BUSINESS COMPONENT DEVELOPMENT FOR THE FREEDOM QUILTING BEE: A MODEL FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN A PERSISTENTLY POOR COMMUNITY

An Expanded Field Project Report

Presented to Antioch University

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Master of Arts Degree

by

Alice Somerville Paris

Tuskegee Institute, Alabama
June 1997

Starry Krueger,
RDLN Advisor

Ralph Paige,
Field Resource Advisor

Shierry Nicholsen, Ph. D.
Faculty Advisor

To my family for their faithful support.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to the board of directors and the members of the Freedom Quilting Bee. Their cooperation and the support they gave me during the course of my field project is greatly appreciated. Mrs. Nettie Young, the president of the board has been a special inspiration to me in this work. She believes that all things are possible and has great expectations from everyone around her.

I would like to offer a special thanks to Starry Krueger of the Rural Development Leadership Network for her special sensitivity in knowing when to press and when to retreat.

I am especially appreciative of the support given to me by the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund. The support of this organization was shown in so many ways and I am grateful for having been associated with it for so many years.

Lastly, I want to thank my entire family for all the support they gave me. My husband, George, my children, G. R. and Theresa, and my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Somerville were always ready to help. I appreciate all of your efforts.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Page

Introduction

I have been employed with the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/ Land Assistance Fund, a rural development organization, for over twenty-five years. During my tenure I have worked at a variety of tasks, most of which could be described as in support of our field work. Over the years, however, I have been assigned to work with a member organization, the Freedom Quilting Bee, on a number of short term projects. The longer I was involved with the members of the Freedom Quilting Bee, the more my interest began to grow regarding their situation and circumstances. I found myself wanting to learn more about the poor, unschooled Black women who were born and lived their lives in Gees Bend, Alabama and later Alberta, Alabama in Wilcox County, located in the Alabama Black Belt region, one of the most economically depressed communities in the United States of America.

These women have owned and operated a unique quilt making business for thirty years. Five years ago the economic and social climate had taken it's toll on their business enterprise; the women who had led the organization since its inception were retiring from their jobs and the transition to new leadership had not been an easy one; but the membership did not want to give up on their business. They wanted to find a way to work

through their business problems, the transition, and revitalize their operations.

I enrolled at Antioch Univertisty as a member of the Rural Development Leadership Network [RDLN] Program. The RDLN requires that its participants complete a rural economic development project in its Master's Degree option. I chose to work with the Freedom Quilting Bee Board of Directors on my field project. I planned to expand their business options by adding three new components to their already existing structure.

I knew that I needed to learn more about the social, political and economic conditions that persisted in their community. I was convinced that the problems the business faced were related to the economic climate as well as race, poverty and sex. These problems could be categorized as systemic to any business organization that poor women would face anywhere in the world.

Poor women need not bow down to the constraints that society places on them, but need to find a way to work within the environment while they seek ways to change these forces that negatively shape their lives. This paper was written to explain the context of how a particular group of women came to their situation in life, what steps they took to make it better, and the role of my field project in continuing to build on the past and keeping the organization meaningful in its mission to fill the economic needs of their community.

ECONOMICS, POVERTY, AND RACE IN THE ALABAMA BLACK BELT

The economic development of the rural South has been arduous and slow. When rural development practitioners in the United States specify locations where the greatest lack of economic development has occurred, the Alabama Black Belt has to be included.

The Black Belt is a region of the United States that is made up of a crescent of southern geography that is home to a high concentration of Black people. The Black Belt consists of highly contiguous counties that form a belt-like appearance across eleven states from Virginia to Texas [Wimberley 1993, 33-38]. The Black Belt region in Alabama is named for its distinct, dark alluvial type soil, but the name eventually became synonymous with the large Black population that is located there [Atkins 1994, 78].

The Black Belt region of Alabama is a unique geographic region that extends from east to west across the south-central part of the state. The region consists of a row or two of counties that give a wave-like appearance when viewed on a map. It was the rich black soil that supported the growth of cotton. For purposes of this discussion, those counties are Bullock, Dallas, Greene, Hale, Lowdnes, Macon, Marengo, Perry, Sumter and Wilcox. A

special emphasis will be placed on Wilcox County which is where my field project was carried out. There are fifty-seven other counties in the state.

Cotton and the Economy of Alabama

Cotton was so profitable after the invention of the cotton gin in 1793, that a planter could borrow enough money to purchase a thousand acres of land, one hundred slaves, and all of his agricultural inputs, expect to pay off his entire debt when he harvested his first crop, and have an excess of funds with which to buy more slaves. The next year he could borrow more money, purchase more land, and more slaves. This cycle produced great wealth for those who were able to borrow money [Atkins, 95 - 96].

Large scale cotton production of a nature that resulted from the wealth it produced was possible on the rich Alabama Black Belt soil. Half of all the cotton grown in Alabama was produced in the Black Belt. Cotton production was so lucrative that planters would not grown any other crops.

A huge labor force was required to produce cotton. There was no available labor in this territory which was newly inhabited by white men and the importation of a large Black slave population became the answer to the labor problem [Franklin 1979, 121]. These two factors above all others are at the root of the present economic problems that exist in the Alabama Black Belt today; economic dependence on a single crop and a large population of poor Blacks [Atkins 1994, 172].

During the height of its relatively short economic prime, the wealthy planters that inhabited the Black Belt fashioned a plantation civilization, a "Cotton Kingdom", that was almost a state within a state. The Black Belt's political, economic and ideological influence would come to have a deep and lasting impact on Alabama [Atkins 1994, 78].

The rich soil found in Alabama and the realization that vast profits could be made, led to Indian Removal Acts, and gave men who said they were a new breed of democratic citizens little pause to become slaveholders and to ponder on the incongruity of that act. Southerners evolved a new notion that the enslavement of Negroes was essential to the white man' s freedom. They used Manifest Destiny as a platform from which to plead their cause.

By 1834, Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana dominated the production of cotton. The income of the planters in the new lands grew enormously and a wave of migration increased [Franklin, 122].

Southern planters were at the center of the economic, social and political life of their communities and had the feeling that they should dominate the lives of their Black property completely. John Hope Franklin quotes Theodore Weld, "Arbitrary power is to the mind what alcohol is to the body; it intoxicates." Weld also contended in his book *The Bible Against Slavery* [1837], that slavery was economically unsound, because the workers could not be expected to be efficient and there was therefore a waste of physical and human resources in the plantation economy [Franklin, 183].

