

JNE ScholarOne E-News #12

This edition of *E-news* has a special interview from an expert in the field who happens to be not only a staunch supporter but also the former **first female** Editor-in-Chief of JNE. Please enjoy our interview with the gem of JNE: Dr. Faustine Jones-Wilson.

FTE: From the Expert

Interviewed by: Natascha F. Saunders, Doctor of Education, Candidate



The Journal of Negro Education interviewed Dr. Faustine Jones-Wilson who began her career in education as a public school teacher/librarian in Gary, Indiana and subsequently served as an Assistant Professor in the College of Education, University of Illinois-Chicago, and as an Associate Professor of Adult Education at Federal City College (now the University of the District of Columbia). She moved up the professorial ranks at Howard University from 1969-70, 1971-93, and was a charter member of the Graduate School's faculty. She was Acting Dean of Howard's School of Education for fourteen months in 1991-92, and retired on June 30, 1993.

Additionally, she served as Editor-in-Chief of *The Journal of Negro Education* from 1978-1991; 1992-93 and is currently Editor-in-Chief Emerita since 1993.

Following her 1993 retirement from Howard University, she was Senior Fellow with the Phelps Stokes Fund (NY), an Associate Editor of the *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)*, an adjunct faculty member with The Fielding Institute (now Fielding University), Santa Barbara, California, and an educational consultant with Citizens United for Excellence in Education, Inc., Washington, DC.

Dr. Jones-Wilson is author of *The Changing Mood in America: Eroding Commitment* (1977), *A Traditional Model of Educational Excellence: Dunbar High School of Little Rock, Arkansas* (1981), co-

editor of *The Arkansas African American Hall of Fame* (rev. ed. 1993), co-editor of *The Encyclopedia of African-American Education* (1996), and co-author of *Paul Laurence Dunbar High School of Little Rock, Arkansas: Take from Our Lips a Song, Dunbar to Thee* (2003). In addition to these books, she has written 28 book chapters, more than 40 articles, along with numerous book reviews, editorials, and essays.

She held leadership positions in educational organizations including President, American Educational Studies Association (AESA); East Coast Steering Committee Chairman-National Council on Educating Black Children (NCEBC) and Executive Board Member of American Educational Studies Association, the John Dewey Society, Society of Professors of Education.

Dr. Jones-Wilson has received numerous awards. Among them are the Frederick Douglass Award from the National Association of Black Journalists (1979); Distinguished Scholar-Teacher, Howard University (1985); Exemplary Leadership Award, American Association Higher Education's Black Caucus (1988); Gertrude E. Rush Award from the National Bar Association (1990); Service Key-Phi Delta Kappa (1990); Distinguished Career Award, Vice President for Academic Affairs-Howard University (1993); Distinguished Alumni Award, College of Education, University of Illinois (1997); the Mary Anne Raywid Award, Society of Professors of Education (2002); LLD, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (2003).

She has two adult offspring, Dr. Yvonne D. Jones, and Brian V. Jones (Joyce Walker-Jones), three grandchildren—Isis Jones Lett (Dr. Kevin), Amon P.-V. Jones, and Joshua J.E.B. Jones, along with two great grandchildren—Gabriel and Aria Lett.

Q 1: I've noticed you are featured on *The Journal of Negro Education* website, a mini bio about you and it says you began with a career in education as a public school teacher and a librarian in Gary, Indiana (1955). Is that accurate?

Dr. Jones-Wilson: That is accurate. Interestingly enough we must return to the context of that day—*de jure* racial segregation and limited opportunity structure. My husband and I moved from Champaign, Urbana where we had been in graduate school at the University of Illinois to Gary, Indiana looking for teaching jobs in the same city. At that time segregation was the name of the game and so there was only one all Black high school in Gary, Indiana, Roosevelt High School. As you might guess, Roosevelt had a number of couples teaching there because of this reason, so when we were interviewed by the principal, Mr. Tatum, who was very honest and I appreciated it, he said he didn't want any more couples because he had too many already; he was going to hire my husband, but not me.

