

Howard University

Digital Howard @ Howard University

Mississippi Health Project

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority

1-1-1935

Mississippi Health Project Annual Report No. 2

Alpha Kappa Alpha

Follow this and additional works at: https://dh.howard.edu/aka_misshealth



Part of the [Public Health Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Alpha, Alpha Kappa, "Mississippi Health Project Annual Report No. 2" (1935). *Mississippi Health Project*.
1.
https://dh.howard.edu/aka_misshealth/1

This Report or Annual Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority at Digital Howard @ Howard University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mississippi Health Project by an authorized administrator of Digital Howard @ Howard University. For more information, please contact digitalservices@howard.edu.

Alpha Kappa Alpha



Mississippi Health Project

July, 1935

D.B. F.

① opportunity to bring in a brief way
Outline of an { experimental } arising
of A. K. A. Health program { from } inaugura
Holmes to
July 1935

② This health program formulated on an idea
originating in our Hall Bas. and was
designed to make alive our ideal of rising

③ I think interested in why we selected State Miss

Been asked

why program that right fully belongs
to girl. Particularly since
self to forgotten man.

FOREWORD

Who is there, who—set down by the whimsical chances of the Winds of Living, in the midst of educational and economic security—can remain unshaken by facts from the lives of those who flounder in the quagmire of poverty, ignorance and abject squalor?

③ When Miss Ida L. Jackson of Oakland, California, the National Basileus of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority travelled three thousand miles across America to tell the national organization in New York in December, 1934, of the woeful neglect of lower class Negroes in the deepest South, (her words cut the road for me to follow.) She challenged the entire sorority to motivate its ideal of raising the social status of the Negro. She challenged every educated Negro anywhere to offer something beyond mere discussion of the deplorable conditions of our submerged classes. *she felt*

For it is the time by the clock of civilization when the man-who-can must go down in the depths and draw the man-who-cannot out on the solid ground of better living. (And with all of the relief measures that have been inaugurated in the past few years for the masses in the United States, very little has been done for the health of the black folk in the far south.) *she felt*

It is, therefore, absolutely the duty of the Negro who has had advantages to go down to these benighted people and administer—personally—to their needs. There cannot possibly be any hope for a perceptible elevation of the racial mass otherwise. *she offered us this*

"The delicate tracery of refined superstructure must rest foursquare on unshakable foundations". *find that*

There can be no top—if the bottom is not solidly there.

⑤ It was for several reasons, the sorority selected the State of Mississippi for the first health project financed by Negroes, serviced by and for Negroes. First, the office of the U. S. Surgeon General had discovered through one of its studies of the many rural districts, that health conditions among Negroes there were the worst possible throughout the several states. Second, the study revealed a tremendous Negro population, outnumbering the whites twelve to one, and unusually poor educational facilities which necessarily augmented low health standards, because of lack of understanding or appreciation of personal, community, and social hygiene. *we knew*

⑥ Raw ignorance, unspeakable crudeness, amazing superstitions, hostility and prejudice—mountain high—limit any forward-moving program both among Negroes and whites. But ~~because~~ *and* this dire need had been realized in the summer of 1934 by those noble women who gave six weeks of volunteer service in an educational project at the Industrial school at Lexington, Mississippi, the Sorority was convinced that Mississippi should be the initial field for service.

CONTENTS

Committee Members and Staff

Introduction

Project as Planned

1. Creation of the Health Committee to work out plans and program
2. Consultation with the U. S. Public Health Service for advice on procedure
3. Correspondence with the Health Department of Mississippi, State and County
4. Approval and cooperation of the Holmes County Health Department
5. Details of the objective, organization and operation of the Project
6. Approval of the project plans by the national organization, the Sorority
7. Letters of commendation by the Senator and Congressman of Mississippi
8. Letters to Federal officials

Project as Operated

1. Advance guard work
2. Travelling clinic
3. The clinics in operation
4. Statistics

Comments

Recommendations and Conclusions

Impressions of Negro Life in Mississippi

Washington, D. C., December 1, 1935.

Miss Ida L. Jackson
Supreme Basileus
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority
Oakland, California

Madam:

I have the honor of submitting to you my report as Medical Director of the Alpha Kappa Health Project in Mississippi. It was my privilege to serve with eleven inspired women who braved the inconveniences of rural life to serve and save the Negro children of Holmes County, Mississippi.

