

Philadelphia Negro Educator: Jacob C. White, Jr., 1837-1902

THE current interest in the plight of the black man in urban public school systems has awakened an interest in past practices in urban education. When, for instance, did Negro teachers become a part of the public school system? What influence did they exert in a white-dominated society? Unfortunately, with the exception of works on W. E. B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington, very little has been written about early Negro educators.¹ Unquestionably, there were in the public eye of the nineteenth century black educators who faced the prejudices of a white school system while laboring daily for increased Negro participation in urban public education. Who were these men and how did they function? An examination of one of them offers the opportunity to view some of the practical concerns of pioneers in urban black education.

The most durable and respected black figure in that field after the Civil War was Jacob C. White, Jr., of Philadelphia. As principal of the Roberts Vaux Consolidated School from 1864 to 1896 he was the highest ranking black in the city's public school system. White and black leaders alike deferred all questions concerning black education during the period to the Vaux principal. No less a figure than W. E. B. DuBois requested White to read critically the proof sheets of his chapter on education in *The Philadelphia Negro*. Respecting White's opinion DuBois asked timidly: "Will you kindly look them over and note my errors of fact or judgment into which I have fallen?"²

¹ August Meier, *Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915* (Ann Arbor, 1963).

² W. E. B. DuBois to White, Oct. 18, 1898, Jacob C. White, Jr., Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP), from here on referred to as JCW Papers.

Born in 1837, White grew to maturity among the most prominent Negroes in Philadelphia.³ Raised in a mortgage-free home on 100 Old York Road, he was the middle child in a family consisting of grandparents, two adults under fifty years of age, and seven brothers and sisters. Far removed from the slums of Southwark, White spent his boyhood in a white neighborhood.⁴ Jacob's father, for whom he was named, was a prominent barber who doubled as a physician for the black community. An expert "bleeder and dentist," he often responded to emergencies and illness among his friends.⁵ Possessor of a shrewd business mind, the older White invested his earnings in land and became a wealthy man.⁶ Summers were spent at Tuckerton, New Jersey, where the Whites "took tea" with the neighbors and "bathed at the beach."⁷ The family's prosperity allowed the younger White the privilege of access to the inner circle of Philadelphia's elite Negroes. Frequent visitors to his home, and friends of his father, were men like Robert Purvis, the Rev. Daniel Payne of the A.M.E. Church, the erudite William Whipper, and such active representatives of Philadelphia Negroes at state meetings as John C. Bowers and Joseph Cassey. Intellectual and moralistic discussions abounded in the White household when these men came together. Most of them were members of the Gilbert Lyceum, and their respect for the elder White is evidenced by his election in 1841 to its presidency. Originally organized for literary and scientific purposes, it became the first black society to admit individuals of both sexes. Educated female Negroes, such as Sarah M. Douglass and Harriet Forten Purvis, listened to the well-attended lectures. A special attraction owned by this group was "a cabinet of minerals and curiosities."⁸

Widely known for his educational endeavors in the Moral Reform Society, Jacob C. White, Sr., was asked by the Rev. Henry H.

³ By a Southerner [Joseph Willson], *Sketches of the Higher Classes of Colored Society* (Philadelphia, 1841).

⁴ The Society of Friends Census 1848, Northern Livities [*sic*], copy at Urban Archives, Temple University.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ S. H. Gloucester to Jacob C. White, Sr., Jan. 14, 1844, JCW Papers.

⁷ Elizabeth White to Jacob C. White, Sr., Aug. 12, 1840, *ibid.*

⁸ Dorothy B. Porter, "The Organized Educational Activities of Negro Literary Societies, 1828-1846," *Journal of Negro History*, V (1936), 563; Mr. Oliver to Jacob C. White, Sr., Nov. 2, 1841, JCW Papers.

Garnett of Washington in 1865 to be Philadelphia director of fund raising for the proposed Lincoln National Institute of Washington.⁹ This interest in education he passed on to his children. His daughters were sent to a school conducted by his friend Sarah M. Douglass, while his sons attended the Lombard Street Public School.¹⁰ It was in this school, under James Bird, that young Jacob C. White, Jr., learned to read and write. The reason why the senior White sent his boys to the public school rather than to a private one was probably the fact that most Negro leaders believed that they must support the Lombard Street School and keep its enrollment up or else chance its being closed. The public school experience of Jacob seems not to have harmed the young boy. He liked reading and was particularly attentive to all matters concerning mathematics.¹¹

Perhaps more important than the educational opportunities at school were the educational opportunities at home. Reading materials, found in quantity in the White household, reflected the family's two main interests. Young White could choose from among the *Sunday School Journal and Advocate of Christian Education*, the *National Inquirer*, the *Liberator* and the *Pennsylvania Freeman*.¹² These newspapers focused on the elimination of slavery and the development of Christian attitudes. Christianity was an integral part of the White household. Not only did the family subscribe to Christian literature, but the elder White was superintendent of the Sabbath school of the First Presbyterian Church on 7th below Shippen Street. White often submitted book requests to publishers for Sunday school texts; included in his selection were books on duties of children, scripture stories, and temperance. His efforts, as were those of his fellow teachers, were directed so "that the Lord may make them [*the children*] all pious. . . ."¹³

The other major concern of the household was the abolition of

⁹ The Rev. Henry H. Garnett to Jacob C. White, Sr., May 8, 1865, *ibid*.

¹⁰ Census 1848, Northern Livities [*sic*].

¹¹ William Buck, "Extracts of the MSS Collection of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society" (1876), July 1, 1840, Abolition Society Papers, HSP. Banneker Institute Minute Book 1855-1859, Mar. 9, 1859, 188, Gardiner Papers, HSP.

¹² Receipts for subscriptions, *Liberator* 1836, 1838, 1839, and 1840; *National Inquirer*, 1838; *The Pennsylvania Freeman*, 1839-1856; and *Sunday School Journal and Advocate of Christian Education*, 1837 (American Sunday School Union Publication), JCW Papers.

¹³ Martin Minett (?) to Jacob C. White, Sr., Aug. 11, 18(?), JCW Papers; Sabbath Schools (broadside), Box 13G, Folder 1, *ibid*.

slavery. Even before his son's birth, White had been owner of a china store (1832-1835) which sold only nonslave products to the black community.¹⁴ Throughout his lifetime, he questioned the inconsistency of Negroes using slave products.¹⁵ By 1837 the senior White was ready for more active means of defeating the slavocracy.

