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THE NEGRO IN ILLINOIS

THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

Negro Students

Data Concerning Negro Students

at the State University

By

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Ethel Chase

". . . .In the early years the Trustees were appointed by the Governor. It is interesting to know that Honorable John J. Byrd, a Negro from Cairo, Illinois, served a term as Trustee of the University from 1878 to 1879 by appointment of Governor John L. Beveridge. . . .

"The Negro at the University of Illinois.

"History.

"The first negro to enter the University was Jonathan A. Rogan of Decatur, Illinois, who entered in 1887. He attended one year. George W. Riley of Champaign, Illinois, a special student in Art and Design, attended from 1894 to 1897. William Walter Smith was the first graduate receiving his degree in 1900. Walter T. Bailey was the second graduate, finishing in architecture in 1904. He was the first and only Negro to receive a professional degree of Master of Architecture. Miss Laudelle Tanner Brown now Mrs. Lidian O. Bonsfield, was the first woman graduate, finishing in mathematics in three years, 1906. Amos Potter Scruggs was the first graduate in law, in 1907. The first negro employee was Mr. L. H. Gulden, who served as janitor of the Drill Hall and Gymnasium,

now Gymnasium Annex. The next was Albert R. Lee, who entered employment as a messenger in the President's Office in February, 1895. He is now chief clerk in that office. Since that time two have been employed as mail carriers for the University, a fireman, now retired and a helper in the Horticulture department.

#### "CURRICULA

"All Curricula are open to Negro students in all colleges and schools without discrimination, both at Urbana and Chicago. Negroes are registered in all of them. For a number of years the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences has attracted the greatest number, because it is a service college, preparing its students for other Colleges, such as Education, Law, Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Library. It also contains the department of Chemistry, recognized as one of the best in the country, and one that has attracted a large number of Negro students to both its undergraduate and its graduate courses. The College of Education has been a popular one and it would seem that the teaching field is far from being overcrowded and there are openings for well trained Negro teachers. In spite of lack of proper vocational guidance in past years, Negro students have shown good

judgment as a whole in entering into curricula which lead to fields open to them after graduation and avoiding those which showed less opportunity for them.

#### "Graduation.

"In the Appendix may be found a statistical table showing the number of degrees conferred on Negroes from 1900 to 1940. This study will show that 46 degrees were conferred between 1900 and 1920; between 1921 to 1934, 203 degrees, and from 1935 to 1940, 86 degrees, a total of 335 degrees.

"In the first twenty years the A. B. degree largely predominated, but since that time the B. S. has come into its own. This can be explained by the fact, that many Negro students after taking the preliminary work in the College of Liberal Arts and Science, transfer to Education. There has been a marked increase in the number of graduate degrees conferred in the past ten years. More Negroes are studying graduate courses than in any time in the history of the University. Further reference will be made to this matter under topic of Graduate Work. An interesting study shown in the Appendix is a table showing the number of Negroes enrolled

and the per cent who graduated. Over a period of years the per cent of those enrolled who graduated is 16%.

"Commencements.

"Negroes participate in the Commencement exercises in the same way any other student does, without discrimination as to marching or seating.

"Employment of Students.

"Normally there are few opportunities open for Negro students to work. Negroes have seldom found employment in University offices; libraries, laboratories, shops, and Physical Plant are not open except through N. Y. A. There are a few jobs open in the University Business District and in homes in the community. Fraternities and sororities, once a fertile field for employment, give the most of their employment as dishwashers and waiters to white students. Often white students, fraternity men themselves, work in nearby houses, rather than their own. Girls occasionally find employment in homes for room and board or for cash pay.

There are a few such places for boys. Tables run by Negro Greek Letter organizations afford employment for a few. There are two such organizations running tables. One serious handicap is the lack of business places conducted locally by Negroes. Now and then some local barber shop has given such employment.