The unusually fine work of these women was gratifying and it evoked the praise of many officials and landowners. Although limitations of time, personnel, and funds handicapped our efforts, we feel that through the realization of some part of your vision, we were more than compensated for the difficulties encountered.

I should like to express my gratitude to all who have contributed work and interest in this our first Health Service.

Respectfully submitted,

DOROTHY BOULDING-FEREBEE, M. D.,

Chairman of Health Committee,
Medical Director of Project.

THE HEALTH COMMITTEE

Dorothy Boulding-Ferebee, Chairman	Washington, D. C.
Norma Boyd	Washington, D. C.
Zenobia Gilpin	Richmond, Virginia
Irene Malvan	Washington, D. C.
Agnes Montier	Philadelphia, Pa.
Gladys Pinderhughes	Baltimore, Md.
Myra Smith	New York, N. Y.
Ethel Sutton	Washington, D. C.
Ruth Weatherless-Sample	Washington, D. C.
Georgette White	Washington, D. C.
Mary Williams	Tuskegee, Alabama

THE EXECUTIVE STAFF

Dorothy Boulding-Ferebee	Medical Director of the Project
Mary E. Williams	Public Health Nurse-in-Charge
Ella V. Payne	Dietitian
Elsie Cain	Secretarial Assistant
Constance M. Ferebee	Secretarial Assistant
Genevieve Mayle	Graduate Nurse

Clinical Assistants

Ida L. Jackson	Marion Carter	Nell Jackson
Ruth A. Handy	Erma Barbour	Alice Avery

INTRODUCTION

During the past three years, we have seen numerous changes in our social structure. All of them have been prompted by humanitarian impulses and the noble aim of helping the unfortunate. The keynote of the present administrative program is aid of the forgotten man. Work relief, subsistence homesteads, vast constructive projects, and especially the enormous volume of legislation enacted by the last Congress, comprising measures which deduct from the wealthy and relieve the poor, are revolutionizing our social and economic institutions. Even the most skeptical who shudder at the expenditures involved, can not deny the nobility of purpose which characterizes these several movements for social reform. Education, health, happiness, and security, are the proclaimed birthright of every American. We are indeed, living in a remarkable age!

Every American! Does that include the American Negro, usually the most unfortunate and often the most completely forgotten man? Theoretically, yes. Actually, there are two primary obstacles to the execution of these Utopian projects among Negroes. First, we have the influences of local race prejudice and discrimination, which militate against them especially in the Southern States where, although their need is the greatest, their share of the proposed benefits will probably be the least. Then, there is the deplorable lack of initiative and organization among the Negroes themselves, many of whom are still waiting for donations from benefactors or hoping in vain that their own leaders, the special advisers and experts, will accomplish something for them. We could do little about the prejudice, but we felt we could do something about the organization of Negroes to help Negroes. We could start to till the soil most ready for our cultivation.

Hence, realizing the unfortunate condition and the pathetic outlook of the majority of American Negroes, the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority inspired and led by its grand basileus, Miss Ida L. Jackson, to whose rare vision and insight we owe the idea of the project has conducted during the summer of 1935, a significant program of pioneer work in public health among the Negroes of Holmes County, Mississippi, under the professional leadership of Dorothy Boulding-Ferebee, M. D.

THE PROJECT AS PLANNED

Assisted by a Health Committee of ten lay and professional women, and advised in an interview and correspondence with Dr. Roscoe C. Brown, Director of the National Negro Health Movement, U. S. Public Health Service, concerning the procedure in initiating the project, Dr. Boulding-Ferebee, chairman of the Committee, sent the following letter to Miss Mary D. Osborne, Director of Public Health Nursing, Mississippi State Board of Health.

March 7, 1935.

My dear Miss Osborne:

I am informed by Dr. Roscoe C. Brown, Director of National Negro Health Movement, U. S. Public Health Service, that Holmes County has participated in the National Health Week Movement, and, as in most communities, there is a need for a more general understanding and use of health measures and service.

Because of the position of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, which I represent, an organization of Negro college women, and of its desire to help less fortunate people in raising standards of health in general, we have elected Holmes County to carry on a project in health. Fortunately, these women, besides having a real public

State Dept, referred County Dept, County local dist: Desire, organization, purpose appropriation, asked for suggestions most

spirit with the desire to do something worthwhile in a small community, have appropriated a limited sum of money for this Health project.