Dr. Noah Cloud, an agricultural reformer and scientific farmer, of that time, believed that the South invested too much of its resources in land and labor and failed to maintain the fertility of the soil. He supported industrial development. His pronouncements and studies were all but ignored during the 1850's when they could have made a difference [Atkins, 173 - 175]. Cotton and the institutions planters believed they needed to make cotton profitable shaped and put into motion a series of social and political forces that are still felt in the Alabama Black Belt today. The challenge to economic development in this region is to overcome the legacy of "King Cotton".

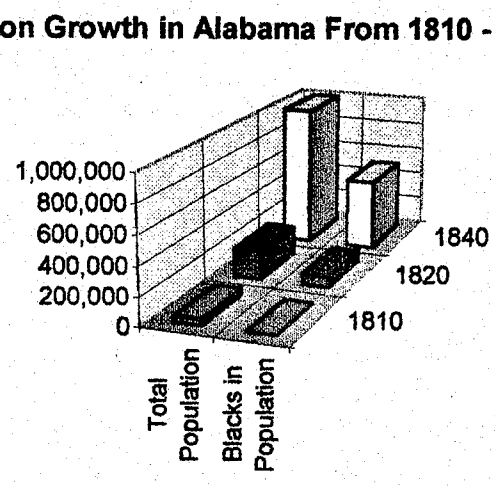
Despite a brief history of great wealth that was generated in the past, this region has been designated as persistently poor by the U. S. Department of Commerce and labeled by economists as one of the most persistently poor areas of the United States.

Poverty and Race in the Alabama Black Belt

The pre-statehood region of Mississippi - Alabama had only 40,000 inhabitants in 1810. By 1820 there were 200,000 inhabitants and a mere twenty years later the population had almost reached 1 million.. In 1820 there were only 75,000 Blacks in the Mississippi - Alabama region while, by 1840 almost half a million were in the area. The tremendous growth of the Black population, largely slaves is essentially the story of the emergence of

the cotton kingdom [Table 1]. Ever since, poverty and race have been linked in the Black Belt of Alabama. [Franklin 1879, 120].

Figure 1



Current indicators show that the links between race and poverty are as strong as ever. According to the 1990 census, the Alabama Black Belt population is 69% Black, ranging from a low in Marengo County of 50.9% to a high in Macon County of 85.6%. The national population is 12% Black and the state of Alabama has a population that is 25% Black. The Black Belt has 56% more Blacks than the national rate of 12% and 43% more Blacks than the state rate of 25%.

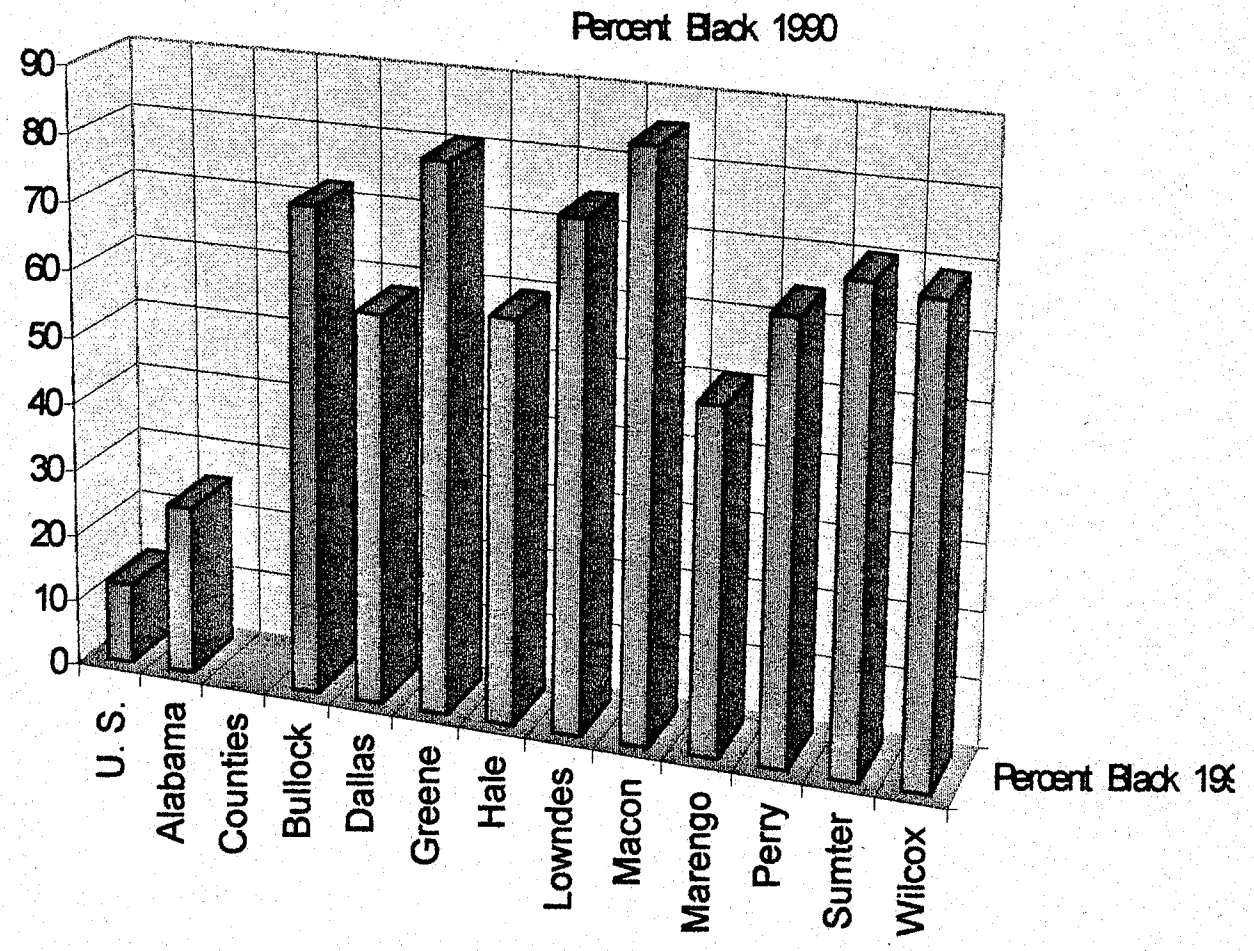
Table 1

POPULATION DATA FOR ALABAMA AND THE ALABAMA BLACK BELT 1990

Counties	Total Population	Percent Population Change Since	Percent Black	Median Family Income	Percent Persons Below Poverty	Percent High School Graduates+	Percent Bachelor's Degree Degree+
U. S.	248,709,873	88.2	12.1	$35,225	13.1	75.2	20.3
Alabama	4,040,587	42.6	25.3	$28,688	18.3	66.9	15.7
Bullock	11,083	-44.3	72.3	$17,796	36.5	49.0	10.0
Dallas	46,498	-12.9	57.8	$20,517	36.2	59.6	12.2
Grene	10,153	-47.1	80.6	$15,663	45.6	53.8	10.4
Hale	15,498	-39.3	59.5	$18,272	35.6	54.4	8.9
Lowndes	12,658	-44.1	74.7	$18,535	38.6	56.7	8.2
Macon	24,928	-9.9	85.6	$20,096	34.5	61.9	18.0
Marengo	23,084	-35.4	50.9	$23,015	30.0	61.4	11.5
Perry	12,759	-52.1	64.4	$16,404	42.6	51.0	11.5
Sumter	15,862	-40.8	70.3	$17,881	39.7	52.4	11.1
Wilcox	13,164	-48.4	68.9	$15,306	45.2	51.1	10.3

