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war African American Womanhood

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At least you know what you want life to give you. A career as fixed and as calmly brilliant as the North Star. The one real thing that money buys. Time. Time to do things. A house that can be delectably out of order and as easily put in order as the doll-house of “playing house” days. And, of course, a husband you can look up to without looking down on yourself.

Somehow you feel like a kitten in a sunny catnip field that sees sleek, plump brown field mice and yellow baby chicks sitting coyly, side by side, under each leaf. A desire to dash three or four ways seizes you.

That’s youth.¹

In her 1925 musing, “On Being Young—A Woman—And Colored,” Marita O. Bonner, a young Radcliffe College graduate, identified her personal and professional goals as a satisfying career, equality in heterosexual marital union, and a home that offered both the pleasure of free disorder, as well as the ease of efficient beautifying. Connecting the material to the temporal, Bonner underscored “time” as the true reward of monetary gain. Although not specifying which matters would occupy this time, Bonner rejected the domestic space as demanding her leisure hours. Despite the clarity of these goals, as well as her hopeful access to them as a young, middle-class, educated African American woman, Bonner considered her subjective desire “to dash three of four ways” as central to her youthful conflict.

Bonner’s essay not only reflected the voice of the generation of women securing the ranks of the urban, African American middle-class, but also embodied concerns surrounding definitions of the modern “race womanhood” or “New Negro” womanhood. In her essay, Bonner laments outmoded raced and gendered ideals which sharply curtailed her freedom “twice a month or twice a year” to “brea[k] away to see or hear anything in a city.” These old attitudes

were “somehow all wrong”; she suggested that women of her generation, puzzling over this problem, “went about it gently and quietly” in their efforts to discover “just what can be done.”² Like Bonner, these gendered conflicts faced groups of women from middle-class and aspirant middle-class backgrounds, whose expanding entry into colleges and universities during the 1920s and 1930s provided new opportunities for economic and professional advancement, though not necessarily social or sexual independence. As they negotiated their passage through the vibrant, cultural milieus of urban spaces, including the college campus, they encountered restrictions limiting their youthful freedom of individual movement, expression, and desire that dominated as markers of modern identity. Indeed, from the growing ranks of educated women, Harlem Renaissance writers and poets, like Bonner, were drawn to form the partial but unequal composition of what Du Bois enumerated, the “Talented Tenth.”³

Published in *The Crisis*, Bonner’s essay addressed an audience of largely educated, middle-class, African American and white liberal-minded readers. Largely associated with the vibrant movement of arts and letters known as the Harlem Renaissance, *The Crisis* was the literary journal of the National Association of Colored People, edited by the eminent race leader, W.E.B. Du Bois, and was one of the era’s most important “little magazines.”⁴ Consistently appearing in the pages of these journals were visual, literary, and social discourses on “race womanhood” or the ‘New Negro’ woman.⁵ These sets of class-based ideals, values, and responsibilities celebrated the New Negro as modern, urban, and progressive, yet simultaneously reinforced a conservative sexual ideology that was classed, gendered, and decidedly out of step, in theory at least if not in practice, with modern notions of the “New Woman.”⁶ For African American middle-class, educated women, on whom “race responsibility” would logically next fall, the older “politics of respectability” and service ran counter to the realities and possibilities of urban modern womanhood.⁷ This cohort of African American women was frequently caught between the older expectations of respectability and service, and the newer demands of modern urban womanhood that appeared to African American women, in particularly raced, classed and gendered forms.

Unlike their forerunners, young college women, most of whom were born in the first decades of the twentieth century, experienced the cultural shifts in urban living including the rise of leisure time, access to commercialized leisure spaces, and mass consumerism’s pressures and pleasures. The Nineteenth

Amendment that announced women's formal political inclusion marked 1920 as the beginning of a decade in which gender roles and sexual norms were in processes of renegotiation. As indexed by the heterosexual social practice of dating, understandings of female sexual pleasure, and touting of women's greater independence in marital relations,⁸ the modern era seemingly offered the prerequisites to African American middle-class women to access "what you want life to give you."⁹ Certainly, women from the middle-classes endured no greater burden than did working-class women; on account of their particular history as raced, classed, and gendered subjects, neither cohort of women reaped—fully, or at all—rewards of this modernization of social, sexual, and cultural values.

This essay focuses on women who attended or worked at Howard University in Washington, D.C., during the inter-war era. As one of the most prestigious historically-black co-educational institutions, Howard University provides an excellent site for the analysis of intergenerational gendered conflicts due to its mixed-sexed student body, and employment of African American administrators and educators. When studying two groups of women on the college campus, conflicting notions of modern or New Negro womanhood appeared between educators and students. The older group were college administrators and educators. Born during the late 1880s and 1890s, these women embodied the spirit of Progressive-era activism and often promoted the ideals of respectability, reform and service as characteristics defining educated women of the race.¹⁰ As administrators and educators, these women were not oblivious to the challenges confronting the older construction of race womanhood; indeed, they witnessed firsthand the resistance of younger women to the tenets of respectability. Younger women, most of whom were born in the first decades of the twentieth century, were students at colleges and universities throughout the country during the inter-war era. Complicating their college experience were cultural shifts in American urban life and lifestyles including the rise of leisure, mass consumption, and changing social and sexual mores. While generational differences, practices and beliefs marked these two groups in distinct ways, younger and older women interacted with each other on a daily basis. In their interactions with one another and within their own cohorts, these two groups helped structure the notion of modern race womanhood as an amalgam of older notions of respectability and service and newer elements of youthful leisure, mass consumption and modern, feminized heterosexuality.

University Women of the 1920s and 1930s

Between the late 1910s and 1930s, educational opportunities for African American youth grew dramatically.¹¹ Larger social, economic and demographic changes, including the mass exodus from the rural South, the rise of protest movements, and the infusion of race pride during the Harlem Renaissance facilitated the growth of an urban middle class; many from this group insisted on their children's higher education.¹² Between 1917 and 1927, African American enrolment in colleges and universities sextupled, burgeoning from 2,132 to 13,500.¹³ Accompanying this rise in college students was an increase in African American educators at institutions of higher learning.¹⁴ While *de facto* and Jim Crow segregation limited the education of African American youth, some liberal white institutions such as Oberlin, Cornell and Radcliffe played prominent roles in matriculating women of the race.¹⁵ In addition, historically black universities and colleges such as Howard, Fisk and Spelman offered physical and intellectual space for the education of African Americans.

