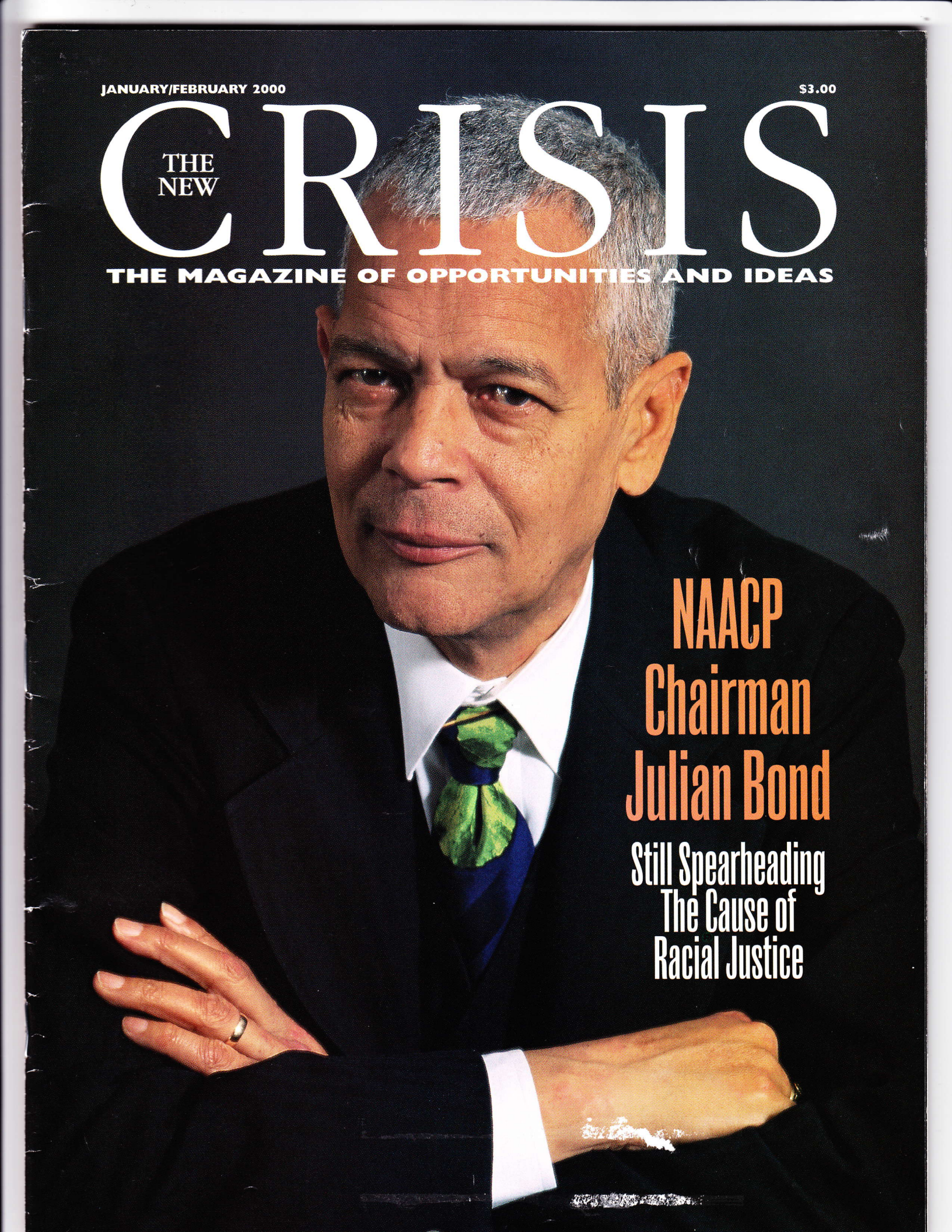


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THE NEW CRISIS

THE MAGAZINE OF OPPORTUNITIES AND IDEAS

A black and white portrait of Julian Bond, an older man with grey hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a green and blue patterned tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. His arms are crossed, and a ring is visible on his left hand.