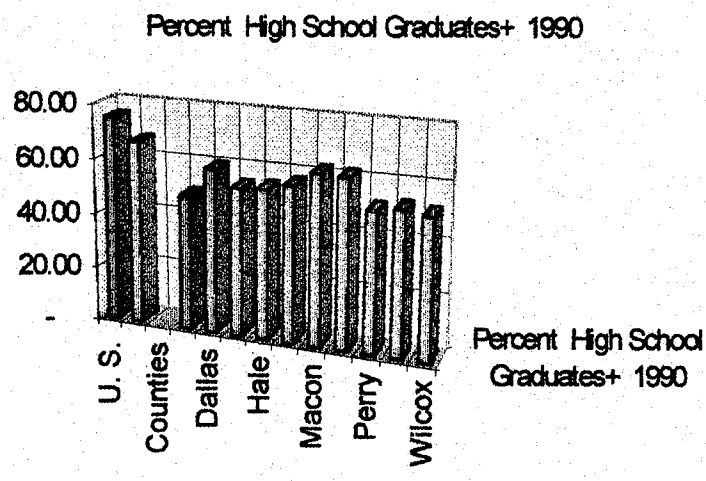
Source: Alabama Population Data Sheet. 1993. Center for Demographic and Cultural Research, Auburn University at Montgomery, Montgomery, Alabama

Figure 2



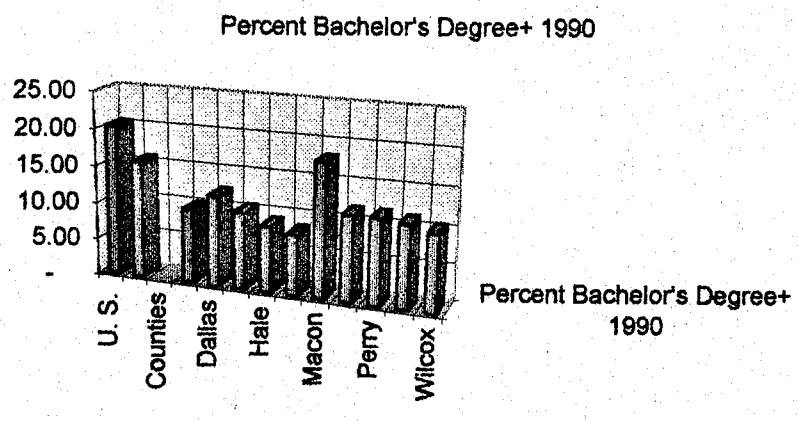
On the national level, 75% of the population graduates from high school. In the Black Belt, 55% of the population graduates, while 45% of the Black Belt population does not finish high school. In the Black Belt, 10% of the population graduates from college, while 20% of the national population

Figure 3



has a college degree. The schools in Alabama, Wilcox County and Alberta are ranked at the bottom of every scale where the criteria is related to

Figure 4

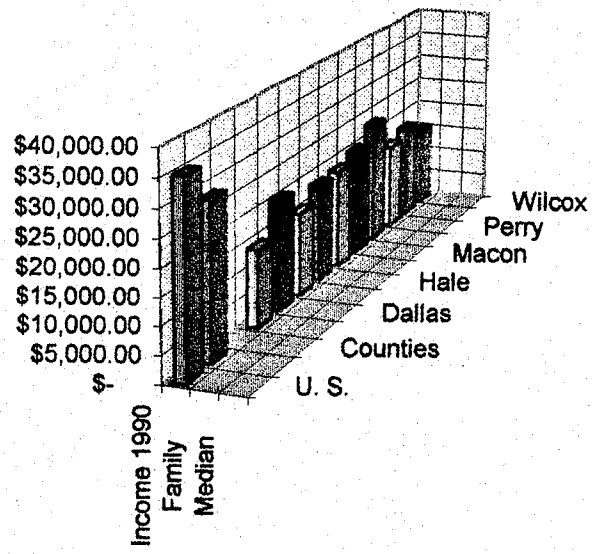


achievement and/or per pupil expenditures. According to the U. S. Department of Education, the average per pupil expenditure is $5,316 for the

United States, $4,444 for the Southeast, and $3,815 for Alabama [Alabama ARISE 1995].

In 1990, the median family income for the Black Belt was $18,000 or half of the national median income of $35,225 [Table 2]. Fully, one third of

Figure 5



the families in Wilcox County had incomes below $10,000 [Table 3]. The per capita income of Wilcox County was $6,552, around 57% of the per capita income for the state of Alabama which was $11,486 for the same period [Table 3].

The poverty rate of Wilcox County was 39.3% in 1990, down from 56.1% in 1970, when the Census Bureau first began to report poverty rates [Table 4]. This rate was still three times the national poverty rate of 13.1% which was reported for the same period [Bogie 1993].

Table 2

GENERAL INCOME STATISTICS FOR WILCOX COUNTY, ALABAMA 1960 - 1990

Amount of Income	1960 Families		1970 Families		1980 Families		1990 Families	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than $5,000	3234	87.31%	2115	55.88%	1532	35.04%	1015	23.03%
$5,000 TO $9,999	374	10.10%	945	26.31%	903	20.65%	878	19.92%
$10,000 to $24,999	82	2.21%	510	14.205	1372	31.38%	1392	31.58%
$25,000 and above	14	0.38%	22	0.16%	565	12.92%	1123	25.48%
Total Families	**3,704**		**3,592**		**4372**		**4,408**	