His facility at writing propelled him into the position of secretary for the militant Vigilant Association of Philadelphia, to which he was elected in 1837. He kept the minutes and the books of that organization. After the burning of Pennsylvania Hall in 1838, young White's mother organized a Female Vigilant Association which was formed to "act in concert" with her husband's group, and participated in its fund-raising activities. These activities left their mark on the boy who often witnessed his father unselfishly giving his money to aid individuals. Christianity and the "value of education" became imprinted upon Jacob's mind.¹⁶

Upon completion of his grammar school education White matriculated at the Institute for Colored Youth in 1853.¹⁷ Founded by Quakers to educate blacks to become teachers, the school emphasized moral training. The Board of Managers cautioned the black teaching staff "to bear in mind that the moral and religious training of the children placed under [your] care, is more important to their future welfare than is their literary and scientific instruction . . . [you] may seek . . . to impress upon the minds of pupils . . . a due sense of their obligation and accountability to their maker. . . ."¹⁸

Principal Charles L. Reason enunciated this Quaker dictum at the dedication of the school's library in March, 1853. Speaking to White and his classmates, Reason outlined the new Institute's creed for black teachers. First, white prejudice and abuse could be tolerated by blacks. The real differences among men came from within

¹⁴ "Account Book China Store 1832-1835," *ibid.*

¹⁵ Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (New York, 1969), 76. Quarles has made numerous errors by confusing Jacob C. White, Sr., and Jacob C. White, Jr., in citing quotations, but this reference to Jacob C. White, Sr., is undoubtedly correct.

¹⁶ Porter, 563.

¹⁷ *Objects and Regulations of the Institute for Colored Youth with a list of the Officers and the Annual Report of the Board of Managers for the Year 1860* (Philadelphia, 1860), 32.

¹⁸ *Twenty-Ninth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Institute for Colored Youth 1881* (Philadelphia, 1881), 9. The same paragraph concerning religious training is to be found in every report of the Institute for Colored Youth (1852-1902).

not from without. The true nobility of man was in his soul. Reason cautioned that a man's life "is not the end but the means . . . our destiny is marked out for us, and over-rides these accidents of occupation, position and name. Our life is above them all. . . ." ¹⁹ Prejudice and mistreatment could be endured since someday all mankind must answer to God and the "goodness" of the black man would be rewarded.

Reason urged his students to improve the lot of the Negro through a triple approach to mankind. He warned students that since education neither begins nor ends in the classroom, their whole life might be spent in accomplishing these goals. First, they must work unceasingly to expand their intellectual and moral powers; second, primary attention should be given to cleanliness; and, finally, there must be a continual effort to improve health. To the impressionable seventeen-year-old White, what better precepts to follow than these of his learned teacher? ²⁰

But the emphasis on moral training did not handicap the excellent academic training at the Institute. Latin, Greek, trigonometry and many of the higher branches of study were taught. Under the tutelage of Negro principals Charles L. Reason (1851-1854) and Ebenezer Bassett (1854-1869), coupled with the stimulation of classmates J. Ewing Glasgow, Octavius V. Catto, Martha Farbeaux and Mary Ayers, White was equipped with the tools necessary for his later position, that of grammar school principal. ²¹

During his study at the Institute White displayed an active curiosity that enabled him to explore the current issues of the day. In five essays during the period of 1853 to 1854 White offered his opinion on numerous subjects. ²² In the first essay he expressed what his father had formerly advocated—namely "The Inconsistency of Colored People Using Slave Produce." This essay criticized the Negro, since White doubted "that there could be found one colored

¹⁹ *The Pennsylvania Freeman*, Apr. 7, 1853; *The Liberator*, Sept. 29, 1853.

²⁰ *Objects and Regulations Institute for Colored Youth*, 1860, 32.

²¹ *Ibid.* J. Ewing Glasgow went on to study at Edinburgh, Scotland. Mary Ayres became a teacher in New Jersey, while Octavius V. Catto and Martha A. Farbeaux taught at the Institute for Colored Youth. Ebenezer Bassett left the Institute in 1869 to become United States ambassador to Haiti.

²² Banneker Institute Lectures and Notes, Box 5Ga, Folder 3, Gardiner Collection. All five lectures are found in this folder.

person in fifty that would put themselves to the least trouble in order to patronize the store that sold Free produce." In a second essay, "What Rum is doing for the Colored People," White called upon the Negro community to "do all that we can to eradicate this evil and put forth all our energies for the purpose of having the youth trained in such a manner that they will be fitted for usefulness. . . ." White's semi-annual examination at the Institute on February 9, 1854, entitled "Business" offers the most accurate description of how he would later conduct his life: "The Great Being who placed us here seems to have intended that we should labor for the purpose of obtaining for ourselves the necessities of life. Look at the physical structure of man and we will see that he is designed to work." To White there were three principles to be followed for success:

In the first place you should deal honestly with all persons, never sell an article, representing it to be good, when at the same time you are aware that it is not. . . . Second do not allow yourself to become involved too largely in debt. Many a man has been ruined by it. Always try to live within your means. Thirdly: You should always have a knowledge of the state of your business, and not entrust to others the sole management of your affairs. By strict attention to business and adherence to the foregoing rules; one can scarcely help succeeding and obtaining an honest and comfortable living.

In essays on "Phrenology" and "Conscience" White enumerated his scientific bases for learning. The ideas of faculty psychology, an often used explanation for learning in the nineteenth century, became his educational guide. "The brain as has been proved is divided into separate organs, each of which governs some particular propensity. . . . The same rules and regulations that govern the muscles, also govern the different organs of the body (the brain included)." Train the brain to think by exercise and continuous use and the individual will grow intellectually. However, for White the final control of man rested in his conscience.

In addition to classroom studies, two events highlighted White's stay at the Institute. That which brought the most distinction occurred on May 24, 1855, when classmates and teachers chose him to address Governor James Pollock at a special reception at the Institute. On the day of the address all eyes were fixed on the eighteen-year-old student as he began his oration to the most powerful man in the Commonwealth. In his opening remarks White

thanked the Governor for his appearance at the black school, since the "state of things in society" usually prevented men of such high station from visiting students so "set off from the other youth of this commonwealth. . . ." White went on to admit that he was glad to meet the Governor and then tactfully turned to the issue of Negro citizenship in the state. He told the Governor to look and he would see that "we are . . . preparing ourselves usefully for a future day when citizenship in our country will be based on manhood and not on color." Finishing up, White expressed the belief of all Negroes "that notwithstanding the restrictions imposed upon us in the varied avenues of life we may yet, by means of this, and other schools . . . and strength of good character, and a love for the right, make ourselves useful, worthy and respected citizens in this the country of our birth and affection."²³ White's speech made no visible change in the policy of the state, but it did propel him into a position of leadership among his peers in the black community.