Howard University, established by an act of Congress in 1867, has been described as the "capstone of Negro education."¹⁶ Located in Washington, D.C., in the midst of a large, African American urban population, Howard was so named for its founder General Oliver O. Howard, who also served as commissioner of the Freedman's Bureau. As historian Raymond Wolters demonstrates, by the 1920s Howard was the "only black multiversity" with a faculty numbering over 150 who trained graduate students in a wide range of disciplines beyond the liberal arts.¹⁷ Howard is central to this essay for numerous reasons, including the university's multiplicity of offerings, its status as a coeducational and prestigious historically black university, and its urban location. Unlike other universities and colleges that focused on the education of African Americans, Howard was unique in its independence from white philanthropic support. Furthermore, Howard was non-denominational despite the role of the American Missionary Association in the university's founding. As a result, students at Howard were often more able to engage in extra-curricular activities reflective of larger American culture. According to Raymond Wolters, in terms of leisure time activities, African American students at Howard often shared more in common with white college students in secular universities than they did with students of their own race who attended institutions located in the Upper and Deep South, which were more rigidly bound by conservative, religious dictates.¹⁸ Yet, as feminist scholars have shown, the white "carefree coed" who participated freely in

mass consumer culture was generally perceived as “fun, frivolous” and generally non-threatening to the dominant social order.¹⁹ The almost opposite was true for their African American counterparts.

From its inception in 1867, Howard University welcomed female students of both white and African ancestry: Howard’s first students were white girls, all of whom were daughters of the institution’s educators.²⁰ Although historically black universities like Howard appeared egalitarian, older notions of separate spheres continued to exist. For example, until the 1890s, as historian Stephanie Shaw points out, Howard women and men dined separately.²¹ Although African American women had equal access to higher education at historically black universities, their experiences differed from men partly due to gendered expectations about their roles in the African American community.

Howard students—who by 1925 numbered 2,000 or 1/6 of all African Americans in college—generally came from middle or upper class homes.²² Women of lesser economic means also attended the university during the early twentieth century, including Lucy Diggs Slowe who would later become the university’s first Dean of Women. In 1904, Slowe entered Howard aided by a scholarship and money earned from a job. As Karen Anderson notes, women like Slowe were not the norm at Howard. Indeed, when informed that young women did not usually work to support their careers at Howard, Slowe insisted that she would be the “pioneer.” In the inter-war period, Howard assisted more African American women with scholarships and part-time jobs, but this group remained a small minority.²³

Jeanne Noble’s important study of African American women’s education found that despite the initial Reconstruction-era focus on instructing African American men, by the eve of World War II, more women earned undergraduate degrees. While only 2 out of every 10 college graduates were women in 1920, that ratio increased to 4 out of 10 a decade later; by 1940, African American women surpassed men in obtaining undergraduate college degrees. In addition, Noble pointed to the movement of African American men into professions other than teaching. While men entered “preaching, dentistry, medicine, and the like,” women quickly assumed the roles of elementary and secondary school educators.²⁴ The feminization of teaching was not limited to African American women, but teaching remained one of the few professions open to them, especially for women who lived in, or returned to, the South. While many college-educated, African American women turned to elementary and

secondary school teaching, a small number moved into university and college teaching.²⁵

During the 1920s, protest and rebellion characterized the behaviour of American youth in colleges and universities throughout the country. In her pioneering study of youth culture, historian Paula Fass shows how the developing influence of peer-groups on college campuses helped fuel rebellious practices such as smoking, drinking, and dating.²⁶ In addition to these personal acts of rebellion, African American youth assumed radical new attitudes towards the older generation. As Raymond Wolters demonstrates, this radicalism was sparked by the post-World War I militancy that challenged the notion that white Americans “unerringly knew the best methods of Negro education and an insistence that black youth must be trained accordingly to principles endorsed by the black community.” While Howard was a university where African American faculty members were both visible and active, and where students remained relatively free of the countless rules characteristic of church-sponsored schools like Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, Howard “students became impatient with the remaining rules and regulations.” They protested against mandatory noon chapel attendance, the requisite singing of spirituals in church, and “compulsory military training” for Howard men. This last issue emerged as the subject of most significant protest, culminating in a week-long strike in May 1925 that successfully nullified this requirement.²⁷ Compelling university men to commit two years to military service no doubt added insult to injury by training a new generation to follow in their father’s footsteps that had earned no general esteem nor broadening of civil rights. The service of World War I African American soldiers did not win full civil rights for members of the race, and the failure to acknowledge the sacrifice of men fuelled community outrage. While the centrality of men in this debate is obvious and understandable, women’s issues did not receive the same attention and solidarity. Men’s issues were those of the community; women’s issues remained those of women.

Danger and the Dormitory

The dormitory emerged as a central site for the intergenerational gendered conflict on Howard campus. Located in the midst of a city densely populated by African Americans, the university did not provide sufficient housing for all coeds, many of whom sought accommodation elsewhere. No greater matter engaged the concern of Lucy Slowe, Howard’s Dean of Women, who saw the lack of supervision of non-resident, female students as bringing

disrepute to all Howard coeds. As a solution, Slowe fought for the construction of a woman's campus where a greater number of women could be housed.²⁸

In 1922, when Slowe accepted the appointment as Dean of Women at Howard, she became the first African American woman to hold this position. Often described as a strong and outspoken individual, Slowe's perception of her new appointment was anything but ambivalent. The role of Dean of Women as "matron" or "chaperone" was outdated, and to emphasize this, Slowe negotiated the conditions under which she accepted the Deanship. In addition to other matters related to the appointment, Slowe insisted that her appointment not require her to live on campus as had her predecessors. Slowe further asserted that "all women in charge of the girls in University shall be directly responsible to me" and that "all policies pertaining to the women in the University shall emanate from my office."²⁹

All descriptions paint Slowe as a stern, strong, outspoken woman who fought for the advancement of women at Howard. Her efforts were shaped by the Progressive-era politics of reform-oriented work, service and responsibility. Another African American woman, Mary Burrill, shared Slowe's life and home for the last fifteen years of her life, and it was neither a secretive arrangement nor a publicly lesbian partnership. No historian has fully examined the relationship between these two women, and the archival sources provide the expected silences on, as well as small glimpses into, Slowe and Burrill's life together.³⁰ Any intimate or personal correspondence to understand the relationship between these two women does not exist, at least not in the Slowe Papers at Howard. Whatever the relationship between these two women, it appeared to be accepted by the community and may be considered in the framework of "Boston Marriages" that characterized similar same-sex relationships between middle-class women during the late nineteenth century.³¹ Scholars have argued that even in 1933, when President Mordecai Johnson imposed the volatile "request" that Slowe leave her home and reside at the women's dormitories, it had little to do with her living with Burrill.³²

