

“Race Women” and Reform: Cleveland, Ohio, 1900 – 1940

Regennia N. Williams

African American women in Cleveland, Ohio, like their sisters across the country, worked tirelessly in the early twentieth century to help improve the quality of life for members of their communities. Through their involvement in public and private organizations, they stressed the need for educational and other reforms and their desire to “uplift the race.” Mary Brown Martin (1877 – 1939) was one of these reform-minded Cleveland women. In 1929 she became the “first Negro to be elected to the Cleveland Board of Education,” and that is usually the extent of the discussion of the significance of her life included in most historical texts.

The reasons for the paucity of historical studies on Martin become clear when one examines her “manuscript collection” at the Western Reserve Historical Society, which consists of a single scrapbook, containing news articles, speeches and correspondence. A close examination of a variety of other sources related to African Americans, women, and reform issues, however, reveals more details of Martin’s complex life within the context of the social history of the community in which she lived and worked. Over time, she became an advocate for educational and other reforms and a popularly elected school leader.

Her election to what was viewed as a powerful and influential position in the educational arena came at a time when women and African Americans were routinely denied opportunities in education and public service, especially in the American South. Martin’s victory in an overwhelmingly white Northern city begs a number of questions about African Americans in Cleveland: Was there anything in her background that would have predicted her success? What organizations did she belong to? Who made up her power base? As an African American woman, how was she able to mobilize broad-based citywide support, not just for her initial 1929 victory, but also for her successful re-election to the board in 1933 and 1939? Finally, in matters of education, did her presence on the board make a positive difference in the lives of her African American constituents? The answers to these questions reveal much about “race women” and would-be educational and social reformers in this era.

Martin can accurately be described as a “race woman,” because of her concerted efforts to identify and support causes that would provide immediate and direct benefits to African Americans. Initially, she appeared to be an unlikely candidate for this position. In the segregated society of Martin’s day, the ideas of “race men” were more likely to be debated publicly and privately when it came to matters related to public education. Harvard-educated William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, for example, as a champion of civil, political, social, educational, and economic rights for all, often found himself at odds with Tuskegee Institute founder Booker T. Washington, a leader celebrated for his work to provide practical or vocational education for the masses of African Americans. While engaged in this controversy, Du Bois saw his work as nothing less than part an overall effort to help African Americans attain “self-conscious manhood.”¹

A well-educated contemporary, educator Anna Julia Cooper found it more than a little confusing that these leaders and others in America were willing to define the “race problem” as one that could only be debated and resolved among the men of the day, whether those men were African American or white. Cooper, who argued that as natural born nurturers, women were endowed with the skills to teach the world about the “masculine and feminine side of truth,” summed up her feelings on women and racial uplift in her book, *A Voice From the South*,

Only the BLACK WOMAN can say where and when I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole Negro race enters with me.²

Cooper was hardly alone in recognizing the role that women could play in improving the lot of African Americans. She and contemporaries like journalist and civil rights activist Ida B. Wells Barnett and Cleveland’s Mary Brown Martin helped revolutionize African American social and political thought through their teaching, writing, and activism.³

By the mid 1990s, a rich body of scholarship on African American women’s activism was available. These works describe, among other things, the nascent women’s movement in turn-of-the century America and how it affected the growing activism among women in cities like Cleveland.⁴ In *Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves*, Deborah Gray White explains that the message of the leadership of one of these groups, the National Association of Colored Women, was unashamedly feminist,

although they did allow time for social activities.⁵

In a similar fashion, Stephanie Shaw's study of the lives of about eighty African American women describes not only their awareness of the negative impact of racism and sexism, but also their determination not to be overtaken by these factors. Shaw explained their training for leadership and service in this manner:

[T]he developmental process undertaken by these women (or seen another way, the process that overcame them) was a social rather than a private matter—one in which parents and grandparents, teachers and preachers, community leaders and community lessers worked together, quite consciously, to enhance individual development in a manner that regularly demonstrated, frequently demanded, and often yielded individual postures of collective consciousness and social responsibility.⁶

Mary B. Martin was certainly conscious of the role that she could play in transforming her society, and she willingly accepted the responsibility for such work in voluntary associations in Cleveland.

