

## **“I Was One of the First to See Daylight”: Black Women at Predominantly White Colleges and Universities in Florida since 1959**

By Stephanie Y. Evans

**K**itty Oliver, a celebrated journalist, nonfiction writer, and oral historian, entered the University of Florida in 1965. She was one of only 35 African American students of 18,000 enrolled and one of only 5 black freshmen to integrate campus housing. Her story, told in *Multicolored Memories of a Black Southern Girl* (2001), is intriguing for its portrayal of the first-wave of black students who integrated the predominantly white institutions in the Florida State University System. Oliver, from Jacksonville, traced her mother's roots to the South Carolina Gullah people. She was an only child and the first in her family to attend college. Her choice to attend University of Florida (UF) instead of the more popular Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) provides a fascinating entry into better understanding state education in the past.

In her narrative, Oliver recalled young adulthood in her mid-1960s transition from Jacksonville to Gainesville: her participation in voter-registration drives and picketing stores that racially discriminated; being “randomly selected” to have a black roommate in the dorm at UF, and the next semester, being immediately rejected by the white roommate assigned; some students’ treating

---

Stephanie Y. Evans is an assistant professor in Women's Studies and African American Studies at the University of Florida. Her book, *Black Women in the Ivory Tower, 1850-1954: An Intellectual History* is forthcoming in 2007 from University Press of Florida.

her as “exotic” and her first flirtations with non-black men; guarded but fruitful relationships with black physical plant workers and local residents of Gainesville; intense and shifting intra-racial disagreements over “Black Power” or “flower child” campus identities; transition from black church music to Otis Redding, to Peter, Paul, and Mary, to Santana, and ultimately to a sampling of each to create her own voice. In the college memoir embedded in her autobiography, Oliver disclosed the hardships of being one of a handful of blacks at the flagship institution in a southern state. But she also expressed appreciation to those who had come before her to “kick down the door” so that she could have a choice of institutions and be “one of the first to see daylight and walk on in.”<sup>1</sup>

Kitty Oliver’s story of enrollment at the University of Florida in the 1960s, her subsequent attainment of a master’s of fine arts from Florida International University, and her nine years serving as an associate professor at Florida Atlantic University provide much opportunity for race and gender analysis of higher education in the Sunshine State. But what of Oliver’s cohort? Where did she, as a black southern woman, fit into the larger picture of black women attending college in Florida? The demographic answer to that question tells much about the complex relationship of race, gender, and higher education in the state and region. The aggregate numbers provide historic context for the much-needed contemporary solutions that must come if diversity is to truly be institutionalized in Florida’s public colleges and universities.

In Fall 2005, I surveyed public records of the eleven state institutions in the Florida State University System and distributed questionnaires to the schools’ offices of institutional research. The following analysis is based on the findings of the status of black women in Florida’s state schools since 1959, when the first black woman enrolled at a predominantly white institution in Florida. Below is a brief history of black access to higher education in Florida, a consideration of Kitty Oliver’s cohort at UF in the 1960s, a current demographic overview, and issues raised by the historic and contemporary pictures. The historical context for understanding African American access to higher education began in the antebellum era. Before the Civil War, nationally more than 250 institutions offered college-level work; only a select few were

---

1. Kitty Oliver. *Multicolored Memories of a Black Southern Girl* (Kentucky, 2001), 58-96, 76.

open to black or women students. The most notable were Oberlin (founded in 1833), Antioch (1853), and Wilberforce (1856), all in Ohio; Hillsdale in Michigan (1844); Cheyney (1837) and Lincoln in Pennsylvania (1854); and Berea in Kentucky (1855).<sup>2</sup>

Generally, efforts to educate black girls brought violent reprisals, even in liberal New England, as exemplified by mob violence that destroyed Prudence Crandall's school for black girls in 1833 Connecticut. If the climate in New England proved hostile for those educating African Americans, the rest of the country was downright murderous. Yet, in the cold, hard environment of colonial and antebellum America, seeds found fertile ground, and buds of hope began to bloom; black women earned their first college degrees in Ohio. Oberlin was the only college to graduate a significant number of black women before the Civil War.<sup>3</sup>

Due to prohibitions in the South and unstable support for educational attainment in the North, free and enslaved black people in the antebellum era relied largely on their own initiative to learn to read, write, calculate, and study liberal or vocational subjects. Historians from Carter G. Woodson (1919) to Heather Williams (2005) have documented the efforts by black people to conduct their own formal and informal learning in the South despite the ever-looming threat of violent repercussions.<sup>4</sup>

In the postwar era, historically black preparatory schools, colleges, and universities like Scotia Seminary and Palmer Memorial

2. Ellen Lawson and Marlene Merrill, "The Antebellum 'Talented Thousandth': Black College Students at Oberlin Before the Civil War." *Journal of Negro Education* (Spring 1983): 142-155; Paul Nelson, "Experiment in Interracial Education at Berea College, 1858-1908" in *U.S. Traditions: A Reader* (Massachusetts, 2003), 91; John Pulliam and James Van Patten, *History of Education in America* (Upper Saddle River, 1999), 134; Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University: A History*. (1962; reprint, Athens, 1990), 47; Carter G. Woodson, *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861* (1919; reprint, New Hampshire, 1991), 265; Roland M. Baumann, "History of Recording Black Students at Oberlin College" (Oberlin College Archives, 2002).
3. Darlene Clark Hine, *A Shining Thread of Hope: The History of Black Women in America* (New York, 1998), 122-23. Heather Williams. *Self Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom*. (Chapel Hill, 2005).
4. Woodson, *Education of the Negro Prior to 1861*; James McPherson, *The Abolitionist Legacy: From Reconstruction to the NAACP* (Princeton, 1975); W.E.B. Du Bois, *The College-Bred Negro* (Atlanta, 1900); W.E.B. Du Bois and Augustus G. Dill, *The College-Bred Negro American* (Atlanta, 1910); Linda Perkins, "Education" in *Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*, edited by Elsa Barkley Brown, Darlene Clark Hine and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn (Bloomington, Ind. , 1994); James Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*. (Chapel Hill, 1988).