Historians argue that Slowe's insistence on more female dormitories should not be mistaken for a desire for greater regulation of female students. Indeed, the new Dean continually stressed the importance of self-regulation and independence, believing these to be essential attributes of modern educated womanhood.³³ Having rejected her role as Dean as either matron or chaperone, Slowe also argued for the autonomy of young college students:

In far too many of our schools women students are hampered by useless rules and regulations designed to control their conduct, but not designed to give that necessary opportunity for making independent choices without which real freedom of action cannot be developed. When a college woman cannot be trusted to go shopping without a chaperone she is not likely to develop powers of leadership.³⁴

Still, Slowe believed the university played a crucial role in instilling the skills of self-regulation among young African American women. By constructing new dormitories that accommodated greater numbers of women, Slowe hoped to foster a more tightly-knit, woman-centered space where morals, values and leadership skills would be developed within a community of women. Slowe pushed for new university regulations requiring all women, except those native to D.C., to live on campus. This change appears to have been both an attempt at greater supervision of coeds and an effort to narrow the divide between resident and non-resident women. By 1931, the new dormitories were trumpeted as a great accomplishment that “marked a beginning of a new era in the life of women students at Howard University.” Moreover, the women’s dormitories were characterized as a “joint enterprise of students and faculty” and “a means of educating students in intelligent self-direction.”³⁵ Slowe and her assistants presented the coed with the perceived responsibilities of autonomous living by demanding student participation in her own education and moral regulation. However, despite the positive assessment of both historians and of Slowe herself, the dormitory certainly curtailed the freedom of young women.

Slowe’s goal of helping women develop their own processes of self-regulation could, in her mind, work only if women were distanced from their male counterparts. In her 1932-1933 Annual Report, Slowe applauded the privacy now accorded to women by the three new dormitories. The original women’s residence, Miner Hall, was located on the main campus, and its central location attracted “criticism of the women.” Slowe declared that the less central location of the new residences eased this assault on women’s characters. Pleased with the new arrangement, Slowe stated, “it was quite a relief to get rid of the men loafers around the dormitory.” While Slowe’s assessment underscored the privacy accorded by these homosocial spheres, it also demonstrated her belief that women were

always unwilling recipients of the attention given to them by the other sex.³⁶

The new Dean was not completely oblivious to the heterosexual desires of young coeds, but she advocated for greater control of male visitors by women themselves. Arguing for a policy that restricted male visitors except when “invited or come to call,” Slowe nonetheless underscored the need for a “social center” that was “separate and distinct from the women’s residence halls.” Without creation of such space, Slowe warned, “grave problems may arise to harass those responsible for the women students, and the same conditions will obtain that were embarrassing to the women before the new dormitories were built.” Not only was the interior claimed as a homosocial environment, but Slowe also perceived the quadrangle to be an arena where women’s “freedom and privacy” would not be curtailed by “unfavorable comment” generated from their interactions with the other sex.³⁷ Slowe’s insistence on these homosocial spaces reflected a re-working of the Victorian ideology of separate spheres into the modern context, as well as her own concern over women’s moral conduct.³⁸ Additionally, Slowe understood the intermingling of the sexes as inherently dangerous when women were not in control of their own living quarters. Slowe argued for the protection of female students and the need for development of their own forms of self-regulation. The latter she could not perceive developing amidst the constant presence of men.

Problematic incidents worked to support Slowe’s efforts to secure the feminized dormitory. In the 1932-1933 Annual Report from the Assistant to the Dean of Women, Joanna Houston recalled the “unfortunate circumstances” of male infiltration of the new women’s dormitories. Ironically, the problems arose when the services of the male night watchman were discontinued. Houston reported that on two separate occasions, “a strange man was on the bedroom floor of the dormitory.” Other events recalled by Houston included a “gang of drunken men” who “insist[ed] on coming into the dormitory” late at night. According to her assessment, these events did not result from the female residents’ breach of propriety, but rather from “problems . . . from the outside.” Here, the “outside” largely referred to urban dwellers unaffiliated with the university, as well as to off-campus communities. Houston noted that the only fault attributed to female residents was their leaving open the basement door, thereby opening all residents to the “mercy of any prowler who wishes to enter.” Houston astutely recognized that some women, “who are not honorable,” may purposefully have taken advantage of the elimination of a night watchman. However,

the Assistant to the Dean seemed less concerned with chastising this conduct than with calling on the university to provide security for its residents. Houston stated, "For anyone to suggest that this is a problem of training and discipline is unthinkable in a dormitory where there is no night force at all. The only solution is proper protection, and this can be given only by a good watchman, such as we had."³⁹ The insistence on male protection coupled with the demand for woman-only spaces reinforced traditional ideologies of male protection and female chastity on the modern Howard campus. Houston's report demonstrates the persistence of Victorian gender ideologies, the problems of urban universities, as well as the financial constraints of universities during the Depression era.

The reports of Slowe and Houston were authored at a particularly troubling time for the Dean of Women and her assistants. Slowe's efforts to forge a woman's program were quashed under the pressures of economic necessity. Positions created to facilitate this woman-centered community were eliminated, including those of woman's physician, dietician and director of dormitories.⁴⁰ Along with these women's positions went that of the night watchman, and Slowe and Houston's reports must be seen partially as a protest against the dismantling of the woman's program. Perhaps some exaggeration occurred in these reports to bolster the urgency of the return of the night watchman, but it is clear that the physical distance of the women's dormitories from the main university campus was perceived as a matter of safety. While these events can also be seen as evidence of the rebellion of young women against single-sex arrangements that denied them male visitors except when deemed proper, the trope of the dangerous city framed much of the anxiety expressed by Houston. In particular, Houston blamed the design of the building and its accessibility through public streets as a major problem. Describing the combined problems of alcohol, urban nightlife, and permissive sexualities, Houston recounted unpleasant interludes with the city's working-class:

Crowds of tramp boys have molested us repeatedly in the evenings by running through the arcades, saying vulgar things back when they were asked to leave, sitting on the wall and repeating the vilest vulgarity they know and laughing in a way which is beyond my power of description, drunken tramps have strolled through the grounds at will, lingering in the arcade and calling at the doors

of women who have never lived there. Indiscreet and shameless lovers park their cars on College Street under the eaves of the dormitories and indulge in disgraceful conduct. Any passerby would think these people were our students.⁴¹

Houston's account indicates that although the physical distance from the rest of the campus provided women with privacy, it also posed imminent dangers, both real and perceived. By community standards, Howard women—mostly middle and upper class—were future wives, mothers and professionals. Their status as young women and as future exemplars of “race womanhood” demanded their fortification against scurrilous urban living. In addition, the removal of women's dormitories from the rest of the campus, while according women privacy, also necessitated the greater protection of women by men from men. Houston's account also carefully alleviated any responsibility for these events from the shoulders of the mostly middle-class female residents. The women, like Houston who lived amongst them, were presented as unfortunate victims whose space and solitude had been invaded. The actions and debauched laughter of “shameless lovers” were presented as behaviour unknown to, and unbecoming of, respectable Howard women. By representing these events as repulsive acts, Houston underscored the divide between the working-class, urban dwellers and the middle and upper class university students. In multiple ways, this division between city and campus shadowed the generational divide between older, college educators and younger, college women.