Another event which greatly affected the character of this man and his place in the black community was the formation in 1854 of the Banneker Institute. Composed primarily of young men, and emulating organizations like the Gilbert Lyceum, this new association gave the membership opportunities to debate and read on the current issues of the day.²⁴ The same year that he addressed the Governor, White was elected secretary of the Institute, a post he retained until 1859. It was with this group that White discussed, listened to, and eventually formulated a philosophy of life. On February 2, 1859, the Banneker Institute debated the question "Has Slavery Been Beneficial?" White's response on this question offers a glimpse of his character development. Opening the discussion on the topic, he told his all-black audience he thought slavery beneficial to the Africans "because they in being reduced to slavery had been brought under discipline, and had been also thrown in contact with superior minds. . . ."²⁵ Another member, David D. Turner, immediately responded to White's statement. To him, any system

²³ Address made on the Reception of Gov. James Pollock at the Institute for Colored Youth by J. C. White, Jr., May 24, 1855, JCW Papers.

²⁴ Benjamin C. Bacon, *Statistics of the Colored People of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1856), 9-10.

²⁵ Banneker Institute Lectures and Debates 1859-1861, Feb. 2, 16, 23, 1859, 8-9, Gardiner Papers.

that sent millions of "human beings into eternity" could not be beneficial. Slavery had a peculiar horror, and Turner deprecated "the idea of good coming from it."²⁶ Springing to their feet, members attempted to take part in the debate, but the lateness of the hour cut short the discussion. During the next meeting, on February 16th, these issues were laid aside while White presented a paper on mathematics. However, the debate continued at the meeting on February 23rd. H. Johnson opened the discussion by defending White, arguing that "Slavery had been a blessing to the African . . . and Africa would eventually be civilized through its instrumentality."²⁷ From the religious view Johnson maintained that "in their own country [Negroes] are worshippers of sticks and stones but have they not been brought to worship the true *Good* according to the Christian Idea of God?"²⁸ Charles G. Parker disagreed, citing the belief that "Africa was once the most civilized continent of the globe."²⁹ In the heat of argument, White rose again to defend himself. Johnson was right, scolded White, since "that class of persons who are brought here and sold as slaves are not identical with those to whom Mr. Parker referred."³⁰

Although a debate often causes the participants to exaggerate their position for the sake of the argument, White's defense of slavery exposes his beliefs. The most important thing in life was Christianity as taught by whites. Even slavery, with all its hardships and death, was insignificant compared to the black man's reward when he found true religion. What was needed in life was order, cleanliness, health and godliness, even at the expense of being treated badly by whites. After all, God in his infinite mercy would someday offer to his faithful children the ultimate reward of heaven. Dignity and Christianity were more important than upsetting the prejudiced, white-dominated status quo. The Quaker's active abhorrence of violence also seeped into White's thinking. Violence was unchristian; the key to life was the satisfactions man received from the comforts of an orderly life and the peace of the inner soul.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

In his discussion of the African, White, as he had done in his speech before the Governor, contended that the heritage of the Negro was inferior to that of the whites. To White, the Negro must prove himself worthy, useful, and of good character if he were to be accepted by whites. Acceptance by whites he believed to be important, since his God was the white man's God, and the "Protestant ethic" was his chosen way of life.

In May, 1858, White's Christian beliefs received their first test. The Banneker Institute had grown in membership and it was felt that the association should join the white debating societies' city-wide organization. As secretary of the group White prepared and submitted a petition to the white National Literary Congress asking that the Banneker Institute be considered for membership. Delegates of the Congress visited meetings of the black group "in order to ascertain if [the Banneker Institute] were a *bona fide Literary Society*."³¹ The delegates reported back to the Congress that the organization was purely of literary character and recommended "to admit the Banneker Institute as a member of the Literary Congress."³² The debate was on; twenty-one speeches followed, eleven for admission of the Negro group and ten against. Intellectual literary pursuits notwithstanding, rejection of the Banneker petition was on the sole basis of the color of its members. White accommodated the prejudiced rejection by reporting to the Banneker Institute that "it would be compromise of dignity to make an application after having been refused."³³ This was done not because he necessarily felt the whites to be right, but rather because any other course would compromise his Christian belief that God would punish his oppressors and as one of the meek he would inherit the earth.

All of this is not to say that prejudice did not bother White. To him there were "glaring inconsistencies, and multiplied instances of bad faith" on the part of the white man. "If we sit at home, we feel it—if we walk the streets, the influence of prejudice surrounds us at every step—if we sleep, our dreams are of the weight of oppression we are obliged to sustain. . . ."³⁴ But White had learned his

³¹ Banneker Institute Minutes for May 20, 1858, 142, Gardiner Papers.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 142-143.

³⁴ *The Celebration of the Eighty-Third Anniversary of the Declaration of American Independence by the Banneker Institute July 4, 1859* (Philadelphia, 1859), 1-2. Few antebellum

lessons from teacher Charles L. Reason well; he learned to live with prejudice by placing his faith in God and Christianity.

Becoming the second graduate of the Institute for Colored Youth on May 6, 1857, White throughout had been rated "Good Always," his popularity with his classmates and teachers, excellent.³⁵ For this reason he was asked to remain at the Institute as the teacher of the preparatory school for boys then being formed. This meant that White would join his mother's long-time friend Sarah M. Douglass, who held the same position in the girls' preparatory school. Although he always wanted to be master of his own school, a wish that was impossible since there were no black teachers in any of the public schools of Philadelphia and he had no money to open a private school, White accepted.³⁶

Association with the Institute lasted through seven years of teaching and thirty-two as alumni president. During this span White increased his knowledge of school administration through the use of the Institute's two teacher-education texts, *School Economy* and *Methods of Instruction*.³⁷ Written by the State Superintendent of Education James Wickersham and used in the Institute for teacher-training programs, these were similar in nature to most of the educational literature of the day. Seating of the class, emphasis on the value of graded classrooms, homogeneous grouping, discussions on maintaining order by using such techniques as hand raising, and

blacks participated in the celebration of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, preferring rather to celebrate the West Indies Emancipation Day on August 1. This celebration of Philadelphia Negroes prompted criticism from Negroes in other cities because it was held on July 4. *Anglo-American*, July 23, 1859.

³⁵ *Objects and Regulation Institute for Colored Youth 1860*, 32.

³⁶ Although no specific statement by White verifies this wish for his own school, one can sense this feeling in his correspondence. White to Thomas R. Davis, undated, JCW Papers; White's quotations "Notes on School," *ibid*.

