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## Hallie Quinn Brown

*(1850–1949)*

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*We believe that the right thinking White American will soon realize that he cannot afford to ignore twelve million loyal citizens of color. It is sadly true that unjust laws are enacted and cruel discriminations made against the Negro. He is held aloof by every other group forming a part of this nation. He is regarded by many as a liability rather than an asset in promoting the value of American life.*



(Hallie Quinn Brown,  
as quoted in McFarlin, 1975, p. 180)

## ❖ INTRODUCTION

Hallie Quinn Brown was a professor of elocution, lecturer, and civil rights activist during the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. Despite the fact that her literary and oratorical works gave voice to thousands of disenfranchised people of her era and that she “produced pedagogical materials confronting important issues that educators still grapple with today,” her contributions to the field of rhetorical communication are seldom mentioned in noteworthy writings on elocutionary theory (Kates, 1997, p. 59). Much of this negligence is because of the limited social roles women and African Americans could take on at the time. Even today, Brown’s work goes unrecognized in most scholarly discussions of elocutionary theory. In the article, “Hallie Quinn Brown: Black Woman Elocutionist,” Annjennette McFarlin noted:

Although “Miss Hallie” as she was known by all, was recognized as one of the greatest elocutionists on two continents, Europe and America, she never made a history book, nor have any of her speeches ever appeared in any speech anthologies. (McFarlin, 1980, pp. iv)

As “one of the first colored ladies to take up elocution as a profession,” Brown taught thousands of African Americans about the power of the spoken word during a period in history when they were not expected to, or welcomed to, be a political force (Daniel, 1970, p. 298). As described in *Notable Black American Women*, she was indeed “one of the most important black leaders ever to emerge” (Smith, 1992, p.116). In this chapter, her role in transforming mainstream elocutionary practice and instruction to acknowledge African American linguistic traditions is spotlighted in an effort to add her contributions to communication research with those of popular mention.

## ❖ BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Hallie Quinn Brown was born the fifth of six children in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on March 10, 1850. Her parents, Thomas Arthur Brown and Frances Jane (Scoggins) Brown, were former slaves. Thomas Brown, who was born into slavery in Frederick County, Maryland, purchased his freedom on his twenty-fifth birthday. In 1834, he purchased the freedom of his sister, brother, and father from his owner and mother, a Scottish woman. Frances Scoggins, Brown’s mother, was

freed by her White owner and maternal grandfather from his plantation in Winchester County, Virginia, after the Revolutionary War. Frances Scoggins and Thomas Brown got married right after Frances turned 22 years old in 1840. They resided in Pittsburgh in their homestead on Hazel Street until 1864. At the time of Brown's birth, her father worked as a steward and express agent for riverboats traveling between St. Louis and New Orleans, with a stop in Pittsburgh (Strom, 1999). He had been a porter and conductor previously. The Brown family enjoyed a life of relative privilege because the couple had accumulated a considerable amount of real estate before the Civil War. With their savings, the parents strived to provide their children with the educational opportunities they never had.

Brown's early years, however, were not spent distanced from the plight of her less-fortunate contemporaries. The Brown home often served as a station of the Underground Railroad, a haven for fugitive slaves traveling in search of freedom. Prior to arriving at the Brown home, many of these slaves had been waiting to be transported to Canada (Baker, 1987; Hine, 1993). The Browns also provided space in their home as a headquarters for ministers of the local African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church. In fact, "Ministers frequented the Brown's family home so often that one room was known as the 'Bishop's Room'" (McFarlin, 1975, p. 15). These early connections to members of her community helped establish Brown's sensitivities for education and human rights, which later drove her activist efforts.

In 1864, because of the mother's poor health, the Brown family relocated to Chatham, Ontario, Canada, where the father became a farmer. Brown was 14 years old when she began her education there, and she remained there as a student until 1870 (Fisher, 1993). At that time, the family moved again to Wilberforce, Ohio, where they built a house, Homewood Cottage, and sent Brown, along with her younger brother John, to Wilberforce College, an AME church institution (Davis, 1933).

