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Mississippi Health Project

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## Mississippi Health Project Annual Report No. 3

Alpha Kappa Alpha

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The 1936  
Mississippi Health  
Project

*In*  
BOLIVAR COUNTY

*By*  
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority

## APPRECIATION

In appreciation of her extraordinary vision and foresight, which made possible these projects, this report is gratefully dedicated to

IDA L. JACKSON

OFFICE OF THE SUPREME BASILEUS

400 Convent Avenue  
New York City

December 16, 1936.

ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA SORORITY

My dear Sorors:

As I have engaged in these projects for the past three years I am more than ever convinced that the concrete assistance, both—educational and medical—that you have given to the members of the race in Mississippi is of great value.

The cooperation of the white citizens of the South, and the hope that your presence has seemed to bring to the Negro families, is great compensation for all effort expended.

I am more than ever convinced and am again recommending, as I have from the first, that Alpha Kappa Alpha make provision for aiding in combating venereal diseases among Negroes—which I believe are the greatest evils of the race.

I heartily commend the organization for its effort towards racial and social betterment.

Sincerely yours,

IDA L. JACKSON,  
Supreme Basileus.

## FOREWORD

The Alpha Kappa Alpha Mississippi Health Project, inaugurated by our National President, Miss Ida L. Jackson of Oakland, California, was designed to meet three needs: first and primarily, that of improving Negro health in sections of the country where medical services are limited; secondly, that of creating and encouraging Negro efforts for Negroes; and, thirdly, that of stimulating a deeper sense of pride and appreciation for service programs directed to our submerged classes.

The entire South presents many opportunities to vitalize ideals of service. Our Mississippi health program, now in its second year, represents an effort to bring to less fortunate people a service conducted, financed, and administered by Negroes. Designed to make alive and motivate our constitutional ideal of raising the social status of our race, the project developed out of Miss Jackson's conviction that educated Negroes everywhere should offer something beyond a mere discussion of the widespread needs of the Negro and should interrupt academic appraisals of the benighted Negroes' problem long enough to contribute actively to a real solution of the problems.

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## THE HEALTH STAFF

Dorothy Boulding-Ferebee, M.D.	Medical Director of Project
Mary E. Williams, R. N.	Public Health Worker in Charge
Bessie E. Cobbs	Graduate Nurse
Melissa Blair	Graduate Nurse
David J. Brown	Clinical Assistant
Marjorie Holloman	Clinical Assistant
Constance Ferebee	Clinical Assistant
Ruth A. Handy	Supreme Grammateus
Ida L. Jackson	Supreme Basileus

## THE PROJECT

### Objective

To conduct for children and adults a health service in preventive medicine, specifically limited to diphtheria, smallpox and malaria in the delta section of the state of Mississippi.

### Section of Location

The choice of county depended upon two factors: one, a county the health department of which had most need of our supplementary service, and two, a county which offered facilities for the housing of our health staff.

### Program

The health service provided for approximately 3000 doses each for immunization against diphtheria and smallpox, and for the treatment of active malaria.

The clinics of the movable type were held in towns and on plantations daily from August 30 to September 2, 1936, and in all clinics a socio-economic-health record was made for each patient.

The complete stock of medicinals and biologics, as well as all needed materials were supplied by the Sorority.

### Organization of the Project

Contacts with the United States Public Health Service, endorsement by Senator Pat Harrison, and the State Department of Health at Jackson, Mississippi, brought the desired invitation to Bolivar County, Mississippi, in which we worked. The County Health Officer, Dr. R. D. Dewryder was most cordial to and cooperative with the health staff.

### Headquarters

We were fortunate in having as our headquarters this year, the little Negro town of Mound Bayou, which with a population of 800 and embracing about 30,000 acres, was founded in 1887 by Isaiah T. Montgomery and Benjamin Green. It has the distinction of having a Mayor, alderman, postmaster, merchants, and populace who are members of the Negro race. They paved the way for a most cordial and cooperative relationship between us and the county landowners, and gave of their time and knowledge of the surrounding country to the promotion of our work.

### Operation of the Project

The first clinic was held in the large three story brick school building erected in 1921 in Mound Bayou, in which we began work immediately.

During the first two days more than 500 children and adults were treated. The first Sunday was spent in visiting rural churches, to stimulate community interest in the clinics.

The days' work began with interviewing the patients, and the usual routine necessary to sanitary procedures in inoculation followed. It was interesting to note how many of these families have clung to superstitions. "Charms" around the necks of the children, varying from pieces of wire, dimes, feathers, to teeth and roots—for the purpose of making teething easier. Others would not cut the hair of boys before the age of eight, believing that this prevented their talking early. Both white and colored county nurses were of great assistance and showed a fine spirit of cooperation.

### Social and Economic Factors

Two things stand out as evidence that there has been an awakening in the South that is slowly breaking the death-like grip of prejudice and ignorance.