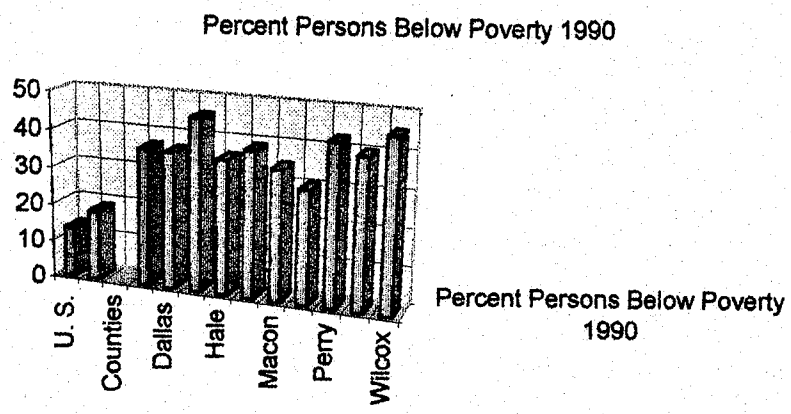
Source: Alabama Population Data Sheet. 1993. Center for Demographic and Cultural Research, Auburn University at Montgomery, Montgomery, Alabama

Table 3

COMPARISON OF 1990 PER CAPITA INCOME			
United States	State of Alabama	Wilcox County, AL	Alberta, AL
$14,420	$11,486	$6,552	$3,617

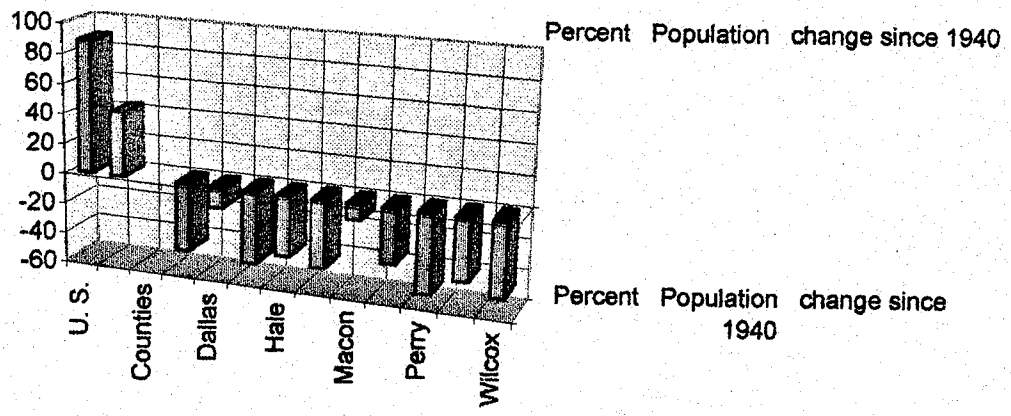
Source: Bureau of the Census, 1990 Census of Population and Housing

Figure 6



Between 1940 and 1990, the population of the United States increased by 88%. The Black Belt lost 37% of its population during the same period.

Figure 7



due to the poor economic outlook for the region. Those losses ranged from the lowest rate of 9.9% in Macon County to the highest rate of loss of 52.1% in Perry County. The Tuskegee Veterans Administration Medical Center and Tuskegee University, both located in Macon County, provided an economic

base for that county which did not exist in other counties and accounts for the low rate of out-migration in Macon County. Wilcox County had twice as many people in it's population in 1940 as it has today even with the Census Bureau reporting increases in the population in every census since 1960 [Table 2]. This increase may be attributed to the rise in employment in the timber industry.

The moral dilemma of the nineteenth century Black Belt which was, according to John Randolph, "the practice of selling human beings in what professed to be the world's most democratic nation" [Franklin 124], has only shifted to another moral dilemma for the twenty-first century: the practice of withholding the knowledge, resources, and expertise needed to move a community out of abject poverty in the richest and most powerful nation in the history of the world.

The lack of diversified development has been a long term economic problem in the Black Belt region. Official unemployment rates in the Alabama Black Belt for 1990 were 10.3% and unofficial unemployment rates were above 15% while the rest of the nation was experiencing extremely low single digit unemployment. Lowndes County experienced a high rate of 13.4% while Shelby County, Alabama which has a relatively low Black population, had an unemployment rate of 3.9% for the same period [Table 5]. Even with high unemployment, under-employment may be the defining characteristic of the Alabama Black Belt.

Table 4

GENERAL POVERTY STATISTICS FOR WILCOX COUNTY, ALABAMA 1960 - 1990			
Year	**Number of Families**	**Families Below Poverty**	**Rate of Poverty**
1960	3,704		
1970	3,492	1,959	56.1%
1980	4,372	1,510	45.0%
1990	4,408	1,293	39.3%

Source: Bureau of the Census.. 1990 Census of Population and Housing

Table 5

AVERAGE UNEMPLOYMENT RATES 1990	
County	**Unemployment Rate**
Shelby	3.9%
Bullock	12.5%
Dallas	10.6%
Greene	11.3%
Hale	7.5%
Lowndes	13.4%
Macon	7.8%
Marengo	6.6%
Perry	10.9%
Sumter	8.5%
Wilcox	11.5%
Black Belt Average	10.6%

Source: U. S. Department of Labor

Throughout the history of Alabama, a primary cause of under-development has been a lack of available credit through the banking system. Lack of credit has been a long time factor in the history of the region's economy and it is rooted in cotton and slavery.

Alabama had experienced so much corruption in it's private banking system, that a state bank had been established. The state bank was said to be wrought with reckless management and overextended loans so that when the panic of 1837 hit, it destroyed the economic flush times in Alabama. The panic caused a downward spiral in the price of cotton., land prices and slave prices. All available capital in the Black Belt was tied up in cotton production. This panic was caused by the demise of the Bank of the United States [BUS]. When Congress repealed the legislation that established BUS, it left the nation without a stabilizing fiscal agency. It was expected that the banking industry would be "privatized", to use a current term. Some historians think that the extremely high rates of return that were made on cotton production was the real weakness in the state bank. What made this panic especially difficult in the Black Belt was speculation. Land had been purchased at inflated rates with inflated paper currency. After the panic, federal payments for outstanding loans could only be made with gold or silver. This further depleted any wealth that was left in the region and Alabama was left without a banking system [Atkins 136 -140].

Alabama's current economic development problems are as rooted in the 1837 financial panic and the resulting lack of credit as it is in cotton and slavery. In order to spur the economy, policy makers looked outside and made efforts to recruit industry to the state. The development of this particular strategy occurs throughout the history of Alabama. In order to bring about economic diversity, Alabama has looked to recruit industry from outside, rather than strengthening the state from within. This recruitment has even led to bidding wars within the state that force communities to give huge tax breaks to attract industry. Today, economists are advising Alabama and the rest of the rural South to move away from recruiting new industry and focus instead on building home-grown businesses, creating local wealth, and upgrading the local workforce(Associated Press, 1996).

As early as 1849, Daniel Pratt, the state's leading industrialist of his time, warned that industrial development was retarded by Alabama's negative attitude toward banks and by bank policies that limited credit to agricultural investments. Banks were necessary evils, he contended, for manufacturing could not prosper without them [Atkins 175 -177]. According to Robert Norrell, "it was insufficient capital and inadequate public and private credit and not ideological opposition to industrialization that limited economic development in Alabama. [Norrell 55].