I was disappointed, but I understood it, so I took a secretarial job with the Gary Jewish Welfare Federation for one year, and then I was employed at Pulaski Junior High School as the school librarian. I was there from 1955-60. Then my husband at that time was promoted to assistant principal of that school, which meant that I had to move. I was not a professional librarian, but I took courses in library science at the University of Chicago, and I could commute from Gary.

I taught Social Studies for a year at Roosevelt High School. By that time, of course, my former husband was out of the way, so Mr. Tatum hired me, and I taught Social Studies for a year. Then I transferred to Froebel High School, where I returned to librarianship. So it was a mixture of teaching Social Studies and librarianship my first seven years in the public schools of Gary, Indiana.

Q2: Wow. So before that experience, and let's even say before getting married, did you know coming out of high school that's what you were born to do? And did you know coming out of school you were going to head into education?

Dr. Jones-Wilson: Yes, I anticipated doing so. Again the context, you have to remember that those were the days of legal segregation and so the best jobs that were available to Black females were teaching jobs. I didn't know where I would teach but I expected to teach, yes.

Q3: Are you originally from Gary, Indiana, born and raised?

Dr. Jones-Wilson: Oh no. I was born and reared in Little Rock, Arkansas where I graduated from Dunbar High in January 1945 and Dunbar Junior College in May 1946.

Q4: Wow, OK. So were your parents in the lane of education or were they just very supportive of you heading into that lane for employment purposes?

Dr. Jones-Wilson: I was reared by my grandparents. My parents met as students at Philander Smith College and they married, they weren't married very long. But the important thing is I was reared by my grandparents and I was beautifully blessed. My grandfather was Assistant State Supervisor of Negro Education in Arkansas, and so I come from a very strong education background. Of course, it was just like inhaling dinner or lunch; education was the name of the game in my home. My grandparents told me that I taught myself to read, I don't remember it, but they said I would take the newspaper and spread it out on the floor and look at the ads and ask them to tell me what the words were. Anyway, when I went to school, I could read. I came from a very strong educational background because my grandfather was an educator. My grandmother did not work outside the home because she had had nine children whom she had reared, but she taught music in the home because she was a wonderful pianist, so she gave piano lessons in the home. So yes, I came from a very strong educational background. I consider myself very fortunate.

Q5: That's phenomenal. So you went from junior high school, and from there how did your career take you from junior high school to college and then to Howard University School of Education for a bit? Could you fill in the gaps for us?

Dr. Jones-Wilson: Yes. Dunbar High School contained grades seven through 12, so it wasn't a separate junior high school. You entered at grade seven, and you graduated after grade 12. I went to Dunbar High School; I graduated from there in January 1945. We had January graduations in those years, as well as May graduations.

Then I went to Dunbar Junior College which was in a corner of the same building, and I graduated from Dunbar Junior College in '46. I took an extra course load, and I also went to summer school in 1945 because I wanted to graduate in May, and did so in 1946.

I entered A M & N College which is now the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff in September of 1946 as a junior and took my last two years of college there. I graduated in May of 1948 summa cum laude. I married and worked as a secretary on campus. Then I went to the University of Illinois, Urbana in September of 1950, and that's where I did my master's degree.

Q6: And you got your masters in . . .

Dr. Jones-Wilson: The teaching of Social Studies in 1951. I expected to be a Social Studies teacher.

Q7: After you are earned that degree then you went back to teach Social Studies?

Dr. Jones-Wilson: Not immediately. My husband at that time followed me. He was a veteran of World War II, and he had not come back to college immediately after World War II. So he graduated from A M & N in May of 1950, worked as a public school teacher in Crossett, Arkansas; then he came to the University of Illinois in May 1951.

Q8: We can say early '50s, because if you graduated in '48 then. . .

Dr. Jones-Wilson: I graduated in '48. He didn't graduate until 1950. So I worked on the campus there as a secretary until the end of August 1950 and then I went to the University of Illinois, Urbana. In those old days you were dealing with a system of racial segregation, and so some of what you could do depended on the opportunities, the very limited opportunities for Black people, particularly Black women. I tried to get a job as a secondary school teacher in Urbana, Illinois, but I failed because they had not employed any Black teachers at the secondary level. They had Black teachers in the one elementary school that was predominantly Black. But I was not prepared for elementary teaching; I was a secondary person. So in my early years segregation was an important component of decisions that were made. It wasn't anything like today. The world has changed 180 degrees, and there's still a lot of change necessary. But I have seen so many changes in my life.