Martin formed alliances with other African American women, including Jane Edna Hunter, founder of the Phillis Wheatley Association (PWA). Hunter's aggressive but non-abrasive style helped secure financial support for programs targeting African American working women and girls. Among those serving on the various committees of the PWA, Mary B. Martin exemplified the kind of refined, educated, "cultured" female person of color that Hunter counted on for support throughout her tenure as executive director of the PWA. Hunter, a former nurse, worked continually with women's, religious, race, and political organizations (usually Republican) while strengthening ties with the non-African American community.⁷

From the numerous references to details of Martin's family life in African American and mainstream newspapers, it is evident that many observers were concerned about her ability to maintain her household and raise her children, while she was nurturing other members of her community.⁸ She was married to attorney Alexander H. Martin, and together they worked with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Negro Welfare Association (NWA), and the Playhouse Settlement. The

Martins were the parents of four children: Alexander, Jr., Sarah, Lydia, and Stuart.⁹ Martin was, no doubt, aware of the fact that even some race leaders put “femininity before feminism,” and information about her family was frequently highlighted in campaign materials and news articles during her years on the Cleveland Board of Education.¹⁰

An alumna of Cleveland’s Central High School (class of 1900), Martin also attended the Cleveland Normal School of Western Reserve University and subsequently taught school in Alabama and Arkansas. She expressed her interest in politics very early in her adult life. Long active in Cleveland’s suffrage movement, she welcomed the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920. Martin’s daughter Sarah M. Pereira recalled that one of her mother’s favorite sayings was: “If a woman is good enough to be the mother of the president, she is good enough to vote.”¹¹

Long before Martin was persuaded that her training and experiences had prepared her for service on the school board, Clevelanders were conscious of the struggles and triumphs of certain reform-minded members of the African American community, and were aware that their stories were worth telling. In the spring of 1902, the *Plain Dealer* newspaper asked George A. Myers, a successful African American businessman, to prepare an article on Cleveland’s African community. Myers’ article suggested that the more than 50 years of integrated schooling in Cleveland had opened the doors of opportunity for many African Americans in search of an education. Myers noted, for example, that the most recent federal census reported that there were “649 [African American] males and 752 females scattered throughout the various grades, the manual training, the high and normal schools.”¹²

In his description of this kind of labor Myers includes the work of members of the National Association of Colored Women, whose mission, according to Article Two of its constitution, was “to raise to the highest plane home, moral and civil life,” while living up to its motto: “Lifting as We Climb.” Myers devotes many column inches to a discussion of the work of the ten Colored Women’s Clubs belonging to the local federation. This federation included secular groups, like the Minerva Reading Club, which Martin belonged to, and those affiliated with churches, such as the Missionary Society of Mount Zion Congregational, longtime church home for the Martin family.¹³

The work of women in these organizations illustrates the central role of African Americans in religious affairs, social reform, and leadership

development. For example, the primary objective of the Minerva Reading Club was "self-culture [through] studies of the standard English authors after the manner planned in the high school course." However, they also had a department of music, which was designed to "encourage a taste for fine music," and they endorsed charitable giving by making monthly donations to the Home for Aged Colored People in Cleveland.¹⁴

The Mount Zion Missionary Society also worked to "keep in touch with the teacher in the southern school." This kind of activity highlighted an aspect of African American women's uplift ideology that distinguished their efforts from early twentieth-century white social workers and settlement house leaders.¹⁵ As Elizabeth Lasch-Quinn suggests in *Black Neighbors*, African American social reformers, unlike many of their white counterparts, recognized the centrality of the church in African American culture and did not try to separate religious work from secular reform activities.¹⁶

The African American press also made a point of documenting the activities of women's organizations in this era. In *The Cleveland Journal*, Bertha Blue wrote a regular column on "Women, and Things of Interest to Them." In 1905 she reported that the Cleveland Public Schools had "1,500 white teachers [and] eight colored." All of the African American teachers were assigned to elementary schools. There were five African American women on the substitute list. Blue, who was one of the eight teachers, believed that the number of full-time African American teachers should have been approximately 40, based on the numbers of African Americans in the city's population. Perhaps because she feared some type of retribution from school officials, she went on to state that, "[the low number of African American hires] is not at present the fault of the Board of Education." She did not, however, say who was to blame.¹⁷