The City and The Campus

Many, though certainly not all, young, middle-class, college women embraced the city as an urban space of pleasure, leisure and consumption and worked to secure their place within it as respectable by modern standards. As noted earlier, women of divergent ethnic and racial backgrounds also challenged traditional gender roles, including notions that situated the city as a dangerous lure. But young, middle and upper-class African American women faced a particularly difficult battle in occupying the city space without censure or judgment. The historic sexualization and de-sexualization of African American women constructed the city as an exceptionally treacherous site for the loss of virtue, both real and perceived. If the dormitory offered the relative safety of university-

regulated communal living, then the city loomed large as the place most threatening to Howard coeds.⁴²

Women's movements within the city posed great concern for educators and for parents, but so did the physical journey to the D.C. campus. Inabel Burns Lindsay, who graduated from the university in 1920, recalled that even the passage from her home to Howard mandated proscribed forms of behaviour. In describing the journey from Missouri to Washington, D.C., Lindsay's account underscores the newness of the experience of going away to college. "Like every good little girl" Lindsay was cautioned not to talk to strangers—particularly not to strange men—on her train ride. However, "all thoughts of restraint were forgotten quickly" when she met a young, Howard-bound man. Describing the meeting as a pleasant interlude of friendly chatter, Lindsay speculated that she was "probably so excited seeing a good looking Negro boy that she would have forgotten all of the inhibitions and instructions." Once at Howard, Lindsay broke additional rules, this time those set by the university, when she went off "just strolling around looking at the town, down on Georgia Avenue."⁴³ Unaware of the regulations, Lindsay needed to adjust to a new world away from home. She recalled:

And I didn't know I wasn't supposed to go off the campus.

I tell you I was completely green. I'd never been in a situation like that, a place like that. I knew my own little town, I knew it was safe to stroll around the streets if you wanted to, but I didn't know how to behave on a college campus, and it wasn't until that evening . . . we were told that freshmen weren't supposed to go off the campus. But I tell you I was incredibly ignorant; I didn't know anything. So that's why I say with real truth that Howard grew me up; it was the major factor in my developing into an adult.⁴⁴

While Lindsay's recollection describes the strictures of coed living in the pre-Slowe period, Dean Slowe—or Lady Lucy as she was nicknamed by students—also imposed additional restrictions on women's movements. The recollections of social worker Ophelia Settle Egypt, who attended Howard between 1921 and 1925, help define the days prior to Dean Slowe as well as the early period of Slowe's administration. Egypt recalled that the "first thing [Dean

Slowe] did was to stop compulsory prayers before breakfast . . . of course, we didn't mind . . . we were glad to have the option." However, women students did not appreciate all of the changes initiated by the new Dean; one unpopular transformation infringed upon the women's movements past the university gates. As Egypt recalled:

The next thing she changed, we didn't like at all. She stopped us from going off campus with the football team. We could only follow them to the gate, but she said it wasn't ladylike to be marching down Georgia Avenue yelling like Indians . . . and she wasn't so keen on our being cheerleaders. She tolerated it, but she didn't like it.⁴⁵

Prior to Dean Slowe, Egypt recalled being chaperoned everywhere, even to church. But despite that supervision, female students "could be cheerleaders at the ball games, and...could follow the team all the way down to Georgia Avenue singing and cheering!"⁴⁶ The athleticism of the event must not have been the problem for Slowe, who was an award-winning tennis enthusiast.⁴⁷ Perhaps the issue here was the sideline and supportive nature of women's cheerleading, or perhaps more obvious: Slowe simply abhorred the lack of respectability associated with women's occupation of the streets as "primitive" in her description of "yelling like Indians."

The association of the city with racialized behaviours not befitting respectable womanhood looms large in the above recollection. While chaperonage eased somewhat and morning prayers became optional, proscriptions on women's movements and behaviour past the gates of the university grew more stringent as the enticement of the city grew more palpable among African American youth. In this sense, the changes instituted by Dean Slowe were partially emancipatory and partially confining. Advocating self-regulation through the decrease in chaperonage, Slowe still believed that certain behaviours transgressed proper feminine roles. No doubt, the trope of urban dangers helped shape Slowe's view of the city as a threatening place for women, but by the 1920s and 1930s, the city's "danger" was becoming less obvious, especially to the youth of this generation. Coupled with the appeal of cheap amusements and avid consumerism was the growing availability of leisure. Similar to other middle-class youth, young African Americans increasingly

needed to demonstrate their class achievement in their leisure-time activities.

“The Worthy Use of Leisure”

Throughout the 1920s, leisure as a cultural practice indicative of middle-class status emerged as an index of social success that swept America as a whole. Among youth, leisure exemplified both age and economic status; among African American youth, leisure-time activities underscored their successful attainment of the growing middle-class national ideal. Academic instruction may have been the primary goal of the modern university, but educators and administrators like Dean Slowe could not ignore the growing importance of helping students manage their non-academic pursuits.

Like other reform-minded women of her generation, Dean Slowe viewed the rise of heterosocial leisure and amusements with apprehension. With disdain, Slowe noted that the rise of leisure and the proliferation of what Kathy Peiss nicely defines as “cheap amusements” transformed college education from the serious pursuit of intellectual growth into the trendy act of “going to college.”⁴⁸ In a 1937 article in *Opportunity*, Slowe commented,

‘Going to college’ has become the vogue in America where more young women are enrolled than in any other country in the world. One often wonders whether or not the hundreds of young women who enter our various colleges today are as serious-minded in purpose as those early pioneers in college education. Judging college women from popular ideas about them, promoted chiefly through motion pictures and light fiction, the young women in college are there solely to have a good time and to outwit college authorities.⁴⁹

As a woman from the generation for whom education was hard-won on raced, gendered and classed terms, Slowe was understandably troubled by these attitudes.

