

From the UCA Archives XLVII
A Closer Look at Faculty Who
Broke the Color Barrier at UCA

By
Jimmy Bryant – UCA Archivist

From the first academic year at the University of Central Arkansas (UCA) 1908-1909, through the 1968-1969 academic year, the faculty was made up of Caucasian men and women. Even though the UCA student body began desegregation in the summer of 1956, with the enrollment of Thomas Embry an African American from Conway, the desegregation of the faculty proceeded at a much slower rate. The first African American joined the UCA faculty in 1969.

In 1969, Dr. Mable Anderson, an African American, was one of several professors hired to teach in the newly created Southwest Center for Early Childhood Personnel Development. The creation of the Southwest Center for Early Childhood Personnel Development (known as The Center) was considered by UCA's president, Dr. Silas Snow, to be grandiose, revolutionary and far reaching. The director of The Center was Dr. Walter L. Hodges who was a nationally recognized authority in childhood education and development.

According to an article in The Echo, Dr. Snow stated, "Our goal is a big one. It is nothing less than the development of an organization that will be of national significance in early childhood development. Our nation's schools must have these strategies and techniques if they are to be successful in efforts to adjust their educational systems to better fit the needs of the pupils of today and tomorrow."

The Center was funded by grants from the U.S. Office of Education that totaled \$861,000, which was expected to fund the program for one full year. When The Center opened in 1969, the plans of operation included the hiring of 22 experienced consultants and 10 relatively young Ph.D. and Ed.D. holders. Dr. Mable Anderson had received her Ed.D. in 1965 from Penn State University.

In a telephone interview with this author Dr. Anderson provided valuable information about her work at UCA, race and society, and her experiences here and in other places.

The Center had four component programs and the program Dr. Anderson was involved in was known as the Behavioral Objective Prescribed Teaching Approach (BOPTA). Dr. Anderson worked with those teachers who had completed their first master's degree in teacher education and who sought another master's degree in that field of study. She also taught those who were seeking their first master's degree.

Being the first faculty member of color at an institution of higher education was nothing new to Dr. Anderson. Before coming to UCA she had taught at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, Kentucky, where she was the first to break the color barrier there as well.

Before Dr. Anderson arrived at UCA in 1969, she was told that she would be the first person of color to teach here. She elected to live in Little Rock and make the daily commute instead of living in Conway. She pointed out that she was not concerned with being the only minority member of the faculty. But, she wanted to avoid any possible problems and decided to live in Little Rock, upon the advice from a lawyer who had been assigned to assist her in acquiring living arrangements.

In Little Rock she rented an apartment at the Summit House. When she arrived, the apartment complex manager asked her who she was and she said, "I'm Dr. Anderson." According to Dr. Anderson it was apparent from the expression on the apartment manager's face (who was white) that he was completely surprised he had rented an apartment to a person of color. When Dr. Anderson attended church at the Episcopal Church in Little Rock, she again ran into the Summit House Apartment manager who was again somewhat surprised to see her at his church. She was the first person of color to live at Summit House.

Dr. Anderson said that she and her co-workers were very involved in their work and did not have a great deal of time for other things. She said that they all got along very well and it was a professional atmosphere.

Retirement is a word that is not in Dr. Anderson's vocabulary. She continues to work each day and is the founder of Village Creek Human and Environmental Justice Society, Inc., and she works *pro bono* exclusively. To have funds on which to operate, her organization has fundraisers and also receives grants and contracts.

Now 81 years of age, Dr. Anderson stays busy and said, "There are two ages, the chronological age and the activity age. If you focus on the chronological age you slow down. When you focus on the activity age, you keep going."

Dr. Anderson's tenure at UCA was short and she was here for only one academic year, 1969-1970. Even though Dr. Anderson was unquestionably UCA's first African American faculty member, many UCA faculty and alumni were under the impression that Mrs. Marian Ross was UCA's first African American faculty member. This can probably be explained by the fact that Dr. Anderson was at UCA for just one year and Mrs. Ross' tenure at UCA lasted for more than two decades. Add to that the fact that institutional memory fades as students graduate and leave campus and faculty and staff retire.