#### ❖ ACADEMIC BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE

Hallie Quinn Brown began her education in elocution on her family's farm in Chatham, Ontario, Canada. She sharpened her early skills by delivering addresses to the cows, sheep, and birds there. Almost daily, Brown would inquire about the health of the animals and climb onto a tree stump or old log to discuss the important issues of her day (McFarlin, 1980). While in Canada, Brown was influenced in ways that shaped her life ambitions. One early event that she recalled into

adulthood was the moment that encouraged her to proclaim that she would one day meet Queen Victoria of England. In her book, *Tales My Father Told, and Other Stories*, Brown wrote of a parade her family attended in honor of the Queen's birthday:

The twenty-fourth day of May was Queen Victoria's birthday, and it was befittingly celebrated with pomp and splendor throughout the Dominion of Canada. On one such occasion our family went to Chatham to participate in the festivities. Soldiers in gorgeous uniform marched through the streets which were decorated with many fluttering flags. Bands bore a large banner upon which was imprinted the face of the Queen. My eyes were fastened on that banner and I was unable to banish the picture from my mind. (Brown, 1925a, p. 15)

To see a woman (of any race) held in such high regard was a first for young Brown. This event taught her that women could do much more than her immediate circumstances had shown. Brown was determined to enlighten others in much the same way as she had been on that day—yet for her it would occur from the podium.

Brown navigated her way through many life challenges. After two happy years in Canada, the Brown family home was destroyed by a fire that came from post-Civil War hostilities. Her sister Mary was killed in the tragedy, and her family was forced to sell much of their Pittsburgh property to rebuild and sustain Homewood Cottage. During this time of financial hardship, Brown worked on the family farm as a farmhand. She grew to see the benefits of hard work and learned that women could stand up to almost any challenge.

In addition to educational experiences on the farm, Brown and her younger brother attended public school in Canada, where they experienced "racial prejudice and humiliation" (McFarlin, 1975, p. 19). Brown's parents decided that she and her brother would attend a college built to educate Blacks, as older sister Belle had. Thus, Brown became a student at Wilberforce College, where she was introduced to what she often called the "Art of all Arts": rhetoric. Brown was immediately attracted to the energy of campus life, and after one term at Wilberforce, she realized that her passion for the spoken word would be fostered there. She wrote of instruction from one of her first mentors—Daniel Alexander Payne, who was a family friend and an AME bishop, as well as the founder, owner, and president of Wilberforce College—in the following words:

Bishop Payne, in the classroom and at home, guided me in speech, taught me to be articulate, how to pronounce, to modulate, taught

me to read. I read to him daily. He was a typical teacher. I grew in knowledge and understanding. (McFarlin, 1975, p. 20)

Brown received a bachelor's degree from Wilberforce University, where she was one of seven graduates. In 1873, she delivered her first public speech as salutatorian of her graduating class (Smith, 1992). Thereafter, Brown taught at several schools—such as the Senora Plantation school in Mississippi and Allen University in Columbia, South Carolina—and eventually became the dean of Allen University from 1875 to 1887. During the summers, she attended the American Chautauqua Lecture School, a notable literary and scientific circle, and graduated from there in 1886. At the Chautauqua School, Brown was influenced by Professor Robertson of the Boston School of Oratory. Brown took a summer course with Professor Robertson, "The Art of Speech and Oratory," which spoke to her passion to become an effective public communicator. After completing the course, Brown's career as an instructor of elocution was launched. In 1890, just four years after graduating from the Chautauqua School, Brown received an honorary master's degree; much later (in 1936), she received an honorary doctorate of laws degree from Wilberforce University. For a year, beginning in 1892, she served as dean of women at Tuskegee Institute. After her stint at Tuskegee, Brown returned to Dayton, Ohio (on the border of the small town of Wilberforce), to teach classes to adult migrant workers in the Dayton public schools. She continued teaching at Wilberforce University until Central State University and Wilberforce University split in the late 1920s or early 1930s. She decided to remain with the institution dedicated to public education, so she transitioned across the street to Central State University.