Given the historical weakness in banking and the resultant lack of credit available in the state, Alabama has relied too heavily on industrial

recruitment in the past; many parts of the state, including the Black Belt, are now paying the price as plants close and move elsewhere. Many economists think that it is possible for localities such as the Black Belt to take more control over their own destiny. Some espouse the idea that the key to self sufficiency is to lay the foundation for vital entrepreneurial activity. Resources for credit must be developed within the state.

The Civil War spelled the end of slavery, but Blacks were not protected under the law and continued to suffer injustices, many of which were economic. The institution of the tenant farming system and the return to the pre-war patterns of agricultural production meant that nothing changed significantly for Blacks in terms of economic, social and political power. The labor of the many was used to increase the wealth of few. The lack of currency and the moral will to make significant changes on the part of the federal government were two important factors in the economic developments of the post war period in the Black Belt. The will of the Black Belt planters to have complete social and economic control of the Black labor force went unchallenged. Political control soon followed [Franklin 232 -240 and Rogers 271 -273].

While technology was being introduced in other parts of the state, the Black Belt stood still. Cotton was still the main crop and Blacks still provided the labor. Blacks who remained in agriculture felt the brunt of the fall in prices of cotton. Labor was the major cost of cotton production. Labor

costs were so low they couldn't be cut any more. The tenant farming and sharecropping systems became entrenched in the Black Belt for the next hundred years. These practices gave cash poor white planters a means of continuing their cotton production and thereby saved their land. There was no wage system in the Black Belt due to a lack of currency and the inability of planters to raise money.

A new agricultural credit system of crop liens was instituted and was regulated by law. The farmer entered into an agreement with the landowner to provide the land and a third party, a merchant who would provide the inputs and household goods as well. These crop lien laws never benefited the poor farmer. In this crop lien arrangement, the farmer provided the labor. When the crop was harvested, the landlord and merchant, both of whom had liens on the crop were paid, and the farmer got what was left. He generally never made quite enough to cover costs and with the landlord and his merchant keeping the books, the farmer generally fell into more debt. The landlord and merchant always came out ahead. In some cases the landlord and merchant were one in the same especially after laws were changed to favor the landlord over the merchant in regards to determining who was to collect their debt first. Merchants bought land to rent out and landlords opened stores, or commissaries, as they were called [Rogers 270 - 276].

New social and economic issues surfaced and had a significant impact on the Black Belt. Public education for Blacks was one of the activities of the

Freedmen's Bureau. Immediately after the Civil War, steps were made to provide educational opportunities for Blacks in the South. When the states began to carry out those duties, it soon became apparent that Alabama lacked a commitment to provide for an education for Blacks or whites. Education is one area that some think could have moved the state out of poverty, but historically we see that Alabama did not value education for either race. The thinking of those who controlled the Black Belt was that education would be detrimental to the control of their labor force [Rogers, 323 -334]..

By the time of the Great Depression, there were already so many poor people in the Black Belt, that they didn't recognize that any significant economic downturn had occurred [Rogers 466]. One isolated community in Wilcox County , Gees Bend, was especially hard hit. When the tenant farmers took their cotton to Camden, they found that the price had dropped so low it would not pay their debts. Cotton was once worth its weight in gold, now it was selling for $.05 a pound. A merchant agreed to store the cotton and extend the farmers credit. He took a chattel lien on the possession's of the farmers. This arrangement carried on for three years until the merchant died in 1932. Soon after this death, his heirs liquidated the assets of over 68 creditor families. The lienholders came from Camden, Alabama and took everything the farmers owned from plows, to chickens, to preserved food. The heirs took household furnishings and all the foodstuffs. When the farmers came in from the fields, all they found were bare cabins. Over 300

individuals lived on wild nuts, game, and fish until government intervention was sought by church groups. Relief was provided by a number of agencies including the Red Cross and the National Guard. All records of the three cotton harvests were destroyed. The farmers were left nothing but were allowed to live rent free by the absentee landlord. [Callahan 35 -37]. Six years later, the Rural Resettlement Administration purchased the land and the government established a new planned farming community known as the Gees Bend Farms [Trend 596].

The Gees Bend Farms provided services to local families and lasted until a fire burned the gin in 1953 and the cooperative was liquidated. The project provided a credit mechanism for farm and home ownership that would not have been available otherwise. Farmers were encouraged to diversify to a limited extent, but cotton was the cash crop. Markets were developed for the cotton through the project. Public education and a health care clinic were important components of this project as well. According to some studies, this project did not achieve the desired outcomes because it did not survive over the long haul. It should be noted that Gee's Bend was in the heart of the Black Belt. This was hostile territory for an independent Black farmer. When the government support of this project waned, farmers still needed credit terms that would allow them to continue to farm. It was not available in Wilcox County. The project was based on production of a raw

material. There was no light manufacturing or processing involved. Small farmers could only survive on the price of their crops.

In the early 1960's the Alabama River was widened for recreational purposes at the site of the Gee's Bend Farms and most of the home sites and farm land were lost. Many of the families moved inland to Alberta. During the same time, the ferry to Camden was closed in an effort to keep Gee's Bend residents away from Civil Rights protests. These two actions in concert did not give any hope to a revival of the project [Trend 598 - 601].

Social, economic, and political conditions changed little in the Black Belt between the depression and the Civil Rights Movement. Black farmers were tied to the sharecropping system and bound in debt. Out-migration was the order of the day. Students brought their suitcases with them to high school graduation activities. Most of the counties in the Black Belt lost over half their population from 1940 to 1990. Mechanization of farms was slow in the cotton production industry but when it came in the late 1960's, it meant the loss of jobs for Blacks and promoted further out-migration.

The Civil Rights Movement brought new hope to Black farmers. They saw a new opportunity to participate in the social, political and economic development of the state. Those Black farmers who owned their land became the backbone of the Civil Rights Movement in rural communities because they were economically independent. They registered to vote, formed

marketing and purchasing cooperatives and began to find a way to have their voices heard around the world. [cite a source for this information]

The Black Belt still has an overwhelming Black, largely poor population. The lack of available credit through the banking system has been a long time factor in the lack of diversified development.

WOMEN AND POVERTY

Many development experts have compared the South to a Third World country. When I began working on my field project, I decided to become familiar with the parallels between Third World and Southern poverty. I also wanted to learn about the cottage industries that were developing in both to determine the outcomes and differences. My field project was designed to be implemented in a very poor community and the women which whom I would be working owned and operated a business that fit the technical description of a cottage industry. Because there were no studies that I could find about poor Black Southern women and cottage industries, I decided to see what was being studied in the Third World and to see if I could find any connections to what I was proposing to do.