"The National Youth Administration has given employment to a large number of Negro students. This fund has been administered by the Employment Division of the University, and its head has been especially sympathetic with the economic status of Negro students. He has placed them in jobs in numbers out of the proportion of Negro students enrolled. A much larger number of Negro students who have applied have been given N. Y. A. jobs than the per cent of all students applying and giving employment.

"The University, particularly the Department of Chemistry, has given scholarships and fellowships to Negroes. There have been about a half dozen given in Chemistry. There was one given in Mathematics last year, and a reappointment given for the next year to a young man who is working on his doctorate. A fellowship in Economics has been given a Race<sup>1</sup> student for 1940-41, who is working on his doctorate also. University Loan Funds have been made available to Negro students and many of them have availed themselves of this source of aid.

<sup>1</sup> Race as used throughout this paper refers to the Negro Race.

"Extra Curricula Activities.

"During the years Negro students have taken an active part in outside activities. William Walter Smith '00 was editor of the Illini (the Student Newspaper) in 1898-1900, president of the Philomathean Literary Society, Color Sergeant in the Military Battalion, and Valedictorian for Class Day. William Jasper Prince was a member of a victorious Illinois Inter-Collegiate Debating Team in 1917 or 1918, and was a member of the Honorary Debating Fraternity. Colored boys have acted as reporters on the Illini. They have taken part in Class Dramatics. About six or seven years ago Negro students participated in an all Negro cast of Negro plays in Lincoln Hall Theater under the direction of the Supervisor of Dramatics. They have taken a part in Spanish plays also. Three or four girls have been members of the Woman's Athletic Association, which is a more or less an honorary organization. There have been colored co-chairmen of both the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A. Interracial Commissioners, such co-chairmen being members of the Y.M.C.A. Cabinet with their pictures appearing in the Handbook of the Associations. Reginald F. Fisher, a student, sang regularly over W S I L L, the University Station, and Audrey Denton, and Marion Bartlett, music students,

play the piano over Station WILL, the latter having a regular period. One young woman, Celeste Cantrell was accepted as a member of Torch, an All-University Woman's Honorary Orchestras, honorary dancing (interpretative dancing) Sorority, has had one or more Negro girls in its membership for many years. Marion Bartlett composed a musical number for Orchestras recitals. This past year Mathews L. Corley, Jr., was a member of the Varsity Debating team, and made the Honorary Debating Fraternity. Edward D. Yeatman was president of the Spanish Club during 1939-40, member of the Honorary Spanish Fraternity and participated Athletics.

"Athletics at Illinois consist of Intercollegiate and Intramural. Negro Fraternities have participated in Intramural events, basketball, softball, and track, and boxing, and tennis and won honors in various events. One Negro won a tennis championship and another a golden glove boxing contest at his weight. The fraternities have won cups for winning in their divisions in Interfraternity basketball. In Intercollegiate Athletics many Negroes have been on football and track squads throughout the years but only a few have won 'Letters.' Roy A. Young won a letter as a tackle in 1904, '05, '06 and Harham H. Wheeler, a letter as quarterback in 1906. In track, H. H. Wheeler qualified



as a sprinter, F. L. Stevenson as a hurdler, George Kile as a sprinter and Garland Jamison, as a high jumper, all of them but one won a letter. Douglas R. Turner won letters in tennis in 1929, '30 and '31 playing number one position. Alphonse Anders won his letter in football in 1939 as an end. William H. Lewis won his letter in track, both indoor and outdoor, as a broad jumper and member of the one mile relay team. Several Race Athletes have won their numerals as members of football and track freshmen varsity teams.

#### "Musical Organizations.

"Two Negro students have sung in the University Glee Club. One about eight years ago, another has been with the Club for the past six years or more. He is still a member. In 1898-1900 a colored woman was a member of the Woman's Glee Club. Two years ago a Race student played in the University Orchestra. Almost since its organization Negroes have sung in the University Choral Society. George W. Riley played a snare drum in the University Band during the years 1894-97.