### **Brown, the Educator**

Brown's early experiences as a classroom teacher were quite challenging. Her first teaching assignments were at plantation schools in the South. During these times, she endured the strain of dilapidated living conditions, severely inadequate teaching facilities, and a shocking degree of illiteracy among both children and adults. Of this early time in her teaching career, Brown recalled, "Surrounding me was desolation, poverty and want glared at me" (McFarlin, 1975, p. 32). For example, after several attempts to seek repairs for the Senora Plantation school in Mississippi (a building with no windows and many cracks in the mortar) to no avail, Brown undertook the repairs

herself (Smith, 1992). Rather than withdrawing from the disappointing conditions, Brown's steadfast character motivated her to improve the conditions of her immediate environment.

Despite the challenge of teaching with limited resources, Brown strived to educate and empower her students to realize the transformative value of public address. She firmly believed that with proper instruction in elocution, any motivated person could impart significant social influence. Brown's pedagogy centered on the role of education as a social tool that deemed the holder responsible for using it to improve society for those who otherwise had few opportunities to do it for themselves. As a result, she successfully taught large numbers of children and some adults to read and speak with diction.

Brown returned to Ohio in 1887 to teach in the Dayton public school system and remained there for four years. Her success as a teacher soon caught the attention of the Tuskegee Institute, where she was paid \$60 per month plus complimentary housing to become the lady principal (i.e., dean of women) for a year, from 1892 until 1893, under the direction of Booker T. Washington. Although Brown was offered an appointment as professor of elocution at her alma mater, Wilberforce University, in 1894, she did not accept the offer until 1906 because of her blossoming travel schedule with both the Lyceum and the Wilberforce (later renamed Stewart) Concert Company as a reader.

During her travels, Brown sojourned in Germany, France, Switzerland, England, and other parts of Europe—lecturing, singing, and reciting (a combination of more than 90 memorized pieces) in major cities of Great Britain (Davis, 1933). She had a repertoire comprised of works such as “Shakespeare and Mark Twain . . . political activist poems and speeches (like Frances Watkins Harper's ‘The Dying Bondman’), and dialect humor (Irish, German, Negro)” (Donawerth, 2002, p. 173). Brown was especially adept at interpreting the poetry of Paul Lawrence Dunbar.

While in Great Britain, Brown was presented twice (in 1897 and 1899) to Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle as a guest and notable elocutionist (Stetson, 1983). In fact, through her established networks in England—and because of how impressed the Queen was with her—Brown was asked to help establish the first British Chautauqua in North Wales in 1895. Unlike the American Chautauqua School, British Chautauqua was a traveling education and entertainment group akin to the Lyceum. After a five-year sojourn in Europe, Brown assumed the position of professor of elocution at Wilberforce University (Logan & Winston, 1982).

### **Brown, the Lecturer**

Brown was a magnificent public speaker. Her expertise was widely noted in newspapers, pamphlets, and serials throughout the United States and Europe. For instance, the *African Methodist Episcopal Church Review* noted her ability to defy popular convention with extreme success:

Miss Brown may be thought to gesticulate too frequently in some of her didactic selections; but right here is shown that she discards the rigid rules of the books and follows nature, for she possesses an ardent temperament, and nearly every sentence she utters in private conversation is made emphatic or impressive by a gesture or variation of the facial expression. Miss Brown possesses a voice of "wonderful magnetism and great compass." At times, she thrills by its intensity; at times, it is mellow and soothing. She seems to have perfect control of the muscles of her throat, and can vary her voice as successfully as a mocking-bird. (Unknown, 1890, p. 259)

Brown moved audiences in ways that few other elocutionists could. She left an impression on listeners that preceded other successful African American women speakers by nearly a century.

Brown's conviction and firm belief in an "embodied rhetoric" that was located within African American communities and vernacular led her to travel extensively as a lecturer, reciter, and elocutionist before both American and international audiences (Kates, 1997; Logan & Winston, 1982). One organization she traveled with was the Lyceum, a well-known band of traveling educators, performers, and entertainers (Wright, 1906). Although Brown's activities with the Stewart Company ended two years after they began (the company disbanded in 1884 because of financial difficulties), her reputation soon reached another acclaimed African American speaker of the era: Frederick Douglass.