We live in a global society where change is constant but poverty is a condition that always seems to be present. Clearly the forms and severity of poverty vary from case to case. Because we have so much social, economic, and political change in society today, someone is always being destabilized and change is affecting their lives. Development agencies are finally beginning to look at ways to overcome some of the very situations that there efforts have aggravated over the years by now supporting the growth of cottage industries as economic development opportunities for women.

As part of my field study project in Rural Economic Development, I wanted to look at this growing resurgence of cottage industries to see how poor women in the South are affected by it. I undertook a study to examine how women have used home based skills and crafts as an economic activity designed to move them and their families out of poverty. I was interested in learning how some women were able to use their own resources and the resources available to them in their community to improve their economic status. I was aware that some development organizations were promoting cottage industries as a solution to poor women in the Third World and that I could learn from their experiences.

Poverty And Its Affects On Third World Women

The most devastating effects of poverty are often seen in the Third World, in communities where women and children are the predominant members of the population. Often where women are the heads of households, and have no means of support, poverty has a dramatic effect. Women and children are more likely to be poor and malnourished and less likely to receive medical services, clean water, sanitation or other benefits of development. The most comprehensive study completed on the subject, *Women and Poverty in the Third World* by Mayra Buvinic, Margaret Lycette and William McGreevey, indicates that the prevalence of female-headed

households, the lower earning capacity of women, their limited control over their spouse's income all contribute to this disturbing phenomenon. Added to these constraints, women have less access to education, formal-sector employment, social security and government employment programs. Larger household size, which is also associated with poor women, is linked to lower per capita food expenditure. These facts combine to ensure that the financial resources of poor women are meager and unstable relative to those of men [Torado, 515]. Because the earning potential of women is considerably below that of their male counterparts, women often bear the disproportionate burdens of poverty, poor education, lack of jobs, and limited social mobility. In many cases, their inferior roles, low status, and restricted access to birth control is manifested in their high fertility. According to this argument, population growth is a natural outcome of women's lack of economic opportunity [Torado, 203].

Economic Development And Third World Women

A number of studies in Africa that focused on the impact of development on women and children have found that, while new technology for cash crops has increased income, nutritional levels have fallen. The cause is linked to conventions about sex roles. The primary reason for this seemingly contradictory phenomenon is the fact that this income belongs to

the man. Men use this increased income for improving homes, throwing "prestige" feasts, and buying transistor radios. In some societies men do use their income to pay school fees, but this does not hold true for other societies. Research that has shown the negative impacts of rural development on women has led to concerns that cultural traditions and decisions made mostly by men, often in the roles of international and national development officials, may result in more dependency for women, greater restrictions, and reduced economic and other opportunities [Tinker, 9 - 25].

Other studies have shown that in some cases new agricultural technologies and machines have led to decreased opportunities for female wage earning, especially among poor women. New milling technology, for example which usually replaces women's work, has often been acquired by men, leading to a transfer of income-earning opportunities from women to men. Such shifts in the income-earning opportunities of women may increase or decrease their welfare, depending upon the way income is allocated within households. A portion of the income disparity between male and female-headed households can be explained by the large earning differentials between men and women [Stevens, 181]. In addition to the fact that women are often paid less for similar tasks, they are essentially barred from higher paid occupations [Torado, 151]. Negative impacts on women can be due to the relative decline in the demand for female labor, the departure of men who provided labor and support, the lack of productivity increases in

women's household and farm activities, and the perverse working out of culturally defined sex roles.

Rural women have less access to the resources necessary to generate stable incomes and are frequently subjected to laws that further compromise earning potential. Legislation often prohibits women from owning property or signing financial contracts without a husband's signature, and women are typically ineligible for institutionally provided resources such as credit and training [Torado 151].

International rural development programs, based on a partial view of society are not likely to succeed as women, like men, act out of self interest, and also like rural men are calculating in pursuit of their goals since they have little margin for risk [Poostchi, 427]. Moreover, since women have also traditionally had to survive through market trade or selling handicrafts produced in their cottage industry [Poostchi, 420].

Cottage Industries And Support For Third World Women

Historically, cottage industry was a home based system of manufacturing widely used during the 1700's and 1800's. Cottage industry basically involved rural families adding to their agricultural income by making products in the home. A merchant provided the raw materials, collected and marketed the finished item, and paid the family a percentage of

the price he received. The most important products made by cottage industry were cloth and clothing. Other products included shoes, cigars and hand - decorated items.

In the United States, the cottage industry system developed in cities about 1870. The practice resulted in the harsh tenement house system and lasted until about 1920. Tenements were crowded, unsafe apartment buildings in which immigrant families both lived and worked. The immigrants worked for extremely low wages, usually making garments. This system declined partly because better management of factories made home-produced goods less competitive. Today, some hand-decorating, sewing, and other highly specialized activities still operate as cottage industries.

Within the past fifteen years women's cottage industries have been introduced as the basis of international economic development programs [Poostchi, 427]. The term cottage industry also refers to any present-day industry in which goods or services are produced at home. For purposes of this paper, I will refer to cottage industry as a business that may have started in the home and is essentially based on skills and knowledge used in the management of a home.

Often the cottage industry selected is based on skills honed for family and home consumption. The term cottage industry is used broadly without specifying a particular process or product. A cottage industry can be rural or urban, using hand-production or mechanized production, for domestic

markets or for export. A cottage industry generally has the following elements in their structure: 1] single person management; 2] high level of personal contacts; 3] scarcity of capital and credit; and 4] high numbers of industries, [that is horizontal expansion rather than vertical expansion] [Poostchi, 571].

CARE [Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere] is the largest non-profit, non-sectarian, non-governmental relief and development organization in the world. CARE has established an international model for developing cottage industries which enables impoverished people to become self-sufficient. The World Bank and the United Nations also support cottage industry efforts throughout the world as do many other well known development and relief agencies [Ramsey, 1996. 3-4]. All of these organizations and agencies offer financial support and others offer non-financial development services for these efforts.

Despite the impressive record of these credit and technical assistance programs, they remain few in number. The vast majority of institutional credit is channeled through formal-sector agencies, and as a result, women generally find themselves ineligible for most small loans.

Many women run small business ventures, called micro-enterprises, which require little or no start up capital and usually involve the marketing of homemade foodstuff and handicrafts. Though women's restricted access to capital leads to high rates of return on their tiny investments, the extremely

low capital - labor rations confine women to low-productivity undertakings. Studies in Latin America and Asia have found that where credit is available to women with informal-sector micro-enterprises, repayment rates have been as high or higher that those for men. And because women are able to make more productive use of capital, their rates of return on investments often exceed those for men [Torado 257].

