

TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE COMMUNITY RELATIONS

We come to this spot today to celebrate the seventy-sixth anniversary of the founding of Tuskegee Institute. It is indeed symbolical that the founder chose the Fourth of July on which to open school, the day on which all Americans celebrate their Declaration of Independence, with its emphasis on the equality of man.

From its very inception, even before the school was started, the founder's attention was focussed on the community and how best to serve the needs of people in the community. And in turn, the community's attention has been focussed on Tuskegee Institute. Into this institution's making, the good-will, gifts, and contributions of many Americans and agencies have been invested.

In the early days, the people of the local community nurtured it with contributions of money and produce, with their work, their time and their credit. All of the people of the state have nurtured it through appropriations from their State Legislature. And above, the American people have supported not only through their national government but with voluntary donations from the poorest to the most wealthy, from the citizen of highest prestige to the most humble. It has received gifts of the illiterate and the learned, of white and black, and from persons of many creeds. All have a stake in this institution. It is as truly American as America is itself.

Tuskegee's community relationships began with the areas immediately surrounding it, spread to the region and nation, then became international. It has not only influenced its various communities socially, economically and culturally, but its program has changed and broadened as the needs of its community have changed.

The first thing the founder did when he arrived here was to make a survey of community life in Macon County in order to learn how best to serve through the new school he had been employed to organize. What he discovered resulted in a con-

cept of the purpose of education that could be adapted to change the lives of the underprivileged anywhere.

His program had two purposes. One, to educate those who came for formal instruction; the other, to improve the community from which these students came. Having himself been transformed by the plan of education instituted at Hampton Institute, whereby emancipated slaves were made self-supporting, intelligent citizens and leaders, he utilized the Hampton plan as a base for his own unique methods. The principles and practices of Tuskegee Institute, then, were "conceived in the light of social needs and the institution has become "one of the best, if not the best example of education conceived in the light of those needs."

While Tuskegee Institute's total program has community implications, it will not be possible to discuss all of them. Only certain phases of its community directed program can be presented.

Early in its history, various extension programs for improving the life of rural people were organized. These programs were directed at the total community--the farm, the church, the home, the school and health, for the majority of the people in the South were rural people.

The Farmers' Conference and auxiliary conferences organized sixty-six years ago, set a pattern followed by local and state conferences all over the South. No problem concerned with the economic or social conditions of Negro farmers was left untouched. Hundreds of thousands of rural folk have been affected by the programs planned by these annual conferences alone.

From Tuskegee Institute's idea of carrying education to the people through a movable school, the present system of Farm and Home demonstration work among Negroes resulted. This movement has changed the lives of hundreds of thousands more.

All communities in the South felt the impact of the Rosenwald School Building Program. Through it, more than 5,000 schools, costing over \$28,000,000 were

built, a cooperative effort of Negroes, whites, public school authorities and the Rosenwald Fund. This was at a time when schools for Negro children were schools in name only. The impact of the Rosenwald School Building Program on the communities in which schools were erected was tremendous; but the impact on the whole South was just as great, resulting in better educational facilities for both whites and Negroes all over the region. Tuskegee Institute was responsible for influencing Mr. Rosenwald to initiate this movement and was mainly responsible for placing Jeanes teachers in the rural schools. It was mainly through Tuskegee's efforts that Miss Anna T. Jeanes set up the Jeanes Fund.

Like the farm and school, the rural church and minister have been received the attention of Tuskegee Institute through Religious Extension activities; Tuskegee's low-cash-cost housing program was designed to improve the rural home; and the program of the Rural Life Council was designed to help the total community.

For many years, this institution has been a health center, first serving nearby areas, then the entire South, then the nation. It has cooperated with the State of Alabama, the Children's Bureau and the Infantile Paralysis Center in caring for large numbers of children from Alabama and neighboring states. Through cooperation of the State Vocational Rehabilitation Service, the John A. Andrew Hospital has helped "hundreds of disabled persons to become independent." Such skill has caused other Southern States to seek rehabilitation for their citizens.