In 1970, the year that Dr. Anderson left the UCA faculty, Mr. Clyde Penny and Mrs. Marian Ross, both African Americans, joined the UCA faculty. Mr. Penny was an instructor in The Center, and Mrs. Ross was the chairperson of the newly created Department of Occupational Therapy. Mr. Penny was at UCA for only a short period of time, but Mrs. Ross was at the helm of UCA's Department of Occupational Therapy for 21 years.

Mrs. Ross attended Philander Smith College in Little Rock from 1945 to 1946 and received her Bachelor of Science in home economics from Central State College in Wilberforce, Ohio in 1949. She received her Master of Arts in home economics in 1951 from the Teachers College of Columbia University of New York. In 1957 she received her Occupational Therapy

Certification from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University. During 1966 and 1967 she was engaged in doctoral study at Ohio State University and she continued her doctoral work at the University of Arkansas in 1980.

Professor Ross had an impressive resume and was Chief of Occupational Therapy at the Arkansas State Hospital from 1957 to 1958; Chief of Occupational Therapy, United Cerebral Palsy in Columbus, Ohio, 1958 to 1965; Assistant Professor of Occupational Therapy, Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio from 1965 to 1969; Chief of Occupational Therapy, University Affiliated Mental Retardation Program, Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, 1969; Occupational Therapy Consultant, Baptist Medical Center in Little Rock and Arkansas Children's Colony in Conway, 1971 to 1979; Acting Director of the School of Health Sciences, 1975 to 1977; Associate Professor and Chairperson of the UCA Department of Occupational Therapy from 1970 to 1991.

Even though Mrs. Ross was not the first African American faculty member at UCA, she was the first African American to serve as a department head at UCA. She became chairperson of the Department of Occupational Therapy in 1970 and served in that capacity until June 30, 1991. In addition, she was elected president of the UCA Faculty Council during the 1978-1979 academic year, making her the first African American to hold that office. The Faculty Council was the forerunner to the UCA Faculty Senate.

Dr. H.B. Hardy Jr., former Dean of the Graduate School and someone who knew and conversed often with Mrs. Ross, stated, "Mrs. Ross was liked by her faculty and was very well-liked across the campus. I never came across anyone who said one negative word about Mrs. Ross. My general perception was that she had the full cooperation of her faculty members and together they planned and executed a very fine curriculum for her students."

When asked about Mrs. Ross and her role as being the founding chair of the Department of Occupational Therapy, Dr. Neil Hattlestad, Dean of the College of Health and Behavioral Sciences stated, "She came to us from Ohio State University and was the perfect choice to mount this program, which continues as the only one of its type in the State of Arkansas. She was thoughtful, well-liked and excelled in organization." After Mrs. Ross retired, a street that runs through UCA was named in her honor, Marian Ross Avenue. Mrs. Ross passed away in November 2001.

Another African American who joined the UCA faculty during the early 1970s was Dr. Willie Hardin, a native of Morrilton, Arkansas. Hardin received a Bachelor of Science in biology from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff in 1962 and a Master of Library Science from the University of Oklahoma in 1972. In 1976, he received his second masters degree from the University of Texas in Dallas in management and administration.

Hardin continued his education and received his Doctor of Arts in Library Administration from Simmons College in 1979. His dissertation was "Analysis of Growth Patterns in Select Black Land-Grant College and University Libraries: Five Case Studies." In 1973, not long after receiving his Master of Library Science degree, he accepted the position of Head of Interlibrary Loan and Instructor at UCA's Torreyson Library. He served in this capacity until 1980.

From 1980 to 1984, Dr. Hardin was the Torreyson Library Acquisitions Librarian and Associate Director. He served as Acting Director of Torreyson Library from January 1, 1985 to June 30, 1985 and was promoted to Director on July 1, 1985. His title was later changed from Director of Torreyson Library to Dean of Torreyson Library in late 1990, during the presidency of Winfred Thompson.

Dr. Hardin also taught in the Department of Educational Media and Library Science while he served as a librarian and later as the Dean of Torreyson Library. During his career at Torreyson Library UCA became the first fully automated library in the state. The card catalog system with which many readers of this article are familiar was done away with, and was replaced by a computerized system.

Dr. Hardin remained Dean of Torreyson Library until 2003 when he was made Associate Vice President of Academic Development. He remained in this position until he retired from UCA. After he moved into academic development, he actively began raising money for scholarships.