³⁷ "Reports of the Institute for Colored Youth 1860-1900," bound in one volume and formerly the property of White, President of the Institute for Colored Youth Alumni Association, Quaker Book Store, Third and Arch Street, Philadelphia; *Twenty-Ninth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Institute for Colored Youth 1881* (Philadelphia, 1881). See also, James Wickersham, *School Economy: A Treatise on the Preparation, Organization, Employments, Government, and Authorities of Schools* (Philadelphia, 1864); James Wickersham, *Methods of Instruction* (Philadelphia, 1868).

building improvements in lighting, ventilation, and heating were all advocated as part of a new approach to education.

While at the Institute, White furthered his interest in mathematics. Not only did he teach mathematics in the preparatory school, he became an outside lecturer on the subject through his membership on the mathematics committee of the Banneker Institute.³⁸ His exceptional ability with figures and calculations led him to pursue the game of chess in his spare time. George Lawrence, Jr., his life-long correspondent in Washington, wrote to White in 1862: "I think your *great expectations* will be realized, for between us I have a presentiment that you are destined to become great on chess."³⁹

Whether White ever became skilled at chess is not known, but his propensity for thinking and skill with figures propelled him into many business ventures. He was appointed the Philadelphia agent for Thomas Hamilton's *Anglo-African* weekly paper (1860-1861) and James Redpath's *Pine and Palm* (1860-1862). In this role he serviced thousands of subscribers in the Philadelphia and Camden area.⁴⁰ The extensive bookkeeping and hiring and firing of carriers presented little challenge to the astute White. In addition to the newspaper business, White was the secretary and manager of his father's Lebanon Cemetery Company at 716 Lombard Street.⁴¹ He made use of this office in founding the Benezet Joint Stock Association of Philadelphia in 1854. This venture, perhaps more than any other, shows White's ingenuity. He sold shares of stock at \$25.00 and accumulated sums of money with which property in the black community was purchased. The stock company owned Benezet Hall and numerous homes, renting them at a profit and paying dividends into the year 1885, all of which attested to White's business acuity.⁴²

³⁸ Banneker Lecture and Debate Book, 49, Apr. 17, 1860, Gardiner Collection.

³⁹ George Lawrence, Jr., to White, June 25, 1862, JCW Papers.

⁴⁰ White's correspondence with James Redpath, Mar. 6, June 24, July 9, July 29, Aug. 20, Aug. 21, 1861; numerous letters 1862, *ibid.*; White's correspondence with Thomas Hamilton, Jan. 3, May 1, May 8, May 15, 1860, Apr. 2, 1861, *ibid.*

⁴¹ Lebanon Cemetery Receipt Book, 1848-1853; Lebanon Cemetery Book of Jacob C. White, Jr., 1874-1881; Lebanon Cemetery Book of Jacob C. White, Jr., 1881-1886, *ibid.*

⁴² Benezet Joint Stock Association Board of Directors Minutes, 1854-1885, Gardiner Papers.

Even his disillusionment with American prejudice resulted in his becoming involved in a business enterprise.⁴³ Although he never really considered it for himself, emigration to Haiti had interested White since his association with *Pine and Palm*, and he felt that he could help Negroes who wanted to emigrate. As Haitian Bureau of Emigration agent for Philadelphia in 1861, he was empowered to receive money and pay train fares of persons leaving for Haiti via New York.⁴⁴ Thus, through diverse activities—newspaper agent, stock broker, cemetery operator, and Haitian agent—teacher White became a comparatively wealthy man at an early age.

During his tenure as teacher at the Institute for Colored Youth, White was closely associated with his childhood friend and former classmate Octavius V. Catto.⁴⁵ Catto, at the time, was the rising Negro figure in the Philadelphia community. Young, vigorous, energetic, and every bit as intelligent as White, Catto had the personality and personal qualities to make him a charismatic leader. These two young men formed a lasting friendship based on their similar social circle and educational beliefs. It was Catto's and White's advocacy of black teachers for black schools that lessened community agitation for passage of a desegregation law and enhanced the position of the Institute for Colored Youth as a school for teacher-training.

Similar interests along athletic lines teamed the two leaders on the baseball diamond. Founded by White, the Pythian Base Ball Club of Philadelphia was considered by Philadelphia blacks as the outstanding team in the state, seldom losing to the black teams from West Chester, Washington, Brooklyn, and Harrisburg.⁴⁶ Cap-

⁴³ William H. Parham to White, Oct. 6, 1862, JCW Papers. In this letter Parham confesses to White that: "The bitter and abiding prejudice which seems indigenous to American minds precludes not only relief but even hope itself. Every day brings in its train of events which unceasingly admonish us to go hence, for this is not our abiding place."

⁴⁴ George Lawrence, Jr., to Henry J. Lombard, Pennsylvania Railroad Company, 1861, 1862, 1898, JCW Papers.

⁴⁵ *Philadelphia Ledger*, Oct. 10, 1871. Catto lived to be only thirty-one years of age. He was shot down outside the Institute for Colored Youth during the election riots of 1871. *Objects of the Institute for Colored Youth with a list of the Officers and Students and the Annual Report of the Board of Managers for the Year 1864* (Philadelphia, 1864), 16; *Proceedings of the State Equal Rights Convention of the Colored People of Pennsylvania held in the City of Harrisburg February 8th, 9th, 10th, 1865* (Philadelphia, 1865), 20-21.

⁴⁶ In 1868 White as Secretary of the Pythian Club became party to the efforts to integrate the early leagues being formed in baseball. Delegate Raymond J. Burr represented the Pythian team in Harrisburg and attempted to gain admission of the Negro team to the Pennsylvania

tain Catto slugged his way to fame as a hard hitting shortstop, while White, whose abilities in baseball were only second-rate, became secretary of the team. Responsibility for arranging games and preparing for the gala picnics which followed the home games fell to White. Ham, fried chicken, potato salad, and all sorts of "delicacies" ornamented the tables at the Broad Street and Columbia Avenue baseball field.⁴⁷ Contributions to support the team poured in. However, one member of the black community, William Still, the abolitionist of *Underground Railroad* fame, and a rival of White's, refused membership, seizing the opportunity to attack White's nonmilitant position.

