionary.”²

Other travelers’ experiences suggest the truth in Bunche’s comments. In fact, one year prior to Bunche’s trip, Eslanda Robeson, a distinguished cultural anthropologist in her own right and the wife of Paul Robeson, singer, playwright, and activist, and traveled to Africa in the hopes of learning more about the continent. During her two-month tour, which included three weeks in South Africa covering much of the same ground that

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Bunche had seen, Robeson was encouraged by the British governor of Uganda to offer her opinion about the necessity of education for Black Ugandans. Although possessing strong feelings against colonialism, Robeson counseled the official that in the face of opposition he must offer his support for the education of Africans. Just as Bunche’s and Robeson’s testimonies and the recommendations they offered were derived, at least in part, from their own lived American experiences, international travel led other African Americans to consider the ways in which their relationship with American modernity could serve as an example for continental Africans.

The process of influencing Africans was initially set underway during the Reconstruction era in the United States when Black Baptist churches and the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) sent missionaries to serve in the African continent. These missions, including those in South Africa, were a part of the ambiguous alliance that many newly emancipated Blacks experienced with the African continent, viewing it sometimes simultaneously as the “Mighty Motherland” and the “Dark Continent.” Although, in later decades many African Americans turned their focus away from Africa, deciding instead to concentrate on domestic issues in hopes of obtaining American citizenship rights, others saw the African continent as central to defining Blacks’ place in the world. Thus, many Black intellectuals continued their work alongside their Caribbean, West African, and Black British counterparts to “elaborate a conception of

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democracy that focused on the struggles of black peoples,” while embracing “a universalism that linked all struggles for democracy and independence.”

Efforts to “uplift” Africa, both materially and spiritually, eventually helped to establish connections that proved supportive or pivotal during later periods. In a few instances, connections between African Americans and Black South Africans can be traced to the amalgamation of the Ethiopian and AME church in 1896, which as historian James T. Campbell explains, “culminated a remarkable historical convergence between black Christians at opposite corners of the Atlantic.” This formation continued the transatlantic traffic of AME clerics to South Africa while also paving a path for several Black South African students to travel to the United States to gain education under the auspices of the AME Church. Although not always sponsored by the AME, students’ trips led countless Black South Africans to become proponents of ideas about progress common among Blacks in the United States. Like the ministers and teachers whom they encountered in the United States, many of them believed that their years studying abroad, characterized by exposure to Western culture and American modernity, enabled them to

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4 Penny Von Eschen, Race against Empire, 22. Also see, 27-28 of this same work. Carol Anderson offers a provocative explanation that the reason the struggle for racial equality continues in the United States is because African Americans narrowed their original focus from human rights to civil rights. For her discussion of the period when Blacks still saw their movement as a global one, see, Eyes Off the Prize, 56-57 and 89.

5 In the United States, racial “uplift” among African Americans took many different and contested forms including that of industrial and classical education, missionary work outside of American borders, and organizational affiliation. While historian Kevin Gaines argues that elites’ espousal of an ethos of self-help and “service” to the black masses was tied to pejorative notions of racial pathology and thus remained a limited and crippling force against white prejudice, historian Michelle Mitchell both broadens and softens the understanding of “uplift” philosophies by looking at how lesser known members of the working and class attempted to ensure Blacks’ collective survival through their own engagement with “racial destiny” strategies. See Gaines, Uplifting the Race and Mitchell, Righteous Propagation.

6 James T. Campbell, Songs of Zion, 139 and 250.

7 In fact, as Walter Williams explains, “The earliest Africans sponsored by a black church were five students from the Liberian mission of the Colored Baptist Foreign Missionary Convention. These students were attending Central Tennessee College in Nashville in 1892.” See “Ethnic Relations.”
“return and work in ways so that our home may lose that awful name, the ‘Dark Continent.’” As Melrose Sishuba and John Sonjica who traveled together in 1910 to the United States succinctly put it in a letter to Booker T. Washington: “What we desire is to obtain education and go back to Africa and be a light to our people.”

In some instances, Black South Africans did not become direct supporters of philosophies held by African American leaders and African Americans more generally, instead feeling the African experience to be unique or dissimilar and/or rejecting African Americans’ beliefs about Africans’ inferiority. Regardless of their renouncement of African American, their travel to the United States often helped make many Africans into individuals who were able to think creatively and critically about their own social position and the responsibilities and duties that frequently accompanied such a status. Like that of full supporters, this reflection helped to weave a trans-Atlantic web of ideas about activism, progress, modernity, and race.

In a few of these instances, it was the journeys of the women, traveling primarily as spouses and/or students, but more importantly, as missionaries, that helped to spin such valuable threads of influence or relationships. Upon their return home, Charlotte Maxeke and Sibusisiwe Makanya, commonly known as Violet, two international students from South Africa, championed self-help and social responsibility through mutual aid.

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8 Campbell, *Songs of Zion*, 253.
10 Although dated, Walter Williams provides an excellent study of the varied relations between African students and African Americans and how the international travels of these African students helped to generate the emergence of Pan-African thought and identity, see “Ethnic Relations.” For additional works on the effects of American education see, R. Hunt Davis, “The Black American Education Component;” Richard Ralston, “A Second Middle Passage;” and Thomas C. Howard, “Black American Missionary Influence” in *Black American Missionaries*. For a discussion of the experiences of African Americans who traveled to Africa as missionaries, settlers, journalists, tourists, and immigrants, and the way in which their journeys shaped their thinking, see Campbell, *Middle Passages*. 
associations like those they had witnessed or participated in while in the United States.\textsuperscript{11} Along with Susan (Susie) Yergan, an African American who lived in South Africa with her family from 1922 to 1936, these women stepped forth to “help shape, mold, and direct the thought” of their age, passionately arguing that the “uplift of women was the means of uplifting the race.”\textsuperscript{12} Despite being left out of handicapped by legal and “traditional” gendered structures in South Africa and being left out of Bunche’s description of missionaries as African American males, Maxeke, Makanya, and Yergan, through their lectures and writings and their group work in the Bantu Women’s League (B.W.L.), Bantu Youth League (B.Y.L.), and the Unity Home-Makers’ Club (U.H.C.), respectively, made it their mission to teach Black South Africans the importance of self-reliance, collective consciousness and pride, along with fiscal responsibility and independence.

Although some scholars have dismissed the organizations that these women led as conservative, apolitical, and focused solely on domesticity, historian Iris Berger convincingly argues that the groups started by Madie Hall Xuma, an African American who lived in South Africa from 1940 to 1963 as the wife of Alfred B. Xuma, a Western-educated Black South African leader, were linked to the profoundly political philosophy of African American advancement and racial uplift and thus are more than they appeared on the surface.\textsuperscript{13} Berger’s analysis, which considers how Madie Hall Xuma’s education

\textsuperscript{11} In this paper, I use “Makanya” as Sibusisiwe’s last name. In various secondary sources, her name has also been spelled as both “Makanya” and “Makhanya.” In her own publications and reports, she spelled it the former way, thus this paper reflects her choice.
\textsuperscript{12} Deborah Gray White uses this description to in her work about Black clubwomen’s activism in the United States. See Too Heavy a Load, 24.
\textsuperscript{13} Iris Berger, “An African American ‘Mother of the Nation,’” 564. A slightly revised version of this article appears in Extending the Diaspora.
and socialization shaped her activism and outlook, can also be extended to the groups and the women in this study. Furthermore, the label of political vs. nonpolitical ignores the fact that Maxeke, Makanya, and Yergan dared to believe in the inherent ability of Africans to succeed despite the actions and writing of others that sought to prove otherwise. By fashioning groups that fostered collective action, these women showed their disagreement with and denouncement of imperialist propaganda that claimed that Africans were incapable of keeping step with the modern industrial world.¹⁴ As James Scott contends, it is important to understand and to recognize the “infrapolitics” of subordinate groups, which moves beyond overt protest to consider the everyday, prosaic, "unobtrusive" level of political struggle.¹⁵ Influenced by Scott’s concept including that of “hidden transcripts,” in his study on black working class opposition in the United States, Robin D.G. Kelley convincingly argues that:

Too often politics is defined by how people participate rather than why; by traditional definition the question of what is political hinges on whether or not groups are involved in elections, political parties, or grass-roots social movements. Yet, the how seems far less important than the why, since many of the so-called real political institutions have not proved effective for, or even accessible to, oppressed people. By shifting our focus to what motivated disenfranchised Black working people to struggle and what strategies they

¹⁴ During his trip, Bunche made this same claim about Africans, see Bunche and Edgar, An African American in South Africa, 10. George Padmore, a lead figure in Pan-Africanism and Black liberation, also discussed this attitude among others who believed imperialist literature, see “A Negro Looks at British Imperialism.”

¹⁵ James Scott, “The Infrapolitics of Subordinate Groups.”
developed, we may discover that their participation in "mainstream" politics including their battle for the franchise—grew out of the very circumstances, experiences, and memories that impelled many to steal from an employer, to join a mutual benefit association, or to spit in a bus driver's face. In other words, I am rejecting the tendency to dichotomize people's lives, to assume clear-cut "political motivations" exists separately from issues of economic well-being, safety, pleasure, cultural expression, sexuality, freedom of mobility, and others facets of daily life. Politics is not separate from lived experience or the imaginary world of what is possible; to the contrary politics is about these things. 16

Kelley’s point is well taken as Makanya, Maxeke and Yergan did not simply see their work as a past-time or a hobby, but instead positioned their work as a part of a larger struggle to overcome imperialism and to improve the world position of Africa’s descendants. Like the American and African American self-help organizations after which they were loosely modeled, their clubs sponsored a variety of “uplift” or self-help activities. Analogous with some of these groups, the racial uplift ideology they advocated was all at once a “complex, varied and sometimes a flawed response” to the situations that the vast majority of the Black population faced as they and the women among whom they work sometimes relied upon class distinctions to validate their leadership and special treatment and strove for European conceptions of progress. 17

17 Kevin Gaines discusses this same occurrence among African American elites in the United States, yet warns readers that this attitude cannot be separated from the “dominant modes of knowledge and power relations structured by race and racism.” See Uplifting the Race, xiv and 20.
While in the United States, this lead many Black women’s groups to host and to participate in exclusive, class-based events, these same organizations and others also led the way in activities that would benefit the larger community such as building and maintaining public health clinics and hospitals and running orphanages and kindergartens that characterized several Black women’s groups in the United States. By comparison, the activities of the women and youth groups founded by the women in this study were very much shaped by the smaller number of educated African women that existed at this time and the repressive South African environment. Nonetheless, many African women who became members of these groups emerged as respected leaders and spokespersons in their own clubs and their communities. Even when others did not take on more public roles, they were able to exhibit some influence, in part, relying upon former traditions of solidarity to modify these groups to fit and address their own desires and cultural needs. In many of these instances, it was Maxeke, Makanya, and Yergan who encouraged these women to continue plunging forward and do their part in ensuring that Black people “would take [their] place in the vanguard of civilization.”

By positioning these women who frequently labored without recognition or remuneration as doers, contributors, and co-architects of ideas about progress, this thesis attempts to add to research that focuses on the intricate, transatlantic web of ideological

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18 Historian Stephanie Shaw considers the self-improvement efforts among Black women that led to community consciousness and social responsibility, see “Black Club Women,” 11-25. Her work, which uncovers Black women’s activism, is a part of a scholarship that helps to complicate discussion about Blacks’ collective activity. To name a few, see Anne Firor Scott, “Most Invisible of All;” Deborah Gray White, Too Heavy a Load; Paula Giddings, When and Where I Enter; Gerda Lerner, Black Women in White America, Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, The Afro-American Woman; and Darlene Clark Hine, When the Truth is Told.


influence. Although there are only a handful of women who can be identified as participants in this American-South African nexus, the work they performed was critical in establishing connections that existed in the trans-Atlantic. Fewer still are identifiable in the few primary sources available for us to study, and even then these sources are scattered in nature and full of silences and gaps. Resources on the three women in this study, however, are available and accessible and are rich enough to reveal shifts in their own ideological stances while they worked. Looking at the ways their activism added to and was different from the century-long missionary effort to reformulate family and domestic life in South Africa further illuminates the connection between the work these women did and the ideas about “uplift” that they encountered during their education in American schools, especially Black institutions and the communities they served.

Despite the fact that in recent years the study of South Africa and America in relation to one another has grown beyond its original focus on formal and official alliances to include diverse topics like historical memory, identity formation, and literary themes, scholarly discussions of women’s community work in the trans-Atlantic have not kept pace. For example, in her dissertation, Amanda Kemp only briefly discusses the work of female missionaries in her dissertation on Black South Africans’ identification with African American progress “from slavery to the mastery of modernity,” while other

21 Although written in a different context, Margaret Jacobs looks at the way in which White American maternalists’ concerns with modernity and progress led them to participate in and to lead the way in the removal of indigenous children among the Aboriginal people in Australia and Native American population in the United States, see White Mother to a Dark Race.

22 For foundational work, please refer to such works as John Cell, The Highest Stage of White Supremacy; George Fredrickson, White Supremacy; Thomas Noer, Cold War and Black Liberation; and Mildred C. Fierce, “Selected Black American Leaders.” For more recent studies, see Gary Baines, “South Africa’s Vietnam?”; Leigh Anne Duck, “Apartheid, Jim Crow, and Comparative Literature;” and Ran Greenstein, “Racial Formation: Towards a Comparative Study.”
scholars have discussed these women individually or in a page or two in writing about male leaders.\textsuperscript{23} This thesis is one effort to view the work of these women as a larger trend, thereby considering conversations and connections and therefore complexities that existed between African American and Black South African women during the early part of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{24}

The absence of the work of female missionaries in larger texts also has much to do with a South African-American history of women that is still in its early stages. Yet, the studies of Bahati Kuumba, Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, Pamela Brooks, and Hilary Sapire have been instrumental in legitimizing and establishing the field conceptually. In her research, Kuumba's focus is on gendered political opportunities in both nations specifically, connecting with Terborg-Penn, Brooks, and Sapire in that she compares women's activism in Montgomery, Alabama and Alexandria and Johannesburg in South Africa. Together, these works focus on the commonalities in women’s experiences and leadership strategies in the movements for inclusion and citizenship of the late 1950s. Nearly all of these accounts are grounded in a feminist perspective and influenced by prior discussions of cross-culturalism. For example, “womanism” as defined by Alice Walker (1983) and Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi (1985) leads all of these authors to look beyond traditional accounts to provide historical visibility to the experiences of minority women. More so than the others, Brooks’ use of interview material allows the

\textsuperscript{23} See Amanda Kemp, “‘Up From Slavery.’” For descriptions of the work of individual female missionaries, see Iris Berger, “‘An African American 'Mother of the Nation’”; David H. Anthony, III, “Each One Teach One”; and James T. Campbell, Songs of Zion, especially chapter eight.

\textsuperscript{24} I have borrowed the expressions, “conversations,” “connections,” and “complexities” from Micol Seigel who discusses that the common pitfall of comparative history is to view historical subjects as parallel. Instead, Siegal encourages scholars to consider interaction and movement. See “Comparable or Connected.”
voices of these women to be heard by considering the ways these women framed, defined and viewed their own actions. Still, only Kummba and Terborg-Penn situate “African feminism” as necessary to the reconstruction of the history of women in Africa and her Diaspora. Like these studies, this paper is written from a “womanist” perspective as it seeks to formulate a deeper analysis of intellectual and activist trends in the Diaspora—one that recognizes gender.25

This study is divided in three chapters. Chapter one, “Trained Hands, Heads, and Hearts: Education for Duty and Citizenship,” opens by discussing the importance of Western education to Blacks in South Africa who longed to improve their status in an increasingly capitalistic and racialized society. Rather than falling into the common trap of generalizing about the effects of American education or relying on overly stark dichotomies with “revolutionary and radicalizing” and “depoliticizing” as polar opposites, the chapter contrasts the curriculum and socialization to which Yergan, Maxeke, and Makanya were exposed and how these experiences might have shaped these women’s outlook on duty and arguably their subsequent careers in South Africa. In chapter two, “Better Homes and Gardens: Women’s and Youth Improvement Groups in South Africa,” the study shifts geographically to determine how and to what degree these lessons showed themselves in South Africa. In looking at the two-prong approach used by these women, speeches and article writing and real-life initiatives that included the practical and formal education of women, we learn how Yergan, Maxeke, and Makanya tried to lead African women, and therefore Black South Africans into the future. The final

chapter, “‘Africa had a Culture all her own’: The Negotiation of Ideas about Civilization and Modernity,” extends an earlier discussion of these women’s scholarly activities, showing them as cognitive, critically-engaged beings who though influenced by Victorian ideas did not adopt them in a wholesale fashion. Rather, throughout the course of their life’s work in South Africa, they like other members of the African and African American elite debated themes in African and non-African culture. Beyond simply the influence of their own class and social backgrounds, the African women with whom they interacted caused them to navigate the intellectual and cultural terrain in different ways, often leading to disagreements among them, although the fundamental goal of self-improvement remained the same.

Even in his short time in South Africa, Ralph Bunche was similar to the activists with whom the paper is concerned in that he stressed to Black South Africans the importance of self-reliance and self-help. In his speech on November 12th, 1937 before a room full of Black educators in Fort Hare College, in Alice, South Africa, Bunche made this point remarkably clear. The topic of the speech, although not entirely unlike his others, was motivated by a conversation that he had earlier that day with an African counselor/tour guide who shared with him that: “Africans were disappointed because American Negroes don’t come to help them.” Bearing this in mind, Bunche encouraged his audience to follow the example set by African Americans even in their absence. This meant, “stick[ing] to their task to reach the top” and rousing “their self confidence and pride” by stressing their heroes and cultural and artistic accomplishments.26 Although

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Bunche wrote in his diary that this speech did not appear to be greatly accepted because many of the teachers as “school people” looked at the African past with disdain, the efforts of women like Susie Yergan, Sibusisiwe Makanya, and Charlotte Maxeke show that the advice of self-help was already in action. By working to develop self-reliance, collective unity, and pride in Black South African women and youth, these activists strove to ensure that this population would not only survive, but also achieve modernity and progress. This thesis represents an effort to tell this story and to give the women their due.

**Note on language:**

This study uses quotations that contain the language of the day including terms like “Bantu” and “Native” and “Negro.” Outside of these direct references, I utilize “African American” and “Black” and “Black South Africans” and “Black,” which are currently used by these populations themselves. Although “race” in South Africa was not completely constructed until the institutionalization of apartheid in 1948, the term as used throughout this paper is historically accurate as many Blacks in South Africa, though belonging to different language/ethnic groups were beginning to consider themselves as a racial group brought together by shared oppression. As Stephen G. Hall has written, African Americans, too, recognized “race” as they attempted to establish a historical genealogy that transcended the middle passage.27 I have chosen to capitalize the word "Black" in this essay, not because it refers to “race,” but because it is used to describe a cultural group/groups that often claims to share a bond of racial identity and similar

experiences. I chose to capitalize "White" because it is important not to see it as fixed, self-evident, or unmarked category.

Additionally, although “North/South,” “East/West,” and “Developed/Developing” are widely accepted expressions in academic circles today, this paper uses the “Western/African” to describe the world as these populations themselves viewed and constructed it and so as not to confuse the reader. Along these lines, the pseudo-scientific descriptions of culture that underlie terms like “primitive” and “backwards,” and which were peppered throughout the writings and speeches of Black and African intellectuals of the later-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, are used only in context.

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28 My thinking in this matter is most influenced by my interest in women’s history. As the field of has continued to expand the importance of recognizing intersectionality has become more of a strong hold. More than ever, scholars are understanding that not all women are white, middle class, heterosexual, and oppressed by patriarchy in identical ways. Thus, scholars have began to mark the “unmarked” and to explore the lives of women that do not fit this categorization. For theoretical works, see the following in _The Feminist History Reader_: Elsa Barkley Brown, “What has Happened Here,” especially 301; Elizabeth V. Spelman, “Gender and Race: The Ampersand Problem in Feminist Thought;” Martha Vicinus, “Lesbian History,” especially 226; and Mrinalini Sinha, “Gender and Nation.” For empirical studies, see Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, “Was Mom Chung a ‘Sister Lesbian’?;” 58-82; Annelise Orleck, _Storming Caesars Palace_; Peggy Pascoe, _Doing What Comes Naturally_; and Elizabeth Thompson, _Colonial Citizens_. 
CHAPTER 1:
Trained Hands, Heads, and Hearts: Education for Duty and Citizenship

In November of 1920, *The Christian Express*, later renamed *The South African Outlook*, published an abbreviated version of a speech delivered earlier that year by Davidson Don Tengo (D.D.T.) Jabavu. The discussion of what he considered to be “the fourteen causes of unrest” and “positive discontent among the Bantu population,” coincided well with the mission of “the journal of missionary news and Christian work” that provided an ecumenical perspective on critical issues affecting Black South Africans. Standing before an audience of Western missionaries, including those from the United States, England, and France, Jabavu had conveyed that most Africans, then collectively known as “Black” or “Bantu” because of the common language group they shared, speculated that the Union Act of 1910, “[u]nited only the White races and was against the Blacks; for the color bar clause struck the death-knell of Native confidence in what used to be called British fair play.”¹ Although many Blacks were facing the economic pinch that defined the post-World War One period, this was coupled with socio-economic hardships tied to bills like the Native Labor Regulation Act and the Mines and Works Act passed just one year after the Union of South Africa was formed. These laws made it illegal for Blacks to break labor contracts and legitimized the long-term practice of

restricting all non-Whites to lesser-paid, semi-skilled and unskilled jobs. There was also a continuation of dompas, dumb passes for African and Indian men, which the British had used since the mid-1880s as a means to control the movement and freedoms of non-White men in the Cape and Natal. As Jabavu saw it, the continued mistreatment of Black South Africans under these laws and others made them remarkably similar to American colonists of the eighteenth century “who were taxed with neither political representation nor equality.”

The “revulsion of Native feeling” that developed as a consequence of Blacks’ unequal treatment was evident in the 1918 Rand Strike of African sanitation workers that Jabavu discussed in his speech. Jabavu assured his audience that similar disturbances were sure to follow and to become normal occurrences as feelings about their ill treatment and exploitation were “seething like molten volcanic lava in the breasts of these inarticulate people.” Jabavu then contended that it was the duty of every loyal citizen to the Union, not simply Africans, to be familiar with these causes and to provide a solution that would save the country from “an anarchist disruption.” One suggestion he offered in this regard was the proper training and education of a generation of African leaders who possessed what he considered the “correct” perspective, a strong sense of responsibility, and levelheadedness. Jabavu’s speech was highly regarded by the White missionaries who attended the conference and the editors of the Christian Express who reprinted parts of it for their readers.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century Jabavu continued to share his

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2 David Culverson, Contesting Apartheid, 24.
4 Ibid.
advice and opinion on matters affecting Blacks. Although his Western education made him a member of South Africa’s small middle-class and led to his being featured in this important publication, Jabavu was not alone either in his education, ideas, or communicative capabilities. Charlotte Maxeke and Sibusisiwe Makanya, who earned bachelor degrees in “Science, English, and Sewing” and rural education respectively from American institutions, shared many of these same sentiments. Like Jabavu, their schooling set them apart from many of their peers, while earning them the distinction of becoming South Africa’s first and second Black female college graduates. Additionally, Makanya, as a descendant of the highly respected Makanya clan, was further held in high opinion and considered a leader among members of the Umbumbulu community in Natal, South Africa where she labored.

When African Americans Susie and Max Yergan arrived in Cape Town, South Africa in January of 1922, they too became members of the African elite and were highly venerated. Many Black South Africans, both literate and non-literate, knew of the circumstances of the American Civil War and the progress that Blacks had achieved since slavery’s end, viewing them as paragons who “demanded to be treated as humans and [declared themselves] to be equal to any people in the world.” As “returned” Africans and graduates of Black colleges tied to ideas of Western-style progress, Yergan and her

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5 Catherine Higgs, *The Ghost of Equality*, 1. Higgs also explains that beyond his education, D. D. T. Jabavu’s entry into the African elite was further cemented through an arranged marriage to Florence Makiwane, the offspring of another prominent African Christian family. See 55-56 of this same work.
6 It is important to mention that South Africa’s middle class occupied a somewhat precarious position between capital and labor. Explanations and evidence of this can be seen in Les Switzer, *South Africa’s Alternative Press*, 6-8; Julia C. Wells, “Why Women Rebel,” especially 60; and Alan Gregor Cobley, “Liquor and Leadership,” 128.
husband not only immediately appealed to Jabavu who greeted them boat side upon their arrival, they also won the approval of the “elite stratum of African society in Fort Hare and in other training institutions where the African petit-bourgeoisie could be found.”