According to a December 2010 Front & Center article on Dr. Hardin in the River Valley & Ozark Edition of the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, UCA's provost at that time, Dr. Lance Grahn, was quoted as saying, "Hardin is someone with a big heart, a love for UCA. In terms of fundraising, he was someone who was our direct contact into the African American community, especially in African American churches. He was very active in raising scholarship money for African American students."

When this author interviewed Dr. Hardin and asked him about the atmosphere on campus and his relationship with colleagues and students, he stated, "I enjoyed a very pleasant working atmosphere and I felt comfortable speaking with those in the UCA administration as well as with faculty members."

After 38 years of service to UCA, Dr. Hardin retired in December 2010. When asked what were some of his fondest memories of UCA, he stated, "I enjoyed supporting the African American student organizations and serving as an advisor. In addition, I also advised the Muslim students and worked with them. My overall fondest memory was overseeing the design and enlargement of Torreyson Library. I also took pride in building the library faculty at UCA and teaching in the Department of Educational Media and Library Science. Working with students and teaching future school media specialists is something that I absolutely loved to do."

Merlin Augustine, an African American, came to UCA in 1967 as a student and majored in counseling and psychology. In a telephone interview with this author, Dr. Augustine said that when he was standing in line registering for his first classes at UCA, President Silas Snow introduced himself to young Augustine and stated, "We are happy to have you on our campus and if you have any difficulties please let me know." Augustine graduated in 1970 and immediately entered graduate school at UCA and received a Master of Science degree in counseling and psychology in June 1971. He later received an Ed.D. in Higher Education and Management from the University of Arkansas.

When Dr. Augustine was attending his graduation ceremony for his Master of Science degree, President Snow handed him his diploma, shook his hand and said, "I will come and get you wherever you are, I want you to come back and work for me." Dr. Augustine's wife, Beverly Elaine Washington Augustine, also graduated from UCA.

After he received his Masters degree, he went to Lake Village, Arkansas, where he worked as a counselor. After one year at Lake Village, President Snow contacted him and asked if he remembered who he was and of course he said he did. He was not looking for a job but said President Snow made him an attractive offer and he accepted the position of Dean of Students and Instructor of Psychology.

Dr. Augustine said that he and Mrs. Ross were the only African American faculty members at that time. When asked about his relationship with the UCA Administration and faculty, he stated, "It would have been impossible to have a more supportive and professional and personal relationship than I did with Dr. Robert Morrow, Dean of the College of Psychology and Counseling. I visited in Dr. Morrow's home and traveled together with him to various meetings." Dr. Augustine also said that Dr. H.B. Hardy Jr. was influential in his life and was one of his mentors.

While at UCA, Dr. Augustine was the recipient of the President's Achievement Award. This award is given to those who are deemed to have made the greatest contributions to UCA's growth and programs. When he and Mrs. Augustine left Conway they were given the keys to the City of Conway by Mayor Jim Hoggard.

Dr. Augustine recently retired as Executive Assistant Chancellor at the University of Arkansas Fayetteville, where he served for 34 years. He is now in retirement but still serves his community. He founded and operates the M&N (Merlin & Nora) Augustine Foundation, which is the largest all-volunteer organization in the state with more than 4,000 active volunteers. The M&N Augustine Foundation is named for Dr. Augustine's parents and works with people who experience catastrophic events which require resources beyond their own financial means. The M&N Augustine Foundation was established on November 16, 1992, in honor of the Augustine's 62nd wedding anniversary.

Dr. Augustine always enjoyed a close relationship with President Snow and said it continues today with other members of the Snow family. Dr. Augustine delivered the eulogy at President Snow's funeral at the request of the Snow family and remarked that they still have a close relationship.

Author's Note: Sources for this article include The Echo, Log Cabin Democrat, River Valley and Ozark Edition of the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, Official Records of the University of Central Arkansas M99-01 collection, Dr. Audie Lynch, Dr. H.B. Hardy, Jr., Dr. Mable Anderson, Dr. Neil Hattlestad, Dr. Willie Hardin, Dr. Merlin Augustine, UCA Bulletins, documents from the College of Health and Behavioral Sciences and "The Centennial History of the University of Central Arkansas" by Jimmy Bryant.