I have never been a member of the association . . . [and] I beg to have my name erased [from your roll] without delay. Our kin in the south famish for knowledge, have claims so great and pressing that I feel bound to give of my means in this direction to the extent of my abilities in preference to giving for *frivolous amusements*. Again, the poor are all around us in great want, whose claims I consider cannot be wholly ignored without doing violence to the Spirit of Christianity and humanity. At all events it seems to accord more fully my idea of duty to give whense [*sic*] it will do the most good, and where the greatest needs are manifest.⁴⁸

White sarcastically replied:

J. W. Purvell states he solicited you to become a member and you consented to the presentation of your name. You are charged on our books [for] . . . \$2.00—upon payment of which a resignation will be accepted As neither the acquisition nor the disposition of your means is a matter of interest to us as an organization we have nothing to say with reference to you giving to "Our kin in the south famishing for knowledge" or the suffering poor around us.⁴⁹

Convention of Baseball Clubs. Although the Pythian Club was supported by representatives Hayhurst and Ellis of the Philadelphia Athletics, the majority of white teams opposed the black team's membership. Burr reported friends from the Athletics told him that they "thought it were better for us to withdraw than to have it on record that we were black balled." After several adjourned meetings, it became obvious that the Pythians' petition would be rejected, and the application was withdrawn.

To show his appreciation to the Athletics, White wrote Philidore S. Bell, A's president, in September, 1868, to congratulate him on the Athletics' winning the National Baseball Championship: "Our favorite club has thus proved itself what we have ever held it to be—the actual champions of the United States. Long may it live to maintain its present bright distinction and to uphold the pride of Philadelphia on the baseball field." White to Bell, Sept. 14, 1868, Pythian Baseball Club Papers, HSP.

⁴⁷ Pythian Baseball Club Papers.

⁴⁸ Still to Pythian Baseball Club, Jan. 30, 1869, *ibid*.

⁴⁹ White to Still, Mar. 1, 1869, *ibid*.

White had made it clear to his critic that his private life was no one's business but his own. He would make his main contributions to his race through his work in black schools.

In the spring of 1864 the directors of the 12th Section, a local school board in the northeast section of the city, were considering the appointment of a teacher for the neglected, run-down Roberts Vaux Primary School. After inspecting the school for the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, James Truman reported classes were held in the Zoar Church basement—a location poorly ventilated, poorly lighted, and with low ceilings which made it unsuitable as a school. Truman also called attention to the fact that “In the rear is a graveyard in which bodies are buried at a very slight depth—access to it is had through the school room—rendering it necessary to vacate the school at the time of funerals.” The movement of the school to the local Union Hall and the continuing appointment of white teachers did not improve matters. For these reasons the directors decided to appoint a black teacher.⁵⁰

Long interested in such a position, the leading candidate was Jacob C. White, Jr. T. Morris Chester, a Negro, attested to the feeling of most Philadelphia blacks when he publicly acknowledged, “I am sure that if responsibility of any kind were placed in the hand of my friend Jacob C. White that he would satisfy any public expectation.”⁵¹ Satisfactorily passing the examination before the directors, White was appointed principal on April 1, 1864.⁵² Interestingly enough, in negotiations over wages White was able to increase his salary to \$625.00 a year, well above the \$450.00 salary of the white principals of the section. Apparently the directors needed a black principal and White had a strong bargaining position.⁵³

⁵⁰ James M. Truman, Jr., Vaux School Committee, to the Board of Public Education, May 8, Oct. 9, Nov. 13, 1862, Box 45, Abolition Society Papers, HSP. During the 1860's the administrative structure of the Philadelphia Public Schools permitted local school boards to appoint teachers. A Central Board of Controllers had only limited authority in this area, being primarily concerned with the raising of funds and the construction of school buildings. See, John T. Curtis, *The Public Schools of Philadelphia: Historical, Biographical, Statistical* (Philadelphia, 1897), 1-25.

⁵¹ *Negro Self-Respect and Pride of Race: Speech of T. Morris Chester, Esq., of Liberia Delivered at the Twenty-Ninth Anniversary of the Philadelphia Library Company, December 9, 1862* (Philadelphia, 1862), 6.

⁵² *The Christian Recorder*, Feb. 24, 1876; *Forty-Fifth Annual Report of the Controllers of the Public Schools of the First School District of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1864).

⁵³ *Ibid.*

At the time of his appointment the Vaux School, located at Randolph and Parrish Streets, had forty-nine pupils on its rolls. By the end of the year, 151 more children had been admitted, and within a few years the enrollment had tripled, requiring the addition of several assistant teachers. By January, 1876, the school had grown to such a size that it was moved to the William D. Kelley School at Wood Street above 11th. At that time this thirteen-room building became officially known as the Roberts Vaux Consolidated School. Having surpassed the older Lombard Street School in size and curricular offerings, the Vaux School could boast of a large orchestra which entertained at black social functions.⁵⁴ White was now principal of the largest and most advanced Negro public school in the city.⁵⁵

The dedication ceremonies at the new location were conducted by M. Hall Stanton, President of the Board of Public Education. In an opening speech Stanton praised White for his outstanding knowledge and ability as a teacher, crediting the success of the Vaux School to his leadership. Isaiah C. Wears, the black Republican leader of the city and its most powerful Negro, decried "the disadvantages under which colored people even still are being educated" and called on the Negro community to "Rely upon yourselves; be not ivy clinging to the oak. . . . Let the children be regular in their attendance and let every colored parent and guardian pray for God's abiding presence in, and control over the interest of the Robert[s] Vaux Grammar School."⁵⁶

Proudly, the black newspaper of the day, the *Christian Recorder*, pointed to White's accomplishments. Here was a black man who was "highly and justly esteemed" by all of Philadelphia. In the same issue, the Reverend R. B. Johns stressed the importance of black pride:

The 10th of February was an important day. The thing of importance marking the day was the opening to the public of a colored Grammar

⁵⁴ Consolidated schools of the period consisted of primary school pupils (Grades 1-5) and grammar school pupils (Grades 6-8) in the same building. The change of name in the Vaux School indicates that it now offered the higher grades. The only other Negro Grammar School in the city between 1876 and 1891 was the James Forten School located at 6th and Lombard Street. This latter school was closed in 1891 due to a lack of enrollment. *The Christian Recorder*, July 7, 1881.

⁵⁵ James H. Macbride to White, Dec. 10, 1875, JCW Papers; *The Christian Recorder*, Feb. 24, 1876.

School; the first and only one in this city. It is not forgotten that there is a Grammar School [James Forten] on Sixth near Lombard Streets, to which colored children go, neither is it forgotten that the instructors are white persons who cannot be expected to be profoundly interested in the future welfare of colored children. That school is colored only in part. The one which I am about to write [Roberts Vaux] *is* colored.⁵⁷

How did White manage the improvement in his school and at the same time gain the respect of both whites and blacks? What role did he, as the leading black public educator in the city, play in urban education during this period?