Q9: This is fascinating. So after you left secondary did you teach at the college level as well?

Dr. Jones-Wilson: After both of us earned masters' degrees, we taught in Gary, Indiana's public schools for 7 years, until we could earn sabbatical leaves. Since my husband had one calendar year more than I of experience, he returned to the University of Illinois first, beginning study toward a doctorate. The next year I joined him to study for mine. Both of us successfully completed doctoral study.

We had to return to the Gary, Indiana public schools to repay the one year of time granted for sabbatical leaves. I went to Lew Wallace High School as a school librarian, and did part-time teaching in Gary at the Gary campus of Indiana University. The primary campus is in Bloomington, Indiana. My first full-time teaching job at the college level was at the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle Campus.

Q10: Were you teaching in the lane of what you got your masters in Social Studies? Was that your focus primarily or something else?

Dr. Jones-Wilson: At Roosevelt High School in Gary I taught Social Studies—ninth grade Civics and 11th grade U. S. History, based on my undergraduate education and master's degree in The Teaching of Social Studies. I wasn't concentrating on future educators, I was trying to get students to like Social Studies in general. For example, I taught U.S. history, and one day a girl came up to me, she said, 'You know, I don't like history, I really don't like history. But I like you, and you seem like you like history, so I'm going to learn it for you.' So I wasn't concentrating so much on the future, but trying to get them to like Social Studies and understand it and appreciate it. When I went to the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, that's where I began to concentrate on preparing future educators.

Q11: So shifting this slightly, what would you say, and there's probably many, but is there one or two accomplishments that you are most proud of, whether it's professional, because you had to overcome a lot of obstacles even to get employed or was it something academically that you achieved maybe one or two accomplishments that you're super proud of?

Dr. Jones-Wilson: Oh dear, that's a hard question. In my generation, we were taught not to brag, so I don't want to feel like I'm bragging. I appreciate the fact that I earned academic honors at every level. I was salutatorian of my high school class, valedictorian of my junior college class. I graduated from college summa cum laude, and I had a fellowship to the University of Illinois at Urbana the first year I went there to work on my master's degree, all as a result of my academic accomplishments. Then I was a teaching assistant at the U of I in Urbana. So I'm proud of the fact that I did accomplish academically.

Professionally I'm honored that I was able to be promoted to the rank of full professor and to work at Howard University because Howard University turned out to be a place of great opportunity for me. I began there as an assistant professor, went to the rank of full professor, served as acting dean for 14 months, was editor-in-chief of *The Journal of Negro Education*, was a senior fellow at the Institute for the Study of Educational Policy. Howard University provided me many opportunities, and I was honored to take advantage of them.

Q12: Would you say you have any research interest or your lane of expertise?

Dr. Jones-Wilson: I got my doctorate in Social Foundations of Education, which is sociology applied to education. I have been very concerned about the lack of equality in American society, the obstacles that have been placed in our paths as we sought to be equally educated. I focused on education because when you don't come from wealthy families, and most Black people do not, you need education particularly so that you can understand the system so that you can be prepared within some area of specialization so you can live life fully and get a decent job.

I applied what I learned in Social Studies through research. For example, I wrote an article on "Blacks in the City" back in 1973; it was published in *The Journal of Negro Education*. I also wrote an article on inequality. The article I just mentioned was published in the summer of 1973, and then in the fall '73, I had an article published on inequality, both in *The Journal of Negro Education*.

So I applied what I learned about Social Studies, History, Sociology, etc. to research; my research interests built upon that. The fact that the ideals of American society are liberty, justice, and equality, and we sorely lacked these, so I focused on that.

Q13: Any other research publication book chapters or anything else you want our readers to know about?

Dr. Jones-Wilson: Yes. As a result of those two articles, Dr. Kenneth S. Tollett, who was director of the Institute for the Study of Educational Policy (this was a Black "think tank" at Howard), offered me a position as a senior fellow. I thanked him, but I told him I didn't want to give up my tenured teaching position but I would be willing to work with him half-time, and he agreed to that. So I became a half-time professor and half-time senior fellow at the Institute for the Study of Educational Policy. Then, I wrote a book called *The Changing Mood in America: Eroding Commitment*, which was published through the Institute in 1977.