Institute in North Carolina, Institute for Colored Youth in Pennsylvania, Dunbar High School, Training School for Girls, and Howard (all in Washington D.C.), Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, and Bethune-Cookman College in Florida became cornerstones of their local communities. The majority of black women college graduates obtained degrees from normal schools that offered the equivalent of a two- or four-year high school degree and two years of college study, and included certification for elementary school teaching. With their degrees, the women taught in the community through Sunday schools, youth leadership development programs, and mutual aid societies as frequently as they taught in the classroom.<sup>5</sup>

Florida Agricultural and Mechanical School was founded in 1887 with fifteen students and two instructors. Of the four historically black colleges and universities in Florida (including Edward Waters founded 1872, Florida Memorial 1879, and Bethune-Cookman College 1904), FAMU has constantly maintained the highest enrollment and graduation numbers and is the only historical black college or university in the state that holds university status to grant doctoral degrees. FAMU was awarded college status in 1905 and university status in 1953; it developed its first Ph.D. program, in pharmacology, in 1984. In addition to FAMU's significant contribution to black education in Florida, Mary McLeod Bethune provided the most important example of black educators' capacity to build institutions. Within its first ten years, Bethune-Cookman had instructed thousands of girls in academic subjects (English, science, algebra, geometry, black history, and music) and vocational subjects (sewing, cooking, weaving, dairy agriculture, and gardening) at the high school level; the school did not receive senior college status until 1945. In building her school, Bethune provided academic hope for black girls in an otherwise barren educational swampland. Although FAMU was

5. Linda Lane, *A Documentary of Mrs. Booker T. Washington* (New York, 2001); Elizabeth Ihle, *Black Women in Higher Education: An Anthology of Essays, Studies, and Documents* (New York, 1992), xiii-xxx, 122; Opal Easter, *Nannie Helen Burroughs* (New York, 1995); Anderson, *Education of Blacks in the South*, 34-35; Eric Anderson and Alfred Moss, *Dangerous Donations: Northern Philanthropy and Southern Black Education, 1902-1930*. (Columbia, 1999); Johnetta Cross Brazzell, "Bricks Without Straw: Missionary-Sponsored Black Higher Education in the Post-Emancipation Era" *Journal of Higher Education* 63 (1992): 26-49; William Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education: Ideology and Power in America, 1865-1954* (New York, 2001).

central in creating a black educated class, by 1910, Florida institutions still had not produced one African American woman graduate at the college level.<sup>6</sup>

By devaluing anything black, particularly degrees from historically black colleges and universities, and limiting black enrollment at predominantly white institutions, older white northern colleges maintained their claim as elite, “superior” institutions. The same tactic was used in southern schools: the exclusion of black students from well-established state schools like the University of Florida and Florida State supported claims of superiority even as whites denied the rich legacy and academic contributions of black schools.

Studies conducted by W.E.B. Du Bois and Augustus Dill in 1900 and 1910 revealed very limited college and university access for black students in the South. By 1910, 658 black women and 2,450 black men had graduated from institutions designated as colleges. Black schools that qualified in the ranking included Atlanta University, Bennett, Fisk, Howard, Lincoln (Pennsylvania), Shaw, and Wilberforce. College opportunities for Florida’s native-born blacks were especially abysmal. Blacks born in other states had a comparative advantage in college graduation. Most of the graduates in the 1910 Atlanta study were born in Georgia (123 graduates) or North Carolina (115). Other states followed far behind in the number of graduates: Tennessee (68), Alabama (48), Louisiana (32), Mississippi (28), Kentucky (27), and Maryland (20). Only 7 blacks born in Florida had graduated from a ranked college by 1910.<sup>7</sup>

Charles Johnson’s 1938 study *The Negro College Graduate* revealed a continued lack of educational opportunity for black students in South Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. Johnson surveyed 5,512 college and professional school graduates (about 29 percent of living black college graduates—3,518 men and 1,994 women). Of this number, 3,331 revealed their birth state. Georgia had 513 black graduates, followed by Texas (443),

6. Du Bois and Dill, *College-Bred Negro Americans*, 46-47; Sheila Flemming, *The Answered Prayer to a Dream: Bethune Cookman College, 1904-1994* (Virginia Beach, 1995), 28; Betty Stewart-Dowdell and Kevin McCarty, *African Americans at the University of Florida*, (Gainesville, 2003), 55; “History,” Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University web site, <http://www.famu.edu/a&m.php?page=history> accessed October 1, 2005.