In other issues of *The Cleveland Journal* in 1903, Blue wrote of plans to organize teachers into a musical and literary club and the pledge by the City Federation of Colored Women's Clubs to furnish coal for the Old Folks' home that winter. By the fall of 1903, Mrs. Carrie Clifford of Cleveland was the president of the Ohio State Federation of Colored Women. Blue's description of a meeting of this group held at the St. John's African Methodist Episcopal Church noted that, "The attendance was large, and seldom in Cleveland, has a more cultured or intelligent set of ladies met in a public meeting." These women advocated support for homes for wayward boys and girls, day nurseries, and senior citizens homes among other things.¹⁸

While most of their efforts to enlighten and uplift other African Americans took place in the local community, these leaders were also well aware of the work of race leaders at the national level, and they frequently took steps to interact with them socially and professionally. In January 1905, local African American women's organizations helped welcome Booker T. Washington to the city of Cleveland.¹⁹

Within a decade of Washington's visit, the "Great Black Migration" resulted in thousands of African Americans relocating to cities like Cleveland. For many migrants, improved educational opportunities were among the reasons for migrating north. The Bureau of the Census reported that in 1920 Cleveland led the nation in the percentage of African Americans ages 7-15 who were actually enrolled in school. "Report on Negro Migration and Its Effects," a study prepared for the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce, stated that Cleveland's African American population jumped from 8,448 in 1910 to 34,351 in 1920.²⁰

The wave of migration that made the population increase possible drew heavily from the states of the Deep South and was of particular concern for school officials. Thirty-nine percent of the African American children arriving in Cleveland between April 1921 and October 1923 came from Georgia and 19% from Alabama, two states where students tended to be "over age for grade," (according to national standards).²¹ By 1923, approximately 9,000 of Cleveland's 137,000 (approximately 6.5%) public school students were African American. These students were concentrated in schools on the city's east side. Of the system's 142 schools, six had enrollments that were more than 40% African American, and one elementary school, Rutherford B. Hayes, was more than 82% African American. Large numbers of African American students were enrolled in special classes for "mentally retarded" and "mentally deficient" children.²²

The committee's report offered three possible explanations to account for the large number of African American migrants needing the services of these special schools. First, those migrating from the South were "disadvantaged because of the lack of educational opportunities; secondly, low moral standards among Southern-bred Negroes; and finally, lack of incentive on the part of the Negro to improve himself."²³

By 1929, the migration had dramatically transformed Mary B. Martin's alma mater, Central High School, and the community around it. The student body, while showing traces of the diversity celebrated by poet Langston

Hughes in the description of his 1920 graduating class, was overwhelmingly African American and increasingly poor at the end of the decade.²⁴ There were 23 nationalities represented in a student body of 659 at the end of the 1928-29 academic year. This figure included 324 African Americans; 161 Russian, Hungarian, and Polish Jews; 68 American whites; and 58 Italians.²⁵ As the neighborhood continued to decline and the poverty rate among the student body increased, African American parents and community leaders increased their calls for improvements in the curriculum and the physical plant at Central.

This, then, was the backdrop against which Martin's political career developed.

In the spring of 1929, she obtained more than 2,000 signatures on her nominating petitions, and among the other groups endorsing her bid for election to the Cleveland Board of Education were the Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, the Cleveland Association of Colored Men, and the 17th Ward Republican Club. The 17th ward was one of the largest majority African American wards in the city. In 1929 it had 4,269 registered voters. Martin's candidacy was also endorsed by the General Federation of (white) Women's Clubs.²⁶

In the November election, Martin was the fourth highest vote-getter, having received a total of 54,985. She received more votes (10,129) than any other candidate in the largely African American near eastside wards.²⁷ Despite her impressive showing among whites on both sides of town, the African American *Gazette* proclaimed Martin "Our School-Board Member."²⁸

The election of this "race woman" to the board could not have come at a more challenging time. "Negro problems," including school segregation, were not on the board's list of top priorities during the Depression. Research by Willard C. Richan, author of "Racial Isolation in the Cleveland Public Schools," suggests, "In the early 1930s, virtually all Negro high school students in Cleveland attended three schools, with the highest concentration at Central High. Its enrollment in 1931 was 614 Negroes and 21 whites."²⁹

In the summer of 1932, the NAACP launched a formal protest against segregation and the discriminatory treatment of African American students in the schools. The group called for the removal of Principal Elbert C. Wixem from Central High School because he "was out of touch with the community and its problems and the school had retrograded scholastically and otherwise

during the seven years he [had] been principal.”³⁰ In that same year, and again in 1933, the NAACP Committee on Education charged that African American high school students were being forced to attend Central High School, even though other schools, with a superior physical plant, were serving the same geographic area.³¹ The NAACP also identified problems in the curriculum, support services and co-curricular activities of African American students.