Some of our Alpha Kappa Alpha women have served as teachers in the summer at Lexington, Mississippi. We feel that a program of health as an adjunct to that teaching job, would be a commendable undertaking.

Will you kindly advise me to what extent your department, through its public health nurses, would cooperate with our effort of bringing the community more help in better health?

I should greatly appreciate any suggestion you may offer regarding the most urgent health need among the Negroes of that district. As we are anxious to formulate plans by April 1, 1935, I should be glad to hear from you at your earliest convenience.

Very truly yours,

DOROTHY BOULDING-FEREBEE, M. D.,

Medical Director of the Project.

This letter was referred to Dr. C. J. Vaughn, Holmes County Health Officer, who suggested that "a special project be inaugurated in cooperation with Special Child Health Conferences to immunize preschool children against diphtheria and smallpox." Subsequent correspondence concerning the material and personnel available, revealed a splendid spirit of cooperation on the part of state officials.

The detailed plan of the project follows:

THE HEALTH PROJECT OF THE ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA SORORITY

The Objective

To carry medical service, its instruction and understanding, to communities where the need is great. The first project is to be an experiment in cooperative community service between the Sorority, the local profession and the official Health Department.

The Location

Lexington, Holmes County, Mississippi, has been selected for the initial health project, as an adjunct to the Sorority's successful educational program at Saints Industrial School, in the summer of 1934, which had the approval and commendation of the State Department of Education in Mississippi.

The People

In this rural farm district, there are approximately 24,000 Negroes, who need help in raising the level of health standards.

The Vision

During the summer of 1934, when five of our Alpha Kappa Alpha women contributed their time and services to a summer school project in Lexington, the happy thought occurred to them as a result of their teaching experience, that a project in health might be attempted; a kind of medical field service begun here and gradually extending itself to other equally deserving localities.

7

They say

And why not

needed

9

and extensive

and before this committee

8 Committee worked 5 1/2 mo. on plans & surveys + addressing ourselves to securing an invitation into Miss. Proper procedure paramount.

The idea was accepted at once by the national organization, which voted to finance the project, and which created the Health Committee composed of ten members and a chairman, both lay and professional sorors, charging them with the responsibility of setting up and operating the Health Project.

The Emphasis of the Program

The Health Committee agreed that a general medical service with a conservation health program would meet some of the needs of these people, but a field service on a limited scale should be concentrated on a definite activity. In order to decide where the emphasis should be placed, a questionnaire was circulated among the members of the sorority, asking whether the project should be focused on children, adults or on general medical service. The decision was for a program of child health.

After consultation with the Medical Officer of Lexington, Mississippi, as to the most urgent need among the children, the emphasis of the activity was immediately fixed on protection of at least three thousand children under the age of seven against diphtheria and smallpox. *

The Project as Planned

The project is based on a plan of a community-wide immunization program against diphtheria and smallpox, aiming to reach approximately three thousand children under the age of seven, through clinics with headquarters at the Industrial School at Lexington, staffed by volunteer women physicians of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, assisted by public health nurses, and staff members of the Holmes County Health Department.

Until recent years, diphtheria has been one of the scourges of child life. With the discovery of antitoxin, and more recently of toxoid, however, its ravages have been materially reduced, yet its death rate is still too high. The highest mortality occurs among children of the preschool age, whose parents have not yet learned the value of immunization. The protection offered by smallpox vaccine is more generally understood and needs no comment.

The Clinics

The Clinics with headquarters at the Industrial School are to operate daily during six weeks of July and August. In the evening, the clinic rooms are to be used for Health Conferences, talks on foods, diets and general child care. The adults and parents of the county are especially urged to attend these conferences, where physicians, public health nurses and dietitians will give lectures and demonstrations.

The Personnel of the Clinic

— 12 staff

The Medical Director of the Project

Volunteer Women Physicians of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority

One full time Public Health Nurse, loaned by the Tuskegee Institute, Ala.

Two part time Public Health Nurses, loaned by the Holmes County Health Department

Six clerical assistants

Operation of the Clinic

The entire service is to be conducted under strict aseptic conditions, with freshly prepared biologicals approved by the County Health Department. The inoculations are to be made by qualified physicians and nurses who thoroughly understand the technique and the results to be obtained.