Not a civil rights "activist," White did belong to numerous groups struggling for equal rights. His memberships included the little-active Pennsylvania Abolition Society, the Equal Rights League, and the Social, Civil, and Statistical Association of Pennsylvania. His main contribution consisted of record-keeping duties as secretary of the Equal Rights League. However, after his friend Octavius V. Catto died in 1871 and the Equal Rights League moved its headquarters out of the city in 1872, White's interests in civil rights organizations waned. Although remaining in the Abolition Society, auditing its books in 1880 and protesting the treatment of Bishop J. P. Campbell of the A.M.E. Church during a trip through the south, White never used these affiliations to protest the actions of public school authorities.⁵⁸ Increasingly, his interest turned to financially oriented societies and organizations connected with education.

The success of White as principal of the Vaux School rested on the techniques of teaching learned at the Institute for Colored

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Minutes of the Social, Civil, and Statistical Association of the Colored People of Philadelphia; Minutes of the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League, Executive Board, 1864-1872, Gardiner Collection; Joseph M. Truman, Jr., to White, Mar. 26, 1868, JCW Papers; *The Christian Recorder*, Apr. 21, 1866; Minutes of the Abolition Society, 1847-1909, Abolition Society Papers, 317, 334.

A complete reading of the available copies of *The Christian Recorder* for the years 1870 to 1890 shows that White's name appeared in connection with civil rights meetings after 1870 only a few times, this despite the continuous participation in these meetings by Philadelphia Negroes like William Still, Robert Purvis, and Isaiah C. Wears. Connection with the public school system and the disagreement with Still seem to have curtailed White's activities. *The Christian Recorder*, copies for the years 1870 to 1890 in the basement of Mother Bethel Church, 6th and Lombard Streets, Philadelphia.

Youth, on his organizational ability gained in private business, and on the Christian principles learned from his father during his childhood. Pupils, parents, and school officials respected and admired their hardworking and interested principal. "Soft speech," patience, and strength of character typified his administration.⁵⁹ As a former pupil remarked in 1890, "I always look to you as one truly great man of our family and every laurel you gain makes me feel more and more important in my birthright."⁶⁰

The pupils had every right to feel proud of their principal. It was White, working behind the scenes, who gained the favor of directors and school board members for the cause of Negro schools. While they considered White one of the most learned of the city's Negro teachers, it was the way he conducted the school that most impressed school authorities. In 1873, school director Robert D. Coxe congratulated White, expressing "great satisfaction and delight at the remarkable interest manifested in [the] school by both the teachers and the pupils. It is a most cheering and encouraging sign. In that respect yours is the best school in the section, and I shall hereafter, hold it up to the others as a model. . . . I was especially pleased with the perfect deportment of your scholars; there was no apparent restraint and at the same time no boisterous freedom."⁶¹

White's influence in educational circles rested on the relationships which he established with individual directors and school board members. He possessed the ability to enlist the loyalty of his white associates. Directors James H. McBride and Thomas Davis attest to his skill in human relations. McBride confided to White, "The most pleasant reminiscences of my connection with the public schools . . . are associated with my efforts to advance the interest of your school."⁶² After Davis' resignation from the Board of Education in 1875, White expressed the opinion that his leaving office was "a public calamity" which "is to me more than an ordinary loss." White thanked Davis for his "advocacy of my cause as representing the great principles of justice," and apologized for "the unrest which

⁵⁹ F. J. Wispser to White, 1888, JCW Papers.

⁶⁰ M. L. Robeson to White, Jan. 13, 1890, *ibid.*

⁶¹ Robert D. Coxe to White, June 27, 1873, *ibid.*

⁶² James A. McBride to White, Dec. 20, 1883, *ibid.*

it has at times caused you.”⁶³ Undoubtedly, White’s friendship with men like McBride and Davis allowed him to work behind the scenes for Negro rights.

Little wonder that within a few years after White became a grammar school principal, and without much fanfare or publicity, progress began to be noticed. The long-time segregation of Central High School came to an end in 1879 when Charles Parker Gordon, one of White’s outstanding pupils, became the first Negro admitted to that school. A few years later, John H. Harris, Jr., a White protégé, became Central’s first black graduate. In the same year, the Girls’ Normal School was thrown open to White’s graduates.⁶⁴ Clearly, White’s influence was having its effect upon Philadelphia education.

His influence was based not only on what he could obtain for the Negro but also on what he could do for the school board. In 1875, when the move of the Vaux School to the William D. Kelley site was being contemplated, school board members became alarmed as to what the reaction of the Negroes might be. After all, the change of school buildings would result in an additional seventeen-block walk for some of the pupils. Board President W. Hall Stanton asked White to use his influence with the black community so that the change of location might be accomplished without complaint. This White did, happily reporting back to Stanton:

The enthusiasm among our people in view of the proposed change of location is unbounded, and I feel safe in assuring you that the eminent success with which this movement will undoubtedly be attended will

⁶³ White to Thomas R. Davis, date unknown, and V. B. Vidal to White, Jan. 5, 1876, both in *ibid.*

⁶⁴ In White’s handwriting are lists of outstanding Vaux graduates; those who later attended Central High School, the Normal School, and the Northeast Manual Training School. His prize student attended none of these schools. A June graduate in 1876 of Vaux Grammar School, Henry O. Tanner later studied art in Paris and went on to become a world famous artist. White continued association with Tanner as reflected in an 1890 post card from Bishop and Mrs. B. T. Tanner desiring White’s presence on December 27th “on the evening of the departure of their son H. O. Tanner for Europe.” Bishop Tanner to Mr. and Mrs. Jacob C. White, Jr., Dec. 26, 1890, Banneker Papers, Box 5Ga-Folder 3, Gardiner Collection, and Box 6G, JCW Papers. By 1898 W. E. B. DuBois could note a continuing increase in the number of black pupils in the city’s high schools. “At present [1898] there are fifty-eight Negro students in the following schools: Central High, Girls’ Normal, Girls’ High, Central Manual Training and North East Manual Training, or about one per cent of the total school enrollment.” W. E. B. DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro* (Philadelphia, 1899), 93n.

justify the action of the Board. In your hands Mr. Stanton, who have shown such kind interest in us for so many years, we feel safe in leaving the issue. . . .⁶⁵

White also aided the school administration by acting as a consultant on problems in Negro schools. In 1873, E. C. Mitchell of the 12th and Ohio Streets School was referred to White for consultation. The directors felt that "The school is now in a crisis" and that White was the "one competent to give advice on the subject."⁶⁶

In 1881 White prevented a possible conflict between the school board and Philadelphia blacks after enactment of legislation that provided for the admittance of pupils without regard to race or color. In Philadelphia, the responsibility for admitting pupils to schools still fell to the local school boards, and with them rested the skillful art of evading compliance. It was to White that the black community turned when their children were denied admittance by such dodges as "there are no seats" or we will "send for your child."⁶⁷ Although White agreed with the black community "that some humbugging" was going on "about us sending our children to white schools," he calmed the situation by enrolling those children in his Vaux School.⁶⁸

Two years later, White persisted in his efforts to ease the strain of integration. Louise Kromer of the Charles Sumner School asked him to admit George Moore. She explained that Moore had received an average of eighty at the last examination and had qualified for admittance to a white school at 5th and Poplar Streets, a school located close to his home. When Moore presented himself on the first day of school, the principal gave him "some kind of examination" and reported his average too low for admittance. Miss Kromer reported: "I cannot say whether it was fair or otherwise but this does seem strange to me that he only received nineteen for Geography and in our school Geography was one of George's best branches.

