

The National Federation of Colored Farmers:  
Constructing Separatist Networks during the 1920s-1930s

Rural History 2010, Brighton, England, Sept. 13-16, 2010

Debra A. Reid  
Professor, Department of History  
Eastern Illinois University  
600 Lincoln Ave.  
Charleston, IL 61920  
dareid@eiu.edu

Please do not cite without contacting the author.

An African-American broker working for a wholesale grocer created a produce commission business in 1922 that shipped train carloads of melons and other market produce from southern farms to Indiana markets. James Perry Davis, a Georgian by birth and resident of Chicago, likely partnered with his Tuskegee Institute classmates to finance the business.<sup>1</sup> By 1929 Davis and his partners were ready to expand. They launched the National Federation of Colored Farmers (NFCF) because, according to Davis, “the Negro farmer was one of the least protected productive units in the country and . . . the future of . . . tillers of the soil lies in organization, particularly in cooperative marketing.”<sup>2</sup> Davis claimed that “by [elimination] of the middleman and encouragement of diversified planting, we will create a new market which will revolutionize the Negro farmers’ income.” Lessons drawn from European cooperatives informed the founders. The first issue of federation’s newspaper, *The Modern Farmer*, included a report on a speech delivered March 1, 1929, at the Palmer House in Chicago by C. Ryle Fay that advocated farmer cooperatives. Fay, a professor at the University of Toronto, explained that farmers had to organize to maintain their position relative to growing industrial cities. Wheat farmers and fruit growers had formed successful cooperatives. The author left the obvious unstated; that black farmers should form cooperatives, too.<sup>3</sup>

Creating a federation to coordinate activities of local cooperatives did not generate unanimous support. In 1923, African-American sociologist, E. Franklin Frazier, believed that the time was ripe for blacks to engage in cooperative ventures, but he believed that organizing based on race would not work. He claimed that speculators could nullify any efforts that white farmers launched to sell directly to consumers while at the same time taking advantage of the black producers.<sup>4</sup> Instead of organizing cooperatives based on race, Frazier argued that cooperatives had to be organized based on size of the market and other factors that drove marketing, purchasing, and credit decisions. Race was an ineffective organization structure.

NFCF founders, on the other hand, decided to encourage black farmers to form local cooperatives. Much transpired between the 1929 expansion and 1940 when John Hope II, an African-American social scientist, explained that the cooperative movement was “beginning to take root in the thinking Negroes. . . both rural and urban.”<sup>5</sup> He featured the NFCF as a model rural cooperative because it existed “to make life on the farm more attractive and more profitable” and to “build up . . . a Negro group of organized, influential and satisfied producers.”<sup>6</sup> Hope used the Rochdale Principles as his benchmark for critiquing the NFCF. The federation’s activities compared favourably with seven tenets of the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers, articulated in 1844 and adopted by the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) in 1937 as the Rochdale Principles.<sup>7</sup> NFCF members created and managed local cooperatives; invested their capital and decided how the capital would be used; met regularly at the local, state, and national level; read the NFCF newspaper monthly; and attended annual conventions to hear success stories and discuss cooperative strategies. *[Table: Comparing Goals: NFCF and Rochdale Principles].*

The goals published in the first issue of the organization's newspaper, *The Modern Farmer*, however, emphasized self-help and racial separatism, a philosophy that promoted economic initiative, often linking success with physical isolation in all-black communities and race-conscious businesses that catered to black clientele. The organization did not extend open membership; dues of \$2.50 for six months exceeded the disposable income of many rural blacks, and the \$1.00 subscription for the newspaper stretched the resources of many, as well. Instead, the organization appealed to the upper class of black farmers, specifically land owners who could pay their poll tax and expressed a decidedly Republican political philosophy. The federation also allied with the National Baptist Publishing House to produce its newspaper, and founders remained active in Protestant organizations. Thus, the economic reforms the organization undertook followed a pattern established in the aftermath of the Civil War as black farmers secured property, started communities, and negotiated market access. Separatism did not blatantly challenge the increasingly repressive status quo dictated by white Democrats, and white Republicans who abandoned black voters. But separatism helped landowning farmers secure visible proof of their status – land -- and protect their right to pursue economic independence in keeping with the American agrarian ideal.<sup>8</sup>