*carefully scrutinized
admirably criticized*

Schedule of Service

Date—From July 8 to August 16, 1935.

Time—Daily from 9 a. m. to 4 p. m., five days of the week and until noon on Saturdays.

Age—All children under the age of seven who have not been protected against these two diseases, are to be carried to the districts where the clinics are set up.

Place—The Saints Industrial School, Lexington, has offered space as headquarters for the medical clinic.

District—All Holmes County is to be divided into five districts, numbered from one to five. The children of each district are to come twice to the clinic of their district, once for diphtheria inoculation and smallpox vaccination, and once a week later for check-up. Each child will be given instructions as to the day of the return visit.

The Records

Each child inoculated will have a complete record card to be filed with the County Health Officer, as a part of the official record, while the duplicate card made by volunteer clerical assistants of the Sorority will be retained as a part of the final report of the committee to the organization.

The Duties of the Committee

To complete all arrangements for activities of the program, as

Preparing a detailed plan of procedure

Preparing a budget of estimated costs

Providing physicians and nurses to conduct the clinic

Providing all the biological and medical materials needed

Dividing the area into districts and arranging the clinic schedule

Selecting and assigning volunteers to make home visits to reach the children

Arranging for the transportation of children to and from clinics

To conduct an educational campaign to create community wide interest in the project, by

Newspaper publicity

Prepared statements for churches and adult groups in Lexington

Announcements to schools and instructions to home visitors

To establish and secure approval of all official departments, with a spirit of cooperation and friendly relationship

To supervise and direct the project, with success and service as its goal

This plan was endorsed by the Mississippi Congressmen, who recommended it to the U. S. Surgeon General. Their letters of endorsement follow:

UNITED STATES SENATE

Committee on Finance

June 6, 1935.

Surgeon General Hugh S. Cumming,
Bureau of the Public Health Service,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Doctor Cumming:

I understand that the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, through Doctor Dorothy Boulding-Ferebee of Washington, D. C., has inaugurated a project in Holmes County, Mississippi, and has been in touch with Doctor C. J. Vaughn, Director of the Health Department in Holmes County, Mississippi. The project selected by Doctor Vaughn and the Sorority is to inoculate the colored children of the County against Diphtheria and Smallpox. I am glad to call your attention to this matter and to express the hope that the Public Health Department may cooperate in this unselfish program.

Very truly yours,

PAT HARRISON,
Miss. Chairman.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

June 6, 1935.

Dr. Hugh S. Cumming
Surgeon General
Washington, D. C.

Dear Dr. Cumming:

I am advised that Dr. Dorothy Boulding-Ferebee, of Washington, D. C., through the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, has inaugurated a project that is approved by the Health Department of Holmes County, Mississippi to increase the health conditions and reduce the death rate among the children of the county, with particular reference to immunizing against diphtheria and smallpox.

I commend this matter to your careful consideration.

Very sincerely,

WILL M. WHITTINGTON,
Third District, Mississippi.

The following letter to the Surgeon General, Dr. Hugh S. Cumming, and a similar one to the Secretary of Labor, Miss Frances Perkins, attempted to link the project with federal relief funds and the Social Security Act.

Surgeon General Hugh S. Cumming
Bureau of the Public Health Service
Washington, D. C.

Dear Doctor Cumming:

I submit herewith the details of a project that has been inaugurated by the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, a national organization of about eighteen hundred college women from practically every

state in the Union, in keeping with its program of doing some constructive piece of work among Negroes.

It occurs to this committee that here is a demonstration which should interest all counties that have large Negro population with inherent serious problems of adequate health service for this group of people.

We understand that Federal funds are available for the promotion of this and similar projects under the Work Relief Bill, providing for the immediate employment of qualified white collar workers, professional and otherwise.

By utilizing the information and experience of this demonstration, and the results of services rendered by persons employed under the Work Relief Bill, these counties might be prepared for the most comprehensive and efficient use of monies which will be made available under the pending Social Security Legislation.

I am respectfully submitting copies of the project, correspondence of the health authorities of Mississippi, and letters of commendation from Senator Harrison and Congressman Whittington.

Because of the unusual significance of this project to begin on July 8, as related to the health of the Negro, I should be glad to have an early conference with you to consider the suggestions made in this letter.