Cottage Industries In The South

I was not able to locate any studies that were undertaken on cottage industries in the rural South, so I interviewed three women from the South who have been instrumental in developing business that meet the classification set out by Poostchi as cottage industries.. Each contains the following elements in their structure: single person management; high level of personal contacts, scarcity of capital and credit and high numbers of industries [horizontal growth rather than vertical growth].. I wanted to talk to these women to get first hand information from them about the way they do business.. I have known Estelle Witherspoon and Martha Hawkins for many years and was well acquainted with their businesses. I met Albert Brown after I began the process. Estelle Witherspoon was the first manager of the Freedom Quilting Bee where my field project was to take place. Nancy Callahan has documented the development of the Freedom Quilting Bee,

from a historical approach, in her book the Freedom Quilting Bee but she did not compare it to any others. Martha Hawkins has been widely written about in her effort to move from a mother whose family was on welfare to the owner/operator of one of Montgomery, Alabama's more popular restaurants. Albert Brown owns a ceramic production and marketing company. Her business met the criteria described by Poostchi and the criteria that I had for selecting women to interview. I wanted the women to have a rural background, I wanted them to have been in the same business for over five years, and I wanted the industry to have grown horizontally during the life of the business. The interviews covered the history of the business, the background of the owner/manager and the subject I most wanted to learn about, their use of capital and credit.

When Martha Hawkins decided to open a restaurant, she developed a business plan and tried to get a loan at a number of financial institutions. She was turned down and was even offered a job cooking for the loan officer. Ms. Hawkins started her restaurant business, *Martha's Place,* with a $5,000 loan from a project that was trying to get women started in business and three month's free rent from her landlord in exchange for agreeing to do the needed repairs to the building herself. She agreed to this arrangement because she did not have the money for the rent. She used the $5,000 to purchase a stove, refrigerator, and tables and chairs for one dining room from a used furniture store. She went to yard sales and bought plates, glasses,

cups and other utensils. The last of the money went for a cash register and a business license.

In the eight years that she has been in business, Ms. Hawkins has never used credit in her financial operations. She has expanded her business to include three other components: catering, contract meals, and delivery services. All of these operations were self-financed. Mrs. Hawkins has ten full time employees and six part time employees. She contracts with a business service company for payroll and bookkeeping services.

Albert Brown has had a life long interest in decorating. She became interested in learning to make ceramics and soon began teaching the skill to other people. She determined that it was in her best interest to start her own business in 1978. When she went to a bank to obtain financing for her dream, Mrs. Brown was told that she could get the loan if her husband co-signed the note. He refused because he did not want her to work outside of the home. She responded by getting a job driving a school bus. Not only was she able to purchase the kiln she needed to go into production, but she also learned her way around the city of Jackson, where they had recently moved. Mrs. Brown invested all of her earnings into her business for a number of years in order to obtain all the equipment and supplies for production. As of this writing, she has a contract to produce figurines for a company in California. Ms. Brown has two part time employees who assist her in the production of ceramics.

Estelle Witherspoon was one of the women who founded the Freedom Quilting Bee. She and the other women had no money and no hopes of financing the operation through ordinary channels. They had no access to credit. The financial needs of the organization were met through a number of grants from foundations. Once they began to make sales, they turned over that money to buy more stock and to finance future orders. At one point the board of directors had to borrow $20,000. This was early in the development and the loan was needed to finish the sewing plant. Once this loan was paid back, the board was not inclined to borrow any more money. Now that the board members are elderly and retired from the day-to-day operation, they refuse to borrow any money to finance operations.

In my work with the Freedom Quilting Bee, I was aware that the lack of available capital made my work more difficult, but we would always find a way to struggle through and finance contract creatively. After the research I completed and the interviews I conducted with the three women, I have come to the conclusion that the lack of available credit and capital will always keep these businesses small and limited in their scope and capacity to provide jobs in the community. Moreover the attitude about the use of credit for expansion and developing was eye opening for me. The cottage industry phase of a business should be a stepping stone in the development process. If women are to gain economic equity, they must find sources of capital and credit and use that credit effectively.

Access to capital and credit alone are not enough to make businesses grow and develop. It cannot be denied that Black women in business in the South are confronted with race, gender, class constraints. Their businesses are probably more sensitive to market place movements and developments than most other businesses. Without access to capital and credit, they must be very creative if they are to reach their goals of providing jobs in their communities and offering a better life for their children.

I found that there were many parallels between Third world women and Black women in the South who have used home based skills and crafts as a way to increase their income. The cottage industry approach is an available one for poor women in the South if they have support and recognize that their undertakings are indeed businesses and that they need to spend as much time learning about business operations as they have their crafts.

FREEDOM QUILTING BEE

In the face of all the social , political and economic challenges that the rural South has to offer, a group of poor Black women in the Alberta community of Wilcox County, Alabama have organized themselves to seek answers to their own economic destiny. Despite the overwhelming odds against them, they have developed a business that offers training and employment opportunities for women in Alberta. Their effort can serve as a model for people in other communities who find themselves in the continuing economic crisis of the Alabama Black Belt.

The Freedom Quilting Bee has become the embodiment of a concept of economic independence for Black women. Located in one of the poorest and most isolated counties in the United States, the members of the Freedom Quilting Bee have organized and operated a truly unique business for the past twenty-nine years. This all Black women's cooperative is an important linchpin in the revival of national interest in quilts and quilt-making. Members of the Freedom Quilting Bee have exhibited at the Smithsonian Institution and have been featured in nationally recognized magazines. Their quilts have been sold in major department stores in New York and they

have made items for a major catalogue sales company as well as specialty catalogue companies.

The seeds for this organization were planted early in 1966 during the Civil Rights Movement. Poverty was abound in Wilcox County. During that time less than half the families there earned more than $1,550 a year. Many families who were still tenant farming, suffered evictions from tenant farms because of their participation in the Civil Rights Movement and their attempts to register to vote. The community was populated by descendants of one hundred slaves who walked from North Carolina to Gee's Bend, Alabama as part of the Pettway Plantation that relocated there during the 1830's [Callahan 33 -34]. The women in this community had a 140 year old tradition of quilt-making and were quite proficient in the skill.