At bottom, the book argued that the U.S. had a changing mood after the *Brown* decisions of 1954 and '55, going through all the 1960s civil rights struggles, protests, etc. With lots of White professionals participating, the mood began to change to proclaim that Blacks had received as much help as we needed and deserved, and therefore we needed to make ourselves satisfied and pull ourselves up by bootstraps. The book attacks that and other similar notions.

That was my first book, and then I wrote a second book through the Institute called *A Traditional Model of Educational Excellence - Dunbar High School of Little Rock, Arkansas*. This was my high school. The book was copyrighted in 1981, and shows that Dunbar was an excellent high school, but it was traditional, it wasn't innovative or creative, it was just the solid substance of teaching. The book argues that an unintended consequence of segregation was that we had excellent teachers. Black women couldn't do much else besides teach, so we had some excellent teachers. What had happened, they had gotten their bachelor's degrees, and they went to summer school at Northern institutions and earned their master's degrees, and we really had some excellent teachers. In fact, certain teachers and the principal filed a lawsuit against the Little Rock school system for equal salaries, because Black teachers and principals were paid less than White teachers and principals, even when the Blacks were more highly educated and had more years of experience. So my book argues that Dunbar High School was an excellent model of education for its students. Let me see. I was lead editor of a book, *Encyclopedia of African American Education*, copyrighted in 1996, but there were many other editors on this particular book project. So I cannot take all the credit.

I am the co-author of another book about our high school; it's *Paul Laurence Dunbar High School of Little Rock Arkansas*. And then in quotation marks, "*Take From Our Lips of Song, Dunbar to Thee*"—that's the name of our school song. And this book was published in 2003. It's a pictorial history of the high school, plus it carries documents. We have a national alumni association, that's how powerful that school was. We migrated all over the United States and had good jobs in various places, but we all credit the foundation that we received at Dunbar for our successes. So this is a pictorial history which contains two things, the history of the school and then all the documents and everything about the alumni association which began in 1971 and still exists to this day. Dunbar graduates merged with Horace Mann graduates because we are dying out. Horace Mann succeeded Dunbar as the last all-Black high school in Little Rock. Both of these schools now are middle schools. Dr. Erma Glasco Davis co-authored this book, and the many photographs were duplicated by Bobby Works.

Let me sum up some things. No one person knows everything, and so what I remember, just generally speaking, we faculty members used to gather in the halls and in what was the instructional materials center in the old days at Howard, and we would have arguments and debates and conversations. It was fun, and a result of a lot of that, we would come to some conclusions to help us formulate our thoughts about these social issues.

I'm a social issues kind of person—what is this society doing to us, trying to push down our throats, keeping us down, no matter how hard we try, something comes up to seem to slap us down. Like right now look what Trump is doing, I don't want to elaborate on that, but look what he's doing to slap down poor people in terms of health care, and education, and all the rest. He's pushing the charter schools and vouchers and all that kind of thing instead of public education. Something is always coming up as a societal issue that is antithetical to the group progress of Black people, so that's what I'm interested in,

social issues and education. Well, you bounce your thoughts off your colleagues, and they'll knock down some of what you thought because not every thought that you have is accurate or worthy. We would knock down each other's thoughts, but we would sharpen our thoughts by debating and conversing with each other.

Q14: Coming down to the home stretch here. Have there been any major influences, situations or people in history that have impacted you personally?

Dr. Jones-Wilson: Oh yes. It's hard to pick somebody because there have been so many. As for example, teachers at Dunbar, it would be very hard for me to pick a particular teacher. But I'll say Mrs. Treopia Gravelly, who was a history teacher at Dunbar; she was very important. So was Mrs. Katie Pierre, at A M & N College. She taught methods courses, and she was very strong about instructing us how to teach, the methods of keeping classroom order and that sort of thing.

Perhaps the book that I have enjoyed greatly—I'll just say the most, probably an exaggeration—is Richard Kluger's book, *Simple Justice*. The book is about the *Brown* decisions of 1954 and '55. It is a superior book by any measurement. I never met him, but I admire that book, I've read it more than once. But I must say there have been so many it's hard to pick, it's hard to choose.