Very respectfully yours,

DOROTHY BOULDING-FEREBEE,
Chairman of Health Committee,
Medical Director of Project.

1809 Second Street N. W.
Washington, D. C.

The reply suggested an interview with Assistant Surgeon General C. E. Waller, which resulted in this letter to Dr. Felix J. Underwood, State Health Officer of Mississippi:

TREASURY DEPARTMENT

Public Health Service
Washington

June 25, 1935.

Dr. Felix J. Underwood,
State Health Officer,
Jackson, Mississippi

Dear Doctor Underwood:

I am writing in regard to the health project sponsored by the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and about to be inaugurated in Holmes County, Mississippi, under the direction of Dr. Dorothy Boulding-Ferebee.

The proposed project, which has the endorsement of Senator Harrison and Representative Whittington of Mississippi, appears to possess merit and deserves encouragement.

If the proposed project meets with your approval, it may be possible for the State department of health to afford some financial aid when the Social Security Act appropriations become avail-

Not so much interest in immediate success
as in making a demonstration of the practical
& feasibility of operation of such projects

(12) Regret lack of time to send detailed plans
is operative, since in the light of events that
followed - they were useless.

able. I also suggest the possibility of affording assistance in the
event that a nurse work-relief project is set up in your State.

By direction of the Surgeon General,

Respectfully,

C. E. WALLER,

Assistant Surgeon General,

Domestic Quarantine Division.

THE PROJECT AS OPERATED

(13) The clinic in operation was not the usual type where staff members,
comfortably situated, have the ultimate in every scientific convenience
at their beck and call. Because of the unusual circumstances in Miss-
issippi, we found it necessary to abandon our clinic headquarters in
Lexington. We had to conduct a travelling clinic in order to reach the
contemplated number of children. For these little black children of
Mississippi are literally living in a state of peonage. Bound to the
plantations which they cannot leave except by permission of landlords
and overseers, these children could not even come to us in search of
health. We were forced to seek permission to carry it to them. Be-
cause of the expense of travel in the country, and of our limited num-
ber of health workers, we were forced to double the staff by importuning
the summer school teachers to act as clerical and clinical assistants,
and to commandeer the six available cars on the grounds to transport
the medicals, linens, and vacuum ice boxes for preserving the biologicals.
In the early morning hours, the staff packed its clinical material, stacked
the cars, and often covered a hundred miles a day through dust, dirt,
broiling sun and bad roads.

The clinics were improvised under trees, in old school buildings and
in weather-beaten churches, where the clerical assistants made records
of the personal histories of the children, who were then prepared by
the clinical assistants for the immunizations. Our technique made use
of the simultaneous injection method for the two diseases. We employed
the multiple puncture method for smallpox, wiping away the surplus
vaccine, and the newly evolved precipitated form of toxoid for diph-
theria, which has a distinctly increased power of immunization with
almost negligible reactions and requires but a single injection. We
found the multiple method practical and effective, eliminating the diffi-
culty in securing children for successive injections.

STATISTICS

The statistics of all clinics for the three weeks are as follows:

Total doses administered	5000
Toxoid doses	2040
Vaccine doses, including repeats	2960
Total attendance	2667
Daily clinic attendance	150 to 240
Number physical examinations	215
Number adults treated	22
Number children already vaccinated	107
Number pieces of health literature distributed	6800
Combined mileage of all cars in Holmes County	5324
Combined mileage of all cars to and from Miss.	17,780
(approximately ¾ distance around earth)	

States represented by staff members:

Alabama, California, District of Columbia, Missouri, New
York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia.

COMMENTS

(14) The project has drawn comment from many influential citizens
throughout the country, a few of whom we shall quote:

Dr. C. J. Vaughn, Medical Health Officer Holmes County, Mississippi:

The health project as planned was a very extensive one, and I
feel that you can consider it as having been conducted in perfect
harmony with all the local agencies; that the sorority has, through
its volunteer workers, performed the first organized health activi-
ties for colored people by their own race and that the results ob-
tained far exceed the expenditures. There are certain results which
have been obtained by this project which can be justly called by-
products. The lasting influence resulting from the educational work
performed will, in my opinion, pave the way for improvement of
the general public health.

I should like to again assure you of the sincere appreciation of
the Mississippi State Board of Health, the Holmes County Health
Department, and the influential citizens of Holmes County both
white and colored for the splendid piece of health work done by the
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority among the colored population of
Holmes County during the period of July, 1935.