Other complaints regarding the lack of employment opportunities for African Americans were heard at the national level. Despite significant reductions in the rate of illiteracy among African Americans since slavery, they were still concentrated in agriculture and domestic and personal services. In 1930, over 75% of the nation’s launderers and laundresses (not in laundries) were African Americans, and more than 68 percent of the cooks (other than in hotels, restaurants and boarding houses) were African American. Members of the NAACP were banking on the fact that more African American involvement in policy-making would improve this situation.³²

When Martin was elected to a second four-year term in November 1933, she received 95,431 votes to secure re-election as “member at large” of the Cleveland Board of Education.³³ The number of votes cast for Martin exceeded by 20,000 the total African American population in the city, once again demonstrating her ability to attract support from the wider community. As was the case in her first election, Martin received far more support (16,921 votes) in the predominantly African American eastside wards than any of the other 19 candidates. It also appears that Martin’s popularity with the white community was increasing. Only one candidate, Alfred A. Benesch received more votes than she did. During her second term, Martin continued to utilize the rather reserved and non-confrontational style that marked her first four years on the board.

In this second term, clubwoman and former Martin associate, Jane Edna Hunter and others also continued to stress the need for improved facilities for Central High School students. They submitted “a report of a study and findings of certain conditions affecting the Central High School” at the regular board meeting on April 9, 1934.³⁴ Beginning in the 1936-37 school year, even the reserved Martin had to respond to the persistent complaints from the NAACP and local African American media outlets about the treatment of African American students in the city’s schools, but especially those in the Central community. In 1937, the Cleveland Board of Education found itself at the center of a heated controversy involving the NAACP, the

Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, and others protesting what they perceived to be unfair Board policy of routinely labeling African American students "retarded." Articles in the *Call and Post* alleged "Too many students were enrolled at Longwood and Outhwaite schools. . . permanent dumping grounds for not only the average but also the mental deficient and slow-learning students."³⁵ Statistics from the Division of Reference and Research of the Cleveland Public Schools showed that the 9,000 Negro pupils were 6.6% of the total enrollment but over one-third (37.4%) of the children in the "over age for grade" classes, and 15.5% of the pupils in the classes for "mental defectives."³⁶

At the April 12, 1937 meeting of the Cleveland Board of Education, the Schools Committee of the NAACP presented a lengthy resolution demanding that the board discontinue the special activity schools, re-establish them as regular schools, and assign the students currently enrolled to the twenty-seven schools located within a two-mile radius of these schools by the start of the 1937-38 school year.³⁷ The NAACP proposal to close the two schools was defeated by a vote of four to three. Mary B. Martin was among those board members voting against the resolution.³⁸ As far as many NAACP members were concerned, Martin had betrayed the trust of both the organization that whole-heartedly supported her candidacy and the African American students in the schools. For her part, Mary, a former teacher, was convinced that these schools provided much-needed services to African American students.

On April 12, 1937, another resolution requesting a new Central High School building was submitted by representatives of the Citizen's Committee of Central High School, a group formed by Central's principal in 1935.³⁹ In the spring of 1937 their resolution noted that the school itself, which was erected in 1878 and had major additions and renovations between 1892 and 1918, was by 1937 aging and severely overcrowded. The resolution asked the Board to identify and procure a site for a new Central High School by the start of fall 1937.⁴⁰

The white principal, Dr. Watson, seemed to be caught between the proverbial "rock and a hard place." He was forced to make these Depression-era cuts in his teaching staff, while citing the need for more teachers at Central, because of "the poor condition of the building, the winding halls and the surrounding neighborhood."⁴¹

In the midst of these problems, Martin stated publicly that she was

unwilling to run for re-election in 1937, but she did declare her candidacy once again in 1939. Whereas racial prejudice was a primary concern for Martin supporters in the 1929 campaign, she chose to emphasize prejudice born of partisan politics in 1939, and cries of “take the schools out of politics” and “take the politics out of the schools” were heard.