7. Du Bois and Dill, *College-Bred Negro American*, 46-47, 54-55.

## FIRST TO SEE DAYLIGHT

47

Virginia (388), Tennessee (253), Alabama (238), and Louisiana (231). By the late 1930s, only 74 African Americans born in Florida reported graduating from college. While the majority of black college graduates were indeed born in the South, very few hailed from Florida. Furthermore, while other states enjoyed a high number of black graduates as residents, only 94 black college graduates resided in Florida at that time, compared to 505 in Georgia, 413 in Texas, 335 in North Carolina, and 326 in Tennessee. Washington D.C. alone had 239 black graduates as residents, over two times the number in the whole state of Florida. Of the entire population of almost 20,000 graduates, Florida ranked sixth-lowest in state of residence.<sup>8</sup>

Between 1945 and 1958 eighty-five black students applied for admission to UF; all were denied admission. For example, in 1949, five students applied to UF: Virgil Hawkins (law), Rose Boyd (pharmacy), Benjamin Finley (agriculture), William Lewis (law), and Oliver Maxey (chemical engineering). None were admitted. The first successful black applicants would not be admitted until the late 1950s, thirty years after UF had graduated its first white female graduate in 1920 and over a century after its founding in 1853.

Daphne Beatrice Alexander Duval (now Duval-Williams), a native of Orlando, Florida, who earned three degrees from FAMU (high school, 1924; B.S. in mathematics, 1927; master of education 1959) became the first black woman to enroll at UF. After graduating from FAMU, she moved to Gainesville and taught at Lincoln High School, the only high school in town for blacks. Characterizing herself as “curious” and “ornery,” she successfully challenged racial segregation at UF and enrolled for classes in January 1959. Duval enrolled in the College of Education for several reasons: she wanted to continue her education, but did not want to commute to Tallahassee, and wanted to desegregate Florida schools like her cousin George Starke had done. Starke had graduated from Morehouse College in Atlanta and was admitted to UF’s Law School in the fall of 1958. He was the only black student on a campus of 12,000 and though he kept a low profile and did not report any overt resistance to his presence, he left after three months. Daphne Duval-Williams recalls attending UF in a

8. Charles Johnson, *The Negro College Graduate* (1938; reprint, New York, 1969), 10, 22-23, 42, 50.

similar uneventful manner and though she did not complete a degree program, she cleared the path for later students to graduate from UF.<sup>9</sup>

Duval-Williams learned to count from her grandmother who was formerly enslaved in Tallahassee and valued time spent with her grandfather, who constructed roads from South Carolina to Florida. Though her grandparents did not have the advantage of formal education, she credits them both with offering her more knowledge and technical training than she received in her early schooling. She married a local businessman, had three children, and was in her fifties when she first attended classes at UF. She had already earned her M.Ed., but was invested in showing that black students “had just as much gray matter as the white students.” Like black women scholars, teachers, and activists before her, Duval-Williams was a club woman: in 1938, she and four women founded the Visionaires Club in Gainesville; she was active in the Mt. Carmel Baptist Church; and she was involved in many advocacy groups locally and nationally. Duval-Williams passed her determination to advance educational opportunities for African Americans on to her three daughters, one of whom was the first to earn a doctorate from the University of Miami and the other of whom (also a math major), worked for NASA in Washington D.C. before retiring home to live in Orlando. Interviewed in February 2006, a few months shy of her one-hundredth birthday, Daphne Duval-Williams demonstrated a sharp wit and mental determination that were perhaps as intense as when she bucked the Jim Crow system in the 1950s as a community activist who integrated the flagship state school.<sup>10</sup>

9. Duval-Williams, personal papers and interview, February 1, 2006, Orlando Florida. Copy of full interview will be available at the Samuel Proctor Oral History Collection in Fall 2006. Stewart-Dowdell and McCarthy, *African Americans at the University of Florida*, 55; Maxine Jones, “Black Women in Florida, 1920-1950” in Colburn and Landers (Eds.) *African American Heritage of Florida*, (Gainesville, 1995), 264.
10. Information provided in interviews with Daphne Duval-Harrison and her two daughters Dr. Daphne Duval-Harrison and Sally Duval Richmond, January 22-February 1, 2006. Duval-Williams was honored by the Gainesville Chapter of the Links in “Women as Bearers of Culture” ceremony, commemorative program dated Sunday, March 25, 2001. See also, “Jones High Alumni Reminisce,” *The Orlando Times*, December 21, 1995 and “Desegregation of UF: Black Pioneers Marched Bravely into History,” *The Gainesville Sun*, September 18, 1998.

Black women were making significant strides in higher education after 1954; however, as with past times and historic places, they were simultaneously being held back in frightening ways. Though there were increased opportunities to attend college after the Supreme Court *Brown v. Board* case, and black women slowly broke barriers, their success was mediated by everyday tragedy. Even while at institutions like FAMU—which were centers of hope and communal growth—black women were subject to social terror. In a stunning example, the same year Duval-Williams successfully enrolled at UF in Gainesville, Betty Jean Owens, a FAMU student, was kidnapped while sitting in a car with classmates and repeatedly raped by four white Tallahassee men. In contrast to the popular rhetoric of American meritocracy, college attendance often failed to guarantee professional advancement, economic security, or even offer basic safety for African Americans. Still, black students pursued higher education and sought to improve their chances of success against all odds.<sup>11</sup>

In summary, college attendance in Florida was an arduous journey for black women. Antebellum college degree attainment for African Americans was slightly greater in the North. After Emancipation, the proliferation of historically black colleges and universities allowed the southern region to generate the most black college graduates, before the admission of blacks to graduate schools produced a shift to the North in the 1920s. At the same time, while most college graduates came from the South, access to college and professional school was scarce in Florida, and opportunities for graduate study was non-existent in the region. Until the 1960s, northern universities like Chicago, Pennsylvania, and Yale provided the only substantial access for black Ph.D.s.