An evidence of this is seen in the operation of the Delta Co-operative Farm managed by Sherwood Eddy and Sam Franklin. Here, thirty-one families—twelve white and nineteen Negro—are working together to make life more worth-while for each other. These families are sharecroppers who were driven out of Arkansas for their participation in the Sharecroppers Union. We visited this farm and left biologicals for the treatment of all families there, and discussed some of the problems with which they are confronted.

Another hopeful sign is the efforts at hospitalization found on Delta Pine Plantation in Scott, Mississippi. There are many objectionable and questionable features but the fact that there is a place where sharecroppers may be housed and receive treatment and care, however inadequate, is a greater evidence of humanitarianism than we found on any other plantation.

Many interesting cases passed through the clinics. Victims of infantile paralysis; twelve and thirteen year old girls with goiters; hundreds of children covered with sores, many with open lesions, lame and partially blind from syphilis and gonorrhoea; many small mal-formed children, babies with rickets due to improper diet.

Although we realize that practically everyone is aware of some of the deplorable conditions in the South, the workers in the project felt that it would be of value to present to you the findings from the socio-economic data gathered in interviews with parents.

The average income of the 384 families, who could give us data on the situation, is \$84.32 per year. Many, many families cleared nothing at all. As a matter of fact they were in debt at the end of the year. Many persons had not seen a nickel from one year's end to another. Instead of money it was reported that some plantations had a system of currency all their own. The workers were paid with a type of currency that could be only spent at the plantation store.

It must necessarily follow that such a meager income would result in poor housing facilities, undernourishment, and inability to buy the necessities that would place one above a bare subsistence level.

To the plantation worker a large family is apparently an asset. Their families are much larger than those in small towns, bringing the average size of families of both groups together to 3.6 children. The children are such an asset that many "stole children" or "outside children" as they are called there were in evidence. In fact one mother remarked, she had to get her children the best way she could! There were 8 sets of twins, one set of triplets. In the family having the triplets the mother is 33 years of age, the father 65. They have 14 children, the eldest of whom is 15 years of age. They have three sets of twins and one set of triplets.

Disease most common among them was measles. One thousand eight hundred thirty-eight children had at sometimes had measles. Malaria cases ranked very high. Mumps and chicken-pox were next highest in frequency among diseases they had at earlier ages.

Number of children who have not been affected by disease to the present time 521.

The following figures show that Bolivar County has made some attempt to combat disease:

The number that had been inoculated against malaria—110.

The number that had been inoculated against diphtheria—18.

The number that had been inoculated against smallpox—123.

In securing the data on "literacy"—there is indication that the number of illiterates is far greater than our numbers here will show.

No test was given to determine literacy standards but the subject's statement that he or she could "read and write." There is a great indication that the number that can neither read nor write is true as given and yet many who are within the group that answered "yes" to the question, might well be placed in this group of the illiterates when judged according to the present day literacy standard.

The same is true of "age and grade."

There is always the question of accuracy of age where there is no birth certificate, and the inability of some parents to remember the exact age of their children.

The children of school age, and attending school in towns show a lower age for grade than those on plantations. This can be explained in the fact that schools are fewer on the plantations, the school year, however short in these towns is shorter on the plantations and the teachers are as a rule less prepared for the job.

There are 24,000 children (Negro) of school age in Bolivar County. The school in Mound Bayou is by far the best public school for Negroes in that section of the State.

There is no consolidated school for Negroes in the County, many of the schools are the places of worship for the plantation.

#### Literacy

Number of	
Women that could neither read nor write	205
Men that could neither read nor write	125
Women that could read but who could not write	408
Men that could read but could not write	323
Women that could both read and write	375
Men that could both read and write	382
Total number of girls between the ages of 1 and 18	501
Total number of boys between the ages of 1 and 18	485
Total number of girls between ages of 1 and 18 attending school	275
Total number of boys between ages of 1 and 18 attending school	425
Total number contacted of school age that were not attending school	561
Average Age for Grade (Plantation)	

Grade	Plantation	Towns
Primer	10.3	6
First	13	8
Second	13	9
Third	13.3	10.1
Fourth	11.8	11.1
Fifth	14	18.6
Sixth	13.8	13.7
Seventh		12.2
Eighth		14
Ninth		15
Tenth		16

The project, which provided for approximately 9,000 doses of biologicals for diphtheria, smallpox, and malaria, has drawn the following comments:

"I wish to express to you and through you to your Sorority and its president my appreciation for your coming to our county. You and your staff did excellent work; your technic was above criticism and your contact with the different groups most satisfactory. . . ."

R. D. DEDWYLDER, M. D.,  
Director, Bolivar County Health Department.



"In my opinion, your work here has been the most outstanding effort, on the part of any outside Negro Organization, for Negroes of Bolivar County, Mississippi. You have come to us at a time when we sorely needed you; and it is with grateful appreciation that I write you this note of thanks."

BENJAMIN A. GREEN,  
Mayor of Mound Bayou, Mississippi.

"In addition to my own personal knowledge of the valuable services you have rendered here at Mound Bayou and in Bolivar County, I have heard many of the large white landowners speak with high praise of your good work. I know I voice the sentiments of the members of our race in Bolivar County when I tell you that we feel under lasting obligation to the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. . . ."