After an initial period of uncertainty, the Yergans settled in Alice, where Jabavu and his wife, Florence, taught and lived, and the place where two years before their arrival, Jabavu delivered yet another important speech. This time, however, the speech focused specifically on the plight of Black South African women and the importance of women’s groups to solve these and other problems, examples of which he witnessed in his travels to the United States and England.

Together, these and other individuals, along with the abaphakamileyo or the “high business owners,” embodied what W.E.B Du Bois, a world-renowned intellectual, called “the talented tenth.”

As representatives of the “talented tenth,” Sibusisiwe Makanya, the Jabavus, the Maxekes, and the Yergans considered themselves “technical experts, leaders of thought, and missionaries of culture for their backward brethren in the new Africa.”

Although the women in this study would later come to defend Black South Africans and many of their cultural practices and their right to decide what progress meant, like their African American counterparts, they saw themselves as “[t]hose who sets the ideals of the community where they lived, directed its thoughts and headed its social movements.”

In the United States, groups affiliated with the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), the umbrella African American women’s organization from 1896-1935, also viewed themselves as a central part of this process. Mary Church Terrell,

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the NACW’s first president, described the special mission of “The Modern Black Woman,” claiming: "We have to do more than other women. Those of us fortunate enough to have education must share it with the less fortunate of our race. We must go into our communities and improve them; we must go out into the nation and change it. Above all, we must organize ourselves as Negro women and work together.”13

Despite the fact that many Black women in South Africa nearly always performed communal tasks like collecting wood and water and thatching roofs along gendered lines, as members of nomadic pastoralist ethnic groups, they never developed the formal women’s organizations like the NACW or those that characterized pre-colonial West Africa.14 Nonetheless, many African women found and joined women’s groups centered on religion. For instance, women in Nguni communities who married outside their lineage and moved away from their birth groups, often found solidarity with other women to be a necessity and a comfort and often became participants in *manyanos*, groups for Christian churchwomen. Similar to Black women’s church groups in the United States, *manyanos* were looked to as “Mothers’ Meetings.”15

Outside of these organizations, there existed in both South Africa and the United States a group of educated and gifted writers who strove to “uplift” their people by

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15 Like Black women’s church groups in the United States, *manyanos* gatherings were characterized by informality with singing, the recitation of scripture, and conversation. Because of their seemingly apolitical nature and willingness to accept the status quo, church leaders at first welcomed these organizations. Soon discussions about their class, racial, and gendered oppressions led these women to demonstrate their abilities of quick politicization. Beyond spreading the gospel in a formally male-dominated field, women in *manyanos* pooled together their resources for *stokvels* or savings clubs so that they could lend a helping hand to members in need. See Deborah Gaitskell, “Housewives, Maids, or Mothers,” 249; and Fatima Meer, *Women in Apartheid Society*, 17.
writing vindicationist and contributionist histories. These efforts illustrate Blacks’ engagement with mainstream intellectual movements about the merits of European and African culture, historical place, and modernity, although the actions of the majority of the elite in both countries indicate that they believed that the easiest and quickest way of being accepted in the mainstream was to demonstrate achievement of progress by cherishing the values they observed in the contacts with Whites and Western culture. In both countries, this cross-cultural interaction, while freeing in some instances, ultimately placed these individuals on the periphery of the two social worlds that characterized their respective nations. In 1935, W.O. Brown, an American sociologist who visited South Africa to learn more about the development of racial consciousness among Black South Africans, expressed the position of many among the Black elite when he reported to his American audience:

His [sic] education and culture are European, as are his conceptions of his rights. His union with Native culture is tenuous. The status of the intellectual is marginal. His own group not only does not supply a sufficient social base for an adequate spiritual and intellectual orientation, but also he is excluded from the European world. Naturally, he feels the pinch of the racial situation more sharply than the

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16 For discussions about the writings of African Americans from the Fugitive Slave Act to the rise of Garveyism and W.E.B. Du Bois’s Pan-Africanism, see Wilson Jeremiah Moses, The Golden Age of Black Nationalism. For a discussion of African Americans’ historical writing, including women like Anna Julia Cooper, Pauline Hopkins and others, from the early republic to the 20th century, see Stephen Hall, A Faithful Account of the Race. For the South African case, see Les Switzer, South Africa’s Alternative Press, especially 51 and 71-79; and Ntongela Masilela’s “Ralph Bunche in South Africa.” Together, these scholars show that despite the political realities that existed in South Africa at the time, the low purchasing power of African readers, and a high illiteracy rate, African writers like D.D.T. Jabavu, Alfred B. Xuma and Mweli Skota, among others, submitted works to both black and white-owned African press in commercial papers like the Bantu World, which show that they too were grappling with the complex nature of modernity.
average native. His status as a person is more insecure.\textsuperscript{17}

Despite the truthfulness contained in Brown’s depiction, many members of the Black South African elite still greatly valued their social standing, not only because it often granted them special privileges uncommon to other Blacks, but more importantly because it allowed them to represent their race as spokespersons and serve among their own population as proponents of culture, progress, and civilization.\textsuperscript{18}

For many of them, education abroad was seen as an important marker in this process. Writing in a Black Johannesburg newspaper shortly after his return from America in 1924, Alfred B. Xuma, the first Black South African to graduate with a Ph.D. from the London School of Tropical Medicine, went so far as to portray overseas education as a prerequisite for progressive political leadership. His description of how important Western education was to this elite group of South Africans, especially those like Jabavu, the Maxekes, whom he discussed specifically, illustrates this point:

\begin{quote}
These people are well educated, civilized, and above all cultured. They more fully appreciate the people’s aspirations as well as their limitations because they themselves have a broader outlook and wider experience. . . . They plead the cause of the Bantu with dignity and consideration. They have a sincere and heartfelt sympathy for their backward brother and would like to see him rise up to their own level. . . . They voice his legitimate claims and interpret his wishes to
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17} W. O. Brown, "Race Consciousness," 574.
\textsuperscript{18} This point can be seen in Alan Gregor Cobley, “Liquor and Leadership,” 128-148.
the White man intelligently and rationally. These people are really the safest bridge for race contact in the present state of race relations in South Africa.¹⁹

For Maxeke, Makanya, and Yergan, their outlook and wider experience meant not only verbally expressing the hardships and thoughts of Black South Africans to a wider audience, but also encouraging and developing opportunities for their self-help and racial advancement. Akin to other members of their class, these women not only expressed an appreciation and realization of the “benefits from the European,” they also granted attention to what they considered to be vices and inconsistencies of Westernism.²⁰ Fitting with the model of the “talented tenth,” they asserted their responsibility, as Du Bois put it, for “guid[ing] the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races.”²¹ This included providing practical solutions for Blacks who continued to face exclusion in the political arena, were made to feel like aliens in their own country, and were forced to face “fluctuations in the labor market, unemployment, poverty and race prejudice.”²² As the sum of their experiences, they often expanded the agendas and methods used by missionaries in the area as well as derived lessons from their Black counterparts across the Atlantic Ocean.²³ For the latter, the women used lessons drawn from their participation in or observation of African American social groups and of course their enrollment in classes at American institutions, especially those

¹⁹ Steven Gish, Alfred B. Xuma, 65.
²³ The work of American and British Missionaries are discussed in the following: James Dexter Taylor and American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions United States of America, One Hundred Years; James Frederick Buss, The Romantic Story; Myra Dinnerstein, “The American Board Mission to the Zulu,”; and Arthur Fridjof Christofersen, Adventuring with God.
founded for Blacks. Despite their close association with African Americans and the strategies they used, these women rarely, if ever, explicitly drew connections between their education and socialization in the US and their activism in the South Africa. Comparatively, Jabavu’s lectures and writings on what Anthony calls the “messianic transmission of the club idea” that he took from his time at Tuskegee University are particularly clear. Juxtaposing his discussion on the topic with one about the training of these women further reveals how their American experiences likely encouraged them to develop initiatives and groups in South Africa like those in America, thereby transforming them into responsible and levelheaded leaders and missionaries who, through their work, promised to bring about modernity and progress.

Although Makanya, Maxeke, and Yergan were educated at different times between the 1890s and 1920s, and in different institutions, the core of their education was indeed similar. Despite differences in classical and industrial curricula, the schools they attended were committed to character education, which took place as a type of movement in American schools from 1890-1935. As American Whites sought to acculturate immigrants with characteristics that were thought to be representative of the American notion of a virtuous republic, the curriculum of American schools from the elementary to the college level extended beyond alleviating illiteracy and preparing students for jobs in industry to offering guidance and training in good citizenship and the acceptable uses of

leisure. Character education also stressed beliefs in obedience to authority, a strong work ethic, punctuality, good, respectable behavior, and a consideration of working for service.25 Although articulating similar goals of training, Blacks colleges went further in training the “hands, heads, and hearts” of their students for race work and citizenship by imbuing in them a strong sense of heritage, identity, and community. For women, this molding process occurred primarily through domestic science programs but often included academic courses.

In hearing about the molding that African Americans underwent at Black colleges and the way in which this had generated the progress they had achieved is what originally motivated D.D.T. Jabavu to come to the United States. His trip was further prompted by the advice many of his European friends who encouraged him to spend the summer studying the methods used at Tuskegee after completing his studies in English at the University of London.26 Tuskegee was the vision of Booker T. Washington, its first teacher and principal and a popular race leader for newly emancipated Blacks. Founded in 1881 in a “little shanty and a church,” the school was tied to Hampton Institute’s model of practical, industrial education and developed to help Blacks secure “a foundation in education, industry and property” rather than immediately “striv[ing] for political preferment.”27 This type of education was thought to minimize antagonizing an increasingly racist White America, especially in the South, where 90% of Blacks resided after the Civil War ended. Like the “Tuskegee Wizard,” many White Americans and

25 John Whiteclay Chambers, The Tyranny of Change, 102; and Sean McGilloway, “Molding Beverly’s Youth.” Steven J. Diner discusses the education of immigrants and the resistance of Southern Whites to a centralized educational curriculum that would include Blacks in A Very Different Age, 95-99, 136, 176.  
27 Booker T. Washington, Up from Slavery, 20, 42, and 44.
Europeans believed that citizenship and its inherent opportunities should come as “the result of severe and constant struggle rather than of artificial forcing.”

Washington’s educational philosophy showed so much promise that only three weeks into his trip in the United States, Jabavu received a cablegram of support from the Minister of Native Affairs in South Africa in which the official declared his interest in learning more about the Tuskegee model and “its suitability and adaptability to the conditions of Natives under the Union.” The Minister’s actions were prompted by the disturbances caused by the newly formed South African Native National Congress, created in 1912 (which in 1923 became known as the African National Congress), and a particularly large indigenous population that desired political participation in the new Union of South Africa. Circumstances like this one prompted the South African nation to view American racial policies as examples to be emulated, hence creating the immediate ideological ties that have been the focus of many scholarly studies.

The Minister’s support of Jabavu’s Tuskegee research was also motivated by the country’s desire to “quarantine Africans from the part of the American ‘Negro’ intelligentsia, which deplored educational adaptation” or the “education [that would prepare Africans for the life they were to lead] and the White domination it supported.” As Eslanda Robeson explained, “The White people in Africa do not want educated Negroes traveling around seeing how their brothers live nor do they want those brothers seeing Negroes from other parts of the world, hearing how they live. It would upset them,

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28 Ibid., 108.
30 See such works like John Cell, The Highest Stage; George Fredrickson, White Supremacy; and Thomas J. Noer, Cold War and Black Liberation.
make them restless and dissatisfied; it would make them examine and reexamine the
conditions under which they live and that would never do at all, at all.”  
In fact, when Max Yergan applied to become the first Black official of the Young Men’s Christian
Association (YMCA) to serve in South Africa, the Yergans’s race and higher education
caus[ed] them to face substantial delays. Beginning in 1920, emigrants from America,
especially non-Whites, were required to submit lengthy passport applications, “including
European character references and a fifty-pound (later one-hundred pound) bond against
the costs of repatriation.”  
As done in the past, in an attempt to reduce the entry of Black
Baptist and African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) missionaries into the country,
the government leveled arguments against the Yergans’s potential presence, most
e especially the husband’s, and the social unrest that might erupt among the nation’s Black
population.  
The policy was prompted primarily by the specter of Garveyism, or the
ideas of Marcus Garvey that claimed Africa for Africans. The article “Garvey's Impact on
Africa,” printed in the Christian Express in July of 1921 just six months before the
Yergans’s arrival, and that addressed the conditions that needed to exist in South Africa
to facilitate the popularity of Marcus Garvey’s ideas about Africa for Africans, certainly
could not have helped the Yergans’s case.  
Eventually, however, Max Yergan won the
support he needed, but only after an extensive letter-writing campaign that included the

33 James T. Campbell, Songs of Zion, 257. Robeson and Bunche both discussed their difficulty in gaining
entry to South Africa. See Robeson, African Journey, 18-19; and Bunche and Edgar, African American in
South Africa, 237.
34 Anthony, “Max Yergan in South Africa,” 28-30. Several Black South African women who were born at
the turn of the twentieth century shared stories about the influence of African American religious workers,
like Reverend Kenneth Spooner who arrived in South Africa in 1913 and enjoyed much prominence among
Blacks. See Belinda Bozzoli, Women of Phokeng, 72-76.
names of top Black leaders in the United States and his passing an ideological litmus test that pitted Booker T. Washington against the more “radical” W.E.B. Du Bois. While Yergan responded to the test by choosing Washington, citing that he was impressed by Washington’s work, David Henry Anthony explains that Yergan, like many Blacks, was uncomfortable with the characterization and appreciated the ideas of both. In fact, while in South Africa, the Yergans maintained their contacts with conservative educators at Hampton and Tuskegee and the more liberal National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) that Du Bois helped found. Considering Max Yergan’s achievements, Du Bois named him one of the “New Negroes,” who after America’s great war for democracy, “now had a new conception of himself and his place in America’s social order.” Throughout the 1920s, “New Negroes” led to a more intense questioning of the Hampton-Tuskegee method, shaping the curriculum at many Black institutions.

Beyond the entry of African Americans into the country, Union government officials were also interested in restricting the travel of Black South African students to the United States out of a fear that they would become adherents of ideas that existed among Blacks in the United States. For South African officials, exposure to a liberal arts curriculum and leaders like Du Bois would be contrary to their goal of producing “good Africans.” Although the government did not take over the education of Blacks until 1961, education until that point as provided by Western missionaries was fitting with the government’s goal. As Belinda Bozzoli makes clear, “If the missionaries were not always

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38 Elizabeth Jacoway, Yankee Missionaries, 190.
39 R. Hunt Davis describes the attempts of the South African government to provide education for South African Blacks while being sure not to relinquish social control. The model they attempted to use was Penn School in South Carolina. See, “Producing the ‘Good African.’”
direct agents of imperialism in Africa they were at least representatives of a Western
culture that aspired to a greater or lesser degree of hegemony over African cultures.”
This control was dependent upon capturing the minds of African youth through
constricted education that did not entail equality or encourage full development.

Missionaries, including those in the American Board of Missions (ABM) who
arrived in 1835, focused narrowly on “Christianizing” and “civilizing” Africans by
“constructing and appropriating on their own terms, boundaries between home and work,
male and female, [and] labor and leisure.” Their purpose was two-fold: to convince
Blacks to cast aside indigenous religions and beliefs in order to receive Christ’s love and
salvation through Christianity, and second, a counterpart to the first, to “civilize” South
Africa’s Black population by ridding them of their pre-colonial beliefs and customs.”
“Civilization” for Black males usually took the form of training for a lower trade in line
with laws like the Mines and Works Act of 1911, and for females it meant that after
passing courses in proper English, undertaking strict training on becoming proper
housewives and attentive domestic servants. Although the education missionaries
offered to Blacks was limited in scope, it was nevertheless considered important and
necessary as it was the only way “‘to replace in their mind[s] the primitive dangerous
animism with the spiritual, highly moral, philosophical theism of Christianity.’” As A.F.
Caldecott, who posed the “Native Question” in 1883, saw it, not educating Blacks would
lead to the eventual ruin of Christianity. As he put it: “‘To teach a mass of barbarians the

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42 James Dexter Taylor and American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions United States of
America, *One Hundred Years*, 18.
great moral and ethical truths of the most enlightening religion of the most civilized part of the world, without at the same time, training their intellectual powers, to grasp the truths taught them, means that they must inevitably degrade our religion to their own low state of mind.”

Wanting to become “enlightened Africans,” led some Black South Africans, however, to reject mission education in African and to travel to the United States to attend Black schools. Often the offspring of the Black South African elite or religious converts of Christian denominations with ties to schools in the U.S., these youth saw Black education as “the panacea that would wrench open all the doors that mission education promised but failed to open.” Although some traveled to the United States to attend industrial schools like Tuskegee and Hampton, others attended schools with a liberal arts focus rooted in the Western classical tradition. Many of these students enrolled at Wilberforce University, the United States’ oldest private, historically Black university and the school where Du Bois taught Greek and Latin from 1894 to 1896. One of the first Black South Africans to graduate from Wilberforce was Charlotte Maxeke.

As a part of the Wilberforce experience from 1894-1901, Maxeke “confronted a full classical curriculum featuring ancient and modern languages, mathematics, and science” which “aimed to develop an individual’s faculties, moral, physical, and intellectual.”

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44 First quote is from Loram, *The Education of the South African Native*, 31 footnote 1. The second is from this same work, 30 footnote 2.
45 Campbell, *Songs of Zion*, 256.
46 Ibid., 139 and 250.
47 Ibid., 264.
high order for the education of colored people generally." Holding true to the philosophies of Bishop Daniel A. Payne, the university’s first leader, Samuel T. Mitchell, the spearhead during most of Maxeke’s matriculation, also stressed the “virtues of manual labor, the obligation to racial service, and the need for a balanced education that trained head, hands, and heart in concert” while working to improve the financial condition and physical plant of the university. After being properly educated through academic courses like algebra, general history, zoology, botany, mineralogy, and astronomy, classes that would ensure that the “highest and best training was the monopoly of no race or class,” students could enroll in more industrial/practical education courses.

Similar in essence although not always in form to the education models at Black industrial schools, the education that Maxeke received at Wilberforce in the latter part of the nineteenth century was intended to counter popular stereotypes about Africans and their descendants as lazy, uneducable, and shiftless beings. Thus, while enrolled, Maxeke was governed by a rigid code of conduct with emphasis on self-control, punctuality, and hygiene. Her school days started at 5:30 A.M. to allow her to tidy her room and to fetch coal and water for the day. As Campbell explains, the rest of the daily routine went as follows:

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49 Campbell, *Songs of Zion*, 264; Frederick McGinnis, *A History and an Interpretation*, 57.
50 For an interesting discussion of how black collectibles and memorabilia from the post-Reconstruction years to the end of World War I continued to influence the racial and racist perceptions of Blacks, see Kenneth W. Goings, *Mammy and Uncle Mose*. 
Morning chapel commenced at 8:00. Classes followed, interrupted only by lunch and physical culture. Students enjoyed an hour of free time after dinner before [being] dispatched to their rooms for a mandatory study period. Lights out—lanterns out, actually, since the school was without electricity—came at 9:00 PM.

Weekends offered little respite from the routine, aside from a Saturday night bath and a second chapel service on Sundays, Missionary meetings, a monthly temperance lecture, and regular elocution contests completed the circuit of the days. The iron routine was broken only by “mixers,” closely chaperoned affairs that consisted of students marching up and down hallways to the strains of martial music and by the annual revival, when in best Methodist fashion, labor was suspended and the spirit given reign.51

This strict routine ensured that Maxeke could give her attention to industrial courses like plain dress making and typewriting as well as her academic courses like philosophy and botany. Together this wide range of classes enabled Maxeke to broadly define her degree as “Science, English, and Sewing.”52 Excited about the knowledge she was obtaining, Maxeke often sent letters back home to her sister that expressed admiration of and participation at a church and school in America (Wilberforce University was an AME institution) that was under black control and gave its participants an opportunity for education and leadership.53

51 Campbell, Songs of Zion, 267.
52 Ibid., 283.
53 For the contents of such letters see Margaret McCord, The Calling, 104 and 124-125.
After completing their degrees, Wilberforce graduates were expected to go out and serve their community. For African Americans this meant providing leadership to a population that was steadily facing increasingly institutionalized racism and the curtailment of civil rights after the ending of Reconstruction. For Maxeke and other Black South Africans attending the school, training was to prepare them to serve and to represent the Black community in South Africa, which by the time Maxeke returned in September of 1901, was on the cusp of imperial reconstruction “that mocked the dreams of a social order based on character rather than race.”

As a Wilberforce student, she took lessons in public speaking, a skill that Bishop Payne saw as necessary to all Blacks’ eventual assimilation into the mainstream. Often these classes were with Hallie Quinn Brown, a well-known professor of elocution, composition, and rhetoric, who taught at Wilberforce from 1893-1923 and was an international speaker on the importance of temperance.

Oratory often extended beyond the classroom. Maxeke, a student member of the North Ohio Conference of the Women’s Mite Missionary Society, a social service organization created to meet not only the needs of the African American community but other Black communities beyond the country’s borders as well, was encouraged her to voice her opinions about the struggles of her people back home. Very impressionable, perhaps because of her younger age, Maxeke often expressed her belief in the inferiority of Africans. This attitude was echoed in her papers that described the African past as one of “‘ritual killings, live burials, and snake bedecked witchdoctors,’” and claimed that

54 Campbell, Songs of Zion, 293.
55 McGinnis, A History and an Interpretation, 57.
56 To read of how Maxeke was remembered by Hallie Quinn Brown, see Brown’s unpublished memoir. A copy is held at Central State University in the Hallie Quinn Brown Library.
African American presence was greatly needed in her country. Throughout her membership in the Mite Society, the women cherished her talks on the conditions of Blacks in South Africa, adopting her as “that Rare Jewel” and their “African girl of beloved memory.” In 1902, Fanny Jackson Coppin, Maxeke’s Mite mentor and the first African-American female principal in the US, traveled to South Africa where she witnessed many of the experiences Maxeke described first-hand. While there, she held courses for women at Bethel Institute, a missionary school that emphasized self-help. This school further attests to the way in which African American ideals about uplift were transferred by female travelers to South Africa and the “ebony kinship” that Milfred C. Fierce described between continental Africans and African Americans.

Maxeke was also prepared for her work back home in South Africa in her training to stay abreast of “some of the leading questions of the day.” In the 1879 Board of Trustees Meeting of Wilberforce University, Bishop Benjamin Arnett convinced the board to pass a resolution to establish a lecture series to encourage students to discuss and debate current issues. While enrolled, Maxeke met and interacted with race leaders like Booker T. Washington and Alexander Crummell among others. Although she never met Frederick Douglass, she was familiar with his ideas through discussions of his life and work, including Du Bois’s eulogy of him in 1895. Although Du Bois was in the process of leaving Wilberforce University owing to mounting disagreements between him and the

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57 Songs of Zion, 266.
58 Ibid., 282.
59 See Fanny Jackson Coppin, Reminiscences of School Life, 126.
61 McGinnis, A History and an Interpretation, 52.
62 Ibid., 53.
63 Campbell, Songs of Zion, 268.
members of the school administration, he made clear that as a graduate, Maxeke could be counted among “the true college men and women,” who were broadly trained and “emancipated by [both] training and culture.” His comments that open Alfred B. Xuma’s *Charlotte Manye* show that Du Bois saw Maxeke as one of the best examples of this in South Africa. By 1914, nearly 50 Black South Africans traveling under the auspices of Ethiopian AME church had learned these same lessons. As James Campbell explains, in many of these instances, these students enrolled at Maxeke’s alma mater.

In South Africa, where Whites were outnumbered three to one by Africans, there was a fear that this steady stream of Black students to the United States would ultimately lead to riots that would likely end with the overthrow of the Prime Minister, Louis Botha, the South African Party, and the White rule and control that they represented. Consequently, in 1916, though most South African officials wanted to prevent the higher education of Blacks all together, the realization that Africans were obtaining overseas education that might cause them to “return with ideas detrimental to [White] interests,” generated support for a local college. As Inter-State Native College at Fort Hare, founded in 1916, and later renamed the University College of Fort Hare in 1951, continued to grow annually in terms of student enrollment, the availability of “higher education” locally gave “state officials a rationale for acting against the trans-Atlantic traffic, not insubstantial for an administration concerned with projecting an appearance of

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65 Campbell, *Songs of Zion*, 250.

even-handed justice and ‘fair play.’”