The historical record of the first black students at Florida's predominantly white state institutions shows that most schools admitted a few black students in their inaugural classes because the schools were opened in the mid-1960s, after UF and Florida State University (FSU) had already begun to desegregate. Institutional research offices provided the following dates for admitting Black students:

---

11. Danielle L. McGuire's "It Was like All of Us Had Been Raped": Sexual Violence, Community Mobilization, and the African American Freedom Struggle," *Journal of American History* (December 2004): 906-931.

## 50 FLORIDA HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

UF	1958 (law school), 1959 (College of Education), by 1962 (7 undergraduates)
FSU	1962 Florida State University
USF	1964 University of South Florida
FAU	1964 Florida Atlantic University
UCF	1968 University of Central Florida

Though there was attrition in the first contingent of black students at each institution, black graduates nonetheless trickled out of Florida's colleges as surely as they trickled in. At least two black undergraduates earned degrees in 1965: Stephen Mickle from UF and Maxwell Courtney from FSU. In the early years of access, there was not much gender disparity in the enrollment or graduation numbers; for black women and men, enrollment was in the single digits until the 1970s.

Faculty appointments generally became available in the 1970s as well, and there was not much gender disparity there either because the numbers for both men and women were also in the single digits. The first noted faculty in the Florida State University System (FSUS), outside of FAMU, came in 1966, when Eva Pride was appointed as assistant professor at the University of South Florida. In 1969, her husband, Richard Pride, also joined the faculty at USF.<sup>12</sup>

Though the number of black students in the United States increased significantly between the 1970s and 2000, the annual percentages of national enrollment fluctuated. In 1976, black men represented 8.1 percent of the total national college enrollment, while black women represented 10.8 percent. The changes in national numbers over the next few decades were as follows:

	1976	1980	1990	2000
Black men (%)	8.1	7.9	7.7	9.5
Black women (%)	10.8	10.3	10.1	12.7

In Florida, the numbers continued to be well below the national average. By the fall semester of 2004, African American students at predominantly white institutions in the Florida State University System averaged only 8.9 percent. Well over a century after African

12. "A Dynasty of Pride - 40 Years of Memories," University of South Florida, University Relations. <http://usfweb2.usf.edu/history/pride.html> accessed October 12, 2005.

Americans first gained access to higher education at Oberlin College in Ohio, black students were finally allowed to desegregate the FSUS. The slow but steady increase over the following decades led to a much improved participation rate, but the current numbers also demonstrate that educational equity still eludes blacks in much of the South.

By 2003, only 17 percent of black Americans 25 years or older reported having a bachelor's degree or more, compared to 27.6 percent of whites. Further, the disparity between black women and men was far wider than the national average. Black women had a 1.3 percent enrollment advantage over black men, while the national average showed that all men had an overall enrollment rate of 1.1 percent over all women. Regionally, the South was the least likely to produce college graduates: 25.5 percent compared to the Northeast (30.3 percent), Midwest (26 percent), or the West (28.7 percent). Southern black women favorably compared to southern black men in educational attainment, despite their relative social and economic disadvantages. Regardless of that attainment, black women in Florida still lagged behind the national and regional levels.<sup>13</sup>

University of Florida is the largest campus in the state university system. Though it was among the earliest to break the color barrier, racial relations have been rocky and growth has not been consistent. Many campuses nationwide saw a black student enrollment explosion in 1968, which resulted in student demands for inclusion in curriculum and for cultural representation in campus spaces. In the 1970s, there was a much-noted UF student protest that reflected this national sentiment. Ten days after "Black Thursday," a student walkout on April 15, 1971, over lack of fair treatment and access, 123 Black students withdrew from UF in protest against the racist campus climate. Since the 1970s, there has been much fluctuation, and the newer campuses of the state university system in Florida struggle to increase enrollment numbers for black students much as the more established campuses did in the initial phases of desegregation.<sup>14</sup>

13. NCES Digest of Educational Statistics Tables and Figures 2003, Table 209; Nicole Stoops, *Educational Attainment in the United States* (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003), 3-6.

14. Stewart-Dowdell and McCarthy, *African Americans at the University of Florida*, 75-76.

At the University of Florida, the percentage of black students has declined in recent years, hitting a low in fall 2004 of less than 7 percent enrollment. Despite low black enrollment, UF ranks high in the prestigious Association of American Universities (AAU)'s listing of Public and Private Top Schools in terms of degrees awarded to black students. In 2001, UF ranked third in the AAU member schools in number of bachelor's degrees awarded (435 degrees), ninth for master's degrees (110), thirteenth for doctorates (13), and fourth in granting professional degrees (52) to African American graduates. By 2003-04, UF had taken the number-two spot for bachelor's degrees (615) and tied fourth for doctorates (24) awarded to African Americans at the top schools. In overall degrees awarded to black students by AAU members, UF ranked first in the nation. Though UF's high ranking on the list for the numbers of black graduates speaks well for the State of Florida, it also demonstrates the dismally low number of black graduates from America's top-ranked schools. Nonetheless, within the Florida State University System, UF did demonstrate a superior ability to retain its black students. Of the black first-time-in-college category, UF held 84.6 percent of its third-year students, compared to lower retention rates at other schools (the lowest was FAU's 59.37 percent).<sup>15</sup>

The state institutions with the highest percentages of black enrollment are Florida International (13 percent), Florida Atlantic (12 percent), Florida State (12 percent), and South Florida (11 percent). In terms of raw numbers, five schools enrolled over 4,000 black students each year: South Florida (4,817 in 2003), Florida State (4,491), Florida International (4,475), and Florida Atlantic (4,247). In terms of 2004 degrees awarded at predominantly white institutions, Florida State produced the most black graduates (963), followed by Florida International (862), University of Florida (840), University of South Florida (749), and Florida Atlantic (731). Significantly, UF produced the highest number of Ph.D.s (24) and the highest number of professional degrees (90) in the state. FAMU was the next-highest producer in both categories (17 Ph.D.s and 79 professional degrees). As for percentages of total degrees awarded to black students, Florida Atlantic topped the list at 15 percent, followed by Florida

15. Table IX-6, State University System 2003-04; Table IX-12 State University System 2001-02; Table IX-8 2003-04 Association of American Universities.