Yet Slowe determined, there were “those who come for what they call ‘college life,’ and those who still come for a serious intellectual experience.” “College life” was a distorted view of the real purpose of education; it encompassed the fun college lifestyle promoted in popular movies. If colleges were “properly organized,”

Slowe argued, then “all who come should . . . receive some benefit—social and intellectual—from their stay.”⁵⁰ Also provoking anxiety for Slowe was women’s easy access to “vulgar, cheap and tawdry entertainments which form such a large part of our public entertainment” that compelled the university to provide proper guidance for student’s “worthy use of leisure.”⁵¹

It was not merely the existence of leisure, but its sheer abundance that troubled the Dean of Women. Arguing that “never in the history of mankind has there been as much leisure for every individual as there is today,” Slowe considered it crucial to train female students on how to manage their leisure activities. The most effective training, focused on self-governance would ensure the growth of productive citizenship. Slowe reasoned: “Whether or not Negro college women will be able to take their places as leaders in their communities depends, to a large *extent*, upon the opportunities offered them for exercising initiative, independence and self-direction while in college.”⁵² Reflecting on older notions of “race womanhood,” Slowe believed that service remained the top priority for educated women.

There was also another practical reason to stress the importance of self-governance. Slowe rejected some of the traditional rules of chaperonage, believing that women students were so “shielded and protected . . . that the most intimate phases of their lives were invaded by rules and regulations.” While Slowe introduced new proscriptions, she maintained that students should have some say in their own governance, reasoning that this way, students were less likely to violate these regulations. No record on the part of students exists to corroborate if this form of self-regulation worked, but one 1933 report from the Assistant to the Dean of Women demonstrates that female students were not always interested in such noble tasks. Houston lamented: “when a girl objects to the part we wish her to take up in a program for her development because she does not want to give up a few trivial dates, she does not at first listen kindly to any story of deferred values.” Here, Houston dismissed as frivolous the young woman’s interest in heterosexual dating while lamenting that arguments advocating on delayed pleasure—whether sexual or not—were sometimes futile. This impatience of youth, Houston concluded, was not merely an annoyance, but identified more serious concerns as “when a girl finds that her attitude towards the other sex does not bring her the perfectly natural and proper association with the men she admires, her case becomes more an immediate problem, often made more serious because the girl really wishes to do the right

thing.” Apparently discussing the intimacies of heterosexual dating and the assumed naivete of women in negotiating sexual matters, Houston granted little agency to women’s sexual desires, behaviours, and responses. Houston’s account underscores the notion that even the disinterested and frivolous student—the type who attended Howard in pursuit of the “college life”—was really, after all, a wholesome woman. Recognizing the generational divide, Houston noted that “when a girl is convinced that all spiritual values are out of date, . . . we can do nothing toward expanding what is fine and noble in her until we can reconvince her.” Listing twenty-five options for helping students reclaim their “fine and noble” womanhood, Houston confirmed Slowe’s perception that the most essential project was teaching young women how to spend their leisure time.⁵³

The campus Women’s League, designed to function as a “clearing house for problems of women,” was one worthy use of leisure time.⁵⁴ All women registered at Howard automatically became members, and by 1937 the Women’s League consisted of almost 1,000 women.⁵⁵ *The Hilltop*, Howard’s student newspaper, regularly recorded the events of the Slowe-inspired organization, which included weekly meetings, an annual Women’s Dinner, and the initiation of a loan fund for financially-strapped women students.⁵⁶ As described by Slowe, the Women’s League “promotes and supervises a number of morale-building activities designed to increase fellowship and intelligent leadership on the campus and in the community.”⁵⁷ Dean Slowe’s organization of women’s meetings influenced many young Howard women, including Ophelia Settle Egypt, who reflected on the “Women’s Club” started by Slowe. “She got us really interested in being women and demanding our rights as women . . . You know everything was very male-tailored until Lucy Slowe came.”⁵⁸

But not all women were keen on the Women’s League, at least not in regularly attending the weekly Friday meetings where members debated topics such as “Dependency of Modern Woman for Man.”⁵⁹ Indeed, the February 1930 and November 1934 issues of *The Hilltop* noted the group’s dwindling size and the “inertia of women on campus.”⁶⁰ The problem of “how to secure the attention and interest of even a representative body of the women” was a serious concern for both Slowe and Houston, whose requests for suggested discussion topics from the women yielded little response. *The Hilltop* noted that “the cabinet of the Women’s League” believed the cause of the poor showing at weekly meetings “may not be altogether a lack of interest . . . among women.” In an effort to

bolster attendance and participation, a questionnaire was devised and circulated asking women to identify their areas of interest. The article appealed to women's sense of duty and obligation, which was apparently on the wane.

There are problems in which the women and the women alone should be vitally interested, and it is in order that some solution may be found for these problems that these meetings are held. In many other colleges, the Women's League is a power—not a power through which the contentions may be carried on, but a power through which necessary projects may be realized.⁶¹

The comparison to other universities and colleges was no doubt intended to inspire school spirit and pride. Students at Howard were expected to fill a role in the community where women's service was expected, and sometimes essential. Younger women like the one(s) who wrote this column still espoused reasoning that reflected Progressive-era ideals. More than likely, Dean Slowe or Joanna Houston played some supervisory role when the "cabinet" drafted or approved such write-ups, but the column also shows that younger, college women also internalized and articulated the tenets of service, committee work and women's responsibility. The aim of these organizations was not, as the above excerpt expresses, about "contentions," but rather that women's organizations should focus on service-oriented "projects."⁶² Other women-centred student-led organizations include sororities that, on Howard campus, played an important social function while emphasizing service as an essential goal. Despite the philanthropic mandate of sororities, these organizations were often viewed as bastions of privilege and exclusion.⁶³ Less lofty ideals were also advanced by the Women's League that, in response to the student body, helped produce an annual May Festival where the "woman who has done most for the finer life of the women on the campus was selected as their queen."⁶⁴

Howard women had other opportunities to spend their leisure time in appropriate ways. In 1931, Frazier Hall's freshmen and sophomore women started weekly coffee hours. Less structured and less formal than the Women's League, these coffee hour meetings appear to have been well attended. As Dean Slowe explained in her 1937 annual report, the students "supplied their own material [for

discussion] in such quantities and of such interests that every session which they have held has been full to time limit and the numbers in attendance upon their programs increased continually as the year advanced." Morning coffee hours also seemed more flexible, moving from one physical space to another as required. Attendees numbered between "five to fifteen" persons, and discussions queried: "How Much and What Kind of Make-up should I Use for My Complexion?"; "Do I Need make-up with classroom attire?"; "Should I borrow my roommate's or friend's clothing?" and "What is meant by a well-modulated voice?"⁶⁵ These coffee hours, where young coeds initiated and discussed youthful problems of make-up, clothing and femininity, appear more vibrant than the Women's League. Unfortunately, *The Hilltop* did not record these casual coffee hour meetings and it is difficult to gauge consistent attendance. However, it appears that of these two meetings of female students, the informal coffee meetings allowed greater expression of youthful concerns. Juxtaposed against the high ideals of service, duty and woman's purpose, the light talk of make-up and clothing appears trivial, yet proved valid concerns for women of this era. These younger college women knew that in order to affect a feminized image of progress and middle-class status—characteristics that helped define modern, middle-class African American womanhood—the consumption of the right clothes and make-up remained essential.