The construction of the new college led to the blocked applications of African students looking to study abroad in American schools as officials claimed that generally “without a single exception, those Africans who go abroad for education return on stilts altogether out of sympathy with their own people. They may be giants when they return, but they walk on their heads. The infants on foot who have stayed at home, are stronger than they for the purposes of the country.”

Although Fort Hare largely operated as a high school until 1923, White South Africans still believed that it was the best option in the training of the “talented few” for their “proper” roles in South African society. This opinion and indeed the term “talented few,” perhaps coined as a surreptitious attack on W.E.B. Du Bois’s “Talented Tenth,” was invented and upheld by Charles Loram, a native of South Africa who held various government positions in education from 1917-1931.

In his 1917 dissertation from Columbia University in the United States, Loram, although familiar with Du Bois’s arguments for classical education for African Americans, made it clear how much more impressed he was with Washington’s industrial model. His position was strengthened by his visit to Tuskegee in 1915, just two years after D. D. T. Jabavu’s departure. Agreeing with Jabavu, who upon his return to South Africa had sung praises about Washington's philosophy, Loram envisioned “a Tuskegee-type of education” for Blacks in South Africa and argued that limited practical training in the "Industrial and Household Arts" provided the best opportunities for "Native advancement.” In fact, it seems that Jabavu was able to weld some influence in this

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67 Campbell, Songs of Zion, 257.
68 Southern Workman, February 1880.
69 Loram, The Education of the South African Native, 34 and 306.
regard, as it is likely that he influenced Alexander Kerr, the appointed principal and a Scottish man, to introduce a bit of Tuskegeeian philosophy into the Fort Hare curriculum “by insisting that the students do manual labor, which initially meant building the school from the ground up.” Also analogous to Jabavu, Loram reserved the most excitement “for the spirit of the Tuskegee,” which though not lending itself to analysis or quantification, “showed itself in the respectful and dignified bearing of the pupils, the earnestness and thoroughness of their work, and the uprightness and usefulness of their lives.”

For Loram, the curriculum at Fore Hare was a winning one only if it imbued the “talented few” with the spirit of Tuskegee, and supplied the “type” of education that would allow them to easily “transfer to their own people the results of European civilization.” By example and influence, the graduates-turned-leaders would then join others from Lovedale College, a school founded for the training of Black teachers by Presbyterian missionaries and American Baptist Missionary schools like the ones that Maxeke had attended in Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage prior to her enrollment at Wilberforce University, to “effect a rapid uplift of the Native people.”

Although the curriculum varied across these schools, students from all of these institutions were required to convert to Christianity and to adopt Western habits, such as dress. Classes included a concentration on personal hygiene with needle and craftwork being additional requirements for women. Although some academic courses like elementary math were offered at these schools, Jabavu preferred the approach of the “agricultural, mechanical, and industrial-type institution” that he had encountered in the

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70 Ibid., 312.
71 Ibid., 306.
U.S. For example, Jabavu expressed admiration for Tuskegee’s Practice Cottage for women, which gave students a small budget to allow them to practice scientific cooking and proper household management. In addition, he admired the way the industrial skills were taught to Tuskegee’s male students, explaining that through classes “the Negro youth was not only studying chemistry, but also how to apply the knowledge of chemistry to the enrichment of the soil, or to cooking or to dairying, and that the student was being taught not only geometry and physics, but their application to blacksmithing, brickmaking, farming, and what not.” For Loram and Jabavu, these types of initiatives could be fully adapted for the education of Blacks in South Africa and were seen as necessary in counteracting the problems that many Blacks faced.

These thoughts, however, were not shared by many members of the Blacks South African elite who through the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) had protested the establishment of the college out of fear that Whites would dominate the new school and determine its courses, a characteristic they saw in Lovedale College. As it turned out, their concerns appeared to be valid as Jabavu remained the only African instructor at Fort Hare for nearly twenty years, and in 1923 when principal Alexander Kerr fell sick, a recently appointed White math teacher was given the post under the declaration the “college was not yet ready for an African principal.” By the 1920s, another two or three dozen Black South Africans had set their goals beyond Fort Hare to travel to United States to study among African Americans.

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74 Campbell, Songs of Zion, 258.
Ideas that the students encountered at liberal arts colleges and brought back with them also permeated the country in another way—with the arrival of Susie Yergan in 1922. Like Frances Coppin, who had been educated at Oberlin College in Ohio, and her mentee, Charlotte Maxeke, Yergan too was educated at a liberal arts college, Shaw University, which ensured her commitment to the self-advancement of Blacks. Although Yergan and Maxeke did not meet until their Western education made them members of the same social class in South Africa, they had more in common than either of them probably realized at that time. Both women had attended Black schools supported by religious denominations, although in Yergan’s case it was the American Baptist Home Mission Society. Additionally, as Shaw was also supported by the Freedman’s Bureau, like Wilberforce, it maintained a “very close identity with the struggle of blacks for survival, advancement, and equality in American society.”

In fact, “uplift” was the reason for Shaw’s founding in December of 1865 as an institution of learning to assist Blacks in North Carolina and “all the other States of the Union where our people are found in considerable numbers.” The school was founded by those “who had faith in the educatability [sic] of the Negro race” and believed that “Christian education of the prevailing classical types would best serve the needs of the Negro.” While Shaw, unlike Wilberforce, was originally founded for the training of male preachers, the school soon moved beyond the focus and offered courses in other areas. Within a year of its founding began to admit female students who frequently trained as teachers. During the First World War, Shaw also prepared its students to serve

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75 Julian B. Roebuck and Komanduri S. Murty, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, 3.
76 Catalogue of Shaw University. 1876-’77, xi.
as missionaries at home and abroad. From the 1880s onward the school began to train
lawyers and doctors as administrators had successfully convinced trustees members of
the relevance and necessity of these professions.\footnote{Mark S. Giles explains that the American Baptist Home Missionary Society organized and supported
Black colleges that were “predicated on the conviction that the success of the Black population in the South
depended upon capable government, moderated and guided by sound Christian ethics.” Thus, as trustees at
these schools they often argued that the curriculum should be on preaching rather than any other occupation
as this would rid the country of the menace of uneducated African Americans and would best prepare
Blacks for the lives that they should lead. While this racist motivation prevented several institutions like
Jackson College (which became Jackson State University in 1974) from developing more collegiate type
courses until 1921, by the early 1880s, Shaw Institute (became Shaw University in 1875) had already added
a medical school, and by the early 1890s, Shaw Institute’s charter law school class and pharmacy class had
graduated. Although these professional schools closed within only a few decades, due to issues arising from
finances and racial contention in the United States, their short existence shows that Shaw’s faculty was able
to convince members of the American Baptist Home Missionary Society to support their objectives. The
graduates of these schools made remarkable contributions to their fields. See “Race, Social Justice, and
Jackson State,” especially 108-109 of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, the Catalogue of Shaw
University, 1876-’77, J. A. Whitted, “Work of the Northern Societies for the Colored Baptists of North
Carolina,” in A History of the Negro Baptists of North Carolina, and Clay Smith, Jr. and Thurgood
Marshall, Emancipation, 59.
\footnote{Ibid., 15 and 61.}}

Although believing that no profession could do “more to improve the daily life of
the masses than the consecrated, skillful, Christian physician,” Shaw University made
sure that all of its students realized the importance of not thinking of themselves, but the
greater good for suffering humanity. In order to prepare its students for a life of duty, the
university’s enrollees were expected “to maintain a high degree of character and
scholarship, and only students who are willing to comply cheerfully with reasonable
rules” were admitted. Thus, Shaw’s curriculum in the years of Yergan’s attendance,
1912-1916, was similar to many other Black schools in that it “was based on the principle
that not literary culture alone, but the adoption of orderly habits and right principles were
necessary for good education” and integration into the American mainstream.\footnote{Ibid., 15 and 61.}
Consequently, the government of students “was strict and embraced the idea of a uniform
regard for good order, studious habits, and attention to the prescribed routine of duty” and
students’ weeks were filled with activities set by the school. Shaw University’s strict focus on the development of students’ sound Christian ethics through religious activities resembles that at Wilberforce.

Besides mandatory participation in literary societies like the Calliopean society for women and other women’s groups like the YWCA, Yergan was expected to attend a variety of other events that focused on moral improvement.

Chapel exercises were held daily before the beginning of recitations. On Sunday there were Sabbath schools at 9:00 a.m., regular services in the Church at 4:00 p.m., and a general meeting of praise and prayer at 7:30 p.m. There were during the week, prayer meetings, a meeting of the Young Men’s Christian Association, and there were also Temperance and Missionary Societies, which several times during the year gave public concerts. There were also several volunteer Bible study classes connected with the Young Men’s Christian Association. The day of prayer for colleges was regularly observed each year.

By keeping Yergan and her classmates busy, requiring women to go home during school breaks and restricting them from the city, which was thought to be full of disease and crime, Yergan and her classmates were thought not only to develop obedience, but also character. In this way, Shaw University was “doing its part in preparing students for

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80 Ibid., 114.
81 Ibid., 113.
82 Ibid., 109; Shaw University Annual Catalog, 1914, 14.
citizenship of the highest type, thus safeguarding the highest interest of the State, the nation, and the world.”

Like Maxeke, Yergan’s commitment to uplift was also motivated by the courses that she took. As a student of the “college track” she enrolled in the usual courses in Latin, Greek, English, and Algebra. In every class, but especially English, students were supposed to develop an appreciation of “good literature” as well as learn how to use the English language with “correctness and grace” and to “convey argumentative topics cogently and with vigor.” Like students at Wilberforce, Yergan was prepared for public speaking through discussions and theatrical and elocution contests. Her ability to assist her future clients was also enhanced by courses that she took in Shaw’s Department of Domestic Arts. These classes, which emphasized hand and machine sewing and textile combining and the harmonizing of colors prepared Yergan’s eyes and hands to teach neatness and good taste in clothing. She also took classes on ventilation, preserving, canning and pickling, which were created for the purpose of elevating and dignifying “what is generally called the drudgery of the home to develop skillful and efficient homemakers.” Despite these varied course offerings, Shaw University maintained its commitment to a classical education, restricting any female student from giving her whole time to industrial work and requiring enrollment in at least two literary classes. Other upper-level courses in domestic science were open only to those who had

83 Jenkins, “A Historical Study of Shaw University,” 114.
84 Shaw University Annual Catalog, 1914, 24.
85 Ibid., 34-35
demonstrated their commitment to classical education by enrolling in the academic or college track. 86

Such wide training allowed Yergan to “‘go forth from [S]haw’s halls into fields of usefulness and influence.’” Desiring to operate as an effective agent of change in her community, Yergan, like other female Shaw graduates who served as the “first female missionaries of the race in the Congo,” and Jeanes supervisors who provided educational assistance to Black schools and Black students all over the American South after the Civil War, took a job teaching high school in North Carolina. During this time, she continued in the vein of her undergraduate training—remaining a faithful, active member of her church, and maintaining membership in self-help organizations, especially those for women. Yergan also continued to support the local Black branch of the YWCA. 87 Like many of America’s Black elite, including her husband, she “welcomed the Y.C.A.’s [sic] missions to develop the whole [person], body, mind and spirit,” particularly at a time when White society refused to recognize African Americans as equal to Whites. 88

For South African officials, however, Yergan’s education and socialization, which increasingly matched that of Black South Africans who traveled to the United States, presented a political threat. Thus, throughout the 1920s and 1930s many members of the South African government, including Charles Loram, remained committed to the principles upheld by Booker T. Washington and the Tuskegee model. Outside of projects at Fort Hare College to bring this to bear, the goal of recreating Tuskegee in South Africa

86 Shaw University Annual Catalog, 1914, 4-5.
88 Nina Mjagkij, Light in the Darkness, 1.
came to fruition in the mid-1920s when funds became available by Caroline Phelps, a wealthy American woman who invested her money into various charitable and philanthropic projects. Contained in the seventeenth clause of Phelps’s will was the declaration that a portion of the monies be used “in the education of Negroes, both in Africa and the US, [a]nd North American Indians.” Other funds were set aside for “needy and deserving White students” which came to mean graduate students at southern American institutions like the University of Georgia who pursued research on Black Americans in the South. When resources were extended to South Africa after educational tours of Phelps-Stokes commissions, this paved the way for what Umheni Khan calls “an educational and race relations intelligentsia-cum-bureaucracy between South Africa and America.”

Serving as the liaison between the South African government and Phelps-Stokes Fund (PSF) trustee members, Loram worked with Thomas Jesse Jones, the PSF director, to finance trans-Atlantic visits for White educators and government officials to Black vocational and industrial schools in the United States. Depending on the length of the stay and the status of the visitors, itineraries sometimes extended beyond the usual visits to Tuskegee, Hampton and the Penn School in the Sea Islands of South Carolina to include Atlanta University, the University of Georgia, and Loram’s alma mater, Columbia University. At the latter, visitors were encouraged to attend the rural sociology and psychology lectures of Mabel Carney, Loram’s former colleague who had expressed

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90 Quote is from Khan, “A Critical Study of the Life of Sibusisiwe Makanya,” 39. To read papers by these students, see Phelps-Stokes Fellowship Studies.
92 Jacoway, Yankee Missionaries, 170.
interest in learning more about his dissertation research on Blacks in South Africa while he was a student there. Throughout the 1920s, Carney’s lectures were representative of a part of an “ongoing debate on how to develop education suitable to the comparably segregated societies. . . of the Southern United States and South Africa.”

Despite the long list of schools included on the educational tour, by October of 1926 when additional funds were earmarked for “general African purposes,” Loram had been so completely captivated by Penn School, a school that was in many ways similar to Tuskegee in that it was built upon the Hampton method, that he arranged to send Africans for “a year at a time to study the method of Penn and adapt them for use in the training of community workers in South Africa.” Although attempting to replicate the Jeanes educational scheme or the travel of married couples to places where they were needed, the lack of available experienced male teachers between the two World Wars limited Loram to the use of women. Immediately, the work of Sibusisiwe Makanya captured his attention.

Since her 1916 graduation from the Teachers’ Training Course at Adams College in South Africa, Makanya had served her community both as a teacher and as the secretary of the Bantu Purity League, a group founded to “keep girls pure in the right way.” Black South African women throughout the 1920s and 1930s were stereotyped as prostitutes who spread venereal diseases and as beer brewers who caused urban disorder. Beginning during the First World War, missionaries had started initiatives to lift the

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94 Jacoway, Yankee Missionaries, 176.
moral standards of African womanhood.⁹⁵ Within a few years, African women had created groups with similar aims. In creating her own group and lecturing her audience on issues of hygiene and home improvement, it seems that Makanya was an “adaptationist” of Westernism. However, this description masks more than it reveals as her activism and speeches after her 1927-1930 U.S. trip illustrate more of a cross-cultural conversation than a complete devotion to Western ideals and beliefs. For instance, although Makanya, as a trained teacher who had graduated from mission schools run by Westerners, owned many articles of European-styled clothing and knew that she would need sufficient clothing for a year’s time in the U.S., she made a conscious decision to take African garb such as beads and loincloths with her. For Makanya, this was an important and deliberate statement, as clothing, as much then as now, suggests an individual’s beliefs, personality, and self-image. More importantly, dress also represented one of the foremost objects of Western attacks on African culture and, as such, would surely distinguish her from African Americans. As a woman of Zulu heritage, a group that had continued to fight against White settlers and colonialism long after other groups had been defeated, Makanya was making a strong political statement.⁹⁶

Despite her strong ethnic pride, Makanya agreed with Loram that traveling to the United States to study the curriculum and methods of Black schools might provide suggestions on how Black South Africans could better “adapt to the encroachment of urbanization and industrialism.” Like other Black South Africans who made the decision to study abroad, she believed that Western missionaries in her native country overly

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⁹⁶ A photo of Makanya appears in Shula Mark’s Not Either an Experimental Doll, 55.
focused on moral training that left Blacks helpless in the face of the harsh realities of urban existence. Upon arriving in the U.S. in 1926, Makanya spent six months observing lessons at Penn, a school founded under “Order Number Nine” issued by Civil War general William T. Sherman to assist the freed men and women of South Carolina’s Sea Islands. Afterwards, she shadowed instructors and students at a ten-week summer school session at Tuskegee. While here, she, like Jabavu, marveled at the size of the campus and the magnificent buildings that proved to be “Masonic triumphs and the outcome of Negro designs.” Again like Jabavu, she was even more impressed by “the spirit of cooperation between the colored workers in the school and the White citizens outside the school.”

As a Phelps-Stokes Fund affiliate studying educational methods for their transmission to South Africa, Makanya probably noted similarities between the curriculum of Penn and Tuskegee. Since both were formed on the Hampton model, their students were exposed to curriculum based on labor and social discipline. Still, academic classes on reading, elocution, elementary mathematics, history, and literature were offered. As Marc C. David explains in his study of literary programs at Penn School, although Rossa Cooley, the principal during Makanya’s 1927 visit, was a supporter of industrial education, “she understood the value of academic courses started under previous administrations, and thus did not eliminate the courses.” Instead, she added another year to the curriculum “to give better preparation for the vocational

classes” while allowing students to make up academic work during the Summer term. Her decision was probably influenced by the criticism of “New Negroes.”

In the 1920s, Tuskegee, too, began to offer more academic courses as it transitioned from a secondary and normal school to an institution that offered mostly college courses. Nonetheless, like those at Penn, Tuskegee’s leaders continued to stress the importance of industrial courses and training, as it was thought that such an approach would allow immediate application and “help to change and improve the moral and industrial condition of the communities in which Blacks lived.” These teachers thought and felt like Cooley who stated in her address before the Ashley Baptist Association in 1908: “Education no longer means to be able to read and write, it means much more. An educated person is one who can do something, one who is fitted to serve his community.” Beyond classes, at Tuskegee this took the form of a weekly Literary Society, in which students and faculty “had the opportunity [to practice] extemporaneous speaking and to acquaint themselves with parliamentary usages.” Although Tuskegee’s leaders intended for these exercises to prepare students to become good representatives of the race, like those at Penn, they took a more gradual approach to citizenship feeling it “vastly more important that we be prepared for the exercise of these privileges.”

Echoing Washington’s 1895 Atlanta Exposition Address, teachers encouraged their students to “cast down their buckets.” As Henry N. Drewry et al. explain, although the educational models at Black industrial colleges had courses in

100 Jacoway, Yankee Missionaries, 190; Marc C. David, “The Penn School of St. Helena,” 182.
102 David, “The Penn School of St. Helena,” 38.
103 Jabavu, “Booker T. Washington’s Methods,” 32; Anson P. Stokes, Tuskegee Institute, 70.
104 Stokes, Tuskegee Institute, 56.
105 For the Atlanta Exposition speech, see Washington, Up From Slavery, 95-115.
common with more liberal arts schools, “It was the liberal arts [college] that challenged the concept of training Black students for careers that reinforced social separation, economic dependency and political impotence.”

Penn and Tuskegee students, like those at Shaw and Wilberforce, were thoroughly involved in community-based programs. According to Davis, the community-based program at Penn School remained an important part of the curriculum and remained the pride and joy of the St. Helena community until the school became public in 1948. During these years, students and instructors alike were expected to play an active role in organizations like the “Temperance Society, a Women’s Union, the Missionary Society, and the Public Service Committee, Sunday School and church” which would simultaneously build character and improve the surrounding communities.

Tuskegee also had a large number of Black social service organizations, including student-led organizations like the “Young Men’s Christian Association, Young People’s Society of Christian Endeavor, The Young Women’s Christian Temperance Union, the Young Women’s Christian Association, and the Edna D. Chenney Missionary Society.

In his 1913 Tuskegee report, Jabavu had especially focused on the organizational work of Margaret Murray Washington, the wife of Booker T. Washington and Lady Principal and Director of the Department of Domestic Service. In particular, Mrs. Washington organized "mothers' meetings," instructed the women in home management and childcare, and led the Tuskegee Women’s Club, an affiliate of the NACW. Though, she died three years before Makanya’s visit to Tuskegee, Makanya, too, was impressed

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106 Henry Drewry et al., _Stand and Prosper_, 66.
107 Ibid., 58.
by the work of Mrs. Washington that she had read about in Booker T. Washington’s *Up From Slavery* and that continued to be emphasized in several ways in Tuskegee’s curriculum.\(^{110}\) Washington’s book had been suggested as part of the reading list to prepare her for education in the United States. Among others, Loram also recommended that Makanya read Cooley’s *Homes of the Freed* that discussed the importance of teachers’ taking the whole community as a classroom to improve the common standard of living. Often the exhibitions, fairs, and cooperative programs put on by teachers and social groups would not only be for improvement in the quality of life for the students and their families, but also to enhance country life and curb the migration of Black youth to Northern cities. Like those at Tuskegee, Penn’s leaders feared that as Blacks continued to travel north for jobs, they would enter into competition with Whites for employment and increase racial prejudice.\(^{111}\)

Makanya’s first stop after Tuskegee was Schauffler Missionary Training School in Cleveland, Ohio. In 1886, American Congregationalists established this women’s college in Cleveland, Ohio to train its students “as missionaries, pastors’ assistants, and leaders and superintendents of institutions in various other fields of Christian labor at home and abroad.”\(^{112}\) Although its students, including three African Americans, were mostly Eastern European, Schauffler was similar to Black educational institutions in key ways. First, it had a particular focus on citizenship. Rather than just prepare its students for the responsibilities, duties and obligations of citizenship, however, Schauffler actually positioned itself as a protector of American citizenship and a guarantor of the nation’s

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\(^{111}\) Rossa B. Cooley, *Homes of the Freed*, 12.

aims against immigrants. To this end, the school trained female missionaries to work among immigrants, who they claimed were “absolutely ignorant both of American history and American ideals.” In speaking of newcomers from Southern and Eastern Europe who, in the 1890s, had begun to outnumber immigrants from countries like England, Ireland, and Germany, Schauffler posited them as the “the greatest dangers to all these things which Americans hold most dear.”113 Thus, the faculty and financial supporters stressed the school “as an all around Americanizing Institution that should commend itself to every American who loves his country and who wishes to see his beloved land saved from the miseries, which have befallen other nations by unifying all our polyglot populations in the spirit of loyalty to the flag.”114 The second characteristic Schauffler shared with black schools and American schools more broadly, was its weight on the importance of character education. Still, when training students for service, Schauffler ranked proselytization and salvation as higher objectives than community improvement.

Unlike the Black schools already noted, Schauffler sought to train only women as they proclaimed women were more influential than men in saving souls and improving the plights of people. The attitude that only men could be missionaries and/or leaders was one that Makanya had run into in her work in the Bantu Purity League in South Africa. Although upholding beliefs about the natural characteristics and responsibilities that women should have in ensuring the morals of the next generation, Makanya’s activism

113 John Whiteclay Chambers, The Tyranny of Change, 11. Paul F. Sutphen, “Americanizing Foreigners,” [n.d.], Historical Accounts, Box 12, Schauffler Missionary Training School Papers (hereafter referred to as Schauffler MSS), Oberlin College Archives (hereafter referred to as O. C. A.); Schauffler Missionary Training School, Catalogue of the Schauffler Missionary Training School, 1930, 8-10, Brochures and Announcements, Box 10, Schauffler MSS.
114 Catalogue of the Schauffler Missionary Training School 1930, 10, Schauffler MSS.
was often unsupported and criticized by men, who believed she was overstepping her boundaries as a woman.\textsuperscript{115} It was not until her arrival in the U.S. and her time at Schaufller that Makanya was surrounded by people who believed that women had greater power to bring about social improvement through education or community work.\textsuperscript{116} In response to the question, “Who makes a better missionary?” Dwight Moody, a visitor and supporter of the school responded:

During the day, when the men are out, the women can go into the house and sit down and talk with the mother, the wife and the children, and pray. Women have more tact, and if we had more of them as city missionaries we would have less anarchism and communism. It is a great pity that women are not more used in this work of reaching the masses, and do not offer themselves more frequently.