**NAACP
Chairman
Julian Bond**

**Still Spearheading
The Cause of
Racial Justice**

EDUCATION

AMERICA'S "OTHER" PRIVATE SCHOOLS

By Dr. Joseph T. Durham

Mention the names of New England's private schools and a large number of Americans will recognize them. Recent news articles, for example, note that both John F. Kennedy Jr. and presidential hopeful George W. Bush attended Phillips Academy in Massachusetts. Schools such as Phillips and Exeter have educated the children of generations of America's first families.

Less well known, however, are African-American private schools, often designated as academies, whose existence has been virtually ignored.

Prior to 1920, over 200 African-American academies operated in the South, and black children depended on them for a high school education. Secondary schools in the South during this time were few and far between, and the few that existed were in the major cities.

In 1916, for example, four southern states did not have a single public high school for blacks, and half of all black students at the secondary level were enrolled in private academies. Georgia had one public black high school but closed it to direct funds to the education of white children. A court battle ensued and Georgia was forced to reopen the black school.

The alarming lack of public secondary education provided for black students reflected the prevailing philosophy in the South, which did not make public education — indeed, any education — a high political and social item for African Americans.

In the midst of this educational failure and because of the insatiable desire for an education, blacks found ways to establish their own schools. They were aided in their quest by religious groups and by philanthropists. John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, and Julius Rosenwald gave generous amounts of money to build schools in black communities, to improve instruction, and to establish libraries. These philanthropists often directed that their largesse should fund "industrial education" favored by Booker T. Washington, who had counseled blacks against pressing for social equality and urged them to train themselves as useful workers for the southern economy.

The Washington concept of industrial education, however, was not embraced by all African Americans. Dr. William Edward Burghardt DuBois, the first African American to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard, actively opposed Washington's ideas. DuBois urged blacks to pursue collegiate courses and a classical education.

DuBois wrote: "The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men. The problem of education, then, among Negroes must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth..."

The DuBois philosophy resonated well with African-American academies, many of which offered industrial education that was less emphasized than academic subjects. In reality, the competing Washington-DuBois concepts ultimately led to two types of schools for blacks: County training schools largely emphasized industrial education and some teacher training, while academies largely emphasized college preparatory subjects and some teacher training.

Religious denominations also founded African-American academies in the South. Notable were the efforts of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. (after 1870, the United

Presbyterian Church U.S.A.), which established over 75 private schools in the South. In South Carolina alone, the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. established 25 schools. In Georgia, Boggs Academy at Keysville was the first boarding school established by the Presbyterians.

Shortly before it closed in 1986, Boggs was said to be the only predominantly black accredited boarding school in the U.S. Today, the former academy continues as the Boggs Rural Life Center.

Other denominations also established private academies. The Baptists founded



A group of Boggs Academy Students (1926), standing in front of the Morgan Grove Presbyterian Church, the first school building of Boggs Academy, Keysville, Georgia.

Fredericksburg Normal and Industrial Academy in Virginia in 1905 and Bettis Academy in Trenton, S.C., in 1881. The Methodist Episcopal Church founded Mather Academy in Camden, S.C., in 1887. The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church established Clinton Normal and Industrial Institute in Rock Hill, S.C., in 1896.

The American Missionary Association (AMA) established academies as well as

some private black colleges. Avery Institute in Charleston, S.C., was established by the AMA in 1865. Avery was a grade and high school with a small normal department, which trained elementary teachers and was known for its high academic and moral standards. It closed in 1954, and its successor is known as the Avery Museum and Research Center of African American Culture.

Taken as a whole, African-American academies provided a high quality of education for black youth in an inhospitable time, when the typical southern view of prejudice and a low view of black intelligence denied educational opportunity to African Americans.

The programs of these academies varied, but there were characteristics that were common to most, especially boarding schools. Because large numbers of academies were affiliated with church denominations, a religious orientation and attendance at weekly chapel and Sunday services was obligatory. Social activities among students and between men and women were strictly monitored.

Boggs Academy, for example, required its students to be in their dormitories by 9:30 p.m. and in bed by 10 p.m. Social graces were stressed. At Palmer Memorial Institute in Sedalia, N.C., the redoubtable Dr. Charlotte Hawkins Brown required the students to dress up for the evening meal at which the rules of manners and table etiquette were strictly observed. In 1941, Dr. Brown wrote a book on etiquette, *The Correct Thing To Do, To Say, To Wear*. It was reprinted four times and detailed a wide range of social behaviors.