Class, Clothes and the Co-ed

Discussions of clothing erupted continually in student newsletters. In April 1930, junior Elaine L. Smith investigated "How Much Does the Average Howard Woman Spend for Clothes?" by conducting a survey of one hundred "outstanding Howard women," seventy-five of whom were sorority members. According to Smith, it was a "known fact that the women of Howard are among the best dressed, certainly of any other Negro college, and compare favorably with any of the big white colleges as well."⁶⁶ Howard women had a significant burden in self-representation, not only as middle-class ambassadors within their own communities, but also as representatives of the race in white society. For Smith, Howard women, in their display of fashionable style, emerged as equals to their white female peers. The importance of dress to Howard women in delineating class, race and gendered identities resonated within African and white America.

Although finances were a matter of concern for most students, Smith declared with pride, "the women on our Hill keep up their

groomed appearance.” Smith concluded that the average total student expenditure was \$80.00. This budget accounted for essential articles of clothing Smith itemized as: one evening and three school dresses; three pairs of hose monthly; two pairs of shoes; lingerie, “beauty shop” and cosmetic expenses. Smith believed her findings sufficient to dispel the myth that Howard women were “little more than glorified ‘clothes horse’” and noted that the average women spent slightly more on her entire wardrobe than did a man for “one good suit.” No such comparison was performed on men’s total clothing expenditure, so it is difficult to substantiate this claim. While \$80.00 was the average, Smith noted that some women splurged up to \$225.00 on these items, while others spent only \$50.00. The wide range of student spending raises the question of class politics on campus and how poorer women fared under peer reviews of clothing and processes of consumption. In this light, it is understandable why coffee hour subjects included matters such as borrowing from and lending clothes to other women. Class distinctions through clothing consumption was so evident that Smith noted “a good number of girls had fur coats”—a status symbol not easily missed despite not being counted in the budget.⁶⁷

Fashion played such an important role in the life of Howard coeds that one 1930 *Hilltop* column underscored its central concern for campus women. Asking eight women, “In what thing are Howard women most interested?”, the column’s writer found that men, clothes and popularity ranked as most important. Senior Muriel B. Stewart sardonically remarked, “the majority of Howard University women are interested in themselves. Vanity is the keynote of their creed.” Elsie Mae Miller reinforced Dean Slowe’s view that many Howard women came in search of the “college life”—the fun, leisurely lifestyle circulating in popular culture and engaging women of diverse identities. Miller mused that most Howard women were interested in “socializing.” Accompanying this desire for a vibrant social life was “dress, self-conceit and being, or at least trying to be the campus vamp.”⁶⁸ It is not known from what economic classes these women respondents came, but these assessments demonstrate that some women found tiring the pressures to dress and socialize. More tempered assessments were also given, including Theodora C. Williams’s somewhat balanced overview:

I admit that there are some who are here expressly because of the social activity. I am inclined to believe that the majority of women

are here to broaden their education. Their social life is merely an activity that is accepted as inevitable in a coeducational institution . . . One cannot say that the women are here because of the social life, without implying that the men are also.”⁶⁹

While Slowe attempted to create an environment where women’s activism and cooperation filled the social calendar of coeds, Howard women—like the majority of American’s interwar college students—found more appeal in the youth-oriented world of leisure.

Come Dancing

Young Howard women increasingly affirmed modern cultural practices as crucial in the expression of youthful, modern womanhood. Dancing, as a particularly youth-oriented activity, permitted women’s bodies—if desired—to freely move through space with happy abandon. The controlled, respectable comportment advanced by older notions of “race womanhood” endured serious challenge in the modern culture of dancing that allowed young women to dance in coupled—and close—step with male partners. While “flapperdom” and modern womanhood signaled growing independence for American women of diverse class, ethnic and racial origins, college women did not completely “abandon the compulsion to behave correctly” and “to be ladylike.”⁷⁰ Indeed, Stephanie J. Shaw demonstrates that well into the 1930s, the education of African American women included the “reinforcement of good manners and high moral standards, a “cultured” appearance, and Christian character.”⁷¹

As a cultural phenomenon, recreational dancing first emerged in the urban dance hall in the late nineteenth century. Long associated with illicit sexuality, urban dance halls developed in tandem with amusement parks and moving picture theatres as new, affordable commercial amusements.⁷² By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, urban dance halls offered working-class and immigrant youth the opportunity for non-chaperoned amusement. As historian Kathy Peiss notes in her study of turn-of-the-century working-class women in New York City, dance halls emerged as “the favorite arena in which young working women played out their cultural style.”⁷³ Tera Hunter demonstrates that African American working-class women also found refuge in dance halls. In particular, young domestics in Atlanta viewed dancing as a form of “resistance to the confinement of the body solely to wage

work.”⁷⁴ While dancing emerged as an outlet for the young and working class, Progressive-era reformers envisioned the dance hall as a dangerous arena for immoral sexual behaviour.⁷⁵

Dancing developed into a “major symptom of rebellion before World War I,” and by the interwar years, students actively organized and participated in dances as heterosocial activities central to youth culture. While dancing moved out of the dance halls and into supervised spaces—often onto college campuses—the association of dancing with alcohol (and other vices) did not dissipate easily. As the main form of rebellion and heterosocial activity for youth in general, Howard educators, like other college administrators, busily attended to dancing as a “problem.” Slowe tempered her distaste of dancing, and sensibly accepted that while dancing could not be eradicated, it could be controlled. In an effort to “uplift” this leisure activity, Dean Slowe reflected on the matter of “taste” in dancing. To this end, Slowe argued:

It frequently happens that students give dances which are in exceedingly bad taste because they do not know any better. Many of them have no training in social standards, hence they have no standards of measurements to guide them. If members of the faculty who are especially sensitive to matters of taste in dancing will work with groups of students on this problem, colleges might make a valuable contribution to social life inside and outside of college walls.⁷⁶