EUGENE P. BOOZE,  
President, Mound Bayou Foundation.

"I am taking this opportunity to endorse the project and to express the hope that you and your associates will find it impossible to continue and extend the work. Seldom do we find qualified persons who are willing to make the sacrifice and to render the service, personally, that is so much needed. You and the members of your sorority are to be congratulated. . . ."

AMBROSE CALIVER,  
Specialist, Education of Negroes, Interior Department.

"I cannot say too much for your Mississippi health project. I think it is excellently reported and apparently as excellently performed. . . ."

M. O. BOUSFIELD, M. D.,  
Julius Rosenwald Fund.

"I was very much impressed with the enthusiasm and consecration which marked the activities of the Sorority in Mississippi and have no doubt that if the project is continued or a similar project inaugurated elsewhere, great good will come of it. . . ."

LEO M. FAVROT,  
General Education Board.

#### CONCLUSION

1. That because of the evidence of undernourishment and malnutrition the committee will make definite plans for the teaching of dietetics in connection with its health program.
2. That because of lack of appreciation of home gardens or inability to develop them, some provision be made for education along this line.
3. That in as much as one of the greatest handicaps that the health committee encountered in the poor housing conditions, a definite program be planned to promote better housing conditions.
4. The Alpha Kappa Alpha will endorse and recommend to the Government; the state department in Mississippi; its senators and congressmen, that the Montgomery home in Mound Bayou be established as a guest house in commemoration of the pioneer work of Isaiah T. Montgomery.
5. That all factors being considered, the county most in need of this service will be used as a base for the health project for 1937.



# NOTICE!

## Colored Health Clinics

### Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Health Committee

*Bolivar County Health Department Cooperating*

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Dr. Dorothy Boulding Ferebee of Washington, D. C., and her trained staff of colored assistants will hold clinics for immunization of children and for other public health work at the places and on the dates given below. The names of the places indicate schools or churches. All clinics will open at 9 o'clock each morning.

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### Everyone Come to A Clinic for Health Advice

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TUESDAY, JULY 11, Mound Bayou A. M. E. Church.  
WEDNESDAY, JULY 12, Mound Bayou A. M. E. Church.  
THURSDAY, JULY 13, Rosedale Church.  
FRIDAY, JULY 14, Perthshire, Knowlton School.  
SATURDAY, July 15, Shelby, (Wooten's), Morning Star Church.  
SUNDAY, JULY 16, Open.  
MONDAY, JULY 17, Scott, Eutaw morning, V. D. Clinic afternoon.  
TUESDAY, JULY 18, Benoit, Colored School.  
WEDNESDAY, JULY 19, Choctaw, Baptist Church.  
THURSDAY, JULY 20, Dahomey, Storm's Chapel.  
FRIDAY, JULY 21, Cleveland, Peter's Rock Church.  
SATURDAY, JULY 22, Boyle, Colored School.  
SUNDAY, JULY 23, Woodbine Colored School.  
MONDAY, JULY 24, Meltonia, Angosta School, Rock of Ages Church.  
TUESDAY, JULY 25, Malvina, Forks of Bogue School.  
WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, Merigold, Colored School.  
THURSDAY, JULY 27, Shelby (west) New Mt. Olive Church.  
FRIDAY, JULY 28, Alligator, Colored School or Church.  
SATURDAY, JULY 29, Deeson, Colored School.  
SUNDAY, JULY 30, Hushpuckena, Colored School.  
MONDAY, JULY 31, Duncan, Colored School.

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**ALL COME AND BRING THE CHILDREN**

1938

# NOTICE

## COLORED PEOPLE

*Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Health Clinics*  
*Bolivar County Health Department cooperating*

*Dr. Boulding-Ferebee, of Washington, D. C., and her trained staff of colored assistants will hold clinics for immunization of children and for other public health work at the places and on the dates given below. The names of the places indicate colored schools.*

**Everybody should attend one of these clinics  
and bring the children**

Wednesday, July 20, Mound Bayou, all day.

Thursday, July 21, Elzie, morning; Woodbine, afternoon.

Friday, July 22, Cleveland, all day.

Saturday, July 23, Boyle, morning.

Sunday, July 24, Angosta.

Monday, July 25, Boyle, morning; Pilgrim's Rest, afternoon.

Tuesday, July 26, Shaw, all day.

Wednesday, July 27, Bethlehem, morning; Choctaw, afternoon.

Thursday, July 28, Duncan, morning; Alligator, afternoon.

Friday, July 29, Craig (Dr. Brooks) morning; Deeson, afternoon.

Saturday, July 30, Lasiter, morning.

Sunday, July 31, open.

Monday, August 1, Symonds, all day.

Tuesday, August 2, Pace, all day.

Wednesday, August 3, Lake Vista (Scott), morning; Eutaw, afternoon.

Thursday, August 4, Beulah, morning; Lobdell, afternoon.

**Everyone come to one of these clinics for health advice !**