Q15: Any advice to the aspiring doctoral students that are coming up in the ranks now?

Dr. Jones-Wilson: Well, I've been retired for 24 years, so my advice is probably dated. I would say, be what you say you are, in other words, don't half step, don't cheat—be authentic. If you say you are a scholar, be one, do your research thoroughly, follow all the guidelines and directions. Have your work full of substance, not fluff. Make sure that whatever you write and teach can be proven. If it is your opinion, make it clear that it's your opinion. We're all entitled to opinions, but make it a clear difference between your opinion and what the truth is. Also, concentrate on what needs to be done. It's not so difficult to describe the past and all, no matter how complicated, but look to the future—what can we do next, how can we help Black children to close this achievement gap? I'm not as worried about the gap; it's the fact that they simply don't know enough. I get so upset when I see them on television, and they are murdering the English language. Their families, their schools are not teaching them how to talk properly and how to dress properly. So when you are doing your research make sure that it is research of substance, worthy research. Be authentic, that's my word, be who you say you are; don't pretend. Don't put up a front because people will see through it.

Q16: And I think the writing, the substance, being able to prove it and be clear if this is your opinion or this is a fact, so that is 100% on point. Anything else?

Dr. Jones-Wilson: Yes, let me say something that you didn't ask me. In life it's very hard to achieve and maintain a balance between the different facets of your existence. For example, I have been married twice; while I was in the labor force I had two children, then grandchildren. Trying to maintain being a professor, the teaching responsibilities, the research responsibilities, trying to be a scholar, trying to be a wife, a mother, a grandmother, trying to attain a balance among all the different roles that we play, all of which are important to us, that is very difficult. I won't minimize it, I won't pretend that it has been easy. And when you find yourself going too far in one direction you have to bring yourself back. So life is never set in concrete. You think, "Oh I have it together, I don't have to . . ." Never. You have to keep

working to achieve a good balance because you don't want to lose your children, you don't want to lose your husband, you know what I'm trying to say. You have to achieve a balance between the various roles and responsibilities of your life, and this is a lifetime quest.

Q17: Wow that is good. Anything else?

Dr. Jones-Wilson: I'm not sure that men feel the need for balance as much as women do. Of course, I'm not a man, but most women certainly do.

Q18: So if you're saying balance is important, I hear you. So what do you do now? Do you have any free time? Do you hang out with your grand kids? Are you traveling? Are you doing any more writing? Any other future goals on the horizon for you?

Dr. Jones-Wilson: I did a good bit of traveling when my husband was alive. But right now I've sold my house and moved into Vantage House, which is a senior citizens community. There are many, many activities here, so I'm engaged in those I choose. I belong to a couple of committees that ensure the residents have a voice in the policies and planning of things in our community. I'm very active at Vantage House, and I have joined a church. I'm sorry to say I slid away from the church during some of my working years, but I have re-joined, and I'm active in church activities.

I am not engaged in any research or writing at this time; I don't anticipate doing any more because I've done that. But I still associate with people, and I'm trying to make a difference in our lives as elders. The youngest person here (Vantage House) is 56 years old; the oldest is 101. I think the average age is something like 78 or 80 or so. So there's still a lot of things that older people need and can do, and I'm participating in that.

Q19: Any final words or anything else you want to make sure I include?

Dr. Jones-Wilson: Well, I want to say I enjoyed my years working with *The Journal of Negro Education*; that was a marvelous experience. Ours was an example of team work; the associate editors, secretaries, and circulation managers have all been superior people. I can't give them enough credit for the work that they do in maintaining and operating that journal, so I would like to honor and praise *The Journal of Negro Education*. Look how many years it has been in business, so you've had a whole series of people who have the same values, dedication, and commitment to excellence and quality. I think *The Journal of Negro Education* is a beautiful example of continuous teamwork.

Thank you for this interview. I am grateful.

Dr. Jones-Wilson, JNE is proud and so very fortunate to have you still

Going strong,

Educating others and

Making a difference in all of our lives.

*Lenda P. Hill
Associate Editor
The Journal of Negro Education*