*The Modern Farmer* editor, Leon R. Harris, expressed the need for economic reform clearly in his first editorial "A Message to A Million" black farmers. He claimed that founders of the NCFB believed that the time had come for black farmers to "form a national organization devoted to diversified production, grading, packing, shipping and marketing of farm products, and to the purchasing of needed farm supplies through co-operative methods, [so] a more prosperous financial condition may result from their efforts as producers." Harris continued in a gender-biased vein, but with a revolutionary tone: "You farmers are the only men of our racial

group who are doing business on invested capital exceeding two and one-half billion dollars. This is real capital – every dollar is a ‘sure enough dollar,’ and every colored farmer has a share in the business. But you are not a partner in the business. The business is not organized. No two, or three, or three hundred of us are able to work together in a way that will result in our receiving a joint profit from the business.”<sup>9</sup>

Harris was one of the four men who had organized the NFCF in 1922. In his 1939 correspondence with Hope II. Harris explained that the founders wanted to “make life on the farm more attractive and more profitable, and to build up in this nation a Negro group of organized, influential and satisfied producers.” To that end, the NFCF “advocated (1) cooperative buying, production and marketing. . . . which had resulted in purchases of more than \$250,000 “worth of farm and farm home supplies . . . during the past eight years.”<sup>10</sup> These supplies helped farmers produce hay, watermelons, string beans, peanuts, sweet potatoes, and vegetables that wholesale grocers (and trading cooperatives) in Chicago, Illinois and Gary, Indiana could purchase. The organized, influential and satisfied producers would ultimately own their own land and form the basis of better “colored farm communities.”<sup>11</sup>

Naturally the NFCF turned to all-black farm communities many of which had operated outside the domination of white landlords since farm families had acquired land, some as early as 1865. During the late 1910s and early 1920s, institutional networks tapped into these autonomous black farm communities, as did the federation. After 1914, “Negro” agricultural extension service and home demonstration agents across the South recruited residents of farm communities to participate in rural reform initiatives because they knew that families within these communities owned their land and had some autonomy over their economic, social, and cultural decisions. Farm families gained access to public and private aid because agents spoke to

their 4-H clubs and home demonstration and agricultural clubs. Members of local NFCF units often had the wherewithal to participate in agricultural extension service offerings in addition to the local cooperative. Thus an institutional network developed locally, within black farm communities, where members managed the clubs or units, and networked at the state and national levels and with urban markets. Thus, NFCF appears to fit the theory that cooperatives help build institutional networks, and could integrate members into larger initiatives.

Those who invested in the fledgling cooperative in 1922 included several men who embraced self-help and separatist goals as they built their respective urban careers. James P. Davis, Leon R. Harris and Cornelius R. Richardson, three of the four men who had organized the NFCF in 1922, had attended Tuskegee Institute between 1904 and 1906 and were, in 1922, thirty-six years of age and Republican in party preference. The fourth founder, Gilchrist Stewart, had matriculated at Tuskegee and had returned to the Institute to teach, likely during the time that Davis, Harris, and Richardson attended. By 1922, Davis worked as a broker, Richardson and Stewart were attorneys, and Harris was a stationary engineer on the Chicago-Rock Island Railroad. They all lived in the North, but three had been born in the South; two of them (Davis and Richardson) near Athens [City], Georgia, and one (Stewart) in Orangeburg, South Carolina. Only Harris had been born in the North, in Cambridge, Ohio.<sup>12</sup> By the time Harris and Davis incorporated the NFCF in 1930, Stewart had died.<sup>13</sup> Another black Republican, Major R. A. Byrd, took his place as the third director of the new corporation. Byrd, born in Ashland, Ohio, in 1873, and educated at Hiram College in Hiram, Ohio, worked as a school principal in Quincy, Illinois before moving to Springfield, Illinois, in 1902 to work for the state government. His title, Major, resulted from a commission he held in the 8<sup>th</sup> Illinois National Guard a unit that had

served during the Spanish American War. Byrd hired black managers to operated the farms he owned.<sup>14</sup>

National media attention resulted from the personal relationships that NFCF officials had with Claude Barnett, founder of the Associated Negro Press. He likewise attended Tuskegee Institute synchronous with Davis, Harris, and Richardson. The team of urban agrarians, attorneys, political activists, and a publisher proved formidable. Thus the NFCF combined numerous Tuskegee-Institute lessons, agricultural reform and effective business practices with public awareness to gain attention and undermine localized, white opposition to black potential.<sup>15</sup>

These men saw the potential to directly link black farmers with urban markets. The federation reached out to farmers in areas where black farmers constituted a distinct minority. For example, race farmers around Racine, Wisconsin, an area that produced more cabbage than any other region of the West, pooled their cabbage heads and shipped them by railway cars to terminal markets. Buyers looking for Holland seed cabbage, for which the region was noted, could purchase quality produce as a consequence. In members of a Georgia unit that shipped 31 carloads of melons.<sup>16</sup> The federation also appealed to black farmers growing cotton, but in areas not typically associated with cotton. Race farmers in southern Illinois who grew cotton participated in the cooperative, and even cooperatively owned a cotton gin in Grand Chain, Illinois?<sup>17</sup> The federation, however, concentrated its resources on recruiting members in areas with heavy concentrations of black farmers, and appealed to them to diversify their production. So, for example, members of a Georgia unit pooled their melons and shipped 31 carloads. This helped them secure the highest prices they had ever received for their produce. *The Modern Farmer* carried dozens of these stories, and correspondence with editors of the *Chicago Defender*

and with Claude Barnett of the Associate Negro Press ensured that NFCF success made the news.<sup>18</sup>

The NFCF gained its greatest visibility, and also some criticism, from its activities in areas with the highest population densities of black farmers in the United States, specifically in Mississippi River delta counties in Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee, and in Yazoo-Mississippi Delta counties in Mississippi. Davis organized the first NFCF local cooperative near Howard, Mississippi, in 1929 when he negotiated with thirty farmers, almost all of whom were tenants and sharecroppers, and a wholesale grocer in Memphis, Tennessee, to furnish supplies to the local. “Race farmers” in the area had been addressing their financial insecurity for more than a decade by the time the NFCF appeared in the county. In Lexington, the county seat, black farmers had organized the Lexington, Mississippi, Colored National Farm Loan Association in 1918 to extend short term credit at low rates, a dire need for farmers of both races. By 1932 race farmers owned all the stock in the association, and had made 250 loans valued at a total of \$250,000. By 1932, C.C. Richardson, a race farmer who owned 200 acres near Howard, served as vice president of the Loan Association and chairman of the Mississippi units of the NFCF.<sup>19</sup> By tapping into existing grassroots organizations, holding annual conventions, and publishing its monthly newspaper, *The Modern Farmer*, the NFCF spread its recipe for economic reform.<sup>20</sup>

The NFCF grew during the Great Depression and had the power to challenge white control, but at the same time it facilitated members’ integration into larger economic, political, and social situations. The Norfolk, Virginia *New Journal and Guide* carried an Associated Negro Press story in 1930 that documented white planters’ resistance as the NFCF spread in rural Mississippi. Davis had launched an “intensive campaign” among the landowners in several counties. He believed that black farmers had a right to the advantages of co-operative buying and

selling, just as white farmers did, but the white farmers refused to allow black farmers to join their organizations. Thus Davis helped black farmers form cooperatives which could save them “from twenty-five to forty cents on the dollar. This saving to the colored farmer comes out of the pocket of the local white wholesale or retail merchant from whom the colored farmers have hitherto been purchasing.”<sup>21</sup> The cost savings placed farmers on a more sound economic foundation which allowed them “to obtain loans from established, high-class agencies at reasonable rates,” including local associations such as the one in Lexington or through land banks established by the Federal Farm Loan Act of 1924 which could re-finance farm mortgages at lower rates of interest. White planters and merchants did not accept this challenge graciously.<sup>22</sup>

Whites countered NCFE success stories by claiming that “thousands of Mississippi Negro farmers had been swindled out of \$6 each on promise of drouth [sic] relief by representatives of the National Federation of Colored Farmers.” The \$6 represented NCFE dues for one year (\$5) and an annual subscription to *The Modern Farmer* (\$1). The white farmers may not have challenged NCFE actions in and of themselves, but cooperative activity generated additional organizing, and resulted in institutional infrastructures that served as conduits funnelling government relief into rural black communities. In late 1930, the Bolivar county unit of the NCFE and the Mississippi State Federation of Farmers, which operated under the authority of the NCFE, called a meeting in Mound Bayou, an influential all-black farm community in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta, to decide the steps to take to secure drought relief from the U.S. government. Black organizers believed that the Mound Bayou leaders “who demonstrated their ability to organize and work in harmony with the white farmers, bankers and merchants all over the state,” could help the black farmers devise a workable plan.<sup>23</sup> This challenged the white-supremacist

chain-of-command that defined race relations in Mississippi. A white agricultural agent of the Mississippi Agricultural Extension Service claimed that the NFCF promised farmers in Madison and Holmes County, savings on food and better market prices for cotton if they paid \$6 for the privilege.<sup>24</sup> Who should the black farmers trust, the white landlords who controlled local markets and supplies, and who had been likewise hard hit by the drought, or a Chicago broker seeking their hard-earned cash?

Davis did not let criticism from white Mississippi agricultural extension agents dissuade him. He met with the Secretary of Agriculture, Arthur M. Hyde, to gain assurance that “no discrimination would be practiced by the government in the distribution of loans for seeds and farming machinery.”<sup>25</sup> Farmers who formed local cooperatives took an important first step toward qualifying for federal aid. The Federal Farm Board, created by the Agricultural Marketing Act, had authority to loan money for marketing purposes to local cooperatives, not to individuals farmers. Race discrimination prevented many blacks from joining cooperatives organized by white farmers, so farmers gained incentive, and the NFCF gained purpose after passage of the Agricultural Marketing Act.<sup>26</sup> Farmers who belonged to cooperatives and participated in extension programs gained access twice over to federal relief given the ways that public agencies such as the Federal Relief Committee, in 1931, pledged to distribute applications for seed loans, to all black agricultural extension workers across the South.<sup>27</sup>

The federation increased its advocacy for black farmers’ access to government relief during the New Deal. Harris praised the Emergency Farm Mortgage Act, passed May 12, 1933, because it addressed the constant problem of low-rate short-term credit for farmers. Farmers could secure loans to refinance their debt; infuse working capital into their operation; and redeem property either foreclosed on or sold for property taxes.<sup>28</sup> The Secretary of Agricultural, Henry

A. Wallace, made a special point of seeking several black agrarians, including James P. Davis, to serve on committees to ensure smooth implementation and equitable access to services of the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act in 1936. “This is the first instance where any administration has given such recognition to the Race to represent and speak for 906,000 Race farmers who come from every state.”<sup>29</sup>

The federation sought information from the government as well. In 1934, more than one thousand race farmers attended the NFCF convention in Charleston, Missouri. Organizers invited U.S. Department of Agriculture officials to share information about relief programs. Discussion among delegates, however, focused on perennial problems: “1-How to own the soil you till; 2-How to life the mortgage hanging over your farm; 3-Purchasing workstock and cattle for another year; 4-Securing loans to improve your home and farm; 5-Buying groceries and farm supplies cooperatively; 6-Producing and selling farm products cooperatively; [7-Home canning and sewing;] 8-Legal contracts protecting sharecroppers and tenants; 9-Why all Colored farmers should be organized.”<sup>30</sup>

More must be done to understand the persistence of farm owners and tenants in the face of sharecropper displacement that occurred in consequence of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration’s cotton buy-out programs. Certainly NFCF associates, particularly Mrs. Leon R. Harris, recognized the suffering sharecroppers and tenants faced. She served on the Resolutions Committee at the thirty-second conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in Houston, Texas, June 28, 1941. The conference adopted the following resolution: “We deplore the disadvantaged position of sharecroppers, tenant farmers, and small farm owners, both white and black. . . [we] approve work of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union that convinced tenant farmers of the South that their economic position is identical and common

action only can alleviate their distress.”<sup>31</sup> Yet, the federation also celebrated the inventiveness of Milus Sutton, a Race dirt farmer from Elko, Georgia, local NFCF leader, and inventor of a cotton chopping and bunching machine, a technology that some criticized for its potential to displace labor and hasten farm consolidation. Sutton responded to critics that he hoped his machine would “help Race farm women and children to get out of the cotton patches and away from the hoe.”<sup>32</sup>

Sutton’s comment indicates the class bias inherent in the NCF. The federation appealed to black farm owners already vested in their local black communities. The local units generated little controversy in the countryside as all-black members pooled their produce, improved packaging and distribution of perishables, and realized higher prices for the commodities as a result. Some of the tolerance may have resulted from the heritage of separatism that had somewhat isolated all-black farming communities from white society. The black farm families had operated outside the domination of white landlords since they had acquired land, a process that began immediately after the Civil War for most. Black farm owners had grow watermelons or sweet corn or other perishable commodities for markets on their small patches of land without disrupting the race or economic status quo. Those who criticized the cooperatives tended to be white farmers or merchants who stood to lose from the change in purchasing that cooperatives facilitated. Thus the local units helped members engage in larger economic networks that benefitted farming communities without threatening the status quo.

The black cooperatives pursued separatist economic reform, but expected institutional networks to support them. NCF officials held government bureaucrats accountable for ensuring that black farmers received access to loans and subsidies during the Hoover and Roosevelt administrations. Davis even left the federation to take a position with the Agricultural Adjustment Administration believing that he could extend more equitable benefits to black

farmers. Black farmers left the business as well, because elder farmers often had no one to take over the family farm or maintain local cooperatives. Others did not have the capital to partake of the “get bigger or get out” philosophy of U.S. Department of Agriculture policy during the post-war production revolution. As a result, the NFCF eventually lost momentum after World War II.

Attorney General of the state of Illinois dissolved the NFCF on November 29, 1944 for its failure to file its 1941 annual report. *The Modern Farmer* remained in publication through January 1949, but its demise terminated the potential that the separatist cooperative federation offered.<sup>33</sup> Namely, the NFCF advocated a scale of farming not in keeping with the capitalist model that national agricultural policy facilitated. Its members’ efforts to integrate into the American agrarian ideal did not come to fruition because the NFCF agrarian ideal of diversification and producer-to-consumer markets contrasted fundamentally with white Americans’ capital intensive farming system. Federal agricultural policy did not incorporate minority perspectives during the post-war production revolution. The influence of all-black farm communities declined as their populations plummeted, which proved that rural cooperatives did not integrate race farmers into larger political, economic, or social networks, but farm-owning families found themselves integrated into larger urban and national society, economics, and civil rights expansion. This was an unintended outcome of cooperative economic integration.

TABLE:

## Comparison of Goals: National Federation of Colored Farmers and Rochdale Principles

<b><i>The Modern Farmer</i> 1, no. 1 (March 1, 1929), [2]</b>	<b>NFCF Certificate of Incorporation (November 19, 1930)</b>	<b>Rochdale Principles, ICA, 1937</b>
<p>“devoted to the interest of the farmer, Truck Gardener, Lives Stock, Poultry, the Home and the People”</p> <p>“the problems of the farmer’s wife will not be overlooked”</p> <p>“There are in America more than one million colored farmers and approximately twenty-five per cent of them own their own farms. The National Federation of Colored Farmers is the organization for these farmers.” <i>The Modern Farmer</i>, 1, no. 2 (April 1, 1929), [2].</p>	farmers	1) open membership
<p>“To you, the million, and to you, one of the million, we preach organization. The National Federation of Colored Farmers is your organization.”</p>		2) democratic control (one person, one vote)
<p>“establish branches in conveniently located cities where shipment of farm produce can be received and marketed at the highest prices for the members of the Federation”</p> <p>i.e. black farmer owned and operated marketing cooperatives for cotton, cowpeas, sweet potatoes, peaches, melons</p>	“devote itself to the problems of diversified production, grading, packing, shipping and marketing of farm products”	3) distribution of surplus in proportion to trade
<p>“because the best grades bring the best prices . . . money will be advanced to the members for the purchase of improved breeds of lives stock [cattle, hogs, sheep, and poultry], and to secure for them thoroughbred breeding stock”</p> <p>“use of improved machinery will be encouraged . . . because machinery SAVES MAN LABOR and increases production”</p>	“to own, manage, and direct farms”	4) payment of limited interest on capital

<p>“organization must be on an economic rather than on a political basis” – <i>The Modern Farmer</i> 1, 2 (April 1, 1929) [2].</p>		5) political and religious neutrality
<p>“purchase supplies needed by our farmers in quantities that will effect a considerable saving in cost prices to the members of the Federation” [i.e. purchases of fertilizer, fencing, paints, oils, seeds, bagging, machinery and implements]</p> <p>“[secure] benefit of the financial assistance afforded to all other farmers of the country and which is in a large part now denied them”</p>	<p>“to devote itself to the purchase of farm supplies through cooperative methods, and otherwise”</p>	6) cash trading (no credit extended)
<p>“meet each year in a National Convention [to discuss] the problems that are peculiar to our colored farmers, . . . financial credit, grading, and marketing farm products, and the purchase of farm supplies”</p> <p>Inform members of “all matters of National legislation affecting Agricultural interests”</p> <p>Inform members seeking to purchase a farm in another state any information available about “the locality and the land in question”</p> <p>“emphasize comfortable living because (good water supply, complete sewage disposal plant, effective heating and lighting) . . . this is one of the reasons why the sons and daughters of farmers leave home in such large numbers”</p> <p>“[inform members of] prices of farm products handled by the produce markets of America”</p>	<p>“to assist farmers in every way consistent with the object and powers of this corporation”</p>	7) promotion of education

<sup>1</sup> *The Modern Farmer* [need to confirm date, June 5, 1922]. *The Modern Farmer* 1, no. 1 (March 1, 1929) through 21, no. 12 (January 15, 1949), microfilm, Albert R. Mann Library, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y. Some issues are missing.

<sup>2</sup> “Farmers to Have Guild: Launch Program of Co-Operative Marketing; Wants 25,000 Membership,” *The Pittsburgh Courier* (Feb. 16, 1929), A3.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. “Destiny of Farmers Depends on ‘Co-Ops’, [sic] English Union Hears,” *The Modern Farmer* 1, no. 1 (March 1, 1929), [1].

<sup>4</sup> E. Franklin Frazier, “Coöperation and the Negro,” *Crisis* (March 1923), in *The Crisis Reader: Stories, Poetry, and Essays from the N.A.A.C.P.’s Crisis Magazine*, edited by Sondra K. Wilson (New York: Modern Library, 1999), 371-373.

<sup>5</sup> John Hope II, “Rochdale Cooperation Among Negroes,” *Phylon* 1, no. 1 (1940), 39.

<sup>6</sup> Hope II, 48.

<sup>7</sup> International Co-operative Alliance Principles, adopted in 1937: 1) open membership, 2) Democratic control (one person, one vote), 3) distribution of surplus in proportion to trade, 4) payment of limited interest on capital, 5) political and religious neutrality, 6) cash trading (no credit extended), and 7) promotion of education. The 1937 principles appear on the ICA website (<http://www.ica.coop>), accessed Sept. 1, 2010. Hope II did not cite the ICA Rochdale Principles.

<sup>8</sup> See the collection of essays edited by Debra A. Reid and Evan P. Bennett, “Beyond Forty Acres and a Mule: African American Farm Families Since Reconstruction,” under review, University Press of Florida.

<sup>9</sup> Leon R. Harris, “A Message to a Million,” *The Modern Farmer* 1, no. 1 (March 1, 1929), [2]

<sup>10</sup> Hope II, 49. Hope II’s footnote does not identify the source but instead compares the NCFCF goals to the “constructive and progressive” goals of the Farm Security Administration (Hope II, 49). The “past eight years” probably refers to 1930-1938, the eight years immediately preceding the letter Harris wrote to Hope II from which Hope II drew heavily for the article.

<sup>11</sup> Hope II, 49.

<sup>12</sup> Biographical information comes from numerous primary and secondary sources. Davis, Richardson, and Harris appear in U.S. Population Census schedules, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, all digitized and live-text searchable through Ancestry.com. These document occupations, names of spouses and family members, and places of residence. By 1921, Richardson was already a successful lawyer by 1921 when he was appointed as a special judge, “Richardson First Man to Act as Judge,” *The Chicago Defender* (January 22, 1921), 1; and he spoke at the 1922 National Negro Bar Association conference on lawyers in politics, “The National Negro Bar Association,” [Norfolk, Va.] *New Journal and Guide* (August 12, 1922), 11. Richardson attended a Tuskegee alumni reunion in Chicago in 1926, “Tuskegee Alumni Meet Here; Tuskegee Grads in Two Days’ Meet Here,” *The Chicago Defender* (June 19, 1926), 3; and he represented the Tuskegee Institute class of 1905 at the 1955 reunion, “Tuskegee Grads Equipped for Living, Speakers Says,” *Atlanta Daily World* (Nov. 12, 1955), 5. The Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, Population Schedule, listed Cornelius R. Richardson as a lawyer living in Richmond, Indiana with his wife. He and Davis both listed “Athens, Georgia” as their birthplace. “Indiana Masons Meet; Re-Elect Grand Master,” *The Chicago Defender* (Sept. 9, 1944), 18. Gilchrist Stewart died in 1926 at forty-four years of age; had matriculated at Tuskegee Institute, studied at the Agricultural College of Ontario, and taught briefly at Tuskegee before pursuing law as a career, “Gilchrist Stewart, Noted Political Leader, Buried,” *The Chicago Defender* (Sept. 4, 1926), 4. For background on the prominent Stewart family, see Albert S. Broussard, *African American Odyssey: The Stewarts, 1853-1963* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 106, 142. Several newspaper clippings document Harris’ life, including his illegitimate birth to a white mother, his boarding with a family in New Columbus, Kentucky, and his life-long isolation from his mother and black, itinerant-musician father. See Leon R. Harris File, Rock Island County Historical Society, Moline, Illinois. City directories in the Harris File indicate he was a pipe fitter in 1930 and 1933.

<sup>13</sup> “Gilchrist Stewart, Noted Political Leader, Buried,” *The Chicago Defender* (Sept. 4, 1926), 4; “They’re Out to Help Hoover,” *Atlanta Daily World* (Sept. 28, 1932), 1A, includes a photograph of members of the planning board of the Republican National Committee for Colored Voters, including Cornelius R. Richardson.

<sup>14</sup> Davis, Harris, and R. A. Byrd served as the three directors when they incorporated the federation in 1930. Davis lived at 610 East 36<sup>th</sup> Street, Chicago, Illinois; Harris lived at South 11<sup>th</sup> Street A, Moline, Illinois; and R. A. Byrd lived at 400 William Street, Springfield, Illinois. The federation maintained a business office at No. 610

East 36<sup>th</sup> Street, Chicago, Illinois. A biography of Byrd appeared in the *Illinois State Journal* [or *Illinois State Register*] (Feb. 16, 1964); a photograph appeared in the *Illinois State Journal* (Dec. 27, 1980). The *Modern Farmer* 1, no. ? (date?), [4]; and (1941), \_\_\_\_ . The owners of *The Modern Farmer*, as of October 15, 1930, were S. B. Wilson (female), business manager, and Henry Allen Boyd (a Baptist minister and secretary of the National Baptist Publishing Board of the National Baptist Convention of America), both of Nashville, Tennessee, see *The Modern Farmer* 2, no. 9 (October 15, 1930), 4, 5. *The Modern Farmer* featured a full-page portrait of “the Late R. H. Boyd, D.D., LL. D. Founder of the National Baptist Publishing Board and builder of the National Baptist Publishing Board’s Plant, Nashville, Tennessee,” under the title: “His Birthday is March 15, 1930, Baptists of the World will Honor this Builder and Race Benefactor who was once a Farmer in Mississippi and Texas,” 2, no. 1 (March 15, 1930), 2.