Another supporter echoed the same sentiments claiming that female missionaries were “like Goliath’s sword, of which David said, ‘There is none like it, give it me.’”\textsuperscript{117}

Armed with the Bible and other training, Makanya believed that she could save Black South African people from the issues they faced with the arrival of Whites and industrialization. Schaufller’s curriculum, which was dedicated to the “training of young women to be leaders in the promotion of an inter-racial and international Christian democracy,” thus it seemed to be the perfect fit.\textsuperscript{118} Shifting from the role as an observer

\textsuperscript{116} Tenney, \textit{The Schaufller Missionary Training School}, 57.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{118} \textit{Catalogue of the Schaufller Missionary Training School}, 1930, 10, Schaufller MSS.
to a student, Makanya was exposed to a tight schedule that emphasized both home life and social work. She and her classmates were expected to rise early with time for breakfast, worship, and solitude. Throughout the week, they attended classes on “church history, the study of the missionary field and the methods employed in missionary work, preparation for holding meetings, and vocal and instrument mental.” In all of these courses, a heavy emphasis was placed on learning proper English, which would enable the “minds of pupils to be sufficiently broadened” as well as allow them to share the details and successes of their work with other English speakers. In order to achieve this goal, Makanya and her colleagues were required to do work in groups and to present their findings before the class—practices she probably realized were similar to Penn and Tuskegee.

Still, as Schauffler’s students came from many ethnic, language, and religious backgrounds, some eighteen nationalities and nearly twelve religious denominations during Makanya’s stay, additional courses were offered to meet student’s specific needs. Instruction of preliminary courses was often offered in multiple languages in order to permit students to finish their coursework in three years. This type of language and training was also important so that the women would be able to proselytize in the native tongue of their population in order to ensure greater success of conversion. However, since Makanya was the first enrollee from the African continent, the school was unprepared to give courses in Zulu or other African languages. There is no evidence

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119 Tenney, The Schaufler Missionary Training School, 103.
120 Ibid.
121 Catalogue of the Schaufler Missionary Training School, 1930, 10, Schaufler MSS.
122 Ibid., 24; Henry M. Tenney, “The Schaufler Missionary Training School: What it is, What is not, and What it should become,” October 1919, Brochures and Announcements, Box 10, Schaufler MSS. O. C. A.
that she enrolled in remedial English language courses, and her biographer explains that she was already efficient in English when she arrived in the United States, which was “an important achievement.” Beyond this, Makanya had been in the United States for nearly a year by the time of her attendance at Schauffler, and whatever her English skills were upon arrival, they would have been enhanced.

In addition to classroom learning, Makanya and her classmates were instructed in the “democracy of development,” which stipulated that “the home life and the school life shall be combined as to give the culture, refinement, and unselfish service of the home with the scholarship and vigorous training of school life.” Under this policy, students were to spend one or two afternoons a week outside of classes in “actual social and religious service of various sorts, such as house-to-house visitations, religious canvass and welfare investigation, work in hospitals, fresh-air camps, in clubs of various kinds, and in conducting sewing schools, basketry, and cooking classes in connection with the different social and welfare agencies of the city.” On Sundays, they were “expected to do work in Sunday Schools and in Mothers’ and Children’s meetings.” Afterwards, they could attend morning service at the Bethlehem Congregational Church, the center of missionary activity among Bohemian immigrants, or any another community church if they wished. On the evening of the Sabbath, they were encouraged to attend the Congressional Church meeting and preaching service. Also under the democracy of development, Schauffler women were assigned chores beyond simply cleaning their own rooms and doing their own washing, ironing and mending in order to prepare them to

124 The Schauffler Memorial, (April 1923): 30, Historical Accounts, Box 12, Schauffler MSS. O. C. A.
125 Catalogue of the Schauffler Missionary Training School, 1930, 22, Schauffler MSS.
give attention to the home as an integral part of missions work. Similar to Tuskegee’s Practice Cottage, rotational chores meant that students would learn how to care efficiently for the entire home.¹²⁶

Makanya and her classmates were also assigned roommates so that they might learn more about different cultures. Such was done to encourage these students to gain “daily association with a high grade of foreign-speaking young women in the home life of this cosmopolitan school, and their practical every-day missionary and welfare work” so that they might learn the “way of approach to the hearts of those so often misunderstood.”¹²⁷ While at Schauffler, Makanya developed many meaningful friendships with individuals affiliated with the institution, with whom she eventually shared stories about her Zulu culture and heritage. Before long, her description of her life in Africa had attracted a following at young people’s meetings and numerous associations and clubs in the Cleveland area. For several of these occasions she dressed in her African garb.¹²⁸

In 1929, however, Makanya departed from Schauffler and set out for Teachers College at Columbia University in New York. Apparently, she was quite lonely there as she explained to her biographer that she spent most of her time cleaning restrooms. Although she expressed the same feelings of isolation when discussing her time at Tuskegee and Penn, this time that she explained that she was even more depressed about

¹²⁷Catalogue of the Schauffler Missionary Training School, 1930, 14, Schauffler MSS.
¹²⁸Khan, “A Critical Study of the Life of Sibusisiwe Makanya,” 60-61. Makanya’s shared stories led Reba P. Mirsky to publish versions of the accounts for the American audience. Both of the books are dedicated to Makanya and the author’s other Zulu friends, see Seven Grandmothers and Thirty-One Brothers and Sisters.
her ill treatment and had to turn to stories of Booker T. Washington’s janitorial work at Hampton for solace. \(^{129}\) While in her masters’ thesis, Umehani Khan encourages readers to imagine what Makanya’s time at Schaufler must have been like, especially since she, as a member of a royal Zulu clan, had been assigned to cleaning bathrooms, the most menial job at the college, Schaufler’s democracies of development, service, and opportunity add complexities to the story. Second, Schaufler did place great emphasis on students being assigned chores, but because they rotated, it seems unlikely that Makanya would have been assigned to clean the restrooms throughout her entire year there. Third, since its founding, the school maintained an open door policy to admit any student, regardless of her ability to pay in full or her educational background at the beginning of the year. While extra chores were assigned to students who were there on loans or donor funds, the school administration made it clear that these tasks were not to interfere with students’ class work, which was to remain the first priority. \(^{130}\) Although Makanya, as an African student, might have chafed at the condescending language used at Schaufler in referring to immigrant populations in their hopes to attract broader American support and funding, she remained at this school for a longer period than she did at Tuskegee and Penn. Even more, after students arrived, Schaufler seemed to be committed to providing a home life that “recognize[d] neither creed, nationality, race not class distinctions” as students were encouraged to “eat at the same table, occupy the same rooms, and kneel at the same altar.” \(^{131}\) Accounts of observers and students throughout Schaufler’s history also attest to feelings of fair treatment, often offering heartfelt reminiscences about the

\(^{130}\) *Catalogue of the Schaufler Missionary Training School, 1930*, 10, Schaufler MSS.
\(^{131}\) Ibid.
atmosphere of the school, which they frequently described as cordial and inviting.\footnote{In a 1923 letter about the school, Alice M. Parker described the school not “as melting pot” but claimed that “it is as others have testified, a mosaic beautiful with racial, national, and personal traits and talents of each girl who is herself a precious stone with a precious individuality and a splendid heritage to build into the freedom and peace that are to be.” Her letters bear a similar tone to those of Mary E. Panhorst (class of 1913) and an anonymous graduate’s testimony printed in \textit{Story of a School for Twenty-Five Years}. Alice M. Parker to Schauffler Missionary Training School, 1913. Historical Accounts, Box 12, Schauffler MSS. the John Gaius Fraser, \textit{Story of a School for Twenty-Five Years}, (n.p., n.d.). Oberlin College Special Collections.}

Furthermore, Makanya’s donation of funds to the school in 1930 along with a short letter expressing her support for Schauffler, suggests that she shared these sentiments.\footnote{\textit{The Schauffler Memorial}, (July 1930): 18, Administrative Records, Box 10, Schauffler MSS, O. C. A.} What is certain is that her move to Columbia University made her similar to many African Americans who had begun to enroll there during the First World War.\footnote{Glotzer, “The Career of Mabel Carney,” 313.}

Makanya financed her studies at Teachers College with the money that she had saved from a speaking tour on Zulu life and customs set by her Cleveland friends. By the late 1920s, Teachers College had grown from an undergraduate institution largely concerned with the “preparation of skilled and competent manual training teachers to one that predominately trained and prepared graduate students for every type of educational work imaginable.”\footnote{Lawrence Arthur Cremin, et al., \textit{A History of Teachers College}, 114; and James E. Russell, \textit{Founding Teachers College}, 47.} This included merging theory with application and a reconsideration of the educational approaches of former decades—what Makanya seemed to have been missing at all of her past schools. At Teachers College, many progressive instructors called for abandoning autocratic classrooms where students were taught
through memorization, recitation, and harsh discipline and favoring teaching problem-solving skills through hands-on learning and the interests of the children.\textsuperscript{136}

As the international reputation of Teachers College grew, so too did the number of students and the average age of the student body. From 1923 onward, a majority of the students were part-time students and full-time teachers and parents, and many were engaged in research.\textsuperscript{137} Approximately one in every twenty registrants at Teachers College was from abroad, and Africa had significant representation.\textsuperscript{138} At thirty-four years of age, it is likely that Makanya found this environment more comfortable than the first school she attended in the United States where the average student was an adolescent. While at Teachers College, Makanya, like several other Black and White students from South Africa, was advised by Mabel Carney, the head of the Department of Rural Education from 1918 to 1941 and an important part of the PSF trans-Atlantic tour during its short existence. As a Carney protégé, it is likely that Makanya not only took courses in rural sociology and psychology but also ones that addressed “the aim of the missionary enterprise, the organization and objectives of missionary schools, and curriculum and methods (with an emphasis on the progressive project method).”\textsuperscript{139} For Carney, the missionary enterprise and rural school needed to work together. Like her other Teachers College colleagues, she also condemned the existing system of locally controlled one-}

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\item[136] In \textit{Founding Teachers College}, Russell discusses changes to the curriculum in the late nineteenth century that reflected the broader nature of education, such as course offerings on educational psychology. See 53-54. For an interesting article examining the feminist historiography of the progressive education movement see, Kathleen Weiler, “The Historiography of Gender,” 161-176.
\item[137] The year Makanya first enrolled at Teachers College, J.R. MacNeel conducted an investigation of the type of students admitted for study. See \textit{Admission of Students}. For other research done by Teachers College graduate students throughout the 1920s, see P.S. Hill, \textit{Series on Childhood Education}; and George Harve Reavis, \textit{Factors Controlling Attendance}.
\item[138] Cremin, \textit{A History of Teachers College}, 116.
\item[139] Kathleen Weiler, “From Home Missionary to White Ally,” 2614.
\end{enumerate}
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room district schools advocating for school consolidation and the use of women teachers. Like Loram, Carney argued that women had valuable contributions to make to students and uncritically accepted the dominant image of women as nurturers who “act as givers of human life and guardians of human values.”\textsuperscript{140} She, however, differed from Loram in that she believed that women teachers in rural areas should not be barred from becoming principals and trainers, even if this included leadership over men.\textsuperscript{141}

By the time of Makanya’s 1929 enrollment at Teachers College, Carney’s interest in rural education had also expanded to include Black education. This began after her tour of Black educational schools in the South in 1921, which featured a lecture that she gave at Tuskegee. One year later, Carney began to offer a “special program on Negro education” at Teachers College, which had now begun to respond to the Northern philanthropic foundations’ involvement in the education of Southern Blacks.\textsuperscript{142} During Makanya’s enrollment, Carney’s program included courses taught by her and a lecture series that brought “outstanding leaders in the field of Negro education” to Columbia to give two-hour lectures on the current state of Black education and race relations. They included John Hope, the president of Morehouse College; Mordecai Johnson, the president of Howard University; and W. E. B. Du Bois, who was then editor of \textit{The Crisis}, an organ of the NAACP. Despite her involvement with these African American leaders who favored liberal education, Carney, like many American Whites, maintained confidence in technical education, as she thought that this was the best as type for which most Blacks were fitted. In addition, Carney’s support of colonialism and missionary

\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., 2603.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 2601.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 2605.
schools in Africa which represented the “civilized man’s burden of trusteeship for backward races,” was largely born out of her South African trip in 1926.\textsuperscript{143}

Carney’s beliefs problematize discussions about Makanya’s educational choices. First, scholars interpret Makanya’s movement from Black to White schools as illustrative of her dismissal of the industrial education model and the accommodationalist/black subservience model it undergirded. They position her as similar to other African students who showed dissatisfaction with the Hampton-Tuskegee model, choosing instead to set out for big, northern cities, which had more liberal schools. In speaking of African students more broadly, historian James Campbell explains that this group of students sought to show that they were not “devotees to practical education.”\textsuperscript{144} The argument continues, they saw this type of training as tangential to their preparation for responsibilities they would assume as leaders in Africa and maintained a desire for more liberal arts classes which were taught to White students of all ages in South Africa.

While this explanation might help to shed light on others’ educational journeys, it does not offer a complete explanation of Makanya’s situation. While it is true that her departure from the schools to which Loram originally sent her delivered “the severe blow to. . . the PSF’s hopes for training a cadre of ‘good Africans’ in the U.S.” and showed the “essential bankruptcy of Loram’s dreams for transforming Africa with 'a thousand Penns,’” Makanya’s study under Carney, of whom she was very fond, might not be as contradictory as it seems.\textsuperscript{145} For example, although Carney saw individual Africans as intellectually capable and open to change, she held “deep-seated Christian beliefs that

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\item \textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 2608; and Glotzer, “The Career of Mabel Carney,” 317 and 327.
\item \textsuperscript{144} Campbell, \textit{Songs of Zion}, 268.
\item \textsuperscript{145} Marks, \textit{Not Either and Experimental Doll}, 52; Davis, “Producing the ‘Good African,’” 99.
\end{itemize}
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caused her to view any religious and cultural difference as inferiority.\textsuperscript{146} When she invited Du Bois to speak, despite his widely known support of classical education, his subject was the importance of religion to Blacks.\textsuperscript{147} Furthermore, the year after Makanya’s departure, Carney’s lecture series, included three female speakers all of whom supported educational adaptation: Cooley, who described her work as principal of Penn School, which Makanya had visited in 1927; Lucy Slowe, the Dean of Women at Howard University; and Rebecca Davis from the Jeanes Fund.\textsuperscript{148} It was not until the early 1940s that Carney’s views about race shifted considerably, perhaps influenced by her continued interaction with Black and African students at Teachers College and her engagement with Black leaders.\textsuperscript{149}

A second reason why this description fails to describe Makanya is that the school she first attended after her departure from Black schools, Schauffler, also lacked a liberal focus and trained students for jobs that did not threaten America’s racial hierarchy. Rather than classical courses in Greek, Latin, and Philosophy, Schauffler students’ lessons were derived mostly from the New and Old Testament of the Bible. Furthermore, although she may have heard stories about Columbia, there is no indication that Makanya chose to leave Schauffler and to attend this school because she believed that the program at Teachers College was more liberal.

Scholars have used comments from Makanya’s unpublished biography to indicate that she found Penn and Tuskegee to be “rudimentary” and ill-fitting with her current

\textsuperscript{146} Weiler, “From Home Missionary to White Ally,” 2608.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., 2611.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 2612-2613.
level of social work, and concluded that the Black institutions she attended had little to no impact on her.\footnote{For example, Shula Marks does not really consider these schools in her short biography of Makanya in \textit{Not Either an Experimental Doll}, 32-34. Also, although Umhenni Khan does mention Penn and Tuskegee, she ultimately dismisses their importance. See “A Critical Study of the Life of Sibusisiwe Makanya,” 51-52.} A closer look at her activism upon her return to South Africa suggests otherwise. For example, in recalling her time at Tuskegee, Makanya shared that she had been moved by pictures she saw in the windowpanes of the school’s chapel. The symbolism of the Three Magi—a White man, a Black man, and a Yellow man—united in adoration of the Christ child left her with great hope and a deep conviction. Twenty years later, Makanya evoked this image and the way that she had hoped to make this symbolism bear fruit in Natal.\footnote{Khan, “A Critical Study of the Life of Sibusisiwe Makanya,” 57 and 69.} Even when rejecting other aspects of the curriculum, she was able to draw lessons from the Black schools that she attended.

Although Makanya’s desire to serve her race was evident before her enrollment at the American schools she attended and/or observed, like Maxeke and Yergan, it is likely that her education provided her with additional skills and more commitment to do so. And although Yergan and Maxeke did not attend historically White institutions, like Makanya, several of their professors were White teachers and often progressives. In fact, in nearly all cases, with the exception of Tuskegee, students at Black institutions were taught mainly by White faculties comprised of Northern missionaries who had come south after the war.\footnote{Stephanie Shaw, \textit{What a Woman Ought to Be and to Do}, 70.} In 1915, one scholar outlined what had been the mission of the Yankee Schoolma’ams in the South: “By the Yankee schoolma’am I mean all that shining host, men and women who came down from the North to help in the education and uplift of the Negro. She set about developing strength out of the Negro’s weakness,
order and beauty out of his disorder.”

Although this was a difficult load to bear, historian Adam Fairclough explains that for Black teachers the burden was even heavier as they had “the added duty of dispelling ignorance, immorality, and superstition that many believed slavery had bequeathed to the race—of leading and elevating a benighted people.”

Elevating the status of African Americans meant that the colleges and universities they attended, although they were not wealthy in terms of financial resources, physical plant, and teaching facilities, and often faced opposition from the White power structure, had to not only train students for particular professions, but to imbue them with characteristics like order, a strong work ethic, and respectability that were expected to enrich both the American and global society. Importantly, at a time when African Americans remained shut out of the political, economic, and social mainstream, Black institutions had also to advocate for race work. In their training of students as doctors, lawyers, seamstresses, homemakers, and farmers among their own population, leaders of these institutions placed emphases on making sure that the hands, the heads, and most especially the hearts of their students, were properly trained. Although, there were debates about whether industrial or classical education would improve the status of Blacks, students at Black colleges usually took classes in both. Through domestic science courses and women’s groups, literary groups, and other classes like those in elocution and English that characterized the curriculum at nearly all Blacks schools, female students learned lessons about orderliness, cleanliness, deference, and female

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respectability, which they could share with their community and could be used to counter negative stereotypes about Black women and the race in general. For Maxeke and Yergan, their academic courses were to ensure that classical education “would not remain the reserve of Whites only.”

For members of the Black elite, community work was one means of ensuring that Black people “would take [their] place in the vanguard of civilization,” and achieve citizenship in their respective nations but also the larger society. This then was dependant upon students’ being committed to the creed that wherever an individual “touch[es] the life of any community [s]he weakens or [s]he strengthens it; [s]he helps to corrupt it or [s]he helps to purify it.” The women in this study took this doctrine seriously and set out to improve the plight of Black South Africans by creating women’s and youth groups and speaking on behalf of Black South Africans.

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155 W. E. B. Du Bois offered these words as part of his suggested platform for the first meeting of Niagara Movement in July of 1905. See “A Proposed Platform for the Conference at Buffalo.”
156 Stokes, Tuskegee Institute, 24.
CHAPTER 2:

Better Homes and Gardens: Women’s and Youth Improvement Groups in South Africa

Armed with their American education and the desire to “uplift,” Maxeke, Makanya, and Yergan considered themselves prepared to offer advice and leadership to Black South Africans who were suffering dire situations. As the first-educated and most senior woman, when Charlotte Maxeke returned to the country in 1901, fresh from her studies at Wilberforce University, the South African nation was not yet formed and was in the midst of the Anglo-Boer War. Nearly a decade after the British emerged as victors, the Union of South Africa was created. The legal establishing of the color bar built upon the legacy of territorial disputes and wars that had accompanied the arrival of White settlers some three centuries earlier. The entrance of missionaries into South Africa soon after further shattered the economic and social independence of Black South Africans as these religious groups made it their mission to “civilize” and “Christianize” the indigenous population.¹

By the time the Yergans arrived in 1922, the problems that Black South Africans faced showed no signs of improvement. Instead, laws like the 1924 Industrial Conciliation Act that legally recognized White trade unions but not those representing

Blacks or Indians and the 1926 Works Amendment Act that reinforced segregation in the mining industry, pushed Black South Africans further down the social and economic ladder.\textsuperscript{2} In 1929, before a packed gathering of North American YMCA “Colored Work Department” supporters in Chicago, Susie Yergan told her audience that South Africa’s race problems were “the most perplexing of the world.”\textsuperscript{3}

Although most Black South Africans were only just beginning to see themselves collectively as a “race” instead of as members of various ethnic groups, continued repression convinced many of the need to band together.\textsuperscript{4} Thus, throughout the 1920s, many Black South Africans showed their opposition to discriminatory South African legislation through their membership in the Industrial and Commercial Workers’ Union (ICU). The union, which was originally established in Cape Town in 1919 for “colored” dockworkers in Cape Town, became strongly influenced by the back-to-Africa movement of Marcus Garvey and immediately galvanized mass support by calling for an immediate end to discrimination and colonial rule.\textsuperscript{5} At one point, both Maxeke’s and Makanya’s names appeared on the ICU membership list. While, Makanya eagerly supported the ICU, even sending money while away in the United States from 1927-1930, Maxeke does not appear to have attended meetings beyond the earliest ones. Perhaps her Christian beliefs, which did not support what she would have considered the vengeful expulsion of all Whites from Africa kept her from participating. Additionally, the influence of her Wilberforce education and her involvement in Black women’s groups in the United

\begin{itemize}
\item Baruch Hirson, \textit{Yours for the Union}, 29-31.
\item Susie Yergan, “Africa: Our Challenge,” 194.
\item For a discussion of how women across ethnic groups viewed each other and used stereotypes to distinguish themselves even throughout the twentieth century, see Belinda Bozzoli, \textit{Women of Phokeng}, 147-164, especially 148-149.
\item Hirson, \textit{Yours for the Union}, 40 and 83.
\end{itemize}
States, both of which advocated interracial cooperation and opposed and extreme political action also might have been influential.\textsuperscript{6} Even so, Cheryl Walker explains that Maxeke’s short time in the ICU appears significant as she was probably most responsible for the ICU’s attempt to initiate a women’s branch in Cape Town in 1920.\textsuperscript{7} Of course, Yergan and her husband, who were still relatively new to South Africa during the 1920s, did not get involved in this “radical” type of activism. Nevertheless, historian David H. Anthony, III explains, by the mid-1930s, Yergan’s husband had become so disillusioned with South Africa’s racist policies that he began taking political steps to the left, living a double life with his day-to-day duties as a YMCA secretary and after hours coaching of young Africans in the socialist tradition. So complete was Max Yergan’s mastery of “this double role that the majority of people who knew of him as a YMCA secretary had no ideas of his extracurricular activities until years afterward.” Although it is unclear how and to what degree Susie Yergan was active in these meetings, students report that she was often present.\textsuperscript{8}

When the ICU began to decline in the mid-to-late 1920s as a consequence of much governmental repression and infighting, there was little to no remaining organized response to the issues ordinary working class Blacks faced. Since its founding in 1912, the African National Congress (ANC), the other major Black political group that at the time, had been the reserve of elite men, As W.O. Brown, wrote of these men:

\textsuperscript{6} James T. Campbell, \textit{Songs of Zion}, 280. Gerda Lerner discusses that the strong class prejudices that characterized many black women’s clubs led these groups to exhibit a patronizing, missionary attitude rather than advocate for the rights of working Black women. See “Early Community Work,” 160.
\textsuperscript{7} Walker, \textit{Women and Resistance}, 37.
Though reminded of [their] political impotence, the heavy taxes imposed upon them, the poor social and educational services provided, the humiliating pass system, the repressionistic native policy, and the hundred and one restrictive rules and laws by which the white man keeps them either out of [t]he social system or subordinate within it. . . . But probably most important of all, the reflective native realizes that salvation lies in the acquisition of European education and culture. He may idealize the Bantu and resent the white man's demeaning term “kaffir” when applied to native folk, but he does not face backward for his cultural orientation. He envisages a Europeanized native people competing for place in the social order which the European has come to think of as peculiarly his own.9

Rather than mobilize a mass movement of Black South Africans, ANC members stressed their “loyalty to South Africa and to Britain that they felt had brought considerable benefits, especially Christianity, education, and the rule of law.” The ANC preferred the route of questioning and petitioning much like D.D.T. Jabavu had described in his 1920 speech before Western missionaries on the likelihood of the British Parliament to intervene in the country’s matters to ameliorate the condition of Blacks. In the mean time, ANC members advised Africans to try to better themselves through their own efforts and to reject active condemnation.10 As Bertha Mkize, a well-known leader in the struggle against apartheid and one of Sibusisiwe Makanya’s ICU colleagues and closest friends, put it: “All those people in the African National Congress are too slow in fighting against

9 W.O. Brown, “Race Consciousness,” 575 and 578.
10 Ibid., 575 and 580.
the laws that hold us down. They just want to wait a bit in order to win the favor of the Europeans.”