Dr. G. G. Ash, one of the oldest practitioners in Holmes County, Miss.:

I fully realize the need of this noble work, and am sure every
member of this organization is doing, a very wonderful work among
the colored people. I have no doubt that this work will save the
lives of many, many of your people in this community, because this
is the first time a work of this kind has been done in this com-
munity exclusively through the aid, financially and personally by
your own race for its own, and I think the time is at hand, when
there should be a great deal more of this noble work by the leaders
of your organizations. The women who are doing this noble work
cannot be commended too highly.

Dr. F. D. Patterson, President, Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute,
Tuskegee, Ala.:

The improvement of health among the Negro people of America
is one of the most pressing problems which confronts us today.
I therefore feel that it is not only worth while, but highly desirable
that your organization representing Negro college women should
get solidly behind an effort to improve the health situation among
rural Negroes. It goes without saying that the wisdom of your
organization would enlist the active cooperation of medical talent
both within and outside of your group in order to most effectively
and ethically obtain your objectives. I therefore not only endorse
the health project of your organization, but heartily congratulate
the organization on the wise choice of such a practical and import-
ant objective.

Feel achieved great good
and success fully demon-
strates a highly accom-
plished service

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We believe that this experience alone, was a positive justification of the constitutional ideal of the Sorority, which is to lift the social status of the race. We believe, further, that other Greek Letter organizations have ideals of this same calibre which could and should be motivated for the levelling of the masses. Through solidarity and the wholehearted participation of educated Negroes, we can "Give back the upward looking and the light" to those of us who still walk in the deepest shadows of the ignorance of living.

Some one has said that a race moves forward on the feet of its children. The one great hope for the Negro is the mental and physical improvement of its children, through the wise placement of our efforts with child health movements. ~~Our~~ Our experiment in Mississippi is worthy of emulation, we believe, by the more fortunate Negroes through public health programs in that state and elsewhere. Under existing conditions of economic pressure, where the problems of public health become aggravated among those who are in the greatest need, the efficient, well-organized, thoroughly united and most unselfish cooperative activity on the part of all groups of Negro leaders is an urgent necessity.

Two deep-rooted facts dominate the scale of impression which followed us home after our work in Mississippi. First, the masses of the Negroes are pitifully in need by reason of their physical and mental handicaps and due to the extreme domination of the ruling classes. Second, the enlightened Negroes—everywhere and with no exceptions—must go down, side by side with the humblest, blackest, "distorted and soul-quenched" Negro serf and elevated him by actual contact.

And this contact will accomplish two important things at once. It will bring, primarily, direct and sure help to the Negro—by the Negro. Then too, it will permit those who hold the whip hand in these areas to see that the Negro race is as variegated as any other race of human beings. They will see a type of Negro vastly different from those whom they already know—one that is ready and well qualified to aid—willingly—the less fortunate members of the race. We therefore, recommend

1. That the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority perpetuate an annual child health project in some neglected southern state.
2. That for the year 1936, a similar immunization program against diphtheria and smallpox, be carried on in the same or a different state, in order to make the best use of materials on hand.
3. That the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority appoint a legal committee to follow up the possible Federal and state affiliations as outlined to the U. S. Public Health Service.
4. That Bi-annual Sorority scholarships be established for study of health and economic problems of the south, with a view towards achieving solutions.
5. That a copy of the report be sent to each Greek Letter organization, accompanied by an invitation to join the spirit of the movement for racial betterment by individual or joint activities in the deep south.
6. That a poll of the membership of all Greek Letter organizations be made to ascertain the organized strength of these bodies for influence and prestige in joint projects.

Only an exhaustive follow-up program which will leave no fertile field neglected and untilled, can make of this tiny bit of leaven—the primary project of 1935 in Holmes County, Mississippi—an opening wedge in genuine racial uplift.

APPENDIX

IMPRESSIONS OF NEGRO LIVING IN MISSISSIPPI

Who is there, who—set down by the whimsical chances of the Winds of Living, in the midst of educational and economic security—can remain unshaken by the facts from the lives of those who flounder in the quagmire of poverty, ignorance and abject squalor.