The *Plain Dealer* urged the support of Martin’s slate, which also included two white men.⁴² Her re-election was also endorsed by the *Cleveland News* and the Citizens League, a civic group that provided evaluations of candidates, and issues.⁴³ The Women’s City Club also announced its support of Martin’s slate. Traditionally, the organization had only endorsed issues not individuals, but the magnitude of the problems faced by the schools caused many to address the campaign issues.

Martin and Alfred A. Benesch joined forces in campaigning for their re-election to the Board of Education. At this time Benesch, who had served continuously on the board since 1925, was a member of the Cuyahoga County Democratic Committee, and Martin, who was a card-carrying member of the Democratic Women’s Club of Cuyahoga County by 1939, had joined thousands of other African Americans in switching from the Republican to the Democratic Party.

Despite negative criticism in the African American press and charges by NAACP leaders that she had not done enough to help the race, Martin easily won the election. This third victory at the polls helped convince Martin that African American leaders could be elected to political offices in citywide elections, even with substantial opposition in the African American community. Most noteworthy about the 1939 returns was the fact that she received 6,000 fewer votes in the African American wards than she had received in the 1933 election; this while the population in those wards continued to increase.⁴⁴

Alfred Benesch, who took great pride in the fact that some members of the media had dubbed him “Cleveland’s most representative Jew,” was likely responsible for some of Martin’s support.⁴⁵ In this election, Martin received 7,981 votes in wards 24 and 25 of Glenville, a community with a large Jewish population. This was a far larger number of votes cast than were cast for any of the other candidates, and more than twice the number of votes (3,512) cast for Martin in these wards in the 1929 election.⁴⁶

A number of reasons can be given for Martin’s third electoral suc-

cess. First and foremost, this former "race woman" had obviously learned to de-emphasize race in making her appeal to white voters, even at the risk of offending members of the NAACP and other groups. Secondly, she joined thousands of African Americans in switching to the Democratic Party during the New Deal era, and the move obviously paid off. As Martin retained significant support in what had traditionally been Republican strongholds in African American wards and gained a new following as a result of her alliances with a leading Democratic candidate.⁴⁷

Unfortunately for Martin's diverse group of supporters, she was not able to take her place on the board. On November 19, 1939, just two weeks after the election, she succumbed to bronchial pneumonia and a cerebral hemorrhage at City Hospital. The news of her death was greeted with shock, confusion about who might take her place, an outpouring of sympathy for the family, and praise for Martin's work with the schools. Even the African American *Call and Post*, which had been very critical of Martin's behavior in the last years of her life, paid tribute to her, stating that she "exemplified Negro motherhood and typified the new awakening of our women to public service."⁴⁸

Alexander H. Martin believed that he understood the secret of his late wife's political success:

[I]n the week following her successful campaign and election for a third term, 100,000 votes gave eloquent testimony to the inter-racial aspect of her leadership. There, with peculiar poise and charm, and without ostentation, despite strong opposition from race-baiters, white and black, she effectively advanced the cause of Interracial Amity in her city.⁴⁹

Complaints from the NAACP and the *Call and Post* notwithstanding, the overall picture for the decade between Martin's first and last elections includes some details that resemble progress. In 1929, Martin and other African Americans in Cleveland complained about the lack of representation for their race on the school board, overcrowded and unsafe conditions at Central High School, and the inability of qualified educators to secure teaching and other appointments outside the predominantly African American elementary schools. By 1939, each of these concerns had been addressed, to some degree. It cannot be denied that the employment of approximately 125 African American teachers in 1940 was a far cry from 68 on the payroll in 1919.⁵⁰ Several other notable African American firsts took place in the

1930s. Hazel Mountain Walker was made principal of Rutherford B. Hayes Elementary School in 1936 and Wilbretta Pope Johnson served as her assistant, until she was made principal at Wooldridge School in 1938. Genevieve D. Storey, former assistant principal at Tremont School, was made principal of Dike School in 1938, and Minerva Heywood became assistant principal at Kennard Junior High School in 1939.⁵¹

Martin held significant committee positions during her tenure on the board. For three of her eight years she served as chair of the influential Committee on Educational Matters, which had ultimate authority in matters related to hiring. The fact that she served is evident from the board minutes, but exactly how influential she was in personnel matters remains unclear.