As the lives of Black South Africans continued to be shaped not only by racist policies that elevated Whites above Blacks, but also the increasingly capitalist society that South Africa had become at the end of World War I, Maxeke, Makanya, and Yergan sprang into action and created organizations to teach Black South African women what they considered to be valuable life lessons and survival skills. As they had learned in their American socialization and education, the work of women was very instrumental in improving the plight of the entire community. Despite their aims to be helpful, some Black South Africans, usually older in age or those who considered themselves to be “traditionalists,” sometimes resented the “progressive” advice offered by these women, feeling that it was too similar to ideas brought by White missionaries in that it represented a real threat to the “old way of life.” They also thought that Yergan, Maxeke, and Makanya, while intelligent women who had trained at Black colleges in the United States, remained unfit to lead Black South Africans into the “modern” world. To the vast majority of Black South Africans the sign of the “American Negro” and the rise to modernity “was presumed male and the ‘up from slavery’ narrative, was essentially the journey of the Black man from slavery to success.” As Amanda Kemp explains, “Women fit into that narrative only as helpmeets and faithful mothers” to men, not as leaders. Doubts about women’s centrality and involvement in Black progress in the United States had much to do with a South African press that concentrated on African American men

12 See M. Bahati Kuumba, “‘You've Struck a Rock,’” 504-523; and M. Bahati Kuumba, *Gender and Social Movement*. 
like Paul Robeson or Booker T. Washington and the low significance many African American male leaders assigned to Black women’s club work. Furthermore, for many Black South Africans, these women were dangerous contradictions to their own cultural belief that women were to remain in the homes as ‘perpetual minors’ who at “no stage could escape the guardianship of their nearest male relative.”

In the first decade of the twentieth century, when chronic labor shortages led government officials to reconsider earlier policies, the belief about the inferior status of women was in many ways recreated, exaggerated, and ossified. Nonetheless, Yergan, Maxeke, and Makanya were able to garner support from individuals on both continents who exhibited more confidence in women’s ability and suitability to lead in matters concerning the home. In the United States, countless African Americans, including administrators of the Black colleges from which they graduated or attended, believed that these women were equipped with the proper attitude and necessary training to serve any population as harbingers of modernity and civilization. Many White South African liberals who worked alongside these women in the 1920s and 1930s to ease inter-racial tensions, shared a similar attitude, sometimes weighing their work as more valuable than that of men, including their husbands. Among members of the Black elite in South Africa, especially intellectuals who championed the idea of the “New African,” Makanya, Maxeke, and Yergan represented yet another important thread between Black and African modernity by providing “bright and shining” examples of what members of this population could and, one day, must become. In fact, some of these intellectuals joined

13 Amanda Kemp, “‘Up From Slavery,’” 141.
14 Walker, Women and Resistance, 13 and 18.
15 Ibid., 13.
the choir of White liberals and African Americans singing praises of these women, calling them “the greatest modernists,” “women of mark” and “pioneer[s] of the greatest human causes.”¹⁷

This chapter addresses the new identities gained women by belonging to associations founded by Yergan, Maxeke, and Makanya. It discusses how this leading band of ladies learned frugality and self-reliance to improve their homes and the health of their families. Important to this discussion is a consideration of Maxeke’s work in public positions that expanded her work within women’s groups. And lastly, this chapter looks at the language used by Yergan, Maxeke, and Makanya and their club members to create and maintain the sponsorship of their work as well as to express their dissatisfaction with the circumstances faced by the majority of Black South Africans.

Upon seeing Charlotte Maxeke in her return to South Africa, Alfred B. Xuma, recalled that she appeared as if she had no time to waste. As he described her, she was “imbued with the spirit of service, she had a message because she had a mission.”¹⁸ Much of this mission revolved around the Ethiopian-A.M.E. Church that she had helped to spur while still a student in the United States. Oral tradition maintains that one of Maxeke’s letters home to her sister, Katie Makanya, was shared with Mangena Mokone, a leader of a group of Africans who had broken away from White churches where they lacked influence. In reading the acclaim Maxeke gave of Wilberforce University and the A.M.E. Church, Mokone promptly sent a letter to Bishop Henry McNeal Turner that expressed his desire to learn more about the A.M.E. Church and a possible collaboration between

¹⁸ Alfred B. Xuma, Charlotte Manye, 13.
the two groups. In May of 1895 the letter was printed in the *Voice of Missions.*\(^\text{19}\) That same year the A.M.E. church prepared for the arrival of three African representatives to travel to the Untied States to meet and to study with church leaders and to “arrange the union.” By 1896, Mokone’s wish had come true, and the A.M.E.-Ethiopian Church in South Africa was formed.\(^\text{20}\)

Maxeke’s main responsibility in the newly formed church was teaching. For the first few years she was under the leadership of Bishop Levi Coppin, an African American and the husband of her Mite missionary mentor in the United States. For nearly a decade and a half, Maxeke taught at various schools, at one point serving on the faculty of Bethel Institute, the Cape Town school opened and supported by the Coppins. She also taught at Wilberforce Institute, both a primary and secondary school that she helped to co-found in Evaton, South Africa in 1908. Both schools were founded on the self-help model common among Blacks in the United States and sought to help Black South Africans reassert control over their economic and social situation.\(^\text{21}\) Maxeke always sought to “train the head, hands, and the hearts” of her students. This meant providing a curriculum that emphasized both industrial and liberal arts courses like those they had attended and after which Wilberforce Institute was modeled. While her husband, Marshall Maxeke, another Wilberforce University graduate, served as the principal and taught languages and math, Maxeke worked as an instructor in science, English and sewing. As “Lady principal,” her title on the school’s letterhead, Maxeke was also responsible for helping to

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\(^{19}\) Campbell, *Songs of Zion*, 134.  
\(^{20}\) Ibid.  
manage the school and provide for the welfare of female students who often lived in her home.\footnote{Campbell, \textit{Songs of Zion}, 283; and J.M. Nhlapo, “Wilberforce Institute,” 6, Nhalpo Papers. University of the Witwatersrand Archives.}

Maxeke also engaged in “active pioneer work” for the A.M.E.-Ethiopian Church by organizing several Christian groups like the Women’s Mite Missionary Society in the United States. Although, there is not much written on these missionary societies due to their existence at a time when the work of women was not considered important and thus not carefully documented, scholars have written that the women in these groups worked among the sick and indigent in surrounding communities. They also helped to sponsor the travel of Black South African students to Britain and the United States for study in hopes that the students would bring back valuable lessons for Black South Africans. One of these students, Hastings Walter Kamuzu Banda, who in 1961 became the first president of Malawi, recalled Maxeke’s efforts to smooth things over at the Magistrate’s office in 1925 so that he could obtain his passport to travel to study at the Normal and Industrial Department of Wilberforce University. (In 1951, the Department finalized its separation from Wilberforce to form its own university, Central State University.) Maxeke was happy that he would be so closely tied to the school for which she still held fond memories. He explained that she was also eager for him to go as “there were messages, personal messages, she wanted me to carry to her old school-mates and friends in the states.”\footnote{A copy of Banda’s description, which was originally recorded in his Gwelo Prison diaries, was reprinted in the \textit{Great Epics Newsletter} 2, no. 3 (March 1998). A printout of this is available in Box 3, Folder 7, H. K. Banda Papers, Indiana University. Banda also recalls another funny story of Charlotte Maxeke who} Despite Maxeke’s ever-expanding agenda in later decades, she remained dedicated to the education of Black South Africans and her domestic missions groups.
One illustration of Maxeke’s burgeoning activism is her formation of and leadership in the Bantu Women’s League in 1918, a group founded to protect the rights of African women especially in the form of passes in the Orange Free State.  

Although Maxeke and her clubmembers successfully mobilized to resist passes until the 1950s, other laws and customs like the mandatory medical inspections of Black women before entering domestic service convinced Maxeke that women needed to band together.  

Although, she did not reject the pre-colonial medical inspections administered by older African women, she argued that the ones given by male police officers led to the sexual harassment, molestation, and the rape of African women and were premised on Whites’ beliefs about a lack of morals that existed among African women. These beliefs were especially spurred by the dramatic increase of young African Christian girls who were pregnant and unmarried beginning during the First World War. In the same year that Maxeke created the Bantu Women’s League (BWL), Makanya started the Bantu Purity League (BPL), which originally attracted Loram’s attention and led to her trip to the U.S.  

While Maxeke did not reject the premise of Makanya’s group, “to keep girls pure and in the right way,” she made it a higher priority to argue and to organize against “disgusting” governmental policies and their consequences that caused many “self-respecting” women to feel abused and humiliated.  

Initially, Maxeke and the members of her group refused to go unheard, defending the rights of Black South African broadly. When the Local Government Commission of

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25 Ibid., 32.
1919-1921 was meeting about passes and failed to call her, Maxeke contacted them and requested to testify about the situation that Black South African women faced. She stated squarely: “I think I understand the exact conditions and needs of my people, especially in regard to the medical inspections of women and girls.”

Although off to a strong start, the organization began to falter, financially and otherwise. Still, members of the BWL began to counter legislation and Whites’ beliefs about their morality by calling attention to class distinctions among them as a sign of evolutionary progress. As Julia Wells explains, membership in the BWL allowed its members, who were characteristically unskilled but more literate than their peers, to gain distinction from their less fortunate sisters. She explains that although these women claimed to be concerned with the “non-European welfare” more generally, and perhaps were more so at the organization’s beginning, they were increasingly motivated to use their class position as a way to argue against laws that showed a “lack of differentiation between the educated, elite and Christian women who were the wives and daughters of ministers of religion and other ‘respectable housewives,’ and the ‘rest of the masses.’”

This is an especially important point to consider because while several Black South African men had been able to overcome stereotypes about their inferiority through “modern” work and to gain stature through social organizations and churches, for nearly a half of a century, the most common sources of authority for African women “still lay in pursuing ‘traditional’ gendered occupations like healing through herbalism and/or intercession

27 Campbell, Songs of Zion, 288.
28 Ibid.
29 Julia C. Wells, “Why Women Rebel,” 64.
with the supernatural forces animating the spirit world utilizing divination and muti.\textsuperscript{30} Among many members of the Black elite, however, these occupations, along with the lucrative business of beer brewing, were largely shunned.\textsuperscript{31} By joining women’s and youth organizations created by women who not only embodied “many of the characteristics of idealized Victorian Christian wives and mothers” but who also were connected through their travels to supposedly forward-thinking and cultured African Americans, group members were attempting to gain stature by associating themselves with both the thread that existed between Black and African modernity and ideas about respectability as held by Western proponents.\textsuperscript{32} Like several Black women’s clubs in the United States, membership in the Bantu Women’s League often enabled them to recreate themselves by allowing them to portray themselves as respectable “ladies” rather than as prostitutes.\textsuperscript{33}

Black South African women’s desire to set themselves apart as ladies of refinement and character may be one reason that Yergan’s self-help organization, the Unity Home-Makers Club (UHC), begun in 1929, enjoyed such a large membership. Similar to Maxeke’s members in the Bantu Women’s League, these women were the wives of prominent Black males and were looking to socialize with similar women. As

\textsuperscript{30} Anthony, “Each One Teach One,” 2. Also see Margaret Strobel, “Women in Religious and Secular Ideology; and Iris Berger, "Rebels or Status Seekers?” 148-155.
\textsuperscript{31} Alan Gregor Cobley, “Liquor and Leadership,” 134.
\textsuperscript{32} Walker, Women and Resistance, 35; Wells, “Why Women Rebel,” 63-64.
\textsuperscript{33} Deborah Gray White explains that the National Association of Colored Women may have formed in response to an insulting letter written by James Jacks, the White president of the Missouri Press Association. Jacks had challenged the respectability of African American women, deeming them thieves and prostitutes. Consequently, club leaders focused on ensuring moral purity among Black women, claiming that it was the key to social and cultural improvement. As White explains though, “in keying on chastity, clubwomen established an orthodoxy bound to drive a wedge between themselves and the masses of black women.” See, Too Heavy A Load, 22 and 70.
Catherine Higgs clarifies, their decisions to join were probably further influenced by the fact that organizational meetings were held in English with connotations of progress and status, especially among its members who had attended mission schools. As Yergan described it, at its birth, the club was made up of nearly “a dozen intelligent ladies” drawn primarily from the rural areas of Lovedale and Fort Hare, the sites of two colleges for Black South Africans. Nearly four years later, Yergan’s organizational idea that granted women the space to alter their identities, grew so popular that she was encouraged to draw up “material on how to start and run a club.” Eventually, this led to the formation of an umbrella women’s organization known as the Bantu Women’s Home Improvement Association. By 1938, the national association contained “sixty-three branches, with a total of 1,911 members and six years after that this grew to ninety branches, mostly within the Cape area.” By adopting English dress and language and joining a group that promised to rehabilitate the race’s image, members of the Unity-Home Makers’ Club were able to distinguish themselves as intelligent and modern ladies. In addition to the gaining identities as women of distinction, the members of Yergan’s and Maxeke’s self-improvement organizations could now define themselves as leaders in public service and the home. As Anthony accurately describes it, women’s self-help groups like the one founded by Yergan “represented a spiritual awakening and organizational coming of age during a period when African women were legally and socially excluded from inheritance, land, voting or other civil rights.” While women were generally restricted to positions of hostesses and cooks in male-dominated political

35 Ibid.
organizations like the ANC, members of Yergan’s Unity Home-Makers Club became officers and were able gain the necessary leadership and organizational skills for running an organization and the movement for “uplift.” Assessing the goals of Unity Home Makers, Susie Yergan phrased it succinctly:

As was said in the beginning most of the members are intelligent women, but it is hoped that from these clubs there will go out many strong leaders with vision to see the needs of the less enlightened classes and that there will one day be a network of Home Makers' Clubs throughout South Africa, giving light and help, adjusted to the needs of every home until the great Bantu race can take its place in the vanguard of civilization.37

Also interested in helping Black South Africans take their rightful place in the modern world were the self-improvement organizations that D.D.T. Jabavu may have helped to spur with his speech on the topic in 1920 and his publication of it that same year. Speaking before a room full of African teachers, Jabavu tried to convince these individuals of their duty to “influence public opinion, in our villages and reserves for better treatment and nobler regard towards our womanhood.” As he saw it, this required the uplift of women, which could be started through women’s groups. Echoing the speeches of Margaret Murray Washington and other NACW leaders in the United States, Jabavu told his audience that “the only means of the [Native race’s] ris[ing] in this world

37 Susie Yergan, “The Unity Home-Makers' Club,” 78.
and command[ing] the respect of the other nations, [is the] raising up of our own women.”

Similarly, women interested in “inspiring leadership among our womanhood” and “looking after non-European welfare” continued to look to the Bantu Women’s League for both guidance and opportunity. In 1933, when the National Council of African Women (NCAW) absorbed the Bantu Women’s League (BWL), although still under Maxeke’s leadership, BYL members maintained that they were not only anxious but also culturally and intellectually prepared to do “our share in the advancement of our race.”

The Jabavus, fond of Maxeke and the organization that she led, spoke of it as “a wonderful movement that stirred the imagination of our people and unmistakably infused a widened public spirit among our womenfolk throughout South Africa.” Indeed, Maxeke’s own activist spirit had led her not only to serve as a teacher and leader in missionary and women’s groups, but also to work in the dual role as a Probation Officer and Court Welfare Officer to Johannesburg’s Juvenile Magistrate. Beginning in 1919 without pay and ending only in 1930 because the South African government eliminated her post, Maxeke was the first-ever African to hold any such position. Her duties included handling cases that dealt with Black South Africans from different ethnic groups and as Xuma described, people “whose stages of development range[d] from the primitive to the most modern.” In all cases, Maxeke was described as having the “ability and insight into human life and conduct” seeing beyond “the rough extremities of life” to note the shortcomings in South Africa’s legal system rather than individual

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40 Xuma, Charlotte Manye, 22.
41 Ibid., 19.
persons. Along these lines, when mothers were sent to prison, Maxeke visited them offering religious instruction and support. She also often watched after their children, adopting so many destitute children that at one point it is said that she had no less than nine residing with her.\(^{42}\)

While Sibusisiwe Makanya, too, had illustrated her potential to lead and her concern for women in her work in the Bantu Purity League, it was only after time in the United States that her work came to resemble that of Yergan’s and Maxeke’s groups. South African historian Shula Marks offers that during Makanya’s time in the United States, particularly in New York, a bed of racial antipathy and a stronghold of Garveyism, she “encountered the seeds of racial consciousness and was influenced by the sense of ‘race pride’ so much in evidence among Black Americans during the inter-war period.”\(^{43}\) Now critical of her initial position, Makanya founded the Bantu Youth League (BYL) in July of 1930 that focused less on controlling the sexuality of women and more on women’s empowerment. Unlike Yergan and Maxeke’s organizations, however, Makanya’s organization was not membership-based and its target group was not women of the upper or middle stratum, although like Yergan’s it did work in rural areas. Still, similar to members of the Unity Home-Makers Club and the National Council of African Women, several of Makanya’s trainees were able to gain higher status. This rise in status led these women to become leaders in the Umbululu area that led to “a better appreciation of their wives by husbands and to the general improvement of the home

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 18-19 and 20.
\(^{43}\) Shula Marks, *Not Either an Experimental Doll*, 36.
surroundings.”\textsuperscript{44} In reporting the progress of BYL, Makanya concisely stated that, “The African woman is generally coming into her own and the contribution which they are making to the solution of real and practical problems is a notable feature of modern social work in the African community.”\textsuperscript{45} With a cadre of “leading ladies” at their sides, Makanya, Maxeke, and Yergan next turned their attention to convincing others that women were more than "superfluous appendages” and that their roles as wives, mothers, and most especially, homemakers, were integral to Black progress in an increasingly modern world. Despite the fact that “Good daughter, good dowry; good wife, good homes,” continued to be a guiding concept in Black South African homes, the rise of cities, the arrival of industrialization and wage labor, and the work of Western missionaries had complicated home life.\textsuperscript{46} In order to improve conditions of the home, Maxeke, Yergan, and Makanya tired to impart lessons of self-help to the members of their clubs through education.

Not unlike White South Africans and Western missionaries, these women claimed that homes were “truly the citadel of African life” and that “if the race is to make real progress, it must first of all begin in the home.” More so than missionary groups, however, these women articulated that “if you definitely and earnestly set out to lift women and children up in the social life of the Bantu, you will find [that] the men will benefit, and thus the whole community, both White and Black.” Undoubtedly influenced by her longer career as a teacher, evangelist, and a court officer that had exposed her to the devastation colonial policies had caused to African homes, Maxeke used stronger

\textsuperscript{44} Sibusisiwe Makanya, \textit{The Bantu Youth League}, 2.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{46} Charlotte Maxeke, “Progress of Native Womanhood,” 178.
language to convince all those professing to be concerned with African welfare that women were indispensable to this process. She contended that:

The woman, the wife, is the keystone of the household: she holds a position of supreme importance, for is she not directly and intimately concerned with the nurturing and upbringing of the children of the family, the future generation? She is their first counselor, and teacher; on her rests the responsibility of implanting in the flexible minds of her young, the right principles and teachings of modern civilization. Indeed on her rests the failure or successes of her children when they go out in life. It is therefore essential that the home atmosphere be right, that the mother be the real “queen” of the home, the inspiration of her family, if her children are to go out into the world equipped for the battles of life.  

Drawing connections between her time as a youth and the educational situation of South Africa that characterized the 1920s as well as her own education and her time as a teacher, Maxeke made a particularly strong argument for the education of women as tied to race progress. As she and others saw it, “Family discipline has undergone rapid disintegration” as the influence and power of the chief had been altered and “nowadays a man dare not, as in the kraal, chastise any delinquent boys, on pain of being brought before the magistrate and punished for assault in accordance with European law.” Mission-educated children of uneducated parents upset the atmosphere of the home

because the children’s broader views led them to “fin[d] fault with everything, finally undermining parental authority, deeming it ignorant, however religious.” This phase then was the “most serious and trying,” as “mothers [b]ecame alarmed and almost discouraged in finding themselves continually disputing about their ignorance with children.” As Maxeke explained the only means of solving this problem was properly educating women.

Agreeing with Maxeke, Makanya supported the practical and formal education for both young and adult women, explaining that this focus would ensure that efforts towards winning the youth would not be “futile and negative in their results.” Thus beyond a night school that enrolled “some 600 young people with branches scattered all over Natal,” Makanya centered women in all of the BYL initiatives. In fact, she encouraged the women among whom she worked to “always maintain membership in a homemakers' club,” which would educate them about the most current information. Much like Penn School in the United States, Makanya also altered the BYL schedule to ensure that such training would be feasible for women. Thus, the BYL held schools for women in the winter because this season represented the “slack period in the agricultural duties of the African women.” As Makanya explained her reasoning to her American audience, “It was the time when the harvesting is over and the rains which mark the beginning of the new plough season have not fallen and so the women have little in their hands.” By the time she wrote her American supporters five years later, she had held five such schools, “four at our headquarters at Imbulu at one at Empushei, an outstation ten miles away.”

50 Marks, Not Either an Experimental Doll, 35; and Marc C. David, “The Penn School of St. Helena,” 19.
Yergan, too, held the education of women to be of utmost importance. Although it is highly likely that she believed that the education at Black colleges in the United States was better than that offered at missions schools in South Africa—as suggested by African students of the time who recall her home schooling her three children—unlike Maxeke and Makanya she did not attempt to arrange scholarships for South African students to travel to the U.S.\textsuperscript{51} This is likely attributable to her family’s enduring almost daily pressures from White officials who resented the presence of African Americans in South Africa. Still, in wanting to help Black South Africans to combat life’s hardships, Yergan became involved in the education of women in multiple ways. First, she secured “scholarships for Native girls to attend Lovedale Institute and the Fort Hare Native College.”\textsuperscript{52} Second, it seems that Yergan had a hand in influencing the Phelps-Stokes Fund’s support of Florence Jabavu’s women’s self-help group, the African Women’s Self-Improvement Association, founded in 1927. As Anthony explains, “it is equally likely that either individually or collectively [the Yergans] may have helped facilitate the process by which Makiwane [Florence] Jabavu secured her funding, as this was around the same time that Max Yergan started looking for support for what would become Fort Hare’s Christian Union building.”\textsuperscript{53} Third, Yergan brought African American educational ideologies to South Africa by tutoring “young South African women beneath the ‘Bantu’ YWCA banner.” In many ways her work mirrored that of her husband, although it also reflected her own education at Shaw University.

\textsuperscript{51} Phyllis Ntantala, \textit{A Life's Mosaic}, 70.
\textsuperscript{52} Yergan, “Africa-Our Challenge,” 193.
\textsuperscript{53} Anthony, “Each One Teach One,” 11 Footnote 4.
Having decided that the education of women was inextricable from race progress, Yergan, like Maxeke and Makanya, set out to teach Black South African women self-reliance, independence, and economic responsibility—traits they deemed necessary for survival. For Makanya and Yergan, these lessons usually occurred through lectures and demonstrations given by experts and group members themselves, while Maxeke covered them not only through her women’s self-help group but also an employment agency she founded for women in 1923. Although this agency focused on securing jobs for women as domestic workers in cities, its goal of training Black women to become good housewives makes it similar in essence to Yergan and Makanya’s groups. Distinctly, however, Maxeke specifically trained her women as domestic servants. Nevertheless, Maxeke saw her labor agency as doubly tied to race progress, feeling that it would lead to a “better and happier condition of life for the Bantu” by allowing women to both gain wages and to learn more about European culture in order to bring it back to their own homes. On this particular point, Florence Jabavu found Maxeke’s reasoning to be faulty, deciding that it really did not matter whether men or women worked inside of these homes as they “were only there as servants and therefore [could] never assimilate anything of the true home life except the externals.”

Despite their disagreement, it is clear that Maxeke and Jabavu like other leaders of women’s self-improvement groups, were motivated by a desire to have Black South African women learn a certain set of skills for their own survival.