While campus dances were supervised and regulated, off campus dance halls provided no such protection. Chaperonage, then, offset some of the negative effects of dancing, but this supervision was criticized by Howard students. Writing in February 1930, Howard student Heywood Broun noted a current debate on chaperonage at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. Broun argued that supervision at university events, including dances, was unwarranted: “By the time a boy is old enough to go to college and a girl sufficiently mature to get invited out to parties both man and woman should be sufficiently set in character to look out for themselves. You cannot chaperon people into goodness.” Broun called into question the chaperone herself, and why such tasks fell on women. In some ways, Broun mused, it was insulting to ask women to act as chaperones as “nobody loves a chaperon. Not even the chaperon herself Acceptance of such an invitation is equivalent

to confession of middle age.”⁷⁷ Obviously, chaperonage was not a new issue to Howard students, as one response to Broun’s column noted his “rekindling the delicate question of chaperonage.” An unknown respondent critiqued Broun’s; she/he stated: “While he [the college student] won’t, as a rule, go out of his way to encounter sin, if you hand it to him on a silver platter the chances are that he’ll help himself to a generous portion.” No precise definition of sin was given, but more than likely this referred to sexual interludes, alcohol use and close dancing. The respondent declared chaperonage a “real art” that transcended the role of the “nosy, over-zealous matrons,” and surmised:

A woman must be helpful, unobtrusive, and a good sport, and at the same time must keep an occasional eye out for couples on the loose . . . A clever chaperon [sic] by the strategic control of the upstairs rooms and the tactful thwarting of too much promiscuity downstairs can stop a multitude of sins be her actions ever so casual.⁷⁸

The differentiation between the “over-zealous matron” and the artful chaperone is striking. While administrators like Dean Slowe eradicated what she considered unnecessary chaperonage for activities like going to church, she maintained the status quo and supported supervision in less redemptive and more heterosocial leisure time activities. This particular student understood the shifting roles of chaperones within the university system, but still considered supervision at parties and dances as primarily a woman’s job. No doubt this had much to do with the assumed virtue of women and the historic place of African American women in racial uplift, but as Broun noted: “The woman who goes . . . as a chaperon says to herself and to her friends, ‘I have become a safe person. I am competent to guard other people because nobody needs to guard me. Here on the shelf I am safe and forlorn.’” Broun underscored the female nature of the task and the rationale of women watching over heterosocial gatherings. Perhaps, Broun considered the authoritarian role of the chaperone was somewhat minimized due to the gendered nature of the supervision and the passivity of the chaperone as the un-married woman who sits “on the shelf . . . safe and forlorn.”⁷⁹ Broun drew a dismal and masculinist picture of the chaperone by engaging the fate of the unmarried woman as bane to young co-eds.

Conclusion

During the 1920s and 1930s, women students and educators at Howard University confronted the influence of modern mores and morals in structuring acceptable understandings of African American womanhood. Increasingly, the display of feminized, middle-class status triumphed over older notions of respectable and modest conduct. Young middle-class women at Howard University embodied ideals of modern “race womanhood” through their conscious display of heterosociability, consumption and feminized behaviours. As they negotiated their ways through the changing and complex terrain of modern womanhood, race responsibility, leisure and consumer-based American culture, young African American women defined the cultural practices that imbued meaning into notions of modern, African American womanhood.

¹ Marita O. Bonner, “On Being Young—A Woman—And Colored,” *The Crisis* 31, no. 2 (December 1925), 63.

² *Ibid.*, 65.

³ Du Bois first defined the “Talented Tenth” in 1903. See W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative American Negroes of Today* (New York: J. Pott & Company, 1903), 33-75.

⁴ See Mc Kible, *The space and Place of Modernism* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 9-10.

⁵ See Hazel V. Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), Gloria T. Hull, *Color, Sex, & Poetry* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1987; Cheryl A. Wall, *Women of the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995); Cherene Sherrard-Johnson, *Portraits of the New Negro Woman* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007).

⁶ The “New Woman,” seemingly an old standard, appears now as historical shorthand and symbol of women’s growing political, social, sexual, and economic independence in the modern era. Yet, the motif of the New Woman invites still further problematizing. For example see, Lynn Duménil, “The New Woman” in *Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1995), and Alyes Eve Wienbuam, Lynn M. Thomas, Priti Ramamurthy, Uta G. Poiger, Madeline Yue Dong, and Tani E. Barlow (eds.), *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization*, The Modern Girl Around the World Research Groups (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008).

⁷ See Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*; (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); Darlene Clark Hine, “Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West,” *Signs* 14, no. 4 (Summer 1989): 912-920; Christina Simmons, “African Americans and Sexual Victorianism in the Social Hygiene Movement, 1910-1940,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 4, no. 1 (1993): 51-75; Kevin P. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1996); Wolcott, *Remaking Respectability* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

⁸ On the rise of modern sexuality, see Estelle B. Freeman and John D’Emilio, *Intimate Matters* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1988), Chapter 11; Beth L. Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat* (Baltimore, Md.: John Hopkins University

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- Press, 1988); Christina Simmons, "Modern Sexuality and the Myth of Victorian Repression," in *Passion and Power*, eds. Kathy Peiss and Christina Simmons (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1989), 157-177; Kevin White, *The First Sexual Revolution* (New York: New York University Press, 1993); Christina Simmons, *Making Marriage Modern* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
- ⁹ Bonner, 63.
- ¹⁰ Stephanie Shaw, *What a Woman Ought to Be and Do* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1996); Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy a Load* (New York: Norton and Co., 1999); Glenda Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*
- ¹¹ Charles S. Johnson, *The Negro College Graduate* (Durham, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1938).
- ¹² Willard Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 333-334; E. Franklin Frazier, *The Black Bourgeoisie* (New York: Free Press, 1957), 47.
- ¹³ Raymond Wolters, *The New Negro on Campus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 17.
- ¹⁴ Myrdal, 305, 319.
- ¹⁵ Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1984), 76; Shaw, 68-103.
- ¹⁶ Walter Dyson, *Howard University* (Washington, D.C: Graduate School of Howard University, 1941).
- ¹⁷ Wolters, 70.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 70-71.
- ¹⁹ See Paula S. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); See Fass; Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Campus Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Susan Cahn, *Sexual Reckonings* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007).
- ²⁰ Rayford W. Logan, *Howard University* (New York: New York University Press, 1969), 34.
- ²¹ Shaw, 85; *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Howard University, 1892-1893*, 51.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 17-18
- ²³ Karen Anderson, "Brickbats and Roses: Lucy Diggs Slowe, 1883-1937," in *Lone Voyagers* ed. G. Clifford (New York: Feminist Press, 1989), 284.
- ²⁴ Jeanne Noble, *The Negro Woman's College Education*. Bureau of Publications (New York: Columbia University, Bureau Publications, 1956), 29-30.
- ²⁵ As Linda M. Perkins shows, "the primary purpose of a Black woman's attending school was utilitarian: to prepare her for a respectable job." See Perkins, "The National Association of College Women," *Journal of Education* 172, no.3 (1990), 66.
- ²⁶ Paula S. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977)
- ²⁷ Wolters, 17-18; 73-77. Also see Martin Summers, *Manliness and Its Discontents* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).
- ²⁸ Lucy Diggs Slowe to Dr. J. Stanley Durkee, January 22, 1923, and May 1923, Lucy Diggs Slowe Papers, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.
- ²⁹ Lucy Diggs Slowe to Dr. J. Stanley Durkee, May 31, 1922, Slowe Papers. See Karen Anderson, "Brickbats and Roses," 283-294; Linda M. Perkins, "Lucy Diggs Slowe," *The Journal of Negro History* 81, no 1-4 (1996): 89-105; Patricia Bell-Scott, "To Keep My Self-Respect," *National Women's Studies Association* 9, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 70-77; Logan, "President Johnson's Embryonic Years, 1926-1935," 247-321.