Douglass helped sponsor Brown's second trip to Europe in 1894. She decided to make the trip to England to raise financial support for a campus library at Wilberforce. Before her departure, Douglass wrote a moving letter of introduction to present Brown to "his British friends" (McFarlin, 1975, p. 120). Brown's relationship with the Douglass family remained strong even after Douglass' death. After six years of extensive fund-raising and touring, Brown was able to return to the United States with England's support for the Frederick Douglass Memorial Library.

Brown's ties to Europe remained strong and she eventually returned there as a representative to the Women's Missionary Society of the African Methodist Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland. She

remained on a European lecture tour for seven months to raise additional funds for Wilberforce at the request of the board of trustees. Her exceptional efforts resulted in the construction of Emery Hall, a dormitory named after the mother of Julia Emery, a London philanthropist. In 1906, she returned to Wilberforce on a full-time basis as professor of elocution. She spent many years in the English department there and became a member of the board of trustees.

A critic from the *Indianapolis Times* wrote of Brown's reception as an elocutionist in the following words: "Miss Hallie Q. Brown, the elocutionist with the company, was loudly applauded. Many credit Miss Brown with being one of the best elocutionists before the public" (McFarlin, 1975, p. 42). With her career as an elocutionist established, Brown was asked to address several groups throughout the southern United States and one in Europe to raise financial support for Wilberforce. Brown's success also afforded her the unique opportunity to teach public speaking to White ministers. Her acceptance in this capacity was proof that she had established herself as one of the premier elocutionists of her time (McFarlin, 1980).

### **Brown, the Leader and Activist**

In addition to her interests in education and public lectures, Brown's concern for civil rights was bolstered during her time at Wilberforce. Many times in her writing, she recalled hearing Susan B. Anthony present her ideas about civil liberties for women to the students of the university. Anthony's convictions regarding women's suffrage led Brown to become an organizer and crusader in the women's Christian temperance movement (Kates, 2001). In 1893, along with five other Black women leaders of African American women's organizations, Brown was selected to speak before the World's Congress of Representative Women, a forum connected with the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Illinois (Wertheimer, 1997). The other Black women invited to speak to the all-White delegation were Anna Julia Cooper, Fannie Jackson Coppin, Sarah J. Early, Frances Watkins Harper, and Fannie Barrier Williams. The issues that emerged ranged from Whites' intellectual imperialism and perception that Blacks were inferior, to Black women's rights to sexual autonomy, to (as Anna Julia Cooper put it) the way that "Black women of the south have to suffer and struggle and be silent" (Leeman, 1996, p. 44). Realizing the need for a national organization to support Black women in America, Brown established the Colored Woman's League of Washington, D.C., in 1894.



The league was a predecessor of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW). The impetus for Brown's efforts stemmed from the exclusion of Black representatives from most social and political decision-making circles (Smith, 1992). She also lectured in support of the British Women's Temperance Association early in her career. From 1905 to 1912, Brown was president of the Ohio Federation of Colored Women's Clubs. Still unsatisfied with her contributions, she became president of the NACW from 1920 to 1924. During her term as president, Brown initiated two major programs: the preservation of the Frederick Douglas Home in Washington, D.C. and the institution of a scholarship fund for women pursuing higher education. She served as chairperson of the scholarship committee and was pleased when the fund was named in her honor years later (Hine, 1993).

Brown held several leadership positions in the early 1920s. In 1924, she spoke at the Republican convention in Cleveland, Ohio, in support of the Republican party's nomination and campaign for fellow Ohioan Warren Harding to the U.S. presidency and also seized the opportunity to speak up for civil rights by promoting an antilynching bill. She also spoke fervently on behalf of the nomination of Herbert Hoover in 1932.