The changes that attracted the most public attention in the 1930s, however, were those at Central High School. With the addition of three African American teachers to that faculty in 1932, secondary school appointments became more frequent throughout the city, and Myrtle J. Bell became assistant principal of Central High school in 1938. When the new Central High School building opened in 1940, Russell H. Davis became the principal of the Central Junior High School that occupied the old facility⁵² Indeed, much had changed at Central since Mary B. Martin was named Class Vocalist for the 1900 graduating class, Bertha Blue was appointed to the faculty of the Murray Hill Elementary School in 1903,⁵³ and “Colored Aristocrat” Helen M. Chesnutt was appointed to the faculty of Central High School in 1904. Improved opportunities for African American educators in the 1930s and 1940s came after much agitation and direct action on the part of the NAACP and leaders in local women’s organizations. By the World War II era, African Americans had come to believe that they were entitled to representation in every capacity of the Cleveland Public School system, and, following Martin’s example, “race women” did not hesitate to claim their places among school leaders.

NOTES

1. William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. David W. Blight and Robert Gooding Williams (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1997) includes a chapter on “Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others” and discusses race, civil and political rights, and education.

2. Charles Lemert and Esme Bhan, ed., *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper: Including A Voice from the South, and Other Important Essays, Papers and Letters* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998).

3. See Alfreda M. Duster ed., *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*

(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

4. In 1892 and 1893, Cleveland's [African American] *Gazette* reported regularly on and encouraged readers to support the activities of Ida B. Wells, one of the most outspoken proponents of African American women's rights and anti-lynching programs in the nation.

5. Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894-1994* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 33-37. Also see Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham's discussion of racial constructions of gender in "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race" in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 17 (1992): 251-74; and Darlene Clark Hine, "Black Migration to the Urban Midwest: The Gender Dimension, 1915-1945," in Joe William Trotter, Jr., *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions of Race, Class, and Gender* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 130.

6. Stephanie J. Shaw, *What a Woman Ought to Be and to Do: Black Professional Women Workers during the Jim Crow Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 6.

7. Carol Poh Miller and Robert A. Wheeler, *Cleveland: A Concise History, 1796 – 1996* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 110-12; and Russell H. Davis, *Black Americans in Cleveland: From George Peake to Carl B. Stokes, 1796-1969* (Washington, D.C.: The Associated Publishers, 1985), 195, 260-61.

8. Even in the literature for her final campaign in 1939, when she had a record of eight years' service on the board, more space is devoted to a discussion of the accomplishments of Martin's children than to her own record of service. In *What a Woman Ought To Be and To Do*, 67-68, Stephanie Shaw identifies W.E.B. Du Bois as one of the race leaders who was also concerned about African American women fulfilling their "physical duty" to have children for the race. For additional information on Du Bois' views on women and feminism, see Eric J. Sundquist (editor), *The Oxford W.E.B. Du Bois Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), and David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919* (New York: Henry Holt, 1993) and David Levering Lewis, *The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000).

9. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, (undated news article), Mary B. Martin Scrapbook, Western Reserve Historical Society.

10. "Slavery Gave City New Board Member," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 7, 1929; "Says Victory in School Board Race Surprise," *Cleveland Press*, November 7, 1929; Biographical sketch of Mary B. Martin (1877-1939) written "To the Children of the Mary B. Martin Elementary School," (n.d.) by Lydia J. Martin, in Mary B. Martin, Papers, Western Reserve Historical Society.

11. Telephone interview with Sarah M. Pereira, Daughter of Mary B. Martin, November 1991.

12. Myers, "Cleveland's Colored Population," *Cleveland Plain Dealer Sunday Magazine*, May 18, 1902, 47-48.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid. For a detailed analysis of the importance of African American women's reform efforts in the Baptist denomination, see Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

15. Ibid.

16. Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, *Black Neighbors: Race and the Limits of Reform in the American Settlement House Movement, 1890-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 5.

17. *The Cleveland Journal*, September 19, 1905, p. 5. *The Cleveland Journal* was founded in March 1903 by Welcome T. Blue and other members of the African American business community. Blue was a member of the same prominent African American family as teacher and journalist Bertha Blue. It promoted the Republican politics of Senator Marcus A. Hanna and self-help, as preached by Booker T. Washington. It ceased publication in 1912.