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- ³⁰ See "The Burning of Letters Continues" *Journal of Women's History* 9 no. 4 (Winter 1998):181-200; Leila J. Rupp, "Imagine My Surprise" in *Hidden From History*, eds. Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus and George Chauncey, Jr. (New York: New American Library, 1989), 409.
- ³¹ D'Emilio and Freedman, 192.
- ³² Logan, 169,292,336-338; Anderson, "Brickbats and Roses," 290.
- ³³ Anderson, 267; Perkins; Bell-Scott.
- ³⁴ Lucy Diggs Slowe, "The Education of Negro College Women for Social Responsibility," Undated Speech delivered to Faculty and Student Body of Howard University, Slowe Papers.
- ³⁵ "Significant Achievements in the Department of the Dean of Women,1931-1932," Slowe Papers.
- ³⁶ Lucy Diggs Slowe, "Extract from the Report of the Dean of Women for the Year, 1932-1933," Slowe Papers.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ See Estelle Freedman, "Separatism as Strategy: Female Institution Building and American Feminism, 1870-1930," *Feminist Studies* 5, no. 3 (Fall 1979): 512-529; Rosalind Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).
- ³⁹ Joanna R. Houston, "Annual Report of the Assistant to the Dean of Women, 1932-1933," June 23, 1923, Slowe Papers.
- ⁴⁰ Lucy Diggs Slowe to Howard University Board of Trustees, April 26, 1933, Slowe Papers.
- ⁴¹ Joanna R. Houston, Slowe Papers.
- ⁴² Important scholarship on the classed and gendered tropes of the dangerous cities includes Hazel V. Carby, "Policing the Black Woman's Body in an Urban Context," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (1992), 738-755; Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Joanne Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).
- ⁴³ Lindsay, interview, NASW Oral Project, 1979.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ⁴⁵ Ophelia Settle Egypt, interview with Dr. Elinor Sinnette 1981-1982, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Oral History Department, Washington, D.C.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ Lucy Diggs Slowe, *Notable Black American Women*; "Meet Dean Slowe," *The Hilltop*, Thursday December 11, 1930.
- ⁴⁸ Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements* (Phil.: Temple University Press, 1986).
- ⁴⁹ Lucy Diggs Slowe, "The Colored Girl Enters College: What Shall She Expect?" *Opportunity* (September 1937): 276.
- ⁵⁰ Slowe, "The Colored Girl Enters College," 276.
- ⁵¹ Lucy Diggs Slowe, "What Contribution Can a Program of Social Activities Fostered by the Institution Make to the Moral and Social Development of Students in Negro Colleges?" Undated Speech, Slowe Papers.
- ⁵² Lucy Diggs Slowe, "Higher Education of Negro Women," *Journal of Negro Education* 2, no.3 (July 1933): 355.
- ⁵³ Joanna Houston, "Annual Report of the Assistant to the Dean of Women, 1932-1933," June 23, 1933, Slowe Papers.
- ⁵⁴ "Women Dined By Dean Slowe," *The Hilltop*, 29 November 1934.
- ⁵⁵ Slowe, "The Colored Girl Enters College," 279.

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- ⁵⁶ For example see "If Women May Speak," *The Hilltop*, 15 May 1930; "Howard's Women's League Helping to Raise Fund," *The Hilltop*, 30 April 1930; "Women's Activities," *The Hilltop*, 15 October 1931.
- ⁵⁷ Slowe, "The Colored Girls Enters College," 279.
- ⁵⁸ Egypt, interview with Sinnette.
- ⁵⁹ "Dependency of Modern Woman for Man Debated," *The Hilltop*, 3 March 1933.
- ⁶⁰ "Women's Activities," *The Hilltop*, 9 October 1930; "Women Dined By Dean Slowe," *The Hilltop*, 29 November 1934.
- ⁶¹ "Women's Activities," *The Hilltop*, February 6, 1930.
- ⁶² Ibid.
- ⁶³ In her introduction to the history of Delta Sigma Theta, Paula Giddings notes her own ambivalence when asked to write a history of the organization. Giddings, a Delta soror while at Howard in the late 1960s, experienced first-hand the era's view of sororities as class-based, closed organizations but underscores its honourable commitment to service and activism.. See Giddings, *In Search of Sisterhood* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1988).
- ⁶⁴ Slowe, "The Colored Girl Enters College," 279.
- ⁶⁵ Lucy Diggs Slowe, "The Fifteenth Annual Report of the Dean of Women, 1937." Slowe Papers.
- ⁶⁶ Elaine L. Smith, "How Much Does the Average Howard Women Spend for Clothes?" *The Hilltop*, 10 April 1930.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid.
- ⁶⁸ "Worth While Readings," *The Hilltop*, 15 May 1930.
- ⁶⁹ Theodora C. Williams as quoted in "Worth While Readings," *The Hilltop*, Thursday 15 May 1930.
- ⁷⁰ Barbara Solomon, "The First Modern College Women," *In the Company of Educated Women*, ed. Barbara Miller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 158.
- ⁷¹ Stephanie Shaw, 90.
- ⁷² D'Emilio and Freedman, 194-201. Also see Erenberg, *Steppin' Out*
- ⁷³ Peiss, 88.
- ⁷⁴ Hunter, 168, 180.
- ⁷⁵ For example, see Elisabeth I. Perry, "The General Motherhood of the Commonwealth": Dance Hall Reform in the Progressive Era," *American Quarterly* 37, no. 5 (Winter 1985): 719-733.
- ⁷⁶ Slowe, "What Contribution Can a Program....?"
- ⁷⁷ Heywood Broun, "It Seems to Me," *The Hilltop* (Thursday 6 February, 1930).
- ⁷⁸ "Virtue On A Leash," *The Hilltop* (Thursday 20 February, 1930).
- ⁷⁹ Broun, "It Seems to Me."