#### "Graduate Work.

"The statistical sheet on degrees shows that during the

first twenty years only six graduate degrees were conferred. Four Master and two Doctor of Philosophy. In the last twenty years there have been fifty-two advance degrees, forty-nine Masters and three Doctorates. The total advanced degrees conferred on Negroes is fifty-eight, fifty-three Master and five Doctorates. This increase in the number of Negroes taking graduate work and receiving advanced degrees shows a healthy trend for the group to seek learning beyond that of undergraduate colleges and to display ambitions to pursue their education to greater depths.

#### "Scholarship and Honors

"Negro students have achieved many scholastic honors during the years, two have been honored with membership in the exclusive Phi Beta Kappa, J. Ernest Wilkins in 1916 and David Harold Blackwell in 1936. St. Elmo Gray, Ph. D., 1916 made Sigma Xi (science honorary comparable with Phi Beta Kappa). Harold D. West, Ph. D., 1936, also made Sigma Xi. There may have been others who have made Sigma Xi but the writer did not have the information. Dr. Brady, was a member of Phi Lambda Epsilon (honorary chemical fraternity) and also was a member of the American Chemical Society. Dr. E. L. A. Chandler was a member of Phi Lambda Epsilon, as was

Dr. H. W. West. Mr. Bertill Arthur Lloyd, A. B., a candidate for his Doctorate in chemistry in August, is a member of Sigma Xi and Phi Lambda Epsilon. Dr. St. Elmo Brady and Dr. E. I. A. Chandler both received University Scholarships and Fellowships in chemistry. Mr. Bertill Lloyd was awarded a scholarship some years ago but did not accept. Another Negro was awarded a fellowship in Romance Languages but did not accept. David A. Blackwell had a Fellowship in mathematics in 1939-1940 and was reappointed to one for 1940-41. David Sims McLaurin, working for his Doctorate in economics, was awarded a Fellowship in economics for 1940-41. David A. Blackwell was made a member of Pi Mu Epsilon (honorary mathematics fraternity) and Laura Henrietta Porter, B. S. was also made a member of Pi Mu Epsilon. David S. McLaurin was made a member of Omicron Delta Gamma (honorary economics fraternity). Edward H. Yeatman, A. B. was a member of Sigma Delta Pi (honorary Spanish fraternity); Mathews L. Porter, Jr., was made a member of the honorary Debating Fraternity; Edward Wimp a few years ago was admitted to the Advanced Course, R. O. T. C. and served as a Lieutenant. In 1939-40 Melton Ivan Taylor was admitted to the Advanced Courses in the R. O. T. C. and served as a Lieutenant. Several Negroes have served as non-commissioned officers in the R. O. T. C. During the years Race students have been admitted to

honorary language and science fraternities, such as the French, Spanish, history, home economic clubs, etc. Some have made the honorary freshman fraternity. Beta Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi won the Schem cup in making the largest gain in scholarship of any fraternity in the second semester, 1933-34.

#### "Living Conditions.

Living conditions have greatly improved in the past twenty years. The two organized houses, where many Negro students live, are buying their houses. The homes in the city where the Independents live are all modern, a situation that did not exist some years ago. There may be a few cases of overcrowding, but these are voluntary and not compulsory. All of the homes housing students of our group are some distance from the Campus except in a few instances. For many years the greatest number of Race Students lived in organized houses. Theoretically the Women's Residence Halls are open to Negro students. But there are practical difficulties that almost preclude their living there. The expense, the early deposit, and the long waiting list are factors that influence the situation.

### "Board

"Two private tables in organized houses board in private homes, two colored eating houses at a distance from the Campus, take care of the feeding of Negro students. The University Cafeteria serving only a noon meal, is <sup>often</sup> often without discrimination to all. One or two white restaurants in the University district (off the campus) will offer meals to Race students. The Illini Union (Student Center) which will open in September, will serve meals and give fountain services to all students alike without discrimination.

### "Organizations.

"There are three national fraternities at the University - the Kappa Alpha Psi, Alpha Phi Alpha, and the Omega Psi Phi. The first two have purchased their homes, which are large, and very attractive. Two sororities make up the girls list of Greek letter organizations. Alpha Kappa Alpha and the Delta Sigma Theta. The Alpha Kappa Alpha's purchased a home a number of years ago, and are well housed near the Campus. The Interfraternity Council voted to admit the Negro fraternities to membership, but they have not availed themselves of this privilege. Cenacle, an honor organization of Negro students has sponsored various projects.

One year it brought about the presentation of plays by Negro students, also an exhibit of books written by Negroes by the University Library. Bethel A. S. L. Lyceum which has functioned for about thirty years, is now managed and attended almost entirely by Negro students.

#### "Welfare.

#### "Religion.

"The various Religious Foundations (white) extend their privileges to Negro students. Many conferences and committee meetings have been held at these Foundations, especially Wesley. Many attend the University Churches, especially the Catholic and Episcopal. A great many attend local Negro churches, although the per cent of Race students attending their own churches, is much smaller than in former years, and is too small for the number of students here. At present the number of Negro students taking part in local church activities is small. Bethel A. S. L. Lyceum, an organization participated in by students through two years, is now officered, attended by and managed almost entirely by students. It serves as a 'laboratory', a forum, and an outlet for expression of pent up convictions. The colored churches welcome the Negro students and co-operate with them as far as permitted by the students

themselves. Race students have frequently given programs in churches in nearby cities and villages. The Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. Interracial Commission, when in existence, has worked for social privileges for Negro students, but of necessity their work was slow and educational in its nature. Because of the seeming slow progress made Colored students became impatient and ceased to work with it. Consequently this work was abandoned. Those Commissions have brought to the Campus outstanding Negro educators, and musicians to the All-University services, College Presidents, the late Richard B. Harrison, the Fisk and Munday singers; have been features. Many Race students are members and active in the local Branch of the N.A.A.C.P.

"Social. The social life has been more or less exclusive, being sponsored almost entirely by the Greek Letter organizations. They have consisted of parties, breakfasts, teas, picnics, and annual spring dances. Home-coming dances have been a custom for many years. Students attend some social affairs in the city. Some of the local churches, especially Bethel A.M.E., have sponsored dinners, teas, suppers. Mixers directly or indirectly for Colored students. The Woman's League has always welcomed Race Women to its teas. In recent years Negro students have attended in larger

numbers the major University social events, such as the Senior Ball, the Junior Prom, the Sophomore Cotillion, the Military Ball and various Class informals.

"Alumni.

"A University is judged by the character and achievements of its Alumni. From this viewpoint the University has not suffered in reputation by its Negro Alumni. But on the other hand its reputation has been enhanced by the contribution they have made to the Race and the State. None have been confined in prison or convicted of crime. Until the advent of the depression Negro Alumni and former students found positions usually in the field in which they prepared. They have usually made good. Many occupy positions of responsibility and trust. Physicians, dentists, pharmacists, engineers, architects, attorneys, journalists, professors and instructors in Universities, colleges, teachers, school principals, chemists, musicians, business men and women, social workers and housewives, are found within its ranks. Mr. Earl B. Dickerson was an Attorney-General Assistant, and now Alderman in Chicago; Dr. Julian H. Lewis, is an associate professor of Pathology at the University of Chicago, Mrs. Maudelle W. Bonsfield, is principal of the Stephen A. Douglas School, Chicago;



Dr. Vergil Cank is Coroner's Chemist, Cook County. T. J. Mann has held important offices with the Federal and City Governments; Dr. Ellis Stewart holds a strategic position with the Liberty Life Insurance Company; Dr. Amos P. Scruggs is an Assistant States Attorney of Cook County; E. W. Lee is Vice President and Cashier of the Farmers State Bank, Boley, Oklahoma; Dr. Walter T. Bailey, practicing architecture and official architect for Federal Housing for Negroes in Chicago. Dr. St. Elmo Brady, is professor of chemistry at Fisk University, Dr. Herbert Henry Harris is professor of chemistry at Meharry University. This list could be greatly enlarged but must end here.