Brown was clearly very engaged in holding prominent leadership positions as an activist speaking on behalf of women's rights in many political arenas. Among these positions were her roles as vice president of the Ohio Council of Republican Women and director of Colored Women's Activities at the Republican national campaign headquarters in Chicago. Much like her popularity as an educator and lecturer, her reputation as a strong political voice grew. On May 6, 1925, her activism was reported in *The New York Times* when she and a group of other NACW members walked out of the International Council of Women's Conference because they were instructed to sit in a racially segregated section of the conference venue, the Memorial Continental Hall in Washington, D.C. Brown publicly criticized the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) for refusing to allow the conference to be held at a location with desegregated seating arrangements (Smith, 1992). Her challenges to the racial and gendered ideologies of the time provided a public voice for the thousands of women and African Americans who were silenced by the oppression of their social world (Davis, 1933).

Brown remained an active lecturer, fund-raiser, and political advocate until her death on September 16, 1949 at the age of 99. She was the longest-living member of her immediate family, although her mother lived to the age of 95. Although she never married or bore any children, she maintained regular correspondence with her niece, Frances Hughes, during the later years of her life. Letters to Hughes have

helped to provide details about the last 24 years of Brown's life. Within them, Brown wrote of her "three loves": Wilberforce University, the AME church, and the NACW (McFarlin, 1975). Two buildings memorialize Brown's life and extraordinary achievements: the Hallie Quinn Brown Community House in St. Paul, Minnesota, and the Hallie Q. Brown Memorial Library at Wilberforce University.

Brown left numerous writings about the accomplishments of historical African American men and women and the need for them to have a political voice as her legacy. Her pedagogical efforts focused on the empowerment of African Americans and women in the hopes that her students would develop the desire and acumen to speak to the nation on behalf of their communities in a way that produced change. In essence, Brown's goal was to teach her students to be vocally active participants in the new political climate that shaped post-reconstruction America.

#### ❖ CONTRIBUTIONS TO COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

In addition to her work as a lecturer-elocutionist, Hallie Quinn Brown authored and edited eight books comprised of instructional texts and anthologies designed to educate citizens about the art of oratory and about the notable achievements of Blacks in American history: *Bits and Odds: A Choice Selection of Recitations for School, Lyceum, and Parlor Entertainments* (Brown, 1880); *Elocution and Physical Culture: Training for Students, Teachers, Readers, and Public Speakers* (Brown, 1910); *First Lessons in Public Speaking* (Brown, 1920); *The Beautiful: A True Story of Slavery* (Brown, 1924); *Tales My Father Told, and Other Stories* (Brown, 1925a); *Our Women: Past, Present and Future* (Brown, 1925b); *Homespun Heroines and Other Women of Distinction* (Brown, 1926, 1988); and *Pen Pictures of Pioneers of Wilberforce* (Brown, 1937). Henry Louis Gates, in the introduction to the 1988 edition of *Homespun Heroines and Other Women of Distinction*, published by Oxford University Press, even cited another book titled *Michile—The African*, but no publication date was given. Brown self-published the first two books in the preceding list, noting "Homewood Cottage" as the publishing company. When discussing her contributions to communication, it is important to note the two specific texts that offered detailed instructions on how to successfully execute a public presentation: *Bits and Odds: A Choice Selection of Recitations for School, Lyceum, and Parlor Entertainments* and *Elocution and Physical Culture: Training for Students, Teachers, Readers, and Public Speakers*. Donawerth (2002) explored each of these two texts extensively and even provided excerpts from both books. A third text, *Homespun Heroines and Other Women of Distinction*, will

be discussed here as well to highlight Brown's extensive contributions, even beyond language and elocutionism or public speaking.

In *Bits and Odds: A Choice Selection of Recitations for School, Lyceum, and Parlor Entertainments*, Brown wrote, "True expression is a simple interpretation of nature. Elocution is the art of expressing thoughts and sentiments in the most natural manner. But elocution is also a science. It embraces a study of the respiratory system and the construction and management of the vocal organs" (Brown, 1880, p. 23). She further explained that elocution is distinctive. It is not a synonym for oratory, but rather a unique extension of oratory that is meant to convey ideas to a listening audience. She noted that elocution evokes emotion and represents the embodiment of a text by a speaker. So it is not merely the responsibility of the speaker to talk but also to do several other things: (1) to cause affect and effect among the audience; (2) to be rhythmic and harmonious; (3) to be stylistically appropriate [rate, pitch, volume, tone, etc.]; (4) to offer ethical content; (5) to express herself naturally [verbally and nonverbally]; (6) to express immediacy or a sense of sympathy with the audience without being overly emotional or out of control; and (7) to clearly interpret her message to the listening audience in a way that can be easily understood. This cogent articulation of elocution is parallel to the most celebrated *classical* texts. Brown provided clear instructions and elaborated each point. This first book, published in 1880, would not be followed by another for 30 years.