One of the foremost of these lessons was self-reliance, which was tied to the ramifications of the migrant labor system and the Natives Land Act of 1913. In the late

54 Campbell, *Songs of Zion*, 288.
1920s, as Black South African men continued to lose their cattle in the face of the shrinking availability of land and were pulled away from their homes to work for wages in the cities, Black women in rural areas were left “to contend with all of the problems of poverty, work, and child rearing, together with the additional problems of homelessness and all of the hideous distortions of life that these impose.”55 In considering the effects upon the family, beginning first with the male wage earner, Maxeke posed that, “The majority earn about L3 10s. per month, out of which they must pay 25s for rent, and 10s for tram fares, so I leave you to imagine what sort of existence they lead on the remainder.56 As the rural wives of these men depended on these wages no matter how poor, women, sometimes whole families, also journeyed to the cities to retrieve the money needed for their own subsistence. Once in the cities, if these women were “unable to locate their spouses soon enough,” Maxeke explains that they were forced to take on whatever jobs were open to them, including becoming the wives of new husbands or turning to prostitution. By 1936, although Black South African women were still only a small fraction of the urban population, some 11 percent, “the trend towards their increased urbanization was unmistakable.”57 In her work with urban women, Maxeke was most concerned with women who became prostitutes and beer-brewers and were subjected to imprisonment and fines. She saw these women as “poor unfortunate victim[s] of circumstances” who through their actions were forced to leave their children to grow up without discipline and parental support.58 The attention that Maxeke gave to the structural issues underlying these women’s problems, rather than their own morality,

56 Ibid., 113-114.
57 Walker, Women and Resistance, 41.
shows that her time as a race leader and teacher, which had exposed her to poverty and family disintegration far and wide, had fostered personal growth. No longer was she the Wilberforce student who grossly portrayed Africans as uncivilized beings responsible for their own conditions.

Even then, Maxeke continued to call on her broad education at Wilberforce University as a means of support for the task at hand. Her labor agency aimed to minimize the number of Black South African women who depended upon illegal forms of employment that plunged them into “depths of immorality and misery” by training these women to become good servants, “useful members of society” and “respectable” women. As Maxeke told one White inspector who was concerned with her agency’s credibility, especially her use of medical inspections as a standard, “‘Although we have no condition to medical inspection, I myself trained as a nurse in connection with missionary work in America and elsewhere, as a result, I can always tell whether the women are free from blemish or otherwise. You can take it from me that before I recommend any girl, I shall satisfy myself that she is beyond reproach in every respect.’”

Although Maxeke’s comments seem incongruous with her defense of women, they are actually similar to the language used by members of the Bantu Women’s League who throughout the early to mid 1920s argued for exceptions to laws based on character and status.

Although Maxeke worked to teach Black women who had migrated to the cities a valuable set of skills that would make them less dependent upon the wages of their husbands who worked in the mines and the mills, Yergan and Makanya, who both

59 Campbell, Songs of Zion, 291.
worked in rural areas, sought to slow the stream between town and country by reducing the dependence on wage labor all together. In their self-help groups, they stressed the importance of frugality and self-reliance for women who were quickly becoming heads of households. In considering the new roles in which women now found themselves, Makanya warned her female students not to travel to the cities as there should always be “One parent living [at] home full time.” In her classes, she also instructed women of the importance of abstaining from conspicuous consumption that had come to define the lives of many Black South Africans in the post-war period. Similarly, the women in Yergan’s club learned the worth of “taking care of their possessions,” and making “full and advantageous use of what they have, meager as it may be.” In attempting to redress the “negative effects of Western civilization,” the reliance on false necessities like coffee and tea and the obsession with cleanliness, members of the Unity Home-Makers Club, like those in Florence Jabavu’s African Women's Self-Improvement Association, developed homegrown solutions for “making valuable use of what under ordinary circumstances is regarded as the waste products of the home.” This included constructing bedding “from old sacks and bits of material and making soap out of oxfat.”

Tied to these lessons of financial independence and self-reliance was instruction on food and meal production. As Charlotte Maxeke and Bernice Mohapeloa, an original member of Yergan’s group, explained, climatic conditions and the loss of land and livestock had meant the arrival of malnutrition for many Black families. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, thousands of Black South Africans were then forced to get their daily

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61 Deborah Gaitskell, “Housewives, Maids or Mothers,” 242.
nutrition from food that did not provide a balanced diet, and hundreds went without food for periods of time. In 1929, Yergan vividly captured the food shortage in a description that she provided for an American audience:

When droughts, which prevail in many parts of South Africa, come as they have done in the last four years, [Africans] almost starve. When I and my husband returned to South Africa, the country had passed through a serious drought. As we rode along on the trains it was a sad sight to see the little nude children whose protruding ribs and thin legs showed signs of extreme hunger. Every time the train stopped, they ran along its side begging us to throw out the remnants of our lunch to them. When we did so they scrambled in the dust hungrily searching for the least morsel.

Seeking to combat the rampant level of hunger that she had seen, Yergan’s work in the UHC like that of Florence Jabavu’s, stressed the need for organization members to learn to cook staple food items in a variety of palatable ways. Similarly, in her hometown of Umbumbulu, Makanya designed courses to teach her target audience how to better preserve their food and how to use mealie (then a staple of the African diet) to make a variety of meals. While Florence Jabavu may have relied upon the description of women’s work from her husband or arrived to them on her own, in some ways

65 Yergan “Africa-Our Challenge,” 194.
Makanya’s and Yergan’s concentration on food production is characteristic of the
domestic science education they encountered at Black schools in the United States.

The already stressed financial conditions of Black South African families also led
these group leaders to make certain that women’s training incurred little to no expense.
While Makanya used the items from her own garden in demonstrations, a demonstration
on drying fruit in Yergan’s group often used only one apple. Additionally, both women
traveled to the residences of the women they worked among. Before the construction of
the Fort Hare Building, the Unity Home-Makers’ regular weekly meetings of two hours
were held on a rotational basis in the homes of participants so that costs could be spread
among members. These traveling meetings also increased unity, learning by doing, and
ensuring that members were really living a life in line with the principles of the
organization. During these trips, Yergan noted that several women had shown an interest
in gardening and were using “planted trees and shrubs as well as flowers and lawns.”
Consequently, UHC group members were encouraged to give lectures and
demonstrations on tips that they used in physical home improvement and land
beautification.67 Makanya’s travel to deliver these types of lessons were so much in line
with Loram’s original goals that in 1932 the Phelps-Stokes Fund, from which she
originally broke while in the United States, “supported the Bantu Youth League to a tune

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67 Yergan, “The Unity Home-Makers’ Club,” 78-79. Starting in the late 1930s, members of the Bantu
Women’s Association began to “participate in the Fort Hare Agricultural Show mounting a joint vegetable
and stock exhibit.” In interviewing group members for her research in 1998, Catherine Higgs found that
association members still kept small vegetable gardens, which they considered to be one the greatest
accomplishments of these self-help organizations, see “Zenzele,” 129.
of 50 to 100 dollars.” As Marks explains: “She had clearly redeemed herself in the eyes of philanthropic capital.”

Although the initiatives of the Bantu Youth League and the Unity Home-Makers’ Club stressed the importance of thriftiness and creativity, when it came to providing meals for the family, Yergan and Makanya also tried to teach strategies that would help Black South African women to overcome economic deprivation. In Yergan’s group, this included applying for and winning government funding for larger projects that taught women “how to raise poultry and pigs for sale [and] how to use cow manure to fertilize maize fields.” On a smaller scale, women in the Unity-Home Makers’ Club, like those of the Bantu Youth League and the Bantu Women’s League were also encouraged to stop spending the little money they had on food and to maintain a vegetable garden and keep its yield for home consumption. Robeson learned the importance of this during her trip when Dr. Max Yergan explained to her that Black South Africans paid “$5.50 to the trader for a bag of mealies (corn) to eat, while the European farmers pays $1.25 to the same trader for a bag of the same mealies for their cattle.” African women for the most part have always been farmers; these women’s organizations stressed the need for women to limit their selling of crops at the market and to concentrate on growing crops their families needed so as to limit the exorbitant amount of money they had to spend.

In Makanya’s association, lessons on growing and tilling crops for home production were largely drawn from her own demonstration garden of flowers and vegetables, the latter of which she used to feed young men in her night school. Makanya

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68 Marks, Not Either an Experimental Doll, 35.
69 Higgs, “Zenzele,” 129.
70 Robeson, African Journey, 58.
71 Ibid.
also shared cuttings from her garden so that flowers and vegetables could take root in other areas of the community thereby increasing community spirit, encouraging people to plant their own gardens, and rejecting Europeans’ ideas about Blacks who supposedly lived in inferior and unattractive dwelling because of their nature. In order to ensure the success of the crops, Makanya undertook the large project of teaching her female students to plant trees to decrease the level of soil erosion. As Eslanda Robeson recalled in her trip, “Soil erosion was everywhere. The rain comes down in torrents, they tell me, and washes the soil from the slopes, making them unfit for agriculture.” As another of her projects, she encouraged and facilitated the construction of a road built by women that would allow them to communicate easier with one another as well as improve the flow of goods for an economy that could flourish outside of wage labor. No less important, this road helped to facilitate her own travel as she and her invited speakers went far into rural areas to give lessons to women on the importance of “becoming involved in women’s clubs, keep[ing] a vegetable garden, serv[ing] three meals a day with the members of the family sitting, and eat[ing] at the same time.” As Western missionaries and White liberals felt that small-scale gardening was the best approach to battle malnutrition and to “civilize” women, they supported the work of Makanya’s group. Interestingly, Frederick and Clara Bridgman and J. D. and Edith Rheinallt Jones, Whites who served as BYL advisors or trustee members, also supplied financial resources for Maxeke’s efforts in the Bantu Women’s League.

73 Robeson, African Journey, 54.
74 Gaitskell, “Housewives, Maids or Mothers,” 242.
75 Gaitskell, “Housewives, Maids, and Mothers,” 242; Marks, Not Either an Experimental Doll, 34-35.
One last lesson that Yergan, Makanya, and Maxeke covered in their initiatives was the importance of proper health and childcare to enhance the forward march to advancement. This focus was also born out of the South African environment and influenced by the few understaffed, underfunded hospitals that existed for Black South Africans. Throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s, medical reports steadily "emphasize[d] the extraordinarily heavy infant mortality in Bantu communities." In 1928 alone, "there were 705 deaths for every thousand African babies under one year as compared with 78 for Europeans."76 Startled by these numbers, members of the Unity Home-Makers club "dedicate[d] two hours a week to [the] issue [of healthcare] alone." As Yergan recalled in 1929: "One of the most interesting lectures and demonstrations was given by a trained nurse on the care of the sickroom and patient. A little boy was put to bed as the patient while the nurse deftly demonstrated how to sponge a patient and to change the bed without removing him."77 In 1936, the year the Yergans returned to the United States, the Bantu Women’s Home Improvement Association, the umbrella group to which Yergan’s group belonged, also began to feature an Annual Training Course that allowed “a great deal of useful information to be exchanged.” Each year after that, a committee prepared the program that was based on the accomplishments and goals of the branches earlier that year. Once the program was set, women of the different groups came together to go “through a week of concentrated work, covering as much of the program as

76 Gaistkell, “Housewives, Maids, and Mothers,” 250.
77 Yergan, “Unity Home-Makers’ Club,” 78.
the time allows.” Attendees report that the classes were well received by group members which showed in their progress.  

Despite the fact that Makanya did not develop a regional training course similar to that of Yergan’s group, she was also concerned about healthcare. In Natal, Makanya frequently traveled to outlying areas in an attempt to teach women and mothers preventative healthcare. In 1935, she worked in cooperation with Edith Jones and Margaret Ballinger, who had started the Joint Committee of European and African Women, to care for sick children and to teach mothers strategies to ensure healthy motherhood and infancy. In other instances, Makanya took medical doctors with her to the countryside who stressed the way in which the health conditions of Black South Africans were tied to environmental issues. Through such discussions, she hoped to teach women the importance of prioritizing physical hygiene and keeping a clean home as ways to cut down on communicable diseases like tuberculosis, which ran rampant in Black communities.

Although Maxeke was the only one of the women in this study to work specifically in urban areas, she was equally concerned with the environment that Black South Africans inhabited. Like Florence Jabavu, who noted that in the cities “the areas inhabited by Blacks under ‘locations’ [were] squalid there [,] being no flowers nor trees
to make the home attractive” and that the congestion of houses “themselves badly built, has made for bad health conditions, resulting in appalling death-rate figures, particularly in infants and children,” Maxeke brought attention to the living spaces that affected Blacks’ livelihood and future progress. In an essay she wrote in 1928 titled, “Progress of Native Womanhood,” she argued that unattractive, crowded spaces in the cities not only led to poor health conditions and alcoholism, but also demoralization. Slums and compounds inhabited by men who worked in the mines, brought those who were already in desperate economic situations into close contact with “hardened criminals and ex-convicts and desperate characters of all nationalities” which often changed their whole outlook on life and convinced them of their dislike of control. Echoing Jabavu of some years earlier, she explained that this “festering discontentment and anger would continue to lead urban Blacks to listen to speeches by Communists, Socialists, and others of Bolshevik tendency.” Like Jabavu she made the avoidance of disruption and chaos the duty of all, especially White missionaries, who in her view had a responsibility to “create an atmosphere peculiarly fitted to disarm suspicion, and infuse [Black South Africans] with the spirit of comradeship and mutual help.”

In this essay and others, Maxeke relied upon her educational training that had prepared her to remain cognizant of “some of the leading questions of the day,” and to convey difficult and sensitive topics cogently. Beyond her writing of essays, her “powers of platform oration” allowed her to gain financial resources and other types of support for her work. She addressed various interracial conferences of civic leaders, social workers,

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politicians and educators, both in South Africa and abroad. Together all the women’s speeches and writings, often covered organizational work, but went beyond that to consider the conditions faced by South Africans, which as they saw it affected home life and thus future progress.

When necessary, these women altered their language to ensure better reception and support. Most commonly, in acknowledging cross-racial cooperation as indispensable to the advancement of Black South Africans, the women appropriated the rhetoric of American Whites and Europeans to harmonize seemingly competing interests. Through a careful negotiation of language they were able to express their discontentment and offer public critiques to those who held more power than they did. Paying attention to these discursive practices allows us to understand how these women were able to generate and sustain support for their educational initiatives and other work, which was especially evident when the women discussed the work of Western missionaries. In varying degrees, Yergan, Makanya, and Maxeke often offered complimentary remarks before discussing their real feelings about the groups’ failures. Of all these women, Yergan was less critical, again probably reflecting the uneasy position that her family occupied in South Africa. Nonetheless, she did offer some criticism telling an audience of

82Shaw University, Shaw University Annual Catalog, 1914, 24.
83Maxeke’s speeches on this matter make it clear that she was unaware of the future consequences of Black women’s employment in domestic services. For instance, Jacklyn Cock’s film, which is titled the same as her book, “Maids and Madams,” and a film by Deborah May, You Have Struck a Rock, are two well known African Media projects that highlight the trials of female domestic workers in South Africa. In May’s film, viewers are able to see how these women’s unfair treatment contributed to their activism along with that of beer hall protests and passes in the 1950s. In many of these instances, female activists used motherhood as a way to try to gain concessions from White South African officials and to declare for themselves a space in the liberation struggle against apartheid. See, Federation of South African Women. Federation of South African Women records, 1954-1964. Yale University Library. 1977. Microfilm. Several scholars have drawn parallels between these women’s activism and that of African American women in the civil rights movement, see Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, "Black Women Freedom Fighters;” and Pamela Brooks, Boycotts, Buses, and Passes.
African Americans in 1929 that though missionaries had shown positive influence by offering education, the plight of Black South Africans continued to be slowed by phantom social service agencies. Bernice Mohapeloa, once one of Yergan’s members, used stronger language to condemn the counterproductive actions of liberals. In May of 1940, she delivered a speech about the importance of Black women’s groups to a room packed with Lovedale students and staff, first speaking fondly of Yergan and the work she did, before stressing the importance of Black women’s groups and self-help in light of Whites who failed to address structural issues. In the beginning, she shared a story about “some European friends in East London” who had discussed starting a soup kitchen in urban areas for underfed African children. Her disagreement with this approach was clear, when she said:

This is a very praiseworthy scheme, but one wonders whether a different approach to the problem would not be more effective in the long run. The real source of the trouble, as I said earlier, is insufficient wages. Would it not be better for the citizens of East London to launch an appeal against low wages, and by gentle persuasion to see that employers of African labor pay sufficient wages and thus enable their employers to provide better food for their families rather than go into the expense of providing a soup kitchen? One cannot help feeling that providing food for our children in this way, instead of making it possible for the parents to feed their own children sufficiently, will, eventually have a demoralizing effect on us and as a race, and make us expect to have things done

for us always.  

Such statements show that Mohapeloa as a UHC member was becoming a spokesperson for and a leader among women as well as the fact that she was not content with handouts from Whites. Instead, she insisted that Africans be given fair opportunity to care for their own offspring. It was then the job of sympathetic Whites to point out and work to change failures in the system. Makanya also had few kind words for Whites who ignored some issues while privileging others. Although beginning an article published in the September 1931 issue of *South African Outlook* (formerly the *Christian Express*) with the seemingly flattering remark that missionaries had made “undeniably rich contribution to Native life,” readers soon learned that it was nothing more than window dressing as Makanya admonished these groups for “their narrow evangelical motive, which saw, in all men, souls to be saved, rather than a society to redeemed.”

It was Maxeke, however, undeniably influenced by the level and the nature of her work outside of women groups, which brought her into closer relationships with missionaries, who exhaustingly went through the accomplishments of missionary groups before offering any sort of negative critique. In a 1928 article, she began by crediting

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86 In her travel notes, Eslanda Robeson described how a woman whom she referred to as Miss Soga, a member of Susie Yergan’s group, addressed a group of women at the Bloemfontein Convention in 1936 about the “service work” that she and the other women in Yergan’s association performed. As Robeson described her, Miss Soga was “a fine Xosa type, and belongs to the Tembus, the royal clan of the Xosa tribe. She is deeply interested and very active in social work, and is doing a great deal to organize the women’s section of the convention for two hours on the last night.” In speaking of the discussions that the women had at the conference, Robeson described them as “informative, and the suggestions practical and constructive. We discussed diet, child welfare, and women’s organizations in other parts of the world. They asked about the National Council of Women in America, about women’s organizations in England, about Negro women everywhere. I told them all I knew.” See *African Journey*, 47, 49 and 61.
missionaries with the “advancement and the uplift of the Bantu people of this land,” as their “teachings have improved the social status of the people” and “creat[ed] in [them] a new desire for improvement, given a new hope, as it were a new lease on life.” Nearly done, Maxeke told her readers that she was so impressed by their work that she exclaimed, “If Africa is to be saved it will not be through the missionary only, but through the agency of young men who were once members of the City Mission.” Still, just as Yergan, Mohapeloa, and Makanya pointed out failures and shortcomings, Maxeke, even if more gently, insisted that there was more “work to be done” and that both missionaries and White government officials had made mistakes over the years.

One of these errors that Maxeke discussed and on which she and Yergan agreed, albeit for different reasons, was the use of men in domestic services. For Maxeke, it only seemed natural that women perform this type of work, consistent with “ideas about woman’s purity and ‘natural sphere’ that she had imbibed in her mission training and her schooling at Wilberforce.” Also influenced by her work as employment officer for women, Maxeke explained to governmental officials and missionaries that their decision to permit men to serve as domestic workers had led to a dangerous situation in places like Johannesburg, where Black female domestic servants were a rarity. In this area, she explained, “We thus have a very dangerous environment existing for any woman who goes into any kind of domestic service in these towns, and naturally immortality of various kinds ensues, as the inevitable outcome of this situation.” Although scholars have interpreted this statement to mean that she was evoking the most vicious stereotypes about the nature of African men, there are other possibilities. In fact, Maxeke’s fear for female domestic workers, seems less related to the idea of African men’s propensity to
rape women, but instead to the probability of women losing their identities as “the flower of the youth of the Bantu” as she like Makanya was alarmed by the attention (often exaggerated) granted to women’s promiscuous behavior in the 1920s. Maxeke also expressed reservations about men’s place in the homes of White women, exclaiming that no one knows what is on the mind of those “raw, uneducated boys.”

Although Maxeke is indeed calling these men “boys,” and questioning their morals much like White South Africans did, her use of language here is no different than her descriptions of not only the women who had not yet passed through the requirements of her labor agency but any Black South African woman who was uneducated. In fact, Yergan’s fear that this type of work “which took [men] through all parts of the house during any part of the day” thereby exposing them to “immodesty and indiscretion on the part of the women of these homes,” probably falls more in line with Maxeke’s original thoughts. Although Yergan ultimately decided that this type of work lowered men’s “respect not only for these women but for all womanhood,” she did not suggest rape as a consequence.

That Makanya never publicly entered the debate on domestic duties was perhaps influenced by the fact that she never married. She did, however, participate freely and often in discussions about the failure of White liberals and missionaries and how this showed in Black South African life. In her same article in the *South African Outlook*, Makanya informed her missionary audience that it was their narrow focus on “saving the soul,” which held that Africans needed only to work, go to church on Sundays, and attend weekly prayer-day meetings, rather than the real issues that Black South Africans faced,

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which actually caused many of the youth to migrate to the cities for employment. Other youth who had no social events in the countryside, only religious activities, saw the city and its modern establishments, like beer halls, as an attractive place. Once there, Makanya explained, these migrants participated in lewd activities and developed a radical way of thinking that soon led to their arrest, or worse, their rejection of Christian ideas about behavior.  

In addressing the life of Black South Africans in urban areas, Maxeke blamed missionaries and White liberals. She was particularly frustrated about their refusals to lobby the government for the elimination of “locations” and an increase in the wages of Black men who held industry jobs. In 1930 before an audience of representative students and non-students, both European and Black, more generally she blamed Europeans for the conditions of Black South Africans, saying that:

We see that the authorities in enforcing the restrictions in regard to accommodations are often doing Bantu society a grievous harm, for they are forcing its womanhood, to the first step on the downward path of sin and crime. The European is by his treatment of the Native in these ways which I have mentioned, only pushing him further and further down the social scale, forgetting that it was he and his kind who brought these conditions about in South Africa, forgetting his responsibilities to those who labor for him and to whom he introduced the benefits and evils of civilization. 

In this same speech, Maxeke then argued that living in sub-standard housing had led many Black men to feel guilty because the low wages they made barely covered the rent. Thus, they participated in “ill activities to satisfy their depression and guilt.” The wives of these men were left without funds to buy food and supplies for their households. Soon after, other members of the household “set out on a life of crime.” Maxeke told missionaries that such conditions not only led Black South Africans to feel “that the laws of the land are not made for Black and White alike but to question Christianity generally. To illustrate her point, Maxeke told the story of one woman, who “had suffered so much [that she] could not be convinced that the same God watched over and cared for us all, but felt that God who gave the Europeans their life of comparative ease and comfort, could not possibly be the same God who allowed his poor Bantu to suffer so.”\textsuperscript{92} Although wanting her White audience members to understand the ramifications of their inactions, Maxeke still realized the importance of establishing a sense of common purpose. Thus, she told her audience that although she was aware of how gruesome her stories were, “according to my belief [this conference] intended to give us all the opportunity of expressing our views, our problems, and of discussing them in an attitude of friendless and fair-mindedness, so that we may perhaps be enabled to see some way of out of them.”\textsuperscript{93}

Maxeke’s concluding remarks show that she, like the other women in this study, clearly understood how important it was to convince White South African groups that

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.
their organizations should share similar concerns and feelings of responsibility towards Black South Africans. Persuasion, however, often meant moving beyond compliments to openly assuming the rhetoric of these groups. For instance, in writing her White American financial supporters in 1935 to gain funds for a “modern rural social center that would provide “facilities for a library, indoor recreation, an assembly hall, night school, and one or two clubrooms—a dire need in most African rural communities,” Makanya told her supporters in simple terms that she hoped that their resources were “blessed” so that she might be able to continue and to expand her work in South Africa. Also as she asked for a “small fund to be devoted to the remuneration of a temporary assistant to the purchase of magazines, papers, and books suitable for our young people to be placed in our library,” she reminded them that the money would “serve the great cause of giving Africans the abundant life which is the hope of all Christian endeavor” (emphasis added). The use of the word “suitable,” although intentional, could be a reference to socialistic or secular materials, or both. Wanting to convince her audience that all that she asked for was necessary to the work on improving the plight of Black South Africans, for which they should all be concerned, Makanya ended the paper with the line that her general aim “may be summed up in the slogan: ‘Better home for better Africans.’”