"Needs.

"Poor economic conditions of parents caused by low salaries and wages, as well as non-employment, reflects itself in the financial condition of Negro students. This in turn affects their scholarship. One cannot do his best work when worrying about his finances. To meet this need there should be more loan funds and scholarships especially for Race students, this in addition to those now existing. Philanthropists should find this a worthy field to which they can contribute. Alumni of fraternities and sororities should raise funds to endow these

organizations to assist them in their financial struggles. Prizes might be given as incentives to better scholarship. Moral support from Race leaders, the press and the pulpit would help."

## "Appendix I.

## "Negro Graduates at the University of Illinois.

## Degrees Conferred.

	Baccalaureate Graduate	M.A.	Ph. D.	Total
"1900 . . . . .	.1			1
1904 . . . . .	.1			1
1906 . . . . .	.1			1
1907 . . . . .	2			2
1908 . . . . .	2			2
1909 . . . . .	1			1
1910 . . . . .	3	1		4
1911 . . . . .	1			1
1912 . . . . .	2	1		3
1914 . . . . .	.5	1		1.5
1915 . . . . .	2			2
1916 . . . . .	3		1	4
1917 . . . . .	2		1	3
1918 . . . . .	6			6
1919 . . . . .	3	1		4
1920 . . . . .	5			5
1921 . . . . .	4			4
1922 . . . . .	6			6
1923 . . . . .	2			2
1924 . . . . .	4			4
1925 . . . . .	8			8
1926 . . . . .	10	1		11
1927 . . . . .	10	1		11
1928 . . . . .	9			9
1929 . . . . .	19	3		22
1930 . . . . .	12	3		15
1931 . . . . .	19	3		22
1932 . . . . .	16	6		22
1933 . . . . .	27	5		32
1934 . . . . .	22	4		26
1935 . . . . .	14	6		20
1936 . . . . .	10	5	2	17
1937 . . . . .	10	5	2	17
1938 . . . . .	15	6		21
1939 . . . . .	11	2	1	14

## "Appendix I. (Continued)

## "Negro Graduates at the University of Illinois.

## Degrees Conferred.

	Baccalaureate Graduate	M.A.	PH. D.	Total
1940 . . . . .	11	2	1	14
Total degrees	<u>289</u>	<u>58</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>352</u>
Average for 40 years	7.2	7.4		8.8

## "Appendix II.

"A Study in the Relationship of Enrollment to Graduation.  
Showing the per cent of Negroes Enrolled Who Graduate.

Year	Enrolled	Graduates	Per Cent
"1925-26	68	10	14 %
1926-27	55	11	20 %
1927-28	92	9	19 %
1929-30	138	15	17 %
1930-31	92	22	23 %
1931-32	129	32	24 %
1933-34	109	26	23 %
1934-35	104	20	19 %
1935-36	101	15	14 %
1936-37	94	17	18 %
1937-38	112	21	18 %
1938-39	102	14	14 %
1939-40	139	10	10 %
Total	<u>1,335</u>	<u>226</u>	<u>216 %</u>
Average	97	17.8	16 %

"Estimate for years not given:  $\frac{620}{1955}$

This estimate based on a conservative estimate of per cent. In the twenty-seven years not given there were 62 graduated. The estimate over thirteen years shows that 16 % of Negroes enrolled, graduated. Instead of using the 16 % as a basis if a more conservative figure were used, say 10% it would show an enrollment of 620. The actual figures are probably much higher.