

In Memoriam

MINNIE MILLER BROWN

1922 - 1995

Minnie Miller Brown of Raleigh, North Carolina, died December 2, 1995. Her base during most of her professional career was in the North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service. There she used her training in rural sociology, adult education, and home economics to improve the quality of life for the rural poor, minorities, and women. She was a leader, a teacher, an advocate. She developed a deep interest in the problems of black farmers. This interest was recognized by the North Carolina A&T State University School of Agriculture in 1995 by its Supporter of Small Scale Agriculture Award.

Minnie was a remarkable woman from a remarkable family. She was born and reared in Salisbury, North Carolina, a rural area at the time. Her father was a railroad laborer. The ten children who survived to adulthood all earned college degrees. When growing up, the children contributed to family income by work such as picking cotton. She attended the local segregated public schools. In 1943 she graduated from Bennett College with a B.S. degree in home economics. A decade later (1955), she earned an M.S. degree in rural sociology at Cornell University. And, ten years later, she completed two years of graduate study in adult education at the University of Chicago.

After four years as a home economic's teacher in a black high school, Minnie joined the Extension Service staff. During the first 20 years, she had to work in a segregated system at the county, district, and state levels. For ten years at North Carolina A&T State University, she had state-wide leadership for what was then called "Negro Home Demonstration Work." When the Extension Service was integrated, she was moved to North Carolina State University at Raleigh in 1967 to be on the administrative staff. There, she had special leadership responsibility for the highly successful Expanded Food and Nutrition Education program which reached many thousands of low-income families in the state. She also did graduate teaching in the area of adult education and poverty and joined with Paul Marsh in research on black homemakers and the disadvantaged. Paul recalls that the work with Minnie on two large field studies in Eastern North Carolina put a face on the reality of segregation in those days; she often had to spend much energy in calling ahead to find lodging and food, no easy task in those rural areas.

On four occasions, Minnie had leave to serve as visiting or adjunct professor in the Department of Rural Sociology at Cornell. There she did research with Olaf Larson on black farmers and taught courses on rural poverty, public policy, and blacks in agriculture. At the time of her death, Minnie was continuing work with Larson on a historical and policy-oriented book about black farmers.

Minnie's research publications include *A Study of North Carolina Negro Homemakers*, an Extension Evaluation Study (1964, with others). This was the first of its kind among blacks. Another was "Successful Black Farmers: Factors in Their Achievement" (with Olaf Larson) in *Rural Sociology* (1979). This was based on her interviews with black farmers in three states.

Among the many honors and awards received, four especially stand out. They are:

- One of the first two recipients of the **Winthrop Rockefeller Award for Distinguished Rural Service (1980)**, given "For her leadership and vision as a teacher, rural sociologists, and extension agent... and her effective work as an advocate for rural people, especially the poor, minorities, and women."
- **Award for Distinguished Service to Rural Life** from the Rural Sociological Society (1987).
- **Honorary Doctor of Science** degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (1989).
- North Carolina State University, Raleigh, established the **Minnie Miller Brown Scholarship Fund** in her honor at the time of her retirement.

Minnie Brown's warmth, integrity, high standards, and dedication won her the love and respect of her colleagues, her students, and her diverse constituencies.

*C. Paul Marsh, North Carolina State University, Raleigh
and Olaf F. Larson, Cornell University*

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