⁶⁵ E. C. Mitchell to White, Feb. 21, 1873; White to W. Hall Stanton, Oct. 28, 1875, JCW Papers.

⁶⁶ E. C. Mitchell to White, Feb. 21, 1873; L. H. Ridge on Nov. 17, 1893, asks White to take a Negro student from his school, saying, "The matter of 'race prejudice' is not a factor in the case." *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Mrs. Nichols to White, Sept. 5, 1881; C. Richards to White, Oct. 12, 1881; E. H. Smith to White, Nov. (?), 1881, *ibid.*

⁶⁸ C. Richards to White, Oct. 12, 1881, *ibid.*

He may have done more poorly than he usually did with me, but I believe he can do it if given an opportunity.”⁶⁹ Again White chose not to fight the discriminatory action of the white principal, deciding instead to admit the boy to his school.

Although one could fault White for his actions in these cases, the black community of the time apparently did not, for they knew of his continuous efforts for educational improvements. As President of the Institute for Colored Youth Alumni Association, he ably advised blacks on teaching opportunities.⁷⁰ Letters from former pupils or Negroes that he aided in placing in teaching positions abound in his correspondence.⁷¹ The assistant to the superintendent of the public schools, L. H. Esler, turned to White for placement of a well-qualified Negro in a teaching position. Esler told a West Indian Negro seeking such a position to see White, since he is best “posted as to any openings available. . . .” In 1875, the report that 83 of 109 graduates of the Institute were or had been engaged in teaching attests to White’s accomplishments. Three-fourths of the black teachers in Philadelphia and Camden were alumni of the Institute for Colored Youth.⁷²

In 1870, the previously all-white Teachers’ Institute of Philadelphia admitted White to membership, thereby acknowledging the proficiency of this black educator in his chosen profession.⁷³ Through his appointment to various committees within the school system, White was able to aid capable black students in furthering their education. For example, candidates for the Northeast Manual Train-

⁶⁹ Louise Kromer to White, Sept. 5, 1883, *ibid.*

⁷⁰ Office of the *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 25, 1898, Received of Jacob C. White, Jr., Alumni dues, *ibid.*

⁷¹ White to Miss M. Inez Cassey, Jan. 3, 1874; M. Louisa Robeson to White, Nov. 2, 1894; Mary E. Chase to White, Nov. 26, 1883; J. H. Riddick to White, Apr. 26, 1880; Moore Street Industrial Institute, Richmond, Va., June 18, 1889; The Gloucester Agricultural and Industrial School, Gloucester County, Va., Dec. 18, 1892; Mary L. Julius to White, Nov. 7, 1877, *ibid.*

An example of these letters is that of Mary L. Julius who asks White, “Do you know of any two teachers who would like to go and teach this winter in Carolina County, Maryland? If so let me know.” See also, *Reports of the Institute for Colored Youth 1860 to 1900*, Quaker Book Store, Third and Arch Street, Phila.

⁷² L. H. Esler to White, June 11, 1877, JCW Papers; *Twenty-third Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Institute for Colored Youth* (Philadelphia, 1875), 10.

⁷³ *Proceedings of the Teachers’ Institute of the City and County of Philadelphia for the year 1873* (Philadelphia, 1873), 12.

ing School had their qualifications reviewed by a panel of principals, and, in 1887, White joined that select group, which accepted both black and white applicants.⁷⁴ Thus, he became the first Negro in Philadelphia to sit in judgment on the admittance of white pupils to high school.

His standing with whites was not limited to the school system. Continually called upon to address meetings, conduct spelling bees, and officiate at public gatherings, White found himself before white as well as black audiences.⁷⁵ He was invited to attend a series of lectures at the University of Pennsylvania given by Dr. Ray Greene Huling of New Bedford, Massachusetts, on the "Place of the High School in American Education." In 1888, he spoke to the Bureau of Work of the Progressive Workingman's Club at the request of its President, John S. Durham, an invitation prompted by Durham's interest in having Negroes gain employment in industry and business. White applauded the action and requested the group to give favorable consideration to educated young blacks for positions of leadership in the business community.⁷⁶ White's lecture accomplished little, but his interest in forwarding the cause of the Negro cannot be doubted.

In June, 1896, Jacob C. White, Jr., retired from the position of principal of the Vaux School, ending an era in urban black education.⁷⁷ Slowly, during the period between the Civil War and the turn of the century, the position of the Negro in Philadelphia schools had improved. Although the practice of school segregation continued, more and more Negroes were admitted to white schools and the acceptance of Negro teachers in black schools was accomplished. White's efforts, although not noticed in the press or the Minutes of the Board of Education, had borne fruit. To him, his school had been his life and through it he had found fulfillment.⁷⁸ Satisfied that

⁷⁴ Superintendent's Office to White, June 15, 1887, JCW Papers.

⁷⁵ List of meetings and spelling bees, *ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Philadelphia Sentinel*, Mar. 3, 1888; scrapbook, Isaiah C. Wears Papers, HSP; post card, The American Society for the Extension of University Teaching to White, Apr. 5, 1893, JCW Papers.

⁷⁷ William Dick to White, Sept. 9, 1897, JCW Papers; *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, Aug. 13, 1897.

⁷⁸ White to Thomas R. Davis, date unknown, JCW Papers.

he had done his best to educate his fellow blacks, White retired from the scene to the quiet of his home at 1032 Lombard Street.