This same careful use of words can be seen in the activities of the Unity Home-Makers Club as Yergan told readers of the *South African Outlook* that the whole purpose of the club was so that “women could share their responsibility in their advancement of the race” (emphasis added). Here, Yergan was stressing that the work of women was

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95 Yergan, “The Unity Home-Makers' Club,” 78.
meant to fit in or alongside others who were working to this end. Two years after Yergan’s departure from South Africa, Lucy Njikelana, who succeeded Yergan as president and had originally served as the organization’s secretary, applied for government funds, building upon the concept of shared responsibility. In her report, she told government officers that the members of the club were “urban” and “Christian,” although most of the members were indeed rural. As Njikelana knew, it was important for her description of group members to be synonymous with forward and sophisticated—values upheld by White missionaries and governmental officers. Her use of this language bears remarkable similarity to the descriptors Maxeke used in earlier years to build a bridge between the Bantu Women’s League and the Joint Councils Movement, a multiracial group set up in 1921 “that was sympathetic to the political aspirations of moderate Black organizations and anxious to initiate dialogue between Black and White leaders.”

Another time in 1921, Maxeke adapted her language so as to appeal to a group of White suffragists. Her speech was the first known time that an African woman was invited to speak publicly before Whites. Although it made no mention of the vote for Black women, perhaps because Maxeke knew that these women did not support it, the speech meticulously outlined the conditions of life for African women in the towns. In her speech, she encouraged her audience members to move beyond Christian sayings and actively display their Christianity by lending their support in solving the riddles that plagued Black life. This, she said, could start in the area of social reforms with an emphasis on charity and soup kitchens. As Maxeke saw it, Christianity and women were

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the keys to social development and progress not just for the race, but the nation. As Cheryl Walker explains, “Despite the fact that she spoke fluently, clearly and with dignity and represented those most nearly concerned,” the audience sat back in their seats and stopped taking notes when Maxeke began to speak. Undeterred by their show of non-support, Maxeke went ahead with the speech and delivered other speeches about the importance of cross-racial working, demonstrating that she truly believed in Christian concepts and A.M.E. tenets of interracial cooperation.97

Like the other women in this study, Maxeke used the language of Christianity not only to bridge gaps across racial lines, but because she was motivated by her belief in Christianity. In every instance, the women advocated among their club members that real improvement of the home meant that it was governed by Christian principles. Makanya stressed hygiene in the Bantu Youth League not only because it would improve the quality of life for Blacks who suffered from a lack of access to proper medical care, but because she fundamentally believed in the credo that “Cleanliness is next to Godliness.” Her Sunday school, like that of Mohapeloa’s and Maxeke’s, placed much importance on religious instruction.98 As these women saw it: “no social work will come to anything unless it has a religious basis.”99 Thus, the activities of the Unity-Home Makers’ Club were governed by a Christian calendar as at least once a year group members showed the Christian spirit of giving around Christmas by “pounding” a local hospital. Pounding meant that “each (member) gave a pound of some produce from her pantry or garden, When all the pounds of tea, sugar, rice, etc., as well as fresh eggs and vegetables came in

97 Ibid., 38.
98 Makanya, The Bantu Youth League, 2.
there was a valuable gift to the hospital.” More than missionaries with whom they sometimes worked, these women’s work moved beyond saving souls to rescue a people, a race, and a nation.

Saving Black South Africans meant saving women and youth. Saving these groups meant practical education and formal education, when possible. Most especially, through lectures and demonstrations on gardening, cooking, house management, and healthcare, Maxeke, Makanya, and Yergan sought to provide their members and audiences with the necessary skills for survival as the needs of the race continued to go unmet. The classes and initiatives they sponsored not only imbued group members and their target audiences with a self-help ethos, they provided a space that allowed women to circumvent the lowly position which South African society had ascribed to them. Claiming themselves as integral to the uplift of the community, the “leading ladies” of these organizations soon gained stature among members of their class and commanded respect and admiration in their communities. Like their leaders, they challenged arguments that only men could be race leaders and that women were to be seen and not heard. They now saw their roles as homemakers, housewives, and mothers as central to any discussion about the advancement of the race.

For Maxeke, Yergan, and Makanya, their education and socialization in the United States and mission schools in South Africa, which placed them at the forefront of this movement, projected them into the limelight where they could offer their opinions and suggestions to diverse audiences in the national and international arena. Seeking to gain concessions and support, these women often used the language of their supporters

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100 Yergan, “The Unity Home-Makers’ Club,” 78.
and in other instances were careful not to do so. To varying degrees all of them praised the work of Western missionaries and the improvements they had made in the lives of many Black South Africans. Nonetheless, the women in this study criticized these groups for their failure to educate women, their unwillingness to address social issues, and finally their discounting of Africans’ pre-colonial traditions in their initiatives. The way in which these women defended and debated these customs and the role and place they had in the road towards progress is the focus of the next chapter.
CHAPTER 3:

“Africa had a culture all her own”: The Negotiation of Ideas about Civilization and Modernity

In 1923, writing in *Umteteli wa Bantu* (The Mouthpiece of the People), a newspaper that commonly published articles about the importance of education, political opportunity, and women’s advancement, R. V. Selope Thema warned fellow members of the Black South African elite of the arrival of a new life in South Africa and explained that with it “we have to swim or sink in its sea of problems.” He contended: “‘We shall have to do what the American Negroes have done—adapt ourselves to our new environment. That is to say, we should assimilate as far as possible the good things of Western civilization and discard those that are bad.’”¹ As one of the foremost Black South African intellectuals who held strong beliefs that the New Negro Movement in the United States offered many historical lessons for the New African Movement occurring in his own country, Thema spent his lifetime presenting acclimation as the most viable choice.

Although Thema was willing to accept that not all things Western were good, he did not extend this same balance to African culture and instead wrote articles in several “New African” newspapers that advocated for the “complete severance of New African

modernity from African traditional society.” For Thema, whose beliefs in many ways are illustrative of the debate occurring among several other members of the Black South African elite, the creation of a “New African” and a “New Africa” meant accepting ideas and values emanating from Europeans and African Americans who, through their extended contact with White Americans and their own devices, were achieving progress. As Ntongela Masilela, an English and World Literature scholar explains about Thema: “to him modernity must destroy, or at the very least it should exercise imperial hegemony over [African traditional society], tradition: to him there can be no reciprocity or rapprochement between them.”

For the women in this study, Thema’s advice was all at once relevant, complicated, and dangerous. They agreed with him that the introduction of Western culture into South Africa had introduced “a new life” that was not always beneficial for Black South Africans, especially in the conspicuous consumption and dependence on wage labor that had increasingly come to define the lives of Black South Africans. Additionally, the manner in which the women’s clubs were organized demonstrates that they, too, supported ideas about progress and civilization and indeed held many parts of the Victorian female persona as their own. Nonetheless, the organizations of Susie Yergan, Charlotte Maxeke, and Sibusisiwe Makanya combated ideas about Blacks’ innate inferiority and their inability to rise and advance that many Western advocates accepted as true. Furthermore, although like Thema, these women, in different ways and to varying degrees, held African American progress as an example of what Black South

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2 Ibid., 22.
3 The debate about the need to absorb European beliefs was such a big one among members of the Black South African that W.O. Brown, an American sociologist sent there to study collective sentiment among the African population, spent several pages discussing it. See “Racial Consciousness.”
Africans could accomplish, and they, themselves, were in many ways representative of such accomplishments by attending and graduating from Black colleges, they did not believe that all African customs were worthless and should be eliminated or that they should even be judged alongside those of Europeans. The development of these attitudes and beliefs had as much to do with the political and social values formed during their childhood as well as their prolonged engagement with Black South African women in their social groups.

Like Black South African and African American leaders and writers of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, Yergan, Maxeke, and Makanya entered debates about the merits of European and African culture, historical place, and modernity. Their speeches and writing though largely about women and the conditions of Black South Africans more broadly, shows traces of and sometimes full conversations about African customs and how they were considering what was irreplaceable and special and what was outdated and harmful. This chapter begins first by discussing their support of Western ideas followed by the way in which these women responded to the debate over African Americans’ role or responsibility in helping to “civilize” Africans according to Western standards. A discussion of Yergan’s, Maxeke’s, and Makanya’s arguments about lobola, beer-brewing, women’s initiation clubs, and polygamy and the way these customs affected women and the future progress of the race conclude the chapter. Altogether, these discussions show that these activists were thoughtful in their approach to activism, reflecting and respecting diverse values among people striving for modernization even as they held on to important traditions.

The most visible engagement of Western beliefs among these women is evident in
Maxeke’s lifetime, which was marked first by her participation in the African Jubilee Choir that allowed her to travel to Europe and America from 1890 to 1894 and later by her time as an activist in South Africa. As Maxeke told her sister, her journey to Europe was much less about establishing a career through singing than to “learn about the world” and “to learn what Whites are taught” in order to share this knowledge with her people.⁴

Prior to her travel to the United States, Maxeke was teaching students much in the same way she had been taught: a narrow focus on cleanliness and proper labor and leisure activities. Her desire for broader education, however, was deepened when on her trip to Europe she met and befriended a number of educated Black Americans who shared with her the concepts underlying Black education in the United States.⁵ A few months after returning home to South Africa in 1894, Maxeke was invited to join another choir, which would take her to America as she so desired. Similar to their routine in Europe, while in the United States, the choir delighted and entertained concert halls filled with those eager to lay eyes on the unique group of Africans and to witness their distinctive harmony. It is likely that they performed in their American concerts in the same manner as they did in Europe—beginning in what was said to represent their “traditional” African garb and shifting in the second act to European-style dress. The disappearance of tall colorful head dresses, loin cloths, and face markings coupled with the appearance of crisp white shirts and dark trousers worn by men and the long flowing dresses adorning female choir members, was thought to depict African progress.⁶ According to Katie Makayana, Maxeke’s sister, and another member of the choir, in Europe these depictions of Africa’s

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⁵ James T. Campbell, *Songs of Zion*, 133.  
⁶ McCord, *The Calling*, 34.
arrival to modernity, coupled with the remarkable singing ranges attributable to several of
the women, led them to be rewarded with lavish gifts. Katie recalled that her most
valued gift beyond the glasses that corrected her vision was a strand of pearls that she
wore in her own European-style wedding that she wanted to rival that of “the English girl
in the City Temple in London.”

Like her sister, Charlotte Maxeke learned to appreciate and to treasure many
aspects of Western life during her childhood. She grew up in a Christian family, where
her father was a lay preacher in the Presbyterian Church and her mother was a teacher.
According to her sister’s description, their rearing was atypical of that of many Africans
who at the time still held to “traditional” spiritual and cultural beliefs. Although, their
parents did not completely abandon their African heritage, as can be seen in their long
trips to visit their family who lived a more “traditional existence,” by the time they were
adolescents, Maxeke and her sister were strong believers that the arrival of Western
missionaries who preached conversion to Christianity and Western ideas had brought
about social and religious order in African life. This attitude, mixed with a desire to
satisfy her professors at Wilberforce University, especially those who once believed in
the providential mission or that it was the role of formerly enslaved African Americans to
return to Africa and lead its regeneration, is likely what led her to express such negative
beliefs about the “Dark Continent” in her written assignments and speeches. Although
her feelings about the worthiness of African culture shifted dramatically when she
returned to South Africa and began to work as a leader of women’s groups and a

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7 Ibid., 83.
8 Ibid., 78-9.
Probation Officer and Court Welfare Officer in the Johannesburg courts, as a Christian, Maxeke continued to argue for the benefits brought by Western culture, claiming that the arrival of Whites had “offer[ed] the terms of Jesus Christ” that allowed Blacks to let go of “hideous” practices and “primitive” beliefs, which in turn meant that they had gained “a new desire for improvement” and were given “a new hope, as it were a new lease on life.”

Similarly, the Jabavus also painted the life of pre-colonial Africans as one of disorder and chaos. As products of Western-style education (Jabavu’s wife was a graduate of Lovedale College, a Presbyterian school founded for the training of Black teachers in South Africa and had attended Kingsmead College in Birmingham, England under the conviction that the wives of educated men must also be educated.), they argued that prior to the arrival of Whites, their land was one of “‘internecine feuds and unbroken warfare, anarchy and devastation.’”

Echoing Maxeke’s early writings and lectures, they described the African past as a “haunted nightmare of uncertainty and tyrannical witchcraft,” and “unsettlement and tribal friction.”

Florence Jabavu put it succinctly: prior to the coming of missions, “there was no room for hope, no happy anticipation of an afterlife, no spiritual outlook.” Like Maxeke, the Jabavus expressed gratitude for the lessons that Western culture brought to South Africa and believed that African progress could be reached if Africans would agree to follow Western education.

Along the same lines, Susie Yergan thought that African progress was tied to a

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10 In this excerpt, Florence Jabavu is quoting her husband, see “The Bantu Home Life,” 164. Biographical information on Florence Jabavu is found in Higgs, Ghost of Equality, 56 and 204 Footnotes 44 and 45.
12 Ibid.
position of submissiveness: to African Americans. In June of 1930, standing in for her husband, Yergan discussed the benefits of Western values for Africans before an audience of Black YMCA members in Chicago. She stated, “the Negro appreciates the benefits arising from occupation such as the suppression of human sacrifices, or incessant warfare and of slavery.” There was also “the introduction of roads and railways [t]hat have been a boon to the progress of the people” and the start up of “trade, education and Medical service [w]hich have all contributed to the prosperity of the country.” 13 Other parts of her speech that were published for wider consumption by the Crisis in 1930 show that although she believed that the “political domination of others was wrong,” the lessons of civilization offered to Black South Africans by Westerners were right. Speaking on behalf of Black South Africans she claimed, “The African realizes these benefits from the European; but at the same time, he is left bewildered and devoid of anything to guide him over the confusing road Europe has mapped out for him.” 14 She advocated that one surefire way to ensure that Black South Africans rose from “the primitive stages of human development” to “what is considered a highly developed civilization” is through the assistance of African Americans. Lastly, Yergan relayed to her audience that Africans realize “the superior advantage of her American brothers and sisters and is looking to them to help her, if all others fail.” 15

Both Yergan and her husband, as advocates of African redemption, believed that because of African Americans’ long contact with Western civilization and the bitter experience through which they passed, referring to the middle passage and savagery, they

14 Ibid., 194.
15 Ibid., 193.
were more cultured and thus better equipped to face challenges wrought by civilization” and thus would be passing Western ideas to Black South Africans. Although it is clear that Max Yergan imbibed this regenerative type of spirit since he was a small child, there is not enough information on Susie Yergan’s childhood to make this claim. However, her education at Shaw undoubtedly convinced her that as an individual of higher learning, she had an obligation to assist those who were less educated, and by extension less cultured. Susie Yergan fundamentally believed in the influential capabilities of African Americans and hoped to convince other Blacks of their duties to uplift Africans by tying it to their own racial progress. As she told her Chicago audience, “When we will are willing to help carry the burdens of the weaker along with our own, we will gain more strength as we go on our way.”

Not at all surprising, Yergan’s belief about the need for Black South Africans to “copy” the strategies used by Black Americans in order to ensure their advancement was shared by other members of the Black South African elite, including R. V. Selope Thema and D.D.T. Jabavu, who as Ralph Bunche recalled during his trip, “thought it would be better for the African to be like the American Negro, with no cultural roots.” Young

17 Ibid., 193.  
18 Ralph Bunche and Robert Edgar, An African American in South Africa, 135. Catherine Higgs complicates Bunche’s concise description of Jabavu by explaining that though he had ambivalence towards African culture this did not suggest that he was anyhow less African. In fact, he clearly defined himself as such; he taught African languages and wrote and published books in Xhosa. See Ghost of Equality, 46. For more about Max Yergan’s belief in African regeneration, see Anthony, “Max Yergan in South Africa,” 27-28. The belief that African Americans were “touch stone[s] of progress” was also shared by Alfred B. Xuma, the author of Maxeke’s short biography and the first Black South African to graduate with a Ph.D. After the death of his first wife, Sibusisiwe Makhanya, Charlotte Maxeke, and others had worked to assist Alfred Xuma in the search for his African-American wife who was to be a “a model of cultural sophistication and respectability.” Ultimately, it was the Yergans who introduced Xuma to his new wife,
Africans, like Maxeke and her fellow members of the African Jubilee Choir, believed that studying among Black Americans would make them “progressive,” a word that conveyed not only their “commitment to Western style progress but their sense of themselves as a racial vanguard.”

For these students and, indeed, their professors, their travel to America was seen as “recapitulating the African American experience, complete with the literal and metaphorical middle passage between savagery and civilization.”

Like the Yergans, they believed that “those whose steps are a little quicker and firmer should reach out a hand to help [us] on this arduous march.”

While the Yergans and many Black South African students who traveled to the United States to study at Black schools believed that African Americans had a responsibility to Africans, the voice on Africa’s current situation and the African past has never been unified. Some African Americans did not figure Africa in their social position and tried desperately to distance themselves from images of savages and beasts.

Others, in accepting distorted images of Africans as primitive savages as offered by the broader American public, traveled to South Africa for mission or study trips. Among them, many African American leaders and religious workers in South Africa believed that “evangelical work alone” was “not enough.” Thus, they began to work actively to transmit a whole system of values and ideals that they believed would lead to “the

Madie Hall, who arrived in South Africa in 1940 and while there also was a founder of women’s self-improvement groups. See Iris Berger, “‘Mother of the Nation,’” 554.

Campbell, Songs of Zion, 253.

Ibid., 251.


James Meriwether, Proudly We Can Be Africans, 17; and Campbell, Songs of Zion, 96.
regeneration of Africa” as framed by Alexander Crummell at the close of the Civil War.\textsuperscript{23}

Other African Americans knew of Africa what ministers of the AME and Baptist denominations discussed in their sermons on African redemption and “providential destiny.” There was also a contingent of Black Americans who paid significant attention to Africa and were familiar with the current struggles of Africans but, unlike Yergan, could see no benefit arising from Africa’s being “occupied” by outsiders, especially Europeans. This attitude was evident in the Black response to Italian imperialism in Ethiopia and other crises on the African continent.\textsuperscript{24}

Other divergences of thought about Africans and the benefits of Western beliefs through colonization were evident, particularly in African American leadership. In fact, Mary Church Terrell, the first president of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) in the United States, read literature of the Anti-Slavery and the Aborigines Protection Society, a group organized to secure justice for the Africans. In particular, Terrell marveled at the treatment of Africans on French soil. As she explained, though she was aware that France had not always treated her African subjects properly, “nobody who has a drop of African blood in his veins can fail to honor and love France on account of the way she treats her Black subjects when they live on her own soil and mingle with other citizens of the great Republic.”\textsuperscript{25} While Terrell struggled to understand colonialism’s affect on Africans in French colonies, Waldo Martin argues that Frederick


\textsuperscript{24} To see a discussion on Blacks’ concerns in Ethiopia, see Meriwether, 27-56. To read more about the “African agenda,” which included American Blacks uniting against white policies in South Africa, see Brenda Plummer, \textit{Rising Wind}, 152-165.

\textsuperscript{25} Mary Church Terrell, \textit{A Colored Woman}, 379.
Douglass was largely unconcerned about European colonization of Africans, particularly after his 1886-1867 trip that took him to countries like Britain, France, and Egypt. His trip to Egypt where he witnessed “poverty and backwardness” led him to develop a negative attitude. As Martin explains, Douglass’ writings on the topic, which can be seen as the “‘lazy African’ versus the ‘enterprising Anglo-Saxon,’ wittingly or unwittingly helped to perpetuate degrading African stereotypes.”

The desire to fight back against negative stereotypes about Africans led many Black South Africans to celebrate their African heritage visually and vocally and in some instances their African-European acculturation. For example, recalling the conversation between her and Bertha Mkize, Katie Makanya, Maxeke’s sister, remembered being told throughout the late 1920s that the African Americans were coming to help in struggles against the state, which included labor and the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU). She was not convinced, however, and responded by exclaiming “Ha! Those Negroes aren’t coming. They’re not mad like you and people in the ICU” and that they would be “unwilling to die for Africans who did not want to fight for themselves.” Although, Makanya began by attacking those Africans who were unwilling to stand up for themselves, she concluded that success was not possible anyway. As she saw it, Africans in the past, including well-known warrior kingdoms, had not won in their battles, and thus Blacks would not either. In her mind, Africans were a strong, resilient people and African Americans who had been taken to another land and enslaved were not. If Africans could not resist Europeans, it simply could not be done.

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26 Waldo C. Martin, *The Mind of Frederick Douglass*, 207.
The underlying element of self-pride in Katie Makanya’s statement can also be seen in the actions of others in terms of organizational formation, speeches, and tours. For example, in his 1913 Tuskegee tour, Jabavu, although wanting to take lessons from the institution, traveled all over the South singing selections from Chopin and showcasing his skills on the violin and the piano to African American audiences. Unlike members of the African Jubilee choir, however, Jabavu was not performing for gifts. Instead, he felt it was his “duty” to discount “the contemptuous attitude” that many African Americans developed on the “native African by reading irresponsible magazines and pamphlets, which laid great stress only on the worst side of the African.” Also in defense of the African, Makanya exhibited a strong African consciousness that can be seen in her construction of clothing in her trip to the United States, her American speaking tour about Zulu culture, and her decision to form a club that had as its first goal a cultivation of pride and respect for African culture while helping members to develop “an appreciation of the culture of other races.” Makanya and D.D.T. Jabavu’s behaviors in the United States show the efforts of Africa’s descendents on the continent to situate their own culture as important and relevant and their abilities to advance without African American leadership.

This same emphasis of racial consciousness and pride was a key component of the African Women's Self-Improvement Association led by Florence Jabavu. Although the activities undertaken by Jabavu’s and Yergan’s group were similar, the dress of their members was a clear delineation. In the latter group, women wore “Sunday” white dresses and other versions of European-styled clothing, while the women in Jabavu’s

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28 Ibid., 27.
group were expected to wear Xhosa clothing so as to “encourage pride in the history of the Xhosa-speaking peoples.” As Catherine Higgs explains Xhosa dress was Jabavu’s way of articulating a conscious anti-Western statement, rejecting the assimilationist model that her husband championed, and drawing a firm line between her group and Yergan’s whom she considered a “foreign interloper and her organization illegitimate, and Lucy Njike-lana, by extension, a sellout.” In Jabavu's mind, Yergan’s inability to speak Xhosa meant that she could neither effectively represent African women’s concerns nor articulate their struggles.

Complexities arise, however, when the closeness of both Yergan’s and Jabavu’s families is considered. In 1923 and 1928, sons born into both families took the first name of the other woman’s husband. Although Higgs concludes that the women did not get along, historian David Henry Anthony uses the children’s naming to argue that the dealings between these two families are complex: “There was nothing coincidental or accidental about this juxtaposition of male appellations. Names are too important to be arrived at arbitrarily, whether in Africa or Black America.” While Anthony may be right, it is quite possible that Yergan and Jabavu’s husbands got along fine, but that the women did not. Thus, perhaps Higgs is right to conclude that Florence Jabavu did not care for Susie Yergan and dismissed the relevance of her organization despite its higher membership count. Such can be seen in a short letter that Florence Jabavu wrote where she confessed a desire for her organization, the African Women’s Self-Improvement Association, to become an auxiliary organization of Charlotte Maxeke’s Bantu Women’s

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29 Catherine Higgs, “Zenzele,” 120.
30 Higgs bases this interpretation on a 1988 interview with Joel and Bernice Mohapeloa. See “Zenzele,” 125.
League (BWL). In the letter to Maxeke, Jabavu requested a copy of the constitution and an explanation of the work that BWL members did. Even without this information, Jabavu did not hesitate to tell Maxeke: “It seems to me that all of us (Bantu women) in South Africa should be its members and under your leadership.”

Florence Jabavu was not the only one to have a negative view of Susie Yergan or to question her motives as a visiting African American, which further shows that the women’s reputations as activists were clearly mixed. So did Phyllis Ntalana, a student who attended the South African Native College in the 1920s. Ntalana accused the Yergans of being far removed from the community, leaving her to wonder if their real purpose “was to show us, blacks and whites in South Africa, that a black American can live as a white person.” She explains that it was only after their furlough in 1931 that the couple returned and actively began to invite students to their house and that the wife began the Unity Home-Makers’ Club. Even then, Anthony considers how cultural differences played into the way the Susie Yergan interacted with Black South African women. As he explains, there might have been “a great deal of hostility simmering beneath the surface regarding things that are not easy to discuss, ranging from differences in skin coloring to interpretations of Christianity and church affairs.” He writes that Susie Yergan “was never ever accepted, nor was she really able to adapt to the circumstances she found, whether in Homburg, Cape Town or Alice, for the differences were probably far too great from anything she known, either in the parts of North Carolina in which she

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lived, or anywhere else she may have visited.”