18. Ibid., September 12, 1903, October 3, 1903, and October 24, 1903.

19. Ibid., January 21, 1905, pp. 1 and 3.

20. Charles W. Chesnutt, "Report of the Negro Migration and its Effects," (unpublished manuscript, no date). Contained in the Charles W. Chesnutt Papers, Western Reserve Historical Society.

21. Ibid.

22. Howard W. Green, "A Study of the Movement of the Negro Population of Cleveland: Based Upon the 1910 and 1920 Census Figures and the April 1921 and October 1923 School Census Figures." The Bureau of Statistics and Research, Cuyahoga County Public Health Association, 1924.

23. Chesnutt, "Report of the Negro Migration."

24. Cleveland Board of Education, Superintendent's Report, 1928-29 School Year, 26.

25. Ibid., 24-27.

26. *Cleveland Press*, June 27, 1929; *List of Electors (1929)*, Cuyahoga County Board of Elections Records, Cuyahoga County Archives; Howard Whipple Green, "An Analysis of Population Data by Census Tracts With Location Index, Cleveland and Vicinity," (Cleveland: Cleveland Health Council, 1927).

27. Cleveland historian Russell Davis repeatedly used the term "colored wards" to refer to the four-ward area (11, 12, 17, and 18) that maintained a clear African American majority from the second to the seventh decade of the twentieth century in his series, "Blacks in Cleveland Politics," in the *Call and Post*, 1966.

28. [Cleveland] *Gazette*, November 16, 1929.

29. Willard C. Richan, "Racial Isolation in the Cleveland Public Schools: A Report of a Study Sponsored by the United States Commission on Civil Rights," (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University, 1967), 33.

30. "Say Discrimination Hits Colored Pupils," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 3, 1932.

31. Ibid.; Richan, "Racial Isolation," 33.

32. U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Negroes in the U.S., 1920-32*. Prepared under the supervision of Z. R. Pettet by Charles E. Hall (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 287.

33. Mary B. Martin Scrapbook, Western Reserve Historical Society.

34. Cleveland Board of Education, *Official Proceedings*, April 9, 1934.
35. *Call and Post*, July 16, 1936 and January 7, 1937.
36. Russell H. Davis, *Black Americans in Cleveland from George Peake to Carl B. Stokes, 1796-1969* (Washington, D. C.: Associated Publishers, 1985), 253. Russell H. Davis, an African American and a native Clevelander, worked as both a teacher and an administrator in the Cleveland public schools. Leonard P. Ayres, who studied the challenges posed by "laggards" in the public schools in the early years of the twentieth century, recommended that schools address the problem of inefficient teaching and unsuitable courses of study, in addition to offering remedial course work. See Leonard P. Ayers, *Laggards in Our Schools: A Study of Retardation and Elimination in City School Systems* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1909), xiii-xv, 1.
37. *Official Proceedings*, Cleveland Board of Education, April 12, 1937.
38. Cleveland Board of Education, *Official Proceedings*, July 6, 1937; *Call and Post*, February 18, 1937, May 27, 1937, and July 8, 1937; *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 7, 1937.
39. Cleveland Board of Education, *Official Proceedings*, December 1, 1936.
40. Cleveland Board of Education, *Official Proceedings*, April 12, 1937; *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 7, 1937; *Call and Post*, April 10, 1937.
41. *Call and Post*, February 25, 1937.
42. "For the Schools' Sake," *Plain Dealer*, October 26, 1939.
43. *Cleveland News*, October 23, 1939 found in Mary B. Martin Papers, Western Reserve Historical Society.
44. See Election Returns for the 1933 and 1939 school board races in the Cuyahoga County Archives, Cleveland, Ohio.
45. For more information, please refer to the Alfred A. Benesch clippings file of the Cleveland Press Collection at Cleveland State University.
46. *Ibid.*, 1929 and 1939.
47. For a study of this trend at the national level, see Nancy J. Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of FDR* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983).
48. *Call and Post*, November 23, 1939.
49. Alexander H. Martin, Biographical Sketch of Mary B. Martin (n.d.), Mary B. Martin Papers, Western Reserve Historical Society.
50. Davis, *Black Americans in Cleveland*, 294.
51. *Ibid.*, 292.
52. *Ibid.*
53. Bertha Blue (c.1877-1963) taught at Murray Hill School for 44 years. Most of her students were children of Italian immigrants. For more information see photographs and manuscript collection for Bertha Blue, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio.