

A Historical Narrative On The Impact Of The New Farmers Of America (NFA) On Selected Past Members

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Abstract

This paper, “A Historical Narrative on the Impact of the New Farmers of America (NFA) on Selected Past Members”, establishes a written historical narrative on issues relating to the impact the NFA had on past members of the NFA, and to gather detailed background information on the NFA. It includes detailed interviews from past members and references pertinent information found in archives and texts.

The research objectives for this study were: (1) to determine what activities of the NFA contributed to or distracted from the leadership development or success of the NFA member as a leader, (2) determine what impact has the NFA (versus other sources) had on the development of each past NFA member as a leader, and (3) and to determine what aspect(s) or program(s) of the NFA (that was lost after the merger) could be incorporated into the FFA where minority issues are of concern.

Major findings of this study were: (1) the participants believed that the agricultural teacher played an important role in their leadership development that helped them to lead and manage programs, and develop human relation skills, (2) the participants believed that the NFA and the FFA were similar, but after the merger there was a lack of Black leadership in the FFA organization, (3) the participants expressed the notion that neither Black nor White teachers were doing as much for all students after the merger and that the interest of the student was no longer a priority for many of the teachers, and (4) the participants believed that the merging of the two organizations was inevitable due to societal and educational integration that was going on in the 1960s.

Based upon the conclusions it was implied that a lack of forethought and effort in maintaining Blacks in leadership positions led to poor morale and a loss of identity among Black students enrolled in the FFA; therefore the National FFA Organization should hire an outside agency to determine the accessibility of leadership positions to professionals of color. Furthermore, the agency should publish their findings and recommendations for review by the FFA Board of Directors and its members.

Introduction/Theoretical Framework

The National Vocational Education Act of 1917 established federal funding for courses in agricultural education. Shortly thereafter, the original idea for the Future Farmers of America (FFA) organization was initiated. The FFA was open to all races, but due to segregation, most Blacks were not able to participate. For many years separate schools in a number of states were provided for Black students. It was not until 1964 when Congress passed the Civil Rights Act that prohibited segregation in public schools that all Negro students enrolled in vocational

agriculture could become members of the Future Farmers of America (FFA) nationwide (Tenney, 1977).

The New Farmers of America (NFA) was an organization of Negro farm boys studying vocational agriculture in the public schools throughout 18 states in the eastern and southern United States. The NFA started in Virginia in May, 1927 with a few chapters and members, and concluded in 1965 with more than 1,000 chapters and more than 58,000 active members (Strickland, 1995). From 1928-1935, all NFA associations were known only by the name of each respective state; for example, N.F.V. designated the "New Farmers of Virginia." All of the other states were similar (New Farmers of America, 1963).

On August 4, 1935, a special group of Negro farm boys and their advisers met in Tuskegee with the idea of establishing a National Organization of the NFA. Seven years prior to this meeting a small group of White farm boys met on November 20, 1928 for the same purpose; establishing a national organization. They called their organization the Future Farmers of America (FFA). The Negro group met to organize a national organization, but the difference with this was the Future Farmers of America was nationwide in representation, whereas the Negro organization was mainly regional (Strickland, 1995). In August of 1935, representatives from all the State Associations met and formed the National Organization of New Farmers of America with a tentative constitution and by-laws (New Farmers of America, 1963). Establishing a national organization was an important step in the development of the New Farmers of America Organization, because state association members were now a part of a national organization that was made up of similar groups of agricultural students from the other States represented (New Farmers of America, 1963).

The NFA was an organization designed to develop the qualities of leadership and citizenship of its members by allowing them to participate in conducting meetings, sharing in carrying out the program of activities of the chapter, and serving on committees (Tenney, 1977). The organization afforded its members many opportunities to develop leadership that was very essential for their success as a modern farmer. These leadership abilities were developed through public speaking, judging, chapter contests and from the training received through the work of the chapter committees under the supervision of the local adviser (New Farmers of America, 1963).

A decade after the Smith-Hughes Act in 1917, African Americans in these professional fields increased rapidly (Bowen, 1994). After the federally mandated desegregation and state compliance efforts of the 1960s ended, the infrastructure that maintained substantial numbers of African Americans in agriculture declined drastically (Bell, Powers, & Rogers, 1987). With the decline in African Americans in key roles, membership in the agricultural sciences has steadily decreased for African Americans in agriculture (Bowen, 1994). Prior to 1965, the idea of merging the NFA and the FFA was presented to both organizations. After numerous meetings and skepticism between the organizations, the merger was approved (Tenney, 1977).

History can be one guide in determining what has led to the decrease of African American students in the FFA organization. FFA membership is one-fourth female, two-thirds non-farms (National FFA Organization, 2000), and less than five percent African American

(Moore, 1994). Prior to the 1960s African American agriculture teachers served as strong community leaders. Once these teachers vanished their leadership roles were not sustained by the agriculture teachers who replaced them (Bowen, 1994).

Focusing on diversity is a major issue in today's society. One way of looking toward the future is to look back at the past to see what may have led to the decline of African American students in agricultural education. The emphasis on diversity and pluralism continues to grow in recognition of demographics, economics and social changes taking place in the United States today (Ingram & Nyangara, 1997). "Some could argue that the focus of future diversity efforts should be on enrolling more minority students and increasing membership in the FFA where programs are currently being offered" (Moore, 1994, p. 14). Larke (2000) stated "One of the big questions is how do we sensitize non-minorities to the need, get them to take ownership of the challenge and recruit students of color" (p.9).

It is important that history be remembered, as the NFA was a thriving organization prior to the merger in the 1960s (Norris, 1993; Strickland, 1995). The agriculture teachers at that time are either retired or near retirement and the NFA and FFA members involved at that time may have fading memories of the specifics of the events. From 1964-1966, virtually no articles were published in The Agricultural Education Magazine about the 1965 merger (Bowen, 1994). Radhakrishna (1998) reported that of the 701 papers presented at the National Agricultural Education Research Meeting (NAERM) over its 25-year history, 14 had women or minorities as a subject matter topic. Of these 14, only two were presented in the 1980s and none in the 1970s. Further, from 1986-1996 only seven journal articles with the subject matter topic of women or minorities were published in the Journal of Agricultural Education (Radhakrishna, 1997).

To understand the years surrounding the NFA and FFA merger of 1965, some background information is useful. There were several laws passed beginning in the 1890s that had a direct effect on integration in America. The two major lawsuits in history that had a major effect on integration and the Civil Rights Act are discussed.

Plessy v. Ferguson

No other institution has been more influential in the lives of Black Americans than education (Adair, 1984). For many years, separate schools in a number of states were provided for Black students. Adair (1984) stated, "You must understand that 'separate but equal' was neither sought or realized as Plessy v. Ferguson mandated. This 'separate but equal' clause derived from the Plessy v. Ferguson lawsuit. The Plessy v. Ferguson case brought justification for segregation in public facilities across the country, including schools" (p. 34).

On June 7, 1892, a Black shoemaker named Homer Plessy was put in jail for sitting in a "White" car of the East Louisiana Railroad. Plessy was seven-eighths White and one-eighths Black, but under Louisiana law, he was considered Black, requiring him to sit in the "Colored" car. After going to court, Plessy was found guilty in the state court, the Supreme Court of Louisiana, and the Supreme Court of the United States for refusing to leave the White car. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Tennessee's "separate but equal" facilities on railroad cars are constitutional. The judge at the trial was John Howard Ferguson a lawyer from

Massachusetts. This case set the precedents that separate facilities for Blacks and Whites was constitutional as long as they were equal. It was argued that “separate but equal” facilities do not offend any provision of the Constitution of the United States. In this case the legislature of Louisiana passed a law which required that all railroads provide “equal but separate” accommodations for Whites and Blacks and forbade the mixing of the two races. This ruling affected Blacks for over a half century (1896 – 1954) until overruled in the May 17, 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education* decision (Adair, 1984).

Brown v. Board of Education

The public schools functioned on the basis of the Plessy Doctrine of “separate but equal” until May 17, 1954 at which time the *Brown* decision came before the Supreme Court (Mercer, 1971). Repeated studies were revealing that there was a great gap between Negro and White schools of the South in the quality of education (Bouma & Hoffman, 1968). Student teachers of White teacher education institutions, prior to May 17, 1954, engaged in student teaching in White schools and vice versa for Black student teachers (Mercer, 1971). All was changed as the result of the decision of the Supreme Court on May 17, 1954 in the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*.

A Black family challenged the segregation policies of the Topeka school system. A student, Linda Brown, living just two blocks from a local area school had to travel twenty-one blocks to school. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) saw this as an excellent opportunity to challenge the Separate but Equal policies of the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision. They would argue that the Fourteenth Amendment indicated that the policy established by the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling was unconstitutional. Thurgood Marshall presented this before the Supreme Court. When the decision came in, all nine justices voted that the policy of Separate but Equal was unconstitutional. The courts ordered immediate desegregation of public schools (Pratt, 1992). “As the bombing of Pearl Harbor was to the entire nation, so the *Brown* decision was to the White South – an assault to be recorded for posterity as yet another event that would live in infamy” (Pratt, 1992, p. 121).

In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court buried the “Separate but Equal” doctrine under the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* lawsuit. The decision in this case was that “separate but equal” had no place in public education (Adair, 1984). The *Brown* decision led to the integration of schools throughout the United States. The most noted was the integration of Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas. Nine Black students were selected to attend a public school in Arkansas and were faced with a very hostile environment to the point where they were protected by the United States Armed Services. After years of struggle, the school was eventually integrated and the first Black student received his degree (Peterson et al., 1978). This crisis in Little Rock had a profound impact on America and the rest of the world. It provided proof of the lengths to which some Southerners would go to prevent integration.

Civil Rights Act

The Civil Rights Act was a lengthy debate that was fought by southern congressmen, but inevitably a change in society was to come. Change is what happened with the reception of this bill. This bill forbade discrimination in all public accommodations, which included

restaurants, motels, sport arenas and theaters. It permitted the Department of Justice to file suit “for the orderly achievement of desegregation in public education” (Pratt, 1992, p. 23). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 legalized integration and allowed freedom of choice in the southern states. Because of this Act, the faculty and student bodies in the south were integrated (Mayberry, 1991). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was pushed by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and it helped train teachers and other school personnel in handling desegregation problems (Bouma & Hoffman, 1968). The Civil Rights Act was the most significant piece of legislation to date, and it has had a lasting effect in the elimination of discrimination and segregation (Hill & Feeley, 1967). Adair (1984) wrote:

On the other side of the struggle was the NAACP exerting unconditional pressure on school districts to desegregate ‘with all deliberate speed’. In 1964, jurisdiction for enforcing the desegregation mandate was transferred from the courts to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (DHEW). It was felt that desegregation was too slow under the courts. School districts were to submit progress reports to DHEW on desegregation efforts in their schools (p. 58).

The Department of Health, Education and Welfare, under the directions of the President of the United States, played an important role in the merging of the FFA and the NFA due to their involvement with sending letters to both organizations requesting for a joint meeting of the groups (Wakefield & Talbert, 2000).

Purpose/Objectives

The purpose of this study was to select and interview past members of the NFA in establishing a written historical narrative on issues relating to the impact the NFA had on these individuals and to gather detailed background information on the NFA.

The research objectives for this study were:

1. What activities of the NFA contributed to, or distracted from, the leadership development or success of the Past NFA Member as a leader?
2. What impact has the NFA (versus other sources) had on the development of selected Past NFA member as a leader?
3. What aspect(s) or program(s) of the NFA (that was lost after the merger) could be incorporated into the FFA where minority issues are of concern?

Methodology

To obtain the data of recording historical narrative from past members of the NFA, interviewing was utilized to accomplish the objectives of the study. The purpose of interviewing was to find out what was in and on someone else’s mind. Interviewing allows the researcher the opportunity to find out those things that cannot be directly observed. Patton (1990) stated that we cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time, situations that preclude the presence of the observer, and we cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world.

The researcher has a distinct and active role in this process. In their qualitative research applications, interviews are often applied because the study's underlying theory is too complex to quantify with traditional methods, too insufficiently developed, or too narrowly interpreted. In other words, interviews often better fit the study's theoretical question and analytical situation than do more traditional experimental or survey designs (Lee, Mitchell, & Sablynski, 1994).

One purpose of this paper was to create dialogue about the NFA. The researcher interacted with the written word by agreeing, disagreeing, or posing other points. It was important for the researcher to respond to what was written and not take what was written at face value. It was necessary for the researcher to question, reflect, and react. "Oral personal narratives occur naturally within a conversational context, and often the performance of one narrative leads to other related performances" (Boland, 1979, p.71).

Interviewing is one of several techniques for gathering data about past events, figures, and movements. Oral history seeks to record on tape the ideas, impressions, and knowledge of persons who might not otherwise leave any kind of written memoir. Oral history interviewing is not a substitute for written history, but compliments traditional sources of materials used in reference to the past. Boland stated, "The greatest advantage of oral over written documents is that the historian actively participates, as interviewer, in creating the oral document, and therefore he can try to get the information he needs" (p. 121).

An interview guide was developed and used by the researcher for all interviews. The interview guide was developed by the researcher and input was received from agricultural education professionals from Purdue University and past members of the NFA not involved in this research study. The participants selected were selected by using snowball or chain sampling. Snowball or chain sampling is a method used for locating information-rich key informants (Patton, 1990). "These are individuals whose names come up repeatedly in talking to different well-situated people, and these selected individuals would make a highly credible sample" (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996, p.234).

On October 23, 2000, a memo was sent on the email listserv to all American Association of Agricultural Educators (AAAE) members and the email listserv to all Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) members referencing information pertaining to past NFA members. From the responses received, nine participants were chose to be interviewed. All of the members selected were past NFA members. All participants were interviewed in person.

Data were analyzed using triangulation from reviewed materials from the archives; gathered materials from books, articles, and magazines; and reviewed transcripts from the interviews. The researcher compared information received from the participants, for accuracy purposes, to data found in the texts and archives. The interview transcripts were consistent with the findings retrieved from the archives and the texts.

Results/Findings

Research objective one sought to determine what activities of the NFA contributed to or distracted from the leadership development or success of the Past NFA Member as a leader? The following research questions were used to achieve this objective.

Research question one: What roles did the NFA play in the school/community where you resided, or worked?

Responses are as follows: “The NFA played very significant roles because their people were in rural communities and many people were not mindful of the activities that were a part of the NFA. The teacher of agriculture would travel throughout the community, visiting homes with the students, working with adults bringing them into the program, and then they became familiar with activities of the NFA and developed an appreciation for what it was doing for their sons.” “It served as a motivating force in their lives. It served as a vehicle for competition, where they could compete, and competition made good men and women out of everybody that past through that program.” “It helped students become leaders in not only the school but in the community as well.” “The NFA was bigger than football in a rural community today, if you can picture that. In that sense, I mean that every sector in the community really valued and respected and had a high regard for the NFA. They knew that it was a part of our lives and one major vehicle to help young men to grow, to understand themselves, to understand the community, to set some goals for themselves, and to learn team and leadership skills.” “In the school and community the NFA was number one. You were seen throughout the community and the school because you did go to the other classrooms and put on demonstrations, and did community service.”

Research question two: What job skills, leadership skills, and values did you gain from your participation in NFA activities that contributed to your career and/or leadership?

Responses are as follow: “I developed leadership skills with the ability to lead and manage people and programs, and the most important thing is developing human relations skills, being able to work with and getting along with people and to work together as a team. Taught us how to develop that brotherly love. That permeated the community.” “The NFA gave me what I needed to reach the point that I am now. It gave me the inspiration, it gave me the hope, it gave me the encouragement, it gave me the push, it gave me the enthusiasm, it gave me everything that I needed in order to be a successful person in order to render the kind of service that I need to succeed. It was responsible for my becoming the Executive Secretary of the NFA, my becoming the Director of Camp John Hope, because I had the leadership ability to do what was needed at that time.” “I think one of the key things I received in the term of leadership skills was the ability to get up and speak before a group. Public speaking was one of those things that they stressed a lot and I find it to be very helpful today.” “I guess those jobs skills really contributed to why I am an agricultural teacher today. My agriculture teacher brought a few of those hidden skills out of me. I had learned them on the farm, but during that time you were trying to get away from the farm and I found out I couldn’t get away from the farm.” “All those experiences I learned from living on a family farm and every time I looked up, the agriculture teacher was out there visiting. He was concerned about us.” “The NFA had more to do with my success than any thing that I can think of in addition to my parents. The high school agricultural teacher played a key role as well.” “The more people you could involve the more you would keep out of trouble, so they came up with these positions. Involving all these people would provide more leadership training for more people.”

Research objective two sought to determine what impact has the NFA (versus other sources) had on the development of each past NFA member as a leader. The following research questions were used to satisfy this objective.

Research question one: What were some of the contests/activities that you participated in as a NFA member?

Responses are as follow: “Public speaking, parliamentary procedure, shop contests, tool identification, livestock judging and many others.” “I participated in landscape judging, parliamentary procedure, livestock judging, forest field day, and one of the most rewarding one was public speaking. I enjoyed that more and public speaking really gave me a push toward the goals that I had set.” “The only contests that I remember were public speaking, livestock judging and quartet.” “The NFA Ball and Quartet.” “Public speaking contest. During that time we didn’t have something in front of you that you read from. You memorized, and then you came back the next day knowing half of it and then the next day you knew it all. So public speaking was number one that sort of stood out. Another one was the NFA quiz contest. Where you learned about your history and the background of the NFA and then the Proficiency Contests with the shop work.”

Research question two: What were some of your experiences as a NFA member?

Responses are as follow: “NFA got me my first trip to Greensboro, North Carolina. We only lived 45 or 50 miles from Greensboro, but I never visited Greensboro, so my first visit to Greensboro was by way of participating in a state convention held on this campus. That must have been in 1962... I think it was.” “The year I served as National President, if the National President of the FFA came to speak at our National Convention, we did not know about it. It was one great experience to hear about Benjamin Mays [Mays is a Baptist Minister, the sixth president of Morehouse College, a mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr., and he delivered the eulogy at King’s funeral] at the Civic Center. It was a tremendous experience. I didn’t see too many white faces.” “We didn’t know anything about the FFA Magazines.” “Wearing those black and gold NFA jackets. Before you wore that coat you had those eggs in your pocket. You didn’t know whether they were boiled or not. You had to go through that initiation. The upperclassmen would come to school initiation day if no other. I don’t know what lie they told, but every one of them came to school, because you would get beat and that was a part of it. You would run down this long line. They would be standing on each side. There would be a week of it. Them rascals could come to school that day with those belts soaked down and if you were a freshman and you were trying to talk to somebody’s girlfriend, they would put the word out there and them rascals would kill you.”

Research objective three sought to determine what aspect(s) or program(s) of the NFA (that was lost after the merger) could be incorporated into the FFA where minority issues are of concern. There were four research questions used to satisfy this objective.

Research question one: What did you see as the primary differences between the NFA and FFA?

Responses are as follow: “The FFA limited the participation of Black students in youth activities because Blacks don’t have the opportunity to be leaders in the organization like they did when the NFA was there.” “The Blacks were the leaders in the NFA. I wish we could develop the FFA to get more Black involvement as officers because Blacks are missing that experience.” It was very difficult to receive awards in the FFA. See the Black students felt like the NFA was their organization and they didn’t see the FFA as being their organization as much as they did back then.” “One of the things I think when we look at the differences sometimes in the merger, I know that the NFA teachers were very dedicated and motivated and they worked extremely hard to make sure that their students understood their roles and responsibilities. People along there with me would take a student whether they were Black or White and try to push them to the max, but agriculture teachers after me that didn’t have no dealings with the NFA wouldn’t push a student to the max. I guess because they didn’t know how to push Black students. Most teachers doing that time expected all of the kids to succeed.” “Now when I started teaching school in an integrated system in Virginia, what I didn’t see was that all the kids were expected to succeed. It seemed like they had given up on some of the kids and I know for a fact that when we merged that some of the teachers certainly gave up on some of the African American kids.” “We had more chances at leadership before the merger. Most of the students that participate in contest are White students. Most of the officers are White students. The Black students could do it, but they don’t have the chance.”

Research question two: What was the atmosphere like in agricultural education when the two organizations first merged?

Responses are as follow: “The Blacks were demoralized. The morale went down, because they felt as if they had lost something. So at that time I was hoping that they would change the name of the FFA. It was called the Future Farmers of America. So we were hoping at that time they would change the name from Future Farmers of America to Future Agricultural Leaders of America or FAA Future Agriculturalists of America, but there were many old timers that had been around for a long time and just didn’t want to change. Because at that time the blacks felt like they were not giving up anything. The NFA...gone forever.” Rather than a merger, many saw it as absorption; they were absorbed rather than merged. We had Booker T. Washington and H.O. Sargent. The only thing they kept was the H.O. Sargent.” “The atmosphere was tense, it was very tense on the part of teachers, on the part of students, and on the part of administrators. The reason it was tense was because nobody wanted to hurt nobody’s feelings and as a result everybody was kind of tense.” “They were two organizations coming together. There will always be some reluctance from both parts. If you are not a change agent, when the word ‘change’ come about maybe the FFA/NFA people said that we were going to lose our identity.” “I think the merger was because of the courts. They had mandated that in Virginia they were going to integrate the schools and because of that I think the two groups came together. If the courts had not mandated that they integrate the schools, we might even today still have separate organizations and have separate schools. So it goes back to the concept of looking at things from a broader perspective. There comes a point of time you have to ask a question to the issue of whether it was a good idea or not? This is my personal opinion.” “I think the group that really lost out in integration was the

average African American kid, because your educated kids succeeded prior to integration and to a degree succeeded through integration. In the state of North Carolina it started with the teachers. Let's go ahead and get the teachers merged as an organization and as a group before we bring the kids together and so forth. We had a hassle at the state level as far as merging the teachers in the organization. This is when some of the teachers came out and was concerned with having Blacks in leadership positions rather than having the Whites come in and take over everything." "Do you remember 1954 when they came out with segregation as being wrong, but yet it was in the 1960s before we got around to doing anything about it. If they did not merge together monies would be cut." "We sort of had a guarantee that we would have someone in one of those positions that they were going to put a Black beside a White. It was a promise in the beginning and then around two years down the road they sort of forgot about that promise that was made." "When we first started we had all these Black teachers and after a year or two they forgot them." "There was a time when there was two Ag. Teachers, one Black one and one White one and the checks would be different." "Some of the experiences we had with the supervisors and so forth, Black supervisor were not able to go into a White teachers' classroom and even suggest anything to them." "Change was very tense. The end results were that there were a lot of promises that were made that were not kept and the NFA was swallowed up rather than merged."

Research question three: What strategies were used to get NFA students involved in the FFA?

Responses are as follow: "We didn't have much of a choice. What strategies?????" "It took the attitude of the teachers to talk with them and encourage them to join the FFA just like they did the NFA. Instead of saying NFA, we'll just say FFA. It was the attitude of the teacher of agriculture." "In the NFA, activities and leadership were very important components and that helped make many of us what we are today, because of the leadership development component of the program." "It was due to integration and integration had to come when it did." "The strategies used to get students motivated in the FFA was to explain to them the full meaning of it, the advantage of it, and the purpose of it. It was explained that it is an opportunity to get out in the community and compete with people outside the community, outside of the state, and in the nation, and it's a good vehicle for the development of young minds." "I think the strategy had to come from the agricultural teacher. If that agriculture teacher was enthusiastic and involved in that program, you wouldn't have that problem back then." "It took Virginia four years to get its first African American state officer. This is where the FFA began. That would tell you if there was much done for African Americans in the FFA. When you bring African Americans to state conventions and you do not have African American in leadership roles, what message does that give to the other African American kids that are there?" "We tried to encourage kids to join. It became more difficult to get minorities to join the FFA because of the money for district contest, dues...kids sort of drew away."

Research question four: What things were lost in the merger that may have been significant enough to retain that could help benefit minority involvement in the FFA today?

Responses are as follow: "One of the things that were lost was contact. Contact with Black leadership. After the merger many positions in southern states, many leadership positions

in southern states were phased out. We didn't have the Black leadership in states that you didn't have the NFA, and as a result we didn't have that Black leadership push for our young people. It's a different kind of push when White pushes Blacks. It's not as effective as Black encouraging Blacks, so most of the states, I would say all of the southern states lost positions of state leadership on the part of Blacks and as a result many of the Black students now are suffering for that kind of leadership and that kind of push that we had when I was in there and when other Black leaders were there to encourage them." "The lost of historical information. Students who come through today through the FFA unless they get a person who would tell them about the NFA, probably would not know about them." "One of the things that we could do as I look back can come from the standpoint of a teacher. He showed a genuine interest in you. Having a teacher that really cared about you, stood behind you, and motivated you. In the old days that agricultural teacher would take you in his car and carry you up to the university. It usually does not happen like this anymore." "One of the things would be some of those contests, for example, at that time we had the quartet and it was very big. From what I understand a lot of singers came from those NFA quartets. That quartet was about one of the only things that I can see right now that would be significant enough to maintain." "At one point in time there were only a few activities for students to become involved in, but as time goes on kids could become involved in other things. Looking at the figures of African Americans in the FFA after the merger, the figures speak for themselves. I don't know how you overcome that data. Could you imagine what it would have been like if the first black National president had come along earlier? It was 20 years after the merger before we got the first Black president, and none since." "That closeness between teacher and student seems like it sort of faded away. It meant something, that relationship between student and teacher and seems like some of that has just faded away and may not be there in this day and time." "I felt like for a long time as a teacher I was a teacher without a club. I was a NFA member when I left my high school, then when I graduated from A&T I was teaching about the FFA and I really just didn't feel like I was a part. When we went to Raleigh and they were discussing the merger, there were some pretty heated discussions going on down there. I taught about the FFA, but personally I had a hard time feeling like I belong because the closeness wasn't there. Mr. Evans came by our house to visit and if he and my daddy decided something, I had no vote. The closeness was because my daddy trusted Mr. Evans. That was lost after the merging process." In some cases even now, some of the White teachers may be afraid to get too close to work with minority individuals."

Conclusions/Recommendations/Implications

The NFA was an organization that had a full history of accomplishments and was a thriving organization prior to the merger in 1965 with the FFA. The purpose of this study was to select and interview past members of the NFA in establishing a written historical narrative on issues relating to the impact the NFA had on these individuals and to gather detailed background information on the NFA. Data collected from a selected group of members, archives and limited written texts were analyzed to accomplish this purpose.

When asked what activities of the NFA contributed to or distracted from the leadership development or success of the Past NFA member as a leader; what impact has the NFA had on the development of each Past NFA member as a leader; and what aspect(s) or program(s) of the NFA could be incorporated into the FFA where minority issues are of concern, all the participants agreed upon these conclusions. The participants believed that becoming actively

involved in the NFA contributed to their leadership development, the agricultural teacher played an important role in their leadership development, and the NFA had a major effect on them today. They all agreed that after the merger there was a lack of Black leadership in the FFA, it became more difficult for Black Students to gain leadership roles in the FFA, the merger was inevitable, and the attitude of the teacher determined the smoothness of the transition after the merger.

This study implies that based on the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited segregation in public schools throughout the United States, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare sent letters to the NFA, NHA, FFA, and the FHA to force them to integrate. If schools under the organizational structure chose not to integrate, the State Department asked each association to consider eliminating funding to these schools.

The merger led to the union of Black and White agricultural students and teachers in schools throughout the United States. It was found that many of the Blacks that were involved in the merger felt that it was inevitable that the organization merged due to time. The participants felt that the merger was a good thing for the organization because they had a lot to learn from the FFA members as well. It was a perception prior to and after the merger by the members that the merger would not place Black representation in the FFA at a level equivalent to Whites. Participants believe that this had an influence in the decline of Blacks in agriculture and the FFA.

Based upon these conclusions it can be implied that a lack of forethought and effort in maintaining Blacks in leadership positions led to poor morale and a loss of identity among Black students enrolled in the FFA.

It is recommended that additional research be conducted to include a larger sample of the population of past NFA members for historical documentation, the National FFA Organization should look into the promises made to the NFA Organization and develop goals that would increase the morale of Blacks in agriculture, and additional research be done to document day-to-day operation of the NFA at the local, state and national levels to be presented to the National FFA Center for showcase.

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