However, the remaining years of his life were not to be idle and unproductive. While principal of the Vaux School, White had seen the value of black institutions. During the year 1895 his wife Caroline E. White had been ill and dying.⁷⁹ Whether prompted by her condition or simply motivated by humanitarian reasons, White became interested in founding a hospital and nurses' training school for blacks. On June 25, 1895, the organizational meeting of the Douglass Hospital was held and White elected President of the Board.⁸⁰ Under his direction funds were raised and a house at 1512 Lombard Street procured to serve as the hospital building. The Hospital advertised to the black community that "accident cases" would be accepted at "all hours" and that "the Dispensary offered free surgical treatment and medical advise to all."⁸¹

In 1897 White and Board Secretary Henry J. Minton led the fight for state appropriations to alleviate the hospital's financial condition. A reception at Douglass Hospital to honor Henry K. Royer, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Senator Israel W. Durham, both of them members of the state appropriations committee, was arranged.⁸² In October, 1897, Alexander K. Pedrick of the State Senate sent a circular letter to White asking him for an historical sketch and a photograph of the hospital, both of which were necessary to procure the state appropriation. This letter went unanswered and Pedrick wrote White again on December 3rd, emphasizing "the necessity of a response of some kind on your part."⁸³ White responded that he had "promptly handed [the previous letter] to the Chief of Staff and through him to the Secretary of the Board of Managers. I was unwell at the time and am still so and supposed

⁷⁹ The name of White's wife is found on a subpoena dated March, 1877, in which Caroline E. White is asked to appear as a witness in the trial for homicide of one Frank Kelly. See, Miscellaneous Papers, JCW Papers. For information concerning Mrs. White's death, see Joseph M. Truman, Jr., to White, Aug. 27, 1896, Douglass Hospital Papers, HSP.

⁸⁰ A note identifies the date of the first meeting. *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Printed Circular, Zion Wesley Church, 15th and Lombard Street, Thursday, Oct. 31, 1895, opening and donation day of the Frederick Douglass Memorial Hospital and Training School—Jacob C. White, Jr., President, Henry M. Minton, Secretary, *ibid.*

⁸² N. F. Mossell to White, June 18, 1897, *ibid.*

⁸³ Circular Letter, Alexander K. Pedrick to Douglass Hospital, Oct. 19, 1897; Alexander K. Pedrick to White, Dec. 3, 1897, *ibid.*

you were in possession of the needed information. I saw the secretary this morning, and I have his promise to have it done to-day."⁸⁴

Apparently White succeeded in having the sketch and information provided for Pedrick, because in 1898 an appropriation of \$5,000 a year for two years was made. After procuring these funds from the state, White in 1900 stepped down as President of the Board of the Douglass Hospital, but maintained his seat on the Board until his death on November 11, 1902.⁸⁵

In retrospect, did Jacob C. White, Jr., help or hinder the struggle for equality? Clearly, White's belief in the values of the "Protestant ethic" did not prepare his pupils for the prejudice of white society.⁸⁶ To believe that success would follow for the black man who practiced what White preached was naiveté.

Honest, earnest and conscientious application to study must and will be rewarded,
Failures ought rather to stimulate us to renewed exertion than fill us with discouragement,
Success is born of desire and application,
The road to success may be strewn with blasted hopes and unrealized desires.⁸⁷

Such maxims did not work for the nineteenth-century Negro who continued to be offered an inferior position in a caste society. What

⁸⁴ White to Alexander K. Pedrick, Dec. 2, 1897, *ibid.*

⁸⁵ "Report to Douglass Hospital," 2, *ibid.* See also, Will of Jacob C. White, Jr. (No. 1882), Registrar of Wills, City Hall, Philadelphia. White's estate was valued at \$12,635.08 in 1902. Although little is known of White's family life, some information does exist in his letters. White usually vacationed during the summer at Atlantic City. He married a second time in 1898. F. C. Wispetal to White, Oct. 22, 1898; White's checks for Dec. 1, Aug. 17, 1882, and Apr. 1, 1885; and, broadside 1857-1858, Banneker House, New Jersey, Cape Island, JCW Papers. For the year White was no longer listed as President of the Board of Douglass Hospital, read letterheads in folder for 1900, Douglass Hospital Papers.

⁸⁶ White was not the only Negro who felt that the Bible and the "Protestant ethic" were part of a public school education. See *The Christian Recorder* for Jan. 2, 1873, in which Negroes insist that only Christian songs be sung in public schools; and *The Christian Recorder*, Feb. 3, 1876, p. 6, in which Negroes claim that "We refuse to expel the Bible from our public schools because its expulsion would be a national condemnation of God's word, and a profession of national atheism."

⁸⁷ White's quotations written in his book entitled "Notes on School"; Mary S. Chase to White, Dec. 31, 1883, JCW Papers. Mary Chase in writing White recalled one of these sayings, "Yes Mr. White—I respect your dear old saying, though old in usage yet forever near to encourage 'Honest, earnest labor is always rewarded.'" See also, "School Essay in the Roberts Vaux School" by Amelia Fry, Class of 1886, *ibid.*

White had overlooked was that the white society did not apply these Protestant values of hard work and perseverance to blacks. Had he committed a disservice to his students? By his continual accommodation to white prejudice and his belief in the "Protestant ethic," was White not teaching his pupils a subservient role? Could he not have fought for equal school rights with more vigor?

Perhaps the best answer to these questions comes from White himself when as a young man he wrote: "Just let a Man do according to the promptings of . . . [his conscience], and he need not regard what others say about his actions, for he will then be satisfied in his own mind that he has done right."⁸⁸ White was convinced that he had been right and, as a friend reminded him, "your labor . . . will be rewarded in the next world."⁸⁹

Although his activities were confined to Philadelphia and had little impact upon black education in other sections of the country, he typified what white Americans of the nineteenth century expected from the black public educator. These expectations forced numerous dilemmas on middle-class black leaders like White who, in principle, wanted integration yet realized that blacks could find jobs only in segregated schools and be medically trained and treated only in segregated hospitals; who accepted white Protestant value patterns even to the point of justifying slavery, but who were often rebuffed when they sought to enter white groups; who achieved influence largely through accommodation (winking at violations of the nondiscrimination law, dampening protest in the black community, using white friends to secure favors for blacks, intervening to solve problems in black schools of the system) while preserving an atmosphere of dignified "leadership."

As historian David Tyack succinctly points out, White's dilemma illustrates that "the racism of the society seems to cry loudest when it afflicts the most sedate and scholarly."⁹⁰

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⁸⁸ Banneker Institute Lectures and Notes, Box 5Ga—Folder 3, "Conscience," Gardiner Collection.

⁸⁹ Mary A. Tucker to White, Sept. 25, 1895, Douglass Hospital Papers.

⁹⁰ Letter in author's possession from David Tyack, dated July 19, 1971.