In 1910, the book (which appeared more as a pamphlet), *Elocution and Physical Culture: Training for Students, Teachers, Readers, and Public Speakers*, was published by Brown's own publishing company: Homewood Cottage (Brown, 1910). What is perhaps most significant about this book is that it appeared when she was 60 years old, and after she had traveled and lectured extensively. Brown was not only more polished as a speaker but she also realized that a text of this nature was needed for instructors. This book was indicative of the whole elocutionary movement in communication studies because it was a step-by-step guide on what to do when delivering a speech.

After reading *Elocution and Physical Culture: Training for Students, Teachers, Readers, and Public Speakers*, it is easy to recall some of the early public speaking texts, in which 100 faces were shown on a page and students were required to identify which emotion correlated with which facial expression. This was one of the predominant paradigms for teaching public speaking in the early 1900s.

Brown's text included precise instructions for instructors teaching elocution to students. Many dimensions were covered—such as hand gestures and total body motions including neck, torso, arm, hand,

wrist, finger, foot, and toe movements—in addition to positioning the body in front of the audience. Brown even covered dress, attitude, and walking. This information was all in Part I of her 15-part lesson guide. In the remaining parts, she pointed out rules for speaking successfully. These guidelines included functions of the human anatomy; proper use of voice and diction; and use of colors, Bible reading, and hygiene of the voice. This latter section indicated when and how to use the voice. As Brown explained:

Never use the voice immediately after eating; the most suitable time for practice is in the morning before breakfast. No *exercise* must be taken on a full stomach. Hot and cold drinks are injurious. Avoid vigorous vocal exercises when suffering from a cold. Do not force the voice beyond its normal strength. Take plenty of outdoor exercise. . . . Tobacco is also detrimental to the voice . . . Smoke should not be inhaled through the lungs nor blown through the nostrils. This practice produces irritation, dryness, and congestion of the mucous membrane. (Donawerth, 2002, p. 192)

These practical facets of public presentation were certainly heuristic in the 1910s and are still quite useful today. Brown then wrote *First Lessons in Public Speaking* (Brown, 1920), which was an important and contributory follow-up to her last text. It also gave practical instructions, but this time the audience was both instructors and students. Public speaking and elocution were not her only interests. In fact, many knew Brown just as much for her speaking as for her political activism (Shoemaker, 1913).

In 1926, at the age of 76, Brown edited a volume titled *Homespun Heroines and Other Women of Distinction* (Brown, 1926, 1988). In that anthology, Brown contributed 21 of the 60 biographies. There were 28 contributors in total, and the chapters covered the lives of many unsung heroines of her time: Phillis Wheatley, Sojourner Truth, Sara Allen, Fannie Jackson Coppin, Lucy Smith Thurman, Harriet Tubman, Catherine Delany, Frances E. W. Harper, Sara Garnet, and Madame C. J. Walker. The professions of these women included physicians, nurses, lawyers, entrepreneurs, journalists, poets, teachers, activists, church leaders, homemakers, and elocutionists. This book was one among many such chronicles of Black lives, including *Who's Who in Colored America* (1927), which became an annual listing from 1927 until 1950.

Brown's work embraced African American culture and situated it within American rhetorical history. During a time when White editors sought to marginalize the literary contributions of African Americans and

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women, Brown used her texts as a vehicle to teach students about the numerous contributions African Americans have made to American society and about their opportunities to speak out against the injustices they saw every day. She wrote to, and through, African American post-Civil War communities in a way that no other writer had done before her time.