The instruction in academies was highly structured and heavily inclined towards college preparation. In fact, one of the touted values was that this schooling led easily to college admission.

While the typical academy did not emphasize industrial education as conceived by Booker T. Washington, its students were taught to respect the dignity of labor. Students frequently were assigned chores at their schools, such as trimming shrubs or cleaning floors. Courses focused on clerical and business subjects, even home economics.

Boggs Academy defined its program as having four parts: study, workshop, work, and play. The play aspect centered on athletics and the arts. Boggs had outstanding football and basketball teams. Its a capella choir frequently toured the country giving



Frank A. DeCosta (Avery, 1927) was the first Averyite to become permanent principal.

concerts to raise funds for the school, as well as to provide experiences for the students to visit famous historical and cultural sites.

Perhaps the best testimonials to the excellence of the African-American academies were supplied by their graduates, who distinguished themselves in many fields of endeavor. The long list of accomplished graduates includes:

Famed jazz musician Dizzy Gillespie, a graduate of Laurinburg Institute in North Carolina; Judge H. Carl Moultrie, a graduate of Avery Institute in Charleston, S.C., who presided over the trial of the eleven Hanafi gunmen who seized 134 hostages in Washington, D.C., in 1977; Dr. Frank DeCosta, former dean of the Graduate School, Morgan State University, was a 1927 graduate of Avery Institute; Ms. Cathy Hughes, businesswoman and owner of several radio stations in the Washington, D.C., area, graduate of Piney Woods Country Life School in Piney Woods, Miss.; and Alice B. Bullock, dean of the Howard University Law School, a graduate of Boggs Academy.

The heyday of most African-American academies ended as church groups cut back on their support and as public school education, though segregated, became more available. There are today a half dozen private schools for African Americans still in operation, which comprise the Association of African American Boarding Schools. The schools are: Laurinburg Institute, Laurinburg, N.C.; Piney Woods Country Life School, Piney Woods, Miss.; Southern Normal School, Brewton, Ala.; Pine Forge Academy, Pine Forge, Pa.; and Redemption Christian Academy, Troy, N.Y.

The African-American academies, which were established just after the Civil War, constituted a "golden era" in the education of blacks in this country. The accomplishments of these schools provide eloquent documentation that blacks have had a long and historic interest in intellectual development, and they did what they could, in spite of severe hardships, to achieve their educational goals.

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A PARTIAL LIST OF BLACK ACADEMIES:

*School - Founding Date - Location -
Namesake - Affiliation*

- **Avery Institute, 1865**, Charleston, S.C., Rev. C. Avery, AMA*
- **Boggs Academy, 1906**, Keysville, Ga., Mrs. V. Boggs, Presbyterian
- **Coulter Memorial Academy, 1881**, Cheraw, S.C., Caroline Coulter, Presbyterian
- **Fredericksburg Normal and Industrial Institute, 1905**, Fredericksburg, Va., Baptist
- **Laurinburg Institute, 1903/4**, Laurinburg, N.C., Independent
- **Fairfield Institute, 1868/9**, Winnsboro, S.C., Rev. O.W. Richardson, Presbyterian
- **Bettis Academy, 1881**, Trenton, S.C., Rev. Alexander Bettis, Baptist
- **Brainerd Institute, 1866**, Chester, S.C., Presbyterian
- **Brewer Normal, Industrial and Agricultural Institute, 1872**, Greenwood, S.C., AMA
- **Clinton Normal and Industrial Institute, 1896**, Rock Hill, S.C., Bishop Isom C. Clinton, AMEZ
- **Mather Academy** (Merged with Boylan-Haven of Jacksonville, FL. 1959), 1887, Camden, S.C., Rev. James Mather, Methodist/Episcopal
- **Daytona Literary and Industrial School, 1904**, Daytona Beach, Fla., Independent

**The AMA (American Missionary Association) established over 150 schools in the South. Records of some schools are at the Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, La*