

Chapter 3

Exemplar of Pearls of Wisdom for the Academy through Dr. Pearlie Dove's Career in Education

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ABSTRACT

The subject of this chapter represents a woman of color, courage, and consciousness who began her early childhood preparation in the segregated “colored schools” of Atlanta, Georgia in the 1920s and 1930s. Pearlie Craft (maiden name) Dove is the focus of this originally conceptualized qualitative narrative which draws its scholarly influence from ethnography, reflective biography, and historiography as well as personal narrative to posit a methodological approach described as ethno-biographical research. The selected key participant for this chapter was born in 1921. The authors constructed the methodology from selected biographical notes, conversations, interviews, and critical theory of the era in which she was educated and lived. The conceptual model describes the foundation for the use of the term Pearlie's Pearls of Wisdom as attributes that can be models for men and women who aspire to promote principles over expediency. This chapter seeks to promote the overarching professional and personal qualities exemplified by Dr. Dove from 1949-2014.

INTRODUCTION

In the prosperous but segregated city of Atlanta, Georgia in 1921, Pearlie Craft was born (*New Georgia Encyclopedia*, 2014a). The history of Atlanta has seen the city emerge from a place called Terminus and Marthasville to an incorporated City of Atlanta (Martin, 1902). The city where Sherman began his

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march to Savannah during the civil war has given birth to many historical events and notable persons of color who have impacted various professional fields of endeavor despite the insidious legal restrictions of segregation. Perhaps the rise of Atlanta as a sprawling hub of economic, social, and educational progress in the south after the War Between the States, can be traced to the development of the black community (Carter, 1894). By the time of The Cotton Expo World Fair of Atlanta in 1895, Booker T. Washington gained acclaim and fame for his famous “hand in glove” speech. Similarly, Atlanta was the city where James Weldon Johnson and his brother, Rosmond Johnson, were educated at Atlanta University. These brothers penned the words and composed the music for the song “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” commonly known within the African-American community as the Black National Anthem.

Hence as the 20th century began, the predominantly agrarian south had among its modern metropolitan centers the City of Atlanta, which arguably was an example of the “New South” (Woodward, 1971; *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, 2014b, para. 1-2). Therefore, the unique racial dynamic of Atlanta at the dawn of the 20th century witnessed the growth of the Atlanta University Center as an educational center of institutions for African Americans, including the arrival of Dr. W.E.B. Dubois to Atlanta University. Conversely, in the decades before the birth of Pearlle Craft, Atlanta had produced a paradoxical society or “New South” (Woodward, 1971; *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, 2014b, para. 1-2) as well as an economic industrialization with social segregation, racial, and political polarization (*New Georgia Encyclopedia*, 2014c, para. 1-8). The working class families and communities of color in Atlanta produced graduates of the colleges and universities that have commonly been identified with the term, The Atlanta University Center. Educationally, historically black colleges had normal schools in the midst of the segregated schools of the Atlanta Public School System (Racine, 1969). It should be noted that many of the black children in the Atlanta area attended one of the normal schools for secondary school education before the benefit of free public high school education was available through the building of Booker T. Washington High School in Atlanta, Georgia (Anderson, 1988; Margo, 1990).

Upon reaching high school during the days of the great depression, Pearlle Craft emerged from Booker T. Washington High School in 1937 as one of its top graduates. By this time, Booker T. Washington High School had become one of the premier high schools available for African-American children in the southeast. Its graduates and attendees included trailblazers among African Americans such as Lewis Sullivan, Lena Horne, Nipsy Russell, Vernon Jordan, and of course, the subject of the case study, Pearlle Craft Dove. The legendary principal at the time of young Miss Pearlle Craft’s matriculation was Charles Lincoln Harper. It was at Booker T. Washington high school that the foundations for the decision to attend Clark University (a parent of Clark Atlanta University) in the fall of 1937 were planted. As noted, she graduated from the last class of Clark University, the campus that is now the site of George Washington Carver High School founded in 1941. Concurrently, W.E.B. Dubois was near the end of his second tenure as a professor at Atlanta University when Pearlle Craft began graduate school at Atlanta University, earning her master’s degree in 1943.

Historians may argue the role of the black community as a significant causal variable in the developmental progress of Atlanta after the Emancipation Proclamation. For example, Atlanta University was founded in 1865 and Clark University followed in 1869 as institutions for the education of colored people (Bacote, 1969; Brawley, 1977). These institutions merged or consolidated to form Clark Atlanta University in 1988. Interestingly, Dr. Dove served on the steering committee that facilitated the consolidation of the two institutions that confirmed her B.A. degree in 1941 and M.A. degree in 1943. The consolidated institution (Clark Atlanta University) confirmed upon her the status of Professor Emerita in Education. Furthermore, a note of historical importance is that the land that Clark University once

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