After emancipation, African American communities struggled to find a place and voice in American society. Gilyard described the intellectual milieu of the time in the following excerpt:

By the end of slavery, the three most powerful influences on African American consciousness and rhetorical practice were (1) the *Black church*, with its urgent sermons galvanizing and voicing the aspirations of the people, (2) the *slave narratives* and their incessant message of literacy for freedom, and (3) the *African American jeremiad*, a primary vehicle of secular protest. (Gilyard, 1999, p. 627).

Brown viewed elocutionary instruction as a progressive means to address the social ills stifling minority communities. Her unorthodox approach to elocutionary instruction was an outgrowth of both her personal experiences as a plantation school instructor and her belief that the plight of African Americans would be improved only with education and social action. Brown often spoke of the social obligations that accompanied freedom for African Americans. In her speech, *Not Gifts but Opportunity*, she offered the following argument:

If the Negro Race is to come to real freedom and true spiritual power and progress; if he is to enter that larger sphere of life which is not meat and drink—there must be a body of God's elect—men and women trained to large knowledge, broad vision and lofty spiritual purpose, who, as teachers and moral leaders, shall lift the standard and lead our people into a larger life. The upward pull through trained leadership; the character-begetting power of strong personalities, the inspirations to higher ideals, to self master, to efficient service through genuine leadership must be recognized. Where there is no vision the people perish. Without such teachers, helpers, and leaders, the schools and colleges must fail and the race sink to lower levels. No stream can rise higher than its source. (McFarlin, 1975, p. 176)

With the larger goals of equality and prosperity for women and African Americans in mind, Brown considered oratory the most available means to promote social change. Almost 100 years before her

time, she recognized the need for African Americans to be literate and articulate if their voices were to ever be heard by White America. Thus, she departed from traditional elocutionary instruction, which taught the following to students:

Detailed analyses of all the movements of head, hand, arm, and body; minute descriptions of shades of facial expression; intricate calculations of the uses of the human voice; and all these embroidered and beset with innumerable rules allegedly derived from nature. (Thomas, 1943, p. 206)

Instead, Brown envisioned elocution as a means to an important end—social uplift and economic independence. In contrast to previous scholars who taught elocution as a form of public performance, Brown taught it as a form of political participation (S. Kates, personal communication, 2003). She saw elocutionary instruction as “education that can be translated into action” (McFarlin, 1988, p. 175).

During Brown’s life, instruction and training in the art of elocution were often restricted to the formal academy. Aside from the few elite, learning the art of public speaking was out of reach for most African Americans. Although various reciter texts were available during this time, access to such materials required a degree of affluence that newly emancipated slaves simply were not afforded. Brown found that the elocutionary movement itself offered many opportunities for instruction in breathing, gesture, and pronunciation, whereas little to no instruction was available in the use of public address to inspire marginalized audiences. She observed that the fundamental ideologies of the movement itself neglected the importance of audience culture and linguistic heritage (S. Kates, personal communication, 2003). This need for cultural inclusion in elocutionary instruction was of pressing concern for Brown as she developed her expertise.

Brown was determined to provide the tools necessary for African Americans to establish and utilize their political voice to promote social change and inform others of *their* responsibilities in the effort. According to Susan Kates (1997), “Brown lived in a time when a black woman educator did not have the opportunity of articulating all of the social and political implications of her work for her community” (p. 61). Thus, she sought to enlighten others so that they might be able to speak to these concerns candidly and effectively in the future. Kates (1997) described the goal of Brown’s pedagogy as an “embodied rhetoric,” “a rhetoric located within, and generated for, the African American community” (p. 59).

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Brown's scholarly and pedagogical contributions were best illustrated in her written work. According to Kates (1997), Brown altered common elocutionary pedagogy in three specific ways. First, many of her works included selections written in African American vernacular English. An example from her reciter text, *Bits and Odds: A Choice Selection of Recitations* (Brown, 1880) illustrated this practice:

Well you know dat de apple tree was the sacred vegetable ob de garden ob Eden till de sly an insinuvating sea-serpent crawled out ob de river on Friday mornen, bit off an apple, made "apple-jack," handed de jug to Eve, she took a sip, den handed it to Adam. Adam took anoder, by which bofe got topseycated an' fell down de hill ob Paradise, an' in consequence darof, de whole woman race an' human race fell down casmash, like speckled apples from a tree in a stormado. Oh! What a fall war dar, my hearers, when you an' me, an' I, an' all drapt down togedder, an' de serpent flapped his forked tongue in fatissaction. (Kates, 1997, p. 12)

Brown endorsed pride in African American linguistic traditions by using the language of African American communities to advance the ideals of Black intellectualism and sociopolitical inclusion. Certainly, as a college graduate and activist who had spoken before many decision-making national polities, she did not speak this way in most public forums.