Nonetheless, Ntalana’s views of Florence Jabavu were not uniformly positive either. She spoke critically of Florence Jabavu who though showing "depth and breadth of intellect: a woman in a man's world," as the warden “for the nine young women students then at the college was a complete failure.” As she explains, “[Jabavu] had no interest in us, her wards, nor in our welfare, and no faith in what she and her husband were doing at [the College]. Mrs. Jabavu told us many times that we should not even imagine ourselves in the position she was in.”

Ntalana’s criticisms show that although both Yergan and Jabavu were vying for the right to represent and uplift African women, their status as Western-educated and accomplished women often put them at odds with the very Black South African women that they sought to represent and serve.

Despite this fact, however, looking at Yergan’s speeches over the years suggests personal growth in how she came to see both herself and African women on the journey to progress. In 1929 and 1930 when she delivered speeches before American audiences, Yergan had originally expressed the need and duty for African Americans to assist Black South Africans in their movement to modernity and civilization. In fact, one speech was expressly titled “Africa-Our Challenge.” However, in her 1933 article in the *South African Outlook*, Yergan focused solely on African women and their work in these organizations. Although arguably tailored for the audience it served, the *South African Outlook* article was similar to a speech that Yergan delivered just one year later in 1934 before an audience of New York-based alumnae and friends of Augusta, Georgia's Paine

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34 David H. Anthony, III in a personal e-mail to the author. 15 April 2010
College. Despite the fact that a transcript of the speech has not been discovered, the New York Age reported it as having discussed the club work of Black South African women. As Yergan explained to her audience, "the remedial agencies being built up for the restoring of these people [are] by their own efforts,” and seconded only by “the assistance being given through the sympathetic activities of other organizations” (emphasis added). Although her now ex-husband’s efforts to appear less critical in the anticommunist atmosphere that came to define the United States from the 1920s until the late 1950s meant that he again shifted his politics and now wrote stinging articles on the backwardness of the African, it is clear that Susie Yergan’s transitional process in granting agency to these women and the larger African population was already underway before her return to the U.S. The title of the speech, “African Women Face the Future,” illustrates Yergan’s new conviction that Black South Africans did not need African Americans to save them.

Even more, beyond the fact that Yergan could not speak Xhosa and that she originally harbored doubts about Africans’ abilities to lead themselves into the future, from the beginning, she, like Florence Jabavu, recognized some of the negative effects that European culture had on Black South Africans. In particular, both women noted the

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36 The New York Age, 28 Apr. 1934.
37 David H. Anthony, III, Max Yergan, 215 and 231-270. Yergan and her husband split in 1945, although it is likely that they had been estranged since their 1936 return. The reasons for the divorce are unclear. For broader discussions on anti-communism, see In Many Are the Crimes. In this book, Ellen Schecker conducts a systematic study of the height of the anticommunist movement. In situating the movement in the mainstream, rather than a passing aberration, she reveals the legacy of anticommunism in the lives of American citizens and the nation’s public and private institutions. Her work is similar to that of other historians who also push the conversation of America’s containment policy in another direction when they describe how efforts to “contain” communism abroad led to anti-communist crusades within the nation’s borders, including an assault of movements for equality, see Lisa McGirr, Suburban Warriors; Thomas Sugrue, The Origins of the Urban; Thomas Sugrue, Sweet Land of Liberty; Nancy MacLean, Freedom Is Not Enough; and Lizabeth Cohen, A Consumers’ Republic.
rise of alcoholism as tied to the migrant labor system and unemployment. As Florence Jabavu clearly explained:

The evil of drink has [f]urther aggravated the situation because it has served to deplete the already insufficient income of the bread-winner. It has degraded the moral life of whole communities, so much so that it is quite common for one to find certain portions of Native locations correctly but unfortunately referred to as Sodom and Gomorrah. The moral conscience has become so dulled that there is no upright public opinion, and these circumstances of degradation have come to be attempted as the natural order of things. 38

Speaking to an all female student body at Bennett College for Women in Greensboro, North Carolina in 1929, Yergan expanded upon Jabavu’s point, excoriating “the famous tot system where Africans were paid partly in alcohol.” Although, she told her audience that “not only the men and women drink, but young children,” this was likely an exaggeration as many scholars of African history explain that while beer-making has remained an economic area for women, its consumption has nearly always been the preserve of men. 39

While Maxeke agreed that alcohol consumption wreaked havoc in the lives of many, she especially concentrated on the effect of brewing among women. She blamed

39 Anthony, Max Yergan, 96. For sources on the historical significance of beer brewing in South Africa see, see Cheryl Walker, Women and Resistance, 53 and 77; and Helen Bradford, “‘We are now the Men.’”
Europeans for introducing Black South African women to a life of sin and crime as they brewed and sold Spokane in order to bring money into the household.\textsuperscript{40} In this statement, Maxeke, strongly influenced by her Presbyterian upbringing and her training by professors at Wilberforce who supported and led in groups founded for temperance, ignores the historical importance of beer in Bantu culture.\textsuperscript{41} Social and cultural historian Alan Gregor Cobley makes clear that Maxeke’s attitude towards alcohol consumption was widespread among the “emerging class of Christianized, educated Africans on the mission stations of the eastern Cape, Natal, and elsewhere in the late nineteenth century,” as these individuals “were caught between these contending pressures. As the founders of the first African political associations, who saw themselves both as spokespersons for, and examples to, their ‘uncivilized brethren’, many members of this class initially adopted a westernized view of alcohol use and came to share the same puritanical disapproval of intemperance that was expressed by the missionaries.”\textsuperscript{42}

Unlike the other women, Makanya showed an understanding of the importance of beer and beer making among Black South Africans. Rather than blame Europeans or work for its prohibition, she focused instead on health factors as some of these concoctions made by women to compete with the government monopoly were found to be poisonous and deadly. Thus, in the early 1930s, she applied for a license to brew and

\textsuperscript{40} Charlotte Maxeke, “Social Conditions,” 114.
\textsuperscript{41} Although Maxeke was right in claiming that many women began to brew beer as a form of employment in the face of poverty, Maxeke’s strong support of temperance led her to downplay the way that the establishment of government beer halls and the collection of related taxes used to pay for the administration of councils that governed African life further hampered these women’s lives and ability to take care of their children by cutting into their profits. In fact, this became a major reason for the mobilization of African women under colonialism in many parts of Africa. For mobilization among women in Tanzania, see J.F. O’Barr and Kathryn Firmin-Sellers, “African Women in Politics,” 200. For a discussion of women’s occupation as tied to beer in Zimbabwe, see Gary Seidman, “Women in Zimbabwe,” 425. For a discussion about the importance of beer-brewing in South Africa, see Alan Gregor Cobley, “Liquor and Leadership.”

\textsuperscript{42} Alan Gregor Cobley, “Liquor and Leadership,” 131.
sell beer and opened the Cim'koma Beer Hall in Umbumbulu.\textsuperscript{43} The small profits were then used to support her rural community center. Although the beer she served held great nutritional value and was recommended by doctors, her actions drew her into controversy in the community. Hamilton Makanya, a family member, said the following of her:

I remember the year she was excommunicated from the church because the people regarded one intelligent enough has no business to participate in anything that has got to do with beer. Oh, she thought it was nothing. . . when she came back drinking was nothing and she sold beer herself. She started a beer hall here, not far away from her place. . . Churches overseas don't ban alcoholic drinks.

Makanya, like Yergan and Maxeke, learned about temperance and prohibition in the United States among religious people and women’s groups, but such activism was also popular among Western missionaries in South Africa who worked to ensure abstinence, going so far to make it a “‘virtual prerequisite’” of church membership for Africans.\textsuperscript{44} In recognizing its cultural importance to Africans, however, Makanya worked to save the custom. Although, she had grown up in a Westernized, Christian family, symbolized by her square house, rather than a rounded hut, and the furniture therein, her parents like Maxeke’s blended the two cultures, seeing no incongruity in observing many Zulu

\textsuperscript{44} Cobley, “Liquor and Leadership,” 131.
practices, which they taught their daughter. This attitude, which was fostered in her childhood, influenced many of Makanya’s other activities as she grew older, leading her to stress pride and a remembrance of the African past. Unfortunately, this connection with the past as tied to beer-brewing led her to be excommunicated from the Congregationalist church.

Makanya’s was not alone in her argument about pre-colonial customs and the value that they held among Black South African people. Yergan, too, recognized the value of such social institutions and made notes of the way in which “ancient customs, beliefs, and social organizations [were] destroyed” with the arrival of Europeans. As she explained in 1930, it was in “the caves of the Zimbabwe ruins, [w]here I found not only paintings on the walls but also gold ornaments which shows that Africa had its culture. The old system of tribal rule, with all of its defects, was suited for the needs of a primitive people.” She went further in her defense of African culture in saying:

The West which has such a superiority complex that it is difficult for her to understand the value of that which is unlike her own, does not realize the value of Africa’s past heritage. Africa had a culture all her own. It was not necessarily inferior to Western culture but rather it was different. Since culture is said to be adapted to its environment and is in a certain degree created by it, the African had real culture—the full expression of racial

life. His social organization was simple but adjusted to the needs of his simple life. His code of ethics embodies some of the highest ideals.\textsuperscript{46}

It is important to realize that Yergan’s use of terms like “simple” “primitive” and “defects,” in discussing the African past and African condition in the present should be seen not a dismissal of everything African, but in many ways is illustrative of the language of the day. Like Maxeke and Makanya and many of the women that they led, Yergan often relied upon such descriptions to gain accommodations and support for her organizational activities and in other instances just used the language uncritically. When leaders like D.D.T. Jabavu, R. V. Selope Thema were so willing to depart with the African past in order to embrace a New African modernity, the women in this study thought it best to consider at least how and to what end African customs should follow them into the future, especially those concerning women. In fact, they all pointed out the ways in which the adoption of Western behaviors actually served to the detriment of African culture. Makanya spoke to it most eloquently saying that Europeans’ “fear and horror of heathen institutions led many to regard Bantu institutions as wholly evil and therefore needing to be destroyed. This spirit which we should interpret charitably as a zeal for their conception of righteousness, has unfortunately blinded many to the good features of Bantu institutions.”\textsuperscript{47} As if following this up, Yergan concluded, “We do not

\textsuperscript{46} Yergan, “Africa-Our Challenge,” 194.
say that the old life was always pure and clean but it was wholesome compared with this slum life.\footnote{Yergan, “Africa-Our Challenge,” 195.}

In looking at African culture more specifically, two practices that these women addressed and debated were that of lobola and polygamy and their relationship to other African practices. Lobola and polygamy were often, but not always, connected in that a man’s or a family’s social standing was reliant upon its “womenfolk as valuable assets for personal profit.”\footnote{Maxeke, “The Progress of Native Womanhood,” 177.} As men sought to improve their standings in the community, Maxeke explains that it was common for one man to acquire anywhere from ten to nearly forty wives. The price “paid for” these women “varied according to the wealth of the families concerned or according to royal blood [a]s Chief’s daughters ranged from fifty to over one hundred head of cattle, while those of ordinary persons fetched from ten to over twenty.”\footnote{Ibid.} In her speech about the progress of African womanhood, Maxeke made it clear that she was opposed to these practices for several reasons. Most importantly, she disagreed with lobola because she believed that the “practice of paying fixed value for a wife” permitted men to consider women as their inferiors and as property, which in turn “arrested the progress not only of the day but also of the latter day.”\footnote{Ibid., 178.}

Yergan and another African American female visitor, Charlotte Crogman Wright, the spouse of an AME bishop whom she accompanied in South Africa for four years, however opposed this argument and claimed that African Americans and Americans more broadly could learn a lot about love from this practice. In fact, arguing against claims that lobola ruled out the possibility of love in a marriage, Wright asked her
American audience if marriages among other races were “nothing more than
conveniences on a higher level.” She concluded her essay with the assertion “that there
are more love marriages among the Bantu than people of other races.”52 Yergan further
defended the practice of lobola by explaining that many well-educated African girls still
desired to be “Lobolaed.” In using these particular descriptors, Yergan was making a
specific point that the support for lobola was more than a matter of “educated” versus
“raw” women or young versus old as critics claimed.53

Another African custom that these women debated was the matter of polygamy.
It is evident from her many speeches, that Maxeke was strongly opposed to men having
multiple wives because she believed that it broke down the structure of the family and
caused husbands to always be away from the home performing various jobs to support his
many wives and children.54 This made women the heads of households that were facing
starvation and disorder among other things. This concern was also shared by Makanya,
who in the beginning held a neutral position on polygamy while in the U.S., where she
viewed the practice as a cultural trait, which set her apart from her American colleagues
and added to her identity and difference as a woman from Africa. In just a few years
time, however, she changed her position. In 1931, her reasons for disapproval offered
before the Native Economic Commission (NEC), a state initiated group that required
missionaries to defend their enterprise and the work that they did, stemmed from her
concern about the welfare of the numerous children of such marriages and the health of
the wives. Her negative view of African people’s belief that "all that counts is the number

52 Charlotte Crogman Wright, “Marriage Customs in South Africa,” 85.
54 Ibid.
of children” was likely informed by the cases of poverty and illiteracy that she encountered in just one year of community work.55 Beyond these statements, however, there is nothing in the record that shows that she actively worked against the existence of the practices.

As much as there were agreement regarding polygamy and the treatment of women, there were also disagreements and contradictions that existed among the women in this study and other individuals. In her essay “Bantu Home Life,” Florence Jabavu began with a long quote by her husband who viewed the lives of pre-colonial women as ones of “absolute subjection dominated by polygamous manhood, while man himself lived in constant dread of murderous foes and malicious ambushes.”56 Although, Florence Jabavu followed this with a more detailed discussion of why her husband considered these practices to have negative effects upon African culture, she later complicated her use of this material when she wrote that “the system of polygamy did not mean that these women were pure chattel rather it granted women a sense of independence as each woman was to be executive manager of her household.” Under polygamy, women were allotted an arable field and livestock, and thus had “complete self accountability without having to appeal to her spouse for the provision of multifarious minor needs.”57 Florence Jabavu’s unwillingness to reject this practice completely reflects some sensitivity to African cultural practices and her willingness to challenge the Western values she learned growing up and in mission schools.

Also connected to discussions of lobola was the matter of “initiation” clubs or

56 Jabavu, “Native Womanhood,” 165.
57 Ibid., 167.
schools for women. In the 1920s, these schools continued to be popular because of their
importance in securing for women their economic and social future through marriage.\textsuperscript{58}
Initiation, which often included female circumcision, supposedly demonstrated to a
potential spouse that a woman has been trained in moral and practical responsibilities and
has maintained her virginity. In instances where age-group circumcision and initiation
was practiced, the experience was also said to create cohesion among women.\textsuperscript{59} While
Florence Jabavu was able to reconcile polygamy and determine its benefits for women,
she could not do the same with initiation schools, and argued that the customs of female
puberty rites and circumcision ceremonies of initiation clubs that supported this practice
were degrading.\textsuperscript{60}

Maxeke disagreed with Florence Jabavu about the relevance of the activities
performed in initiation clubs, seeing them as pre-colonial institutions and practices that
had contemporary relevance. Although she did not go into matters of female
circumcision, perhaps because it was largely frowned upon by Whites, she claimed that
in pre-colonial initiation clubs, ample attention was given to making sure that girls
remained morally pure, even if was to ensure that they would get their full lobola.
Furthermore, along with others, she argued that these schools were important in that they
prepared women to become wives and mothers and in turn allowed them to benefit as it
would protect them from physical abuse or desertion.\textsuperscript{61} She explained:

\textsuperscript{58} December Green, \textit{Gender Violence in Africa}, 49.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 45-46; Audrey Wipper, “Women’s Voluntary Associations,” 168; and Stanlie M. James and Claire C. Robertson, \textit{Genital Cutting and Transnational Sisterhood}, 11.
\textsuperscript{60} Florence Jabavu, “The Bantu Home Life,” 166.
\textsuperscript{61} Leonard Thompson, \textit{A History of South Africa}, 23; Wright, “Marriage Customs in South Africa,” 85. Not all women saw lobola as a beneficial practice and some ran away to gain the protection of missionaries. For example, see Elizabeth Schmidt, “Negotiated Spaces and Contested Terrain.” Linzi
In these primitive schools, girls were taught lessons on purity conducted by old women periodically and sometimes physical examinations were resorted to, which figured highly in keeping girls in sound moral control. In those days, these practices had great effect in molding the subsequent conduct of the womenfolk. They produced types of mothers who themselves took pride in keeping clean homes morally for which the Bantu have been so famous until the advent of the White man into South Africa.\(^{62}\)

Here, Maxeke is seen as defending Africans whom she claimed had always been concerned with home life and morality. As she saw it, in the new environment that characterized South Africa in the late 1920s and early 1930s, those women who did not get “initiated” were forced to counter attacks on their virtue and piety that their mothers never before experienced.\(^{63}\)

In considering women’s initiation clubs, Makanya found them to be a more relevant and therefore a superior system of educational instruction when compared to the lessons given on the same topic in mission schools. Although there is no proof that she was initiated, Makanya indicated that she knew of and valued the closeness that women who were initiated gained in the process and the lessons taught by older women and girls:

\[^{62}\text{Maxeke, “The Progress of Native Womanhood,” 177-178.}\]

\[^{63}\text{Ibid., 182.}\]
The girls were initiated in clubs by matured girls chosen for their capability of leaders. These leaders explained to the young people the mysteries of life as they understood them. The program included dancing, songs of the tribe, etiquette, sociability, duties of matrimonial life, training in the language customs of the people, family and tribal history. In these clubs grown-up girls would teach young girls how to conduct themselves in society—a feature, which is lacking amongst our mission-trained girls.64

Yergan and Wright did not speak on the schools or the initiation process that the women underwent although they did defend the custom of *lobola* that provided a rationale for these schools.

Yergan, Maxeke, and Makanya’s views about the merits of African and non-African culture, especially in line with their discussions about *lobola*, polygamy, beer brewing, and women’s “initiation” schools, shows that these women were thinking, critically engaged beings who, though finding ideas about progress, modernity, and civilization to be influential, did not adopt them in a wholesale fashion. Instead, throughout the course of their life’s work in South Africa, they navigated the intellectual and cultural terrain to decide how and in what ways African practices and customs were important in a society increasingly moving towards Western notions of improvement. Additionally, although they had all studied among African Americans, unlike D.D.T. Jabavu and Selope Thema they did not maintain that Black South Africans should be the carbon copy of American Blacks.

64 Sibusisiwe Makanya, “Zulu Girl,” 117.
The largest shift in thinking can be seen in the writings and speeches of Susie Yergan and Charlotte Maxeke who through their work with Black South Africans came to appreciate the agency of African women and gained a deeper respect for the African past. Even then, they, along with Sibusisiwe Makanya, did not always agree about the relevance of the customs they were considering although the fundamental goal of self-improvement remained the same. Like Makanya who traveled to the United States in 1927 with a strong sense of African pride and returned with an even stronger sense of self, these women came to argue that discarding beliefs that were part and parcel of the African past did not signify arrival with advancement or modernity. Instead, the women in this study understood many of the pre-colonial customs involving Black South African to be vibrant, useful, and, most of all, valuable. Although the speeches they gave and the articles they wrote were on the surface about the type of work they were doing or the issues that Black South Africans and women faced, a closer look reveals that they like other members of the Black South African elite and the Black middle class in the United States were actively participating in the debate about culture, modernity, and progress. In the end, all of these women, although teaching the members of the organizations to strive for certain European standards, decided that Africa, too, had culture.
CONCLUSION:

While several studies have focused on larger, more visible stories of official alliances and policies between South Africa and the United States, experiences and actions beyond of this framework, namely those of women, have yet to be fully researched or understood. Without a full consideration of the role and work of Black South African and African American women, whose travels and work helped to weave a transatlantic web of ideological influence, to establish transcontinental relationships, and to alter discussions about progress, modernity, and civilization, the South African-American nexus remains incomplete. As Ralph Bunche himself realized that it was impossible for any African American not to be looked upon as missionary in South Africa, this discussion shows that Bunche’s description can be extended to many Black South Africans who traveled for study in the United States as they returned to their own nation as well.

The women whose stories this thesis relays were indeed missionaries in their own right. Their American socialization often made them popular leaders among Black South African women who were not only looking to establish new identities in a world that valued European conceptions of progress, but also reduce the problems resulting from landlessness, migration, unemployment, and the degrading of social agencies for Blacks.
Although Bunche makes clear that any traveler could be considered a missionary regardless of religious adherence, the women in this study were Christian women who were guided by the principle of self-sacrifice and believed that Christianity was one of the most important aspects of their work. Moreover, their service work in organizations like the Bantu Youth League, the Bantu Women’s League, and Unity Home Makers’ Club was tied to an ideology of self-help and uplift that they hoped would improve the conditions that most Black South Africans faced.

Sometimes the lessons that they offered to members of their group or the populations among which they worked were directly and indirectly tied to their socialization in American colleges, especially Black institutions. At these schools, students were trained not only for work in particular professions, but for responsibilities as race leaders. For women, this meant education in domestic science departments and women’s organizations. In Makanya’s case, although she did not consciously become a supporter of the African American ideas about progress that she encountered while in the United States, she was able to use her American travel to think critically and creatively about her own status, responsibility, and course of action. Like Maxeke and Yergan, Makanya’s South African work, situated women as leaders within homes and viewed homes as the basis for racial progress, thereby attacking the principles that only men could be race leaders and women should be seen and not heard that existed in both European and African culture.

Discussions of these women’s work are also crucial in elucidating the common trap of political versus non-political when it comes to discussions of women’s activism. Even when Yergan, Maxeke, Makanya were engaging in reform and not revolution, their
work cannot, and should not, be considered as the hobby of middle class or elite women or reduced to simply to the social sphere. In fact, in South Africa, women’s participation in self-improvement groups of the 1920s and 1930s, often provided them with key organizational skills and a new sense of identity that was directly tied to some members’ agitation for rights in direct struggles against apartheid in later years.¹ By providing spaces for women to meet and to exchange ideas, these groups created among their members a profoundly political philosophy that resisted the dominant paradigm of the state and encouraged them to fight back against people and ideas that viewed them as irrelevant and incapable of keeping step with the world. Additionally, the speeches and writings of Yergan, Maxeke, and Makanya show that these women and their followers were out to save a race, to help its members find their place in the “vanguard of civilization,” and to fight imperialism more broadly. Their work caused them to critique those in power and enter into political circles in order to gain concessions and support, whether or not they could vote.

Beyond that, their writings, which so often addressed African culture and situated some pre-colonial beliefs and practices as worthy and valuable, cannot be overemphasized. This was no small feat for these women who were also often supporters of “New Africanism.” And while many of the Western missionaries believed that Black South Africans’ arrival to modernity meant leaving behind everything African, Yergan, Maxeke, and Makanya disagreed with such individuals, whom Bunche, himself, disparaged because of their eagerness to create carbon copies of African Americans and

¹ Scholars have found that membership in these organizations was linked to their participation and leadership in groups like the Young Women Christian Association (YWCA), the African National Congress Women’s League (ANCWL) and the Federation of South African Women (FSAW). See Iris Berger, "An African American 'Mother of the Nation,'” 545.
Europeans. In fact, after Eslanda Robeson’s trip on the African continent she also began to think of the image of Africans in the “modern” world and attempted to alter these images through her writing and through film. Like the women of this study who decided that Africa had a culture all her own, Robeson concluded her book, *African Journey*, with a one-line proclamation: “Africans are people.”

While this thesis seeks to situate the work of Susie Yergan, Charlotte Maxeke, and Sibusisiwe Makanya into a larger trend, it goes without saying that much more work is needed. Individual biographical work on these women is critical for restoring their complete historical visibility. Additionally, a larger study of the wives of African Methodist Episcopal (AME) bishops and Baptist preachers in Africa is needed. The Black South African women who crossed the Atlantic Ocean for study and began to work to promote self-help initiatives or other philosophies could be fruitfully compared to women who did not travel to the United States and began similar groups. Such a discussion will allow for complexity to emerge while allowing for a genuine discussion of self-help versus philanthropy. In any of these cases, revisionist research that considers Black South African and African American women travelers as *actors* and *contributors* will undoubtedly show that their work was just as critical, sometimes even more so, than those holding public offices. It is high time to give to such women their just due.

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