Certainly no institution has a longer service to Negro physicians and surgeons than the medical and surgical clinics established here. The John A. Andrew Clinic has become a national institution attended by physicians from all regions. Medical personnel are made acquainted with the best and latest developments in medicine, which many could not otherwise obtain; and underprivileged patients from all over the South receive unusual medical attention without charge.

The National Negro Health Week organized in 1914 was a community centered movement and was an effective agency for health education. It sought to improve health of the country districts as well as that of the urban areas. Practically all state and national agencies working for health improvement cooperated with it. This movement was eventually absorbed by the United States Government and became a part of the work of the United States Public Health Service.

The National Negro Business League was the first group organized by Tuskegee Institute on the national level. Established in Boston in 1900, it has grown into more than 200 business associations, located in more than twenty-one states and in more than 100 cities. The League has created a community of interest among Negro business men and has helped to build up the Negro as a factor in the national economy. From this one organization has evolved practically every other Negro national business group. Infact, there is hardly any organization established to promote the interests of Negroes in any area in the national community which Tuskegee has not helped to establish or promote.

The Tuskegee idea of total community development was soon adopted in many foreign countries. Visitors from the farthest corners of the earth came to see and to study Tuskegee's methods. Then, students from foreign countries began to arrive to enroll in formal classes. Long before the United States began its present program of technical and other assistance to underdeveloped countries, the German and Liberian governments were calling on Tuskegee for such help in Africa, and numbers of Tuskegee's faculty and students have in recent years rendered foreign service.

The United States Government utilized Tuskegee's ideas of education in the Philippines, when it took over these islands after the Spanish American War.

The Director of Tuskegee's Rural Life Council worked in India as Community Development Adviser, rendering service similar to that provided by the Rural Life Council in communities surrounding Tuskegee.

In Indonesia, Tuskegee is helping through various members of its faculty to develop a \$800,000 vocational education program for the Indonesian government. Known as the Tuskegee-Indonesia Project, its purpose is not only instruction but the "upgrading of teachers of vocational education."

A number of Tuskegee's faculty and graduates have served on foreign education commissions through the years. Just recently, upon invitation from the ministry of Education for India, our President was a member of such a committee to study rural education in that country. It is interesting to note that the committee recommended a program similar to that which the founder originated long ago--"the development of instruction in rural areas, of extension services in the surrounding areas and research on problems related to rural living."

The Tuskegee Institute program for community improvement was directed at carrying its methods and standards into the Negro community, but "no less important was the work of promoting good-will and cooperation between whites and Negroes in the South, indeed in the entire nation.

The variety of mediums utilized in promoting good-will indicate the extent of these efforts. Sometimes this promotion has been through speeches and addresses, through organizations like the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, through good-will tours throughout the South, the annual lynching letter, or the present Race Relations report, interracial discussions arranged for visiting student groups and through various publications.

Tuskegee Institute has always provided a place where white and Negroes could, if they wished, discuss their mutual problems in an atmosphere of good-will.

On this hill years ago, Tuskegee Institute faced a great challenge--that of elevating a race recently freed from slavery. It has utilized every legitimate and honorable means of accomplishing that purpose. Through its many leaders who have achieved local, regional, national and international fame because of their services, it has been teacher to a vast community.

None can say that its challenges have not been adequately met. This truly

community institution has not only tried to improve the community but its program has from time to time changed and broadened as the needs of the community have changed. Tuskegee's several communities still need its best efforts and it deserves the appreciation and gratitude of all the American people.

In 1900, the founder said, "During the next half-century and more, my race must continue passing through the severe American crucible. We are to be tested in our patience, our forbearance, our perseverance, our power to endure wrong, to withstand temptations, to economize, to acquire and use skill; in our ability to compete, to succeed in commerce, to disregard the superficial for the real, and the appearance for the substance; to be great and yet small, learned and yet simple, high and yet the servant of all."

--Jessie Parkhurst Guzman,
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(Address delivered July 4, 1957, Zion Hill, Tuskegee, Alabama)