Brown reclaimed important moments in African American history and literature. Her work frequently referred to African American contributions that were neglected in tales of American history. For instance, her book, *Bits and Odds* (Brown, 1880) included a poem by George H. Boker that brought to light the important contributions of African American soldiers in the Civil War:

Dark as the clouds of even,  
 Ranked in the western heaven,  
 Waiting the breath that lifts,  
 All the dead mass, and drifts  
 Tempest and falling brand  
 O'er a ruined land;-  
 So still and orderly,  
 Arm to arm, knee to knee,  
 Waiting the great event  
 Stands the black regiment. . . .  
 "Now," the flag-sergeant cried,

"Through death and hell betide,  
 Let the whole nation see  
 If I were fit to be free  
 In this land; or bound  
 Down like the whining hound—  
 Bound with red stripes of pain  
 In our cold chains again!"  
 Oh! what a shout there went  
 From the Black regiment!

(Kates, 1997, p. 65)

As evidenced in this selection, Brown's text critiqued the incomplete history of America told in mainstream texts and anthologies.

Brown's view of the social role of elocution differed from that of common theorists. Prior to her influence, elocutionary instruction was thought of as a means to intellectual refinement and economic prosperity. In contrast, Brown saw the value of instruction in elocution as a means to achieve social and moral transformation (S. Kates, personal communication, 2003). Brown's work made rhetorical instruction available to post-emancipation African Americans.

Brown's scholarship provided her contemporaries with opportunities to study writing and speaking. From *within* the African American experience, she was able to share the power of the spoken and written word. Although *Bits and Odds* is one of her more noted works, Brown left a seven-volume legacy of books before her death. All her books described the transformative nature of rhetorical study and fully embodied the "Lifting as We Climb" principle that was so much a part of Black social movements at the turn of the century (Kates, 1997, p. 69).

In the book *Women Builders*, Sadie Daniel (1970) summarized Brown's contributions as follows:

The causes for which she worked, racial uplift, equality for women, temperance, political improvement, the church, educational advancement, Women's clubs, excellence in the arts—the Scholarship Fund, and the institutions which bear her name, all attest to a century of building a better more perfect humanity by Hallie Q. Brown. Few women of any period, race, or creed have equaled her versatility, her loyalty, her purposefulness, her acumen, and the wide range of her contributions to progress in the world. She built in many areas and in each one she left a residue of inspiration, a foundation of courage and intent for young people to continue moving, lifting as they climb. (p. 307–308)



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Brown's contributions were multifaceted. She was a teacher, author, lecturer, entertainer, and activist. Her career was marked by multiple successes and her contributions to communication were made manifest through her writing of three books about public speaking: *Bits and Odds: A Choice Selection of Recitations for School, Lyceum, and Parlor Entertainments* (Brown, 1880), *Elocution and Physical Culture: Training for Students, Teachers, Readers, and Public Speakers* (Brown, 1910), and *First Lessons in Public Speaking* (Brown, 1920). At a time when Black voices in communication were subdued, Brown was a pioneer who helped to define the parameters of the field of speech and rhetoric. She deserves her rightful place in history alongside the early forerunners in communication research.

## ❖ CONCLUSION

Hallie Quinn Brown spent her entire life speaking in support of women's suffrage, civil rights, and higher education. Her work served as a foundation for the development of other "embodied" scholarship, such as that which is chronicled throughout the remainder of this text. Brown was a diligent humanitarian, political activist, and educator. Although her contributions to elocutionary theory have received almost no mention in most rhetorical texts, it is hoped that her contributions to the field of communication will be better recognized in years to come. She is an inspiring example to us all as a champion for social justice and personal success.

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