<sup>15</sup> “Biographical Sketch,” Claude A. Barnett Papers, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois. Lawrence D. Hogan, “Associated Negro Press (ANP),” *Encyclopedia of the Great Black Migration*, edited by Steven A. Reich (Greenwood Press, 2006), 28-30. Booker T. Washington, the educator often associated with rural self-help, had been dead for seven years when the Tuskegee alumni invested in Davis’ cooperative. The networks that Washington helped create through Tuskegee remained active at least until 1949 when the NCFP ceased publication of *The Modern Farmer*.

<sup>16</sup> “The Farmers Column,” *The Chicago Defender* (May 23, 1931), 15.

<sup>17</sup> “Illinois Farmers Lay Plans to Better Their Condition,” *The Chicago Defender* (May 28, 1932), 13.

<sup>18</sup> “The Farmers Column,” *The Chicago Defender* (May 2, 1931), 15.

<sup>19</sup> Hope II, 49-50.

<sup>20</sup> “The Farmers’ Column,” *The Chicago Defender* (Sept. 4, 1932), 15.

<sup>21</sup> Whites Oppose Attempt to Organize the Negro Farmers,” [Norfolk, Va.] *New Journal and Guide* (Oct. 18, 1930), 14.

<sup>22</sup> “The Farmers’ Column,” *The Chicago Defender* (Sept. 4, 1932), 15. “Farm Loan Association,” *The Chicago Defender* (June 14, 1924), A1.

<sup>23</sup> “Mississippi Farmers Seek Federal Aid,” *The Chicago Defender* (Dec. 13, 1930), 3.

<sup>24</sup> “Whites Oppose Attempt to Organize the Negro Farmers,” [Norfolk, Va.] *New Journal and Guide* (Oct. 18, 1930), 14.

<sup>25</sup> “Tell of Methods to Get Farm Loans,” *The Chicago Defender* (Jan. 24, 1931), 3.

<sup>26</sup> Floyd J. Calvin, “Federal Board Head Urges Farmers to Form ‘Co-Ops;’ James C. Stone Addresses 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Farmers’ Congress at Tuskegee,” *The Pittsburgh Courier* (December 14, 1929), A10; “Alabama Farmers Organize,” *The Pittsburgh Courier* (April 5, 1930), 9.

<sup>27</sup> “Seed Loan Funds for all Farmers,” *Afro-American* (January 24, 1931), 2.

<sup>28</sup> “Urges ‘Square Deal’ for Race Farmers: Department of Agriculture Asked to Take Hand in Rural Situation; Federation Officer Tells of Plans for Farm Aid,” *The Chicago Defender* (June 24, 1933), 11.

<sup>29</sup> “Race Farmers Recognized as Regional Meet; Four Outstanding Race Leaders Invited,” *The Chicago Defender* (March 14, 1936), 1.

<sup>30</sup> “Expect Big Delegation at Farmers’ Annual Convention,” *The Chicago Defender* (Sept. 15, 1934), 5. “New Deal Will Get Real Hearing at Farmers’ Meet,” *The Chicago Defender* (Oct. 20, 1934), 4. “Farmers Close Best Confab in Charleston, Mo.; Noted Leaders Speak at National Confab of Farmers,” *The Chicago Defender* (Nov. 17, 1934), A1.

<sup>31</sup> “Conference Resolutions,” of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference of the NAACP, Houston, Texas, June 28, 1941,” *The Crisis* (September 1941): 296-297.

<sup>32</sup> “New Deal Will Get Real Hearing At Farmers’ Meet,” *The Chicago Defender* (Oct. 20, 1934), 4. “Farmer Invents Cotton Chopping Device; Maker Demonstrates Machine at Meet in Missouri,” *The Chicago Defender* (Nov. 17, 1934), A6.

<sup>33</sup> From Edward J. Hughes, Secretary of State, to George F. Barrett, Attorney General, Authorization to Pursue Dissolution of the National Federation of Colored Farmers, 2937 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Illinois, November 16, 1942. Dissolution decree, *The People of the State of Illinois at the Relation of George F. Barrett, Attorney General, vs. National Federation of Colored Farmers*, General No. 123222 in Chancery, Nov. 29, 1944, both filed with the Office of the Secretary of State, Springfield, Illinois.