International (13 percent), Florida State (11 percent), and North Florida (11 percent) (see table B). Not surprisingly, FAMU had the highest black enrollment (13,067) as well as the highest percentage (93 percent) and number (12,213) of black graduates.<sup>16</sup>

The predominantly white institutions in the state system each have a unique history, vision, and purpose. These different institutional flavors may indeed impact black enrollment and employment. There are numerous variables regarding academic interest, location, local history, and historical era of founding that also impact campus demographics. Each college and university must deal with unique challenges to attracting a diverse campus body in addition to the broader aspect of being a predominantly white institution. For example, the types and number of degrees awarded may influence students' campus choice. University of Central Florida (UCF) and University of South Florida lead in the number of education degrees awarded while UF granted almost a third of the total degrees the Florida State University System awarded in engineering. Business management was by far the most popular degree at UCF, and it surpassed all other degrees awarded in the system. These types of statistics for degrees awarded have implication for both racial and gender student participation—given the disparity in academic disciplines—which could inevitably influence student enrollment numbers.<sup>17</sup>

It is important to note that in the Florida State University System, each institution's tuition cost is comparable. The actual cost varies, but not by more than \$200.00 per year. However, the cost of living in a certain location (Boca Raton or Miami versus Tallahassee or Gainesville) may be prohibitive and may greatly impact students' ability to afford a college in a certain location. Lastly, the demographics of a certain area may influence college choice. Student perception of alienation can be grounded in the broad variance of actual black populations in the myriad of Florida campus location host cities.<sup>18</sup>

16. Florida State University System (FSUS) *Fact Book 2003-04* <http://www.fldcu.org/factbook/default.asp> accessed September 30, 2005.

17. FSUS *Fact Book 2004-2005*, "Degrees Granted by Discipline and Institution," [http://www.fldcu.org/factbook/2004-2005/pdf/t29\\_00\\_0405\\_f.pdf](http://www.fldcu.org/factbook/2004-2005/pdf/t29_00_0405_f.pdf) accessed May 17, 2006.

18. See FSUS *Fact Book 2005-2006*, "Tuition and Fees," <http://www.flbog.org/factbook/quickfacts.asp#tuition> accessed May 17, 2006.

The three smaller historically black colleges and universities—Bethune-Cookman, Edward Waters, and Florida Memorial—have contributed significantly to the overall number of black college students in the state of Florida. Enrollment at each school varied (Bethune-Cookman College 2,505 in 2003; Edward Waters 1,206; Florida Memorial 1,985), and the colleges enjoyed a higher percentage of black students. Unquestionably, the largest and most significant contributing factor to black college and university student enrollment and graduation rates in the state is Florida A&M. FAMU has been recognized for its achievement in black education: the school ranked third on the 2001 *Black Enterprise* “Top 50 Colleges for Black Students” list and sixth in 2003. The institution also ranked first in 2003 and 2004 on the *Black Issues in Higher Education* list of “African American Baccalaureate Top 50.” As in other southern states, without historically black colleges and universities black college enrollment would be virtually nonexistent, which partially explains attacks on these institutions by those who have opposed social advancement for African Americans. But even with their contributions, black enrollment and graduation numbers in Florida are tragic, a situation that is exacerbated by severe gender disparities.<sup>19</sup>

The gender divide of African American students in Florida reflects both historic and national discrepancies. As previously stated, black women’s enrollment routinely surpasses that of black men. In the Florida system’s Fall 2004 head count, there were 25,479 black women; this constituted 9.1 percent of the total 277,582 student population. There were only 14,681 black men (5.2 percent). While both numbers were well below the national average, the low enrollment of black men reflects the continuing, alarming trend of black men’s absence from college. FAMU enrolled 7,178 black women and 5,035 black men. Six of the other Florida state institutions enrolled between 3,500 and 4,800 black students. At each of these schools, without exception, black women students outnumbered black men by at least 1,000 in enrollment. At New College, of the 691 total student enrollment, there are 11 black women and no black men enrolled. The demographic character of each institution surely influences

19. *Black Enterprise* <http://blackenterprise.com/> and *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* (formerly *Black Issues in Higher Education*) <http://www.diverseeducation.com/> accessed October 1, 2005.

black students' attendance choices; but there are larger environmental factors that impact the gender divide in state college enrollment.<sup>20</sup>

When considering the historic state and national trends of law enforcement, it is easy to see that black men have been systematically tracked into the prison system, which has had a devastating effect on their numbers in college. In the awful legacy of lynching, black men have been demonized as a threat and railroaded into incarceration. In 1995, there were 16,208 black women enrolled in the Florida state system and 9,964 black men. That same year there were 1,998 black women in the Florida state prison system compared to 33,986 black men. A decade later, black women's college attendance increased to 25,479 (+9,271) and black men's to 14,681 (+4,717). Conversely, by 2004, black women's state prison population had increased to 2,171 (+173) and black men's state prison population reached 40,259 (+6,273). Though the percentage of increase in Florida's prison system was much higher for women than men, the raw numbers demonstrate the overwhelming barriers to educational attainment faced by black men and the stalled rate of increase in their college attendance. These numbers are not surprising considering that Florida has consistently ranked in the top third in the U.S. Department of Justice's Statistics Report for the highest number of inmates, but it does reveal a situation that the Florida State University System must contend with if diversity initiatives are to be realized. Arguments for blacks' greater capacity for criminal behavior are easily dismissed when considering the individual, social, and institutional history of white criminal behavior towards African Americans, especially in the South.<sup>21</sup>

In context, Florida is only one of many states suffering from the race/gender attainment disparity: the gender divide is also apparent in the state of Georgia. For example, in all state institutions for the Fall semester of 2004, there were 40,043 black women

20. FLSUS *Fact Book 2003-2004* <http://www.fldcu.org/factbook/default.asp> accessed September 30, 2005.

21. FLSUS *Fact Book 2003-2004* <http://www.fldcu.org/factbook/default.asp> accessed September 30, 2005; Postsecondary Education *Opportunity*, 1-4; Bureau of Justice Statistics *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics 2003*, 535; Florida Department of Corrections *2003-04 Annual Report*, page 36 and Inmate Population Table; Bureau of Justice Statistics *Bulletin*, April 2003, 1; Bureau of Justice Statistics *Bulletin*, April 2005, 1.

enrolled and only 18,714 black men. However, viable solutions are available. In 2003, Georgia took action to redress race-based discrepancies in educational access. The Georgia Board of Regents instituted a state-wide competitive grant program that distributes \$200,000 to winning proposals that sought to measurably increase black male college participation in the state. Between 2003 and 2005, there was a 13% jump in black men's college attendance. The African-American Male Initiative (AAMI), which awards grants between \$15,000 and \$30,000 demonstrates an understanding that corrective state-funded measures are warranted to overturn historic state-supported racist admissions policies and disproportionate incarceration rates.<sup>22</sup>

Though black men have historically attended higher-ranked colleges, attained far more graduate and professional degrees, and earned more prominent positions with higher salaries than black women, black women's college attendance consistently surpassed black men's. Since the mid-1800s, black women like those cited in Mary Church Terrell's autobiography, *A Colored Woman in a White World* (1940), have commented in editorials and their memoirs about the difficulty of finding "suitable" men in their same educational class. The numbers continue to be incongruent, and though there are problematic class assumptions in black women's narratives, the discourse regarding finding a mate with the same education persists. The numbers demonstrate that the crisis of black men's systematic imprisonment, which gained much attention in the mid-1990s, has worsened.<sup>23</sup>

For many women, finding a mate is the least of one's worries when striving to earn a college, graduate, or professional degree at a predominantly white institution. Historically, black collegiate women have suffered much: from racialized sexual harassment and violent intimidation; racial segregation and stigmatized separation; stereotypes that presume black and female intellectual inferiority; lack of role models and professional mentors; feminization

22. "USG Funds Partnerships to Enhance Black Male Participation in, Preparation for Higher Education." Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. Press Release, November 10, 2005. Office of Strategic Research and Analysis <http://www.usg.edu/sra/> accessed January 16, 2006. See also African-American Male Initiative: Creating a More Educated Georgia website <http://www.usg.edu/aami/> accessed January 16, 2006.

23. Mary Church Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World*. 1940. Reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1980.

of poverty; and intense pressure to be family and community caretaker at the expense of individual development. Each of these factors has worked against black women's college degree attainment and impacts their will to persevere through academically and socially challenging courses of study at universities that were at best unwelcoming and at worst hostile.

Black women's scholarship has increased significantly since the 1980s, when a boom of scholarship by and about black academic women bolstered knowledge about their intellectual heritage. Unfortunately, that body of scholarship has not reached the mainstream in many areas of the South. Campus climates did not even allow black people to enroll until the 1960s, making cultural paradigm shifts a continuing struggle. Although many black student unions were founded in the 1960s and 1970s alongside Black Studies programs, the body of knowledge that has been developed from these endeavors needs institutionalization in order to combat the marginalization of black scholars and African American scholarship. Black men and black women have qualitatively different barriers in higher education, but the overall lack of numbers in college enrollment translates into a lack of trained professors prepared to replace the rapidly retiring professorate and uphill battle for institutional diversity at all levels.

As of 2004, there were 157 black women and 258 black men tenured in the Florida State University System. The gender and racial breakdown was as follows:

Race	Black	White	Hispanic	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Native American
Women of FSUS tenured women)	157 (11%)	1,142 (79%)	73 (5%)	70 (5%)	9 (.06%)
Men of FSUS tenured men)	258 (6%)	3,571 (82%)	163 (4%)	358 (8%)	9 (.02%)

The total number of tenured faculty in the Florida system is 5,810: 1,451 women and 4,359 men. The disparities are obvious, reflecting the national underrepresentation of minorities and women in

tenured, senior faculty positions. But here, as in the student population, race and gender impact access and opportunity in complex ways. For example, FAMU employs over 200 of the 415 tenured black faculty in the state, again demonstrating the lack of substantial integration of black scholars at Florida's colleges and universities.

As of 2005, the number of black faculty in the Florida State University System was limited:

UF	86 ranked black faculty; 46 tenured (18 women, 28 men)
FSU	55 ranked black faculty (26 women, 29 men); 27 tenured
FAMU	405 ranked black faculty, 299 total tenured (all races)
USF	84 ranked black faculty (47 women, 37 men); 38 tenured (20 women, 18 men)
FAU	51 ranked black faculty (29 women, 22 men); 22 tenured (8 women, 14 men)
UWF	11 ranked black faculty (University of West Florida)
UCF	60 ranked black faculty; 26 tenured (12 women, 14 men)
FIU	53 minority faculty (Florida International University)
UNF	27 ranked black faculty (University of North Florida)
FGCU	12 ranked black faculty (7 women, 5 men); 12 tenured (Florida Gold Coast University)
NEW	11 minority faculty (New College of Florida)

Clearly there is a paucity of ranked and tenured black faculty. But, the number of black women full professors in the state is also appallingly low: FAMU has 37 black women tenured as full professors and 128 black men tenured at that level. Considering that nationwide, there were only 1,916 black women tenured as full professors in 2003-04, the numbers are not surprising. There are 3,427 black men tenured as full professors in the nation, demonstrating again the depth of complexity in assessing racial and gender access to higher education, degree attainment, and professional development.

The number of tenured faculty in the neighboring state of Georgia again demonstrates the lack of diversity within regional

higher education demographics. In 2002 there were a total of 7,659 faculty tenured in the state of Georgia's nineteen major universities. Of these there were 637 black faculty; a graphic demonstration of the fact that historical legacies of racial disenfranchisement are difficult to overcome. The complexity of gender in higher education becomes clear when considering the precarious position that black women academics hold. The superior student numbers for women have not, as of yet, translated into equitable faculty appointments or comparable rank and tenure awards.<sup>24</sup>

In summary, black students, both men and women have historically been barred from predominantly white institutions in the Florida State University System. Though representation has significantly increased since the 1960s, the numbers are not nearly representative of the state's black population, which in the 2000 Census showed a Florida population of 78% white and 14.6% African American; the gender dynamic further complicates the racial discrepancies in varied ways. Segregation of public institutions in the state permeated education at all levels. When black students gained access to Florida's predominantly white institutions, black women students enjoyed significantly greater access to higher education than black men. Though the combination of race and gender subjugation has made black women's collegiate experiences rocky, black women's enrollment and graduation numbers far outpace black men's. With very few exceptions, in all races, at all levels, women are either on par or slightly above men in college enrollment and degrees earned. The disparity between the numbers of black women and men, however, is drastic. On the whole, with the exception of the one state school that is a historically black institution; black students' enrollment and graduation rates are disturbing.<sup>25</sup>

Although black women dominate black men in the student ranks, black women's faculty numbers are consistently lower than black men's. Black women's college enrollment has been higher

---

24. Office of Strategic Research and Analysis. <http://www.usg.edu/sra/faculty/rg02.phtml> accessed January 16, 2006. State colleges and two-year colleges in Georgia were not included in this count.

25. Tana Mosier Porter, "Segregation and Desegregation in Parramore: Orlando's African American Community" *Florida Historical Quarterly*. (Winter 2004): 289-313; Jason Blake, "The Integration of Stetson University" *Florida Historical Quarterly* (Spring 2004): 469-485. Florida's 2000 Census lists a 14.6% Black population compared to 12.3% nationally. See U.S. Census Bureau <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/12000.html> (accessed May 17, 2006).

than black men's since the early twentieth century, but by 1995, black men had earned 30,000 Ph.D.s compared to black women's 20,000. Moreover, this trend of black women holding fewer academic positions, while being relegated to junior ranks, and receiving tenure in lower numbers, is unyielding. These developments, coupled with the tracking of black men into prison and away from college, demonstrate that black Floridians experience different barriers because of the relationship of gender to race.

According to university records, desegregation of Florida's predominantly white institutions first took place at the University of Florida. However, black students at UF entered through the law school and extension or night courses before being allowed to join the undergraduate population in the mid-1960s. Of Florida's ten state predominantly white institutions, eight were founded in the 1960s or after. Most incorporated black undergraduate students from their inception, even if only in small numbers. In the two predominantly white institutions founded in the nineteenth century, University of Florida (1853) and Florida State (1857), Jim Crow segregation barred black students or faculty for the first century. Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, founded in 1887, began as and has remained the pillar of black collegiate inclusion for the state.

FAMU consistently ranks high in national lists of top schools for black students. However, even beyond FAMU, Florida's State University System as a whole is a relatively strong national leader in black enrollment, graduation, and faculty. Despite the lag in significant numbers, the recent decline in black student enrollment, and the decade-long plateau in tenured black faculty numbers, Florida's university system has much to offer in black higher education access. By looking back at historical developments, researchers and policy analysts can find examples of wrong paths in education, but they can also find gems in stories of successes to be built upon.

Overall, black women in Florida's institutions of higher education are statistically marginalized; however, their varied presence offers much potential for the state system to reflect and reevaluate goals, challenges, and successes in serving Floridians. Kitty Oliver's autobiography points to areas to be explored when considering black women's collegiate participation.