The entire county where we worked is a silent but powerful witness of decay and misery. Weather-beaten shacks, ratty and treacherous dirt roads, impassable dilapidated wooden bridges that creak and sway beneath the weight of weary travellers—all contribute to the general appearance of neglect and want. One sees none of the traditional Southern mansions, the palatial ancestral homes. There is only cotton, cotton—long unending stretches of the great cloth plant—the only thing apparently that will grow under the blaze of a torturing sun, blistering relentlessly every living thing. Only the cotton blooms—pink, lavender and white—emerge in splendor, the one beautiful, vital thing in this apparently forgotten land.

Is it little wonder that a people living in this stifling, consuming heat seem lethargic, drugged. Truly they are, for the most part, a saddened, defeated, submissive lot. Illiterate, helpless, they present an apathetic picture as they start from fields and doorways with expressions at once stupid, vacant and void of hope. The children, diseased, deformed, aged and wizened all too soon, return no smiles to one's eager gaze. They, too, are slow, dejected. There is no fun, no mischievous selfishness, no carefree childish airs in this region where play is a lost art.

Most of the inhabitants of the county are bound to the plantations on which they live, forming groups from four to eight hundred Negroes. These groups are operated independently each owner doing quite as he pleases with his own Negroes. The men are tenant farmers, tilling the soil and planting the crops of cotton with the aid of the entire family, including even the smallest child, who may be just big enough to hold a hoe. A family may never leave a plantation without the consent of the owner. If ever it does migrate, they may take nothing from the shack, not even the live stock.

Some owners allow one-room schools on the grounds. These are in a dilapidated condition and they censor very carefully what the Negro rural teacher offers. She may teach the art of planting and the care of the fields. She may teach how to build a house or repair steps, but she may not teach either children or adults how to keep a receipt or how to compute their earnings and their share of the produce.

Every plantation has its commissary where everything the Negroes wear or eat or own, must be bought. The limited variety of foodstuffs available makes the physical condition of the Negroes a pitiful sight. Skin diseases, deformed bones, sore eyes, malnourished little bodies are mute evidences of deficiency diseases wholly due to dietary errors. The commissaries all boast of salt, meal, fat back, grits, flour and sugar, so that the diet daily and yearly is corn bread and fat back, grits and gravy. Coarse, rough clothing and occasionally shoes, are bought.

As these articles are purchased, a certain amount is deducted by the overseer or rider, from the tenant farmers' wages, so that, through exorbitant prices, and unchallenged accounts, at the end of the year, when

the crops are sold and paid for, the Negro instead of receiving the wages in money is often in debt to the plantation. From one year to another, he neither sees nor handles a five cent piece. It is easy to see the utter futility of his hoping to leave such a system. Thus the Negro seems almost resigned to his predicament, trapped, hopeless, alone.

And what of the heart-sickening life and fundamental tragedies of our people in Mississippi? In all my travels I heard no lifting of the sad, fate-loaded voices in work-songs. There were no cheerful choruses sweeping across the plantations as the crops were tended daily. Only on Sundays—through the only medium they know for unfolding their cramped and crushed souls—do these lowly people sing with an unbelievable fervor and melody their crude songs of sorrow, affliction, of doubt and tremendous faith.

And it is well that they can burst out into song, can scream, can cry, and can pour out the deepest emotion of their pent-up souls in their churches.

For when once the misery—damned up—has poured across the threshold of wild expression, they settle back—empty—vacuous—blank to fill up once more.

The black faces of Mississippi are empty, vacuous, blank.

16 I say again—it is the hour by the clock of civilization when a ladder of hope and help must be let down from the heaven of social security to these black men who still wallow in abject debasement.

It is to the educated Negro upon whom has fallen the blessings of good training, the ordinary elements of clean, decent living, a true knowledge of the freedom of the soul, it is to him that these black masses look. He can go back to the base of black life in this country. He can start with a verse of an old spiritual:

"I know my robe's gonna fit me well!

I tried it on at the gates of hell!"

Is he going to gather his robes smugly around him, cloak himself with a fine lathering of materialistic show or is he really going to prove that his robe fits him?

Is he going to extend his good beyond himself to cover the wretched nakedness of those who walk—barren and alone—in Mississippi—in all the black belts of the rural districts of the south?

They need us.

Let us go down. Let us help them.

"The delicate tracery of refined superstructure must rest foursquare on unshakeable foundations".