Now that the larger picture has been outlined, I propose that future research use historic women's experiences to gather more information about higher education for African Americans in Florida. Daphne Duval-Williams' story shows that oral history can

be a valuable source in recording the experiences of this demographic. Further, Oliver's narrative provides a guide to how researchers might explore black women's qualitative experience in Florida higher education. Areas of inquiry about racial and gendered factors of collegians should include:

- Family background (ethnicity, location, education, economic)
- Motivations and expectations in choice to attend or teach at a predominantly white institutions instead of an historically black colleges and universities
- Inter- and intra-racial relations regionally and nationally
- Historic era in which students attend and age of the student
- Campus social climate (dating, housing, co-curricular activities, or faculty mentoring)
- Classroom and curricular developments
- Disciplinary interests and career goals
- Personal and professional outcomes of choosing to attend a predominantly white institution

These questions can partially be answered by oral histories that have already been collected in the very rich campus archives, and additional interviews can be conducted to gather the details of a generation that is still very much unknown in the historical record. These narratives will add a qualitative mosaic to the quantitative data set provided here to reveal intricacies of black women's college and professional experiences. After collection of these narratives takes place, comparison with first-wave integrationists from other regions and other historical eras can be made. For example, Oliver's memoir can be compared to others offered by black women collegians such as Fanny Jackson Coppin, Mary Church Terrell, Anna Julia Cooper, and Pauli Murray. Individual, generational, and regional distinctions can further delineate what it means to be a black college woman in order to draw conclusions about college and employment choice. These narratives must be supplemented by gathering black men's stories of college participation.<sup>26</sup>

Further, institutional research in the Florida state university data system should be analyzed to better understand race and gender disparities in faculty salaries and representation in academic

---

26. For samples of these memoirs, see Stephanie Y. Evans, chapter on Black women's autobiography in *Black Women in the Ivory Tower, 1850-1954: An Intellectual History*, forthcoming from University Press of Florida.

disciplines. In order to identify specific areas needed for improvement, a better grasp of statewide discrepancies will be useful. Additionally, race and gender gaps in staff and administrative participation must also be considered. Black women's limited access to institutional leadership positions shows more shadows than sunshine in Florida. In addition to collection of oral histories and institutional considerations, explorations of the ethnic background of black college populations will be fruitful. Florida's rich history of national and racial intersections provides a unique backdrop for understanding ethnic diversity within the African Diaspora.

As a final point, research must address how gender affects race in higher education. The legacy of Dr. Ronald McNair is being lost daily. McNair, a laser-physicist and astronaut from segregated South Carolina, significantly contributed to the intellectual fabric of the United States. His intellectual sons are corralled in prisons at great cost to humanity. The nation and the world are denied the brilliance of black men because of a dated tradition of institutionalized racism. Vilification of black men is ingrained, knee-jerk, pervasive, and deadly. Conscious and deliberate action is necessary to stop and reverse this long-standing trend.

Conversely, because of the biological role of child-bearing, black women and their children still represent a disproportionate number of working-class citizens who survive below poverty level. In Florida, nine percent of male-headed families were below the poverty line in 2001; over 25 percent of female-headed families were below the poverty line. Supporting women who traditionally bear the brunt of poverty is essential. Further, advancing education at the elementary and secondary levels is essential to the growth of college enrollment and to the relative relief from poverty that higher education provides. Though gender dynamics differ, both black men and black women need increased educational and employment opportunities; it is not an either/or proposition. Initiatives like the Upward Bound program, which helps high school students prepare for college and the Ronald E. McNair Scholars program, which helps college students prepare for graduate school are essential in closing the gaps in higher education. Like the nation, the state citizenry is only as great as the least advantaged among us.

The drop in black enrollment in Florida's state schools has made national news. The ramifications of the lack of diversity are duly noted by leaders like UF's president Bernard Machen. As the leaders of educational institutions have recognized since the mid-1980s,

diversity equals excellence, and many schools in the South are behind the curve. But beyond sheer numbers, Florida schools must recruit black students and faculty to advance scholarship that employ diverse experiences, theories, frameworks, and epistemologies. The Ivy League and Top 10 schools that Florida system institutions are competing against have long-standing African American Studies departments and other well-developed ethnic studies areas. Currently, there are six Ph.D. programs in African American Studies: Michigan State, Harvard, Berkeley, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and Temple. Northeastern just founded their doctoral program last year and Yale's interdisciplinary Black Studies doctoral program is also quite successful. The field is growing, but no doctoral programs for Black Studies yet exist in the South. The scholarly inquiry of race and gender studies is one measure of an institution's academic weight; Florida's advancement of graduate studies of marginalized populations can impact academic understanding and social relations both on and off campus, which will in turn impact national ranking. Additionally, Florida's historically black colleges and universities offer much guidance and leadership in race studies. Sustainable and mutually beneficial partnerships must be developed between the state's historically black colleges and universities and predominantly white institutions.<sup>27</sup>

Black women's participation in the Florida State University System serves as a valuable perspective from which to evaluate and measure what is "higher" about higher education. This intersection of race and gender provides an instructive narrative of persistence, oppression, exclusion, contribution, and creative resistance that makes the Sunshine State, the South, and the country shine a bit brighter. For Oliver and the first wave of black college graduates in the Florida university system, being among the "first to see daylight" meant a struggle for comparable access. For Florida's state institutions of higher education, seeing daylight means continuing to develop sustained relationships with African Americans who desire equitable opportunities. Those individuals seeking entry to academe face challenges; those institutions seeking excellence are, perhaps, challenged just as much.

---

27. Kimberly Miller, "Fewer Black Freshman Enrolling at Florida Universities" *Palm Beach Post* September 27, 2005; Peter Schmidt, "Public Colleges in Florida and Kentucky Try to Account for Sharp Drops in Black Enrollments" *Chronicle of Higher Education*