Father Francis Walter, an Episcopalian priest, was in Alabama working with the Selma Inter-Religious Project. This project was a civil cights organization whose goal it was to document injustices suffered by Blacks. The organization hoped to use this documentation to help Blacks receive relief through the criminal justice system. When Father Walter became acquainted with the quilts in the area, he first envisioned selling some to raise money for the local work of the Civil Rights Movement. Although the going rate for quilts was $5 in this cash poor community, Father Water gave the quilters $10 for each quilt. After the quilts were sold in New York, the plan called for the profits to be divided between the SCLC

FIELD PROJECT

My field project has been developed to serve as a model for business expansion and job creation in communities with limited resources. I wanted to develop a model that poor women and others, who do not have access to capital or credit, could use to expand their businesses in a systematic manner. Specifically, I planned to undertake an economic development planning initiative related to the long range growth, financial profitability and future development of the Freedom Quilting Bee. The project was designed to result in a guide for developing business modules.

I had assisted the board of direcors of the Freedom Quilting Bee in instituting a conference bag operation and I knew that they were interested in finding other ways to expand their operations and employ more women in their community. I approached them with my idea for my field project after working with them on some other ideas and concepts. This plan was being developed with and for that board to be used as a tool for bringing about those goals in a systematic effort. The board members wanted to ensure that all aspects of these developments are thoroughly studied and that each enterprise would complement the existing operations. This project was

developed to assist the board of directors with their internal planning process.

Since the Freedom Quilting Bee falls into the category of a business that does not have ready access to capital or credit, has a single person management, and a high level of personal contacts all through its operations, it meets the criteria of a cottage industry and therefore it was decided that the way to build their business in the short term, would be to add components in a horizontal development model.

Based on the types of business enterprises already in operation, the assets of the organization and the needs of the community, I developed a long list of enterprises that I thought could enhance the long range growth, financial profitability, and future development of the Freedom Quilting Bee. I presented the list to the board for their input and refinement. We were to take the long list and work out which three of my suggested projects they would adopt, or come up with a different list altogether.

One of the chief criteria that I set for selecting the three projects was participation and interest of board members. With the exception of the business service center, I knew that it would take more input to implement the initiatives than to just have the board of directors affirm my suggestions. If they and key staff were not able to commit, on a self-selected basis, to work with a specific project, it would not move. As we discussed the list of possible initiatives during the board meeting, I put up a blank sheet of paper.

As people responded as to what their role could be in developing and implementing suggested projects and tasks involved in those projects, I added their names and the tasks they wanted to complete. The suggested projects that had the greatest interest of the board were the dolls and the silk screening. Other ideas were eliminated because if the projects were to serve the organization, the members had to be willing and interested in working with it.

As we worked on refining the list we agreed on three projects. The first was a business service center. The second item would be rag doll production component and the third would be a silk screening operation

The business service center will have a two-fold mission. First, it would meet the needs of the Freedom Quilting Bee in the modernizing of their own business office and secondly, to provide the community with a business service outlet. The rag doll production component is an idea that the board had considered in the past but had not made a commitment to implement. The silk screening operation would be developed to complement the conference bag component that is already in place.

A master plan was developed for each component and assignments were made. Timelines were assigned to each task and the board gave approval to the concept and agreed to assist in the implementation of this project. The board also approved a fundrasing campaign to accompany this effort. I was able to raise the needed finances quickly from a small

foundation in New York. The funds were available to meet a two-fold need: a leadership development program for the new manager was a part of the funder's program. A grant for $20,000 was sufficient to meet the projected budget for the three components.

BUSINESS SERVICE CENTER PLAN

The business service center has been envisioned to bring the office operations of the Freedom Quilting Bee up-to-date and to allow the staff to operate the business aspects of the company in a manner that would allow them to take advantage of the more modern technology that has become standard equipment in today's business environment. The concept of a business service center that would also meet some of the needs of the community seemed to build on one of the business services that is already in use., i.e., UPS shipping. The Freedom Quilting Bee has operated a UPS shipping center for the past twenty years. Items that are manufactured in-house are shipped by UPS and the Freedom Quilting Bee receives a rebate for all packages shipped from there. Members of the community also use Freedom Quilting Bee UPS shipping services. It was envisioned that whatever new services that would instituted in the business service center would also be available to the public at set rates. Those rates would be determined initially by finding out what amounts other businesses charge for

BUSINESS SERVICE CENTER OPERATION PLANNING GUIDE

WHAT SHALL BE DONE	HOW	BY WHOM	WHEN
Determine needs, select and price items for Business Service Center in order to determine the amount of money needed to purchase equipment	Refer to office supply catalogs for a description of items to be purchased and compare prices.. Make final decisions on items to be purchased based on prices and the specific functions that are needed by the administrative staff..	Carrie Williams	January 15
Raise funds for equipment based on prices.	The board has authorized the Federation of Southern Cooperatives to seek funding for this effort.	Alice Paris	April 30
Purchase and install equipment	After appropriate funds have been raised, the administrative staff will purchase equipment form an office supply company.	Carrie Williams	May 15
Train staff to use equipment	design and implement an in-house training session for the general use office equipment.	Carrie Williams	May 20 ...
Train staff to use computer	Design and implement a series of computer training sessions for appropriate staff..	Alice Paris	May 20 ...
Advertise availabilty of Business Service Center	Post leaflets around in the community, make announcements at local churches.	Carrie Williams	May 30 ...
Evaluate and make changes as needed	Management will report service center activities to the board on a regular basis	Carrie Williams	July 30

the same service, then evaluating the charges at a later date when we would have data to compare.

Resources and Financial Assets

The physical resources that would be necessary for the development of a business service center included a telephone answering machine, fax machine, copier, computer, computer printer, computer stand, and a touch tone telephone. An office space was already in existence and it would be designated as the location for the Business Service Center. Electrical outlets and phone outlets already exist, sot there would be no need for any renovation work. An estimated $3,500 would be needed in order to purchase the equipment to activate the Business Service Center. The board of directors would need to raise funds to gain access to the working capital for this project

Training and Human Resource Development

The board of directors will assure that administrative staff will be trained in the proper use and maintenance of the Business Service Center equipment. A training curriculum for the operation and maintenance of the telephone, telephone answering machine, fax machine, and copier will be developed and implemented in-house using staff resources or resources

identified by the board. The training for the use of the computer and the computer programs will be identified from outside the organization and provided to the staff on an on-going basis.

Governance of Resources

The Business Service Center will be organized and run based on policies developed by the board. The board will appoint a committee to lead this process. A Business Service Center manual will be developed by the committee and will address any issues that the staff may face in the operation of the center. Some items that should be included will include the hours of operation, costs for various items, payment terms. An evaluation of the operation after the first quarter of operation should assist in determining if all the issues have been addressed in the manual. An update should follow if it is found to be deficient in any area.

Decision Making and Distribution of Gained Assets

It is expected that the major use of the equipment will be by staff for the Freedom Quilting Bee itself, therefore, the public use and funds generated from it, are not expected to be sufficient for the support of the Business Service Center. The funds that are generated from this type of use,

however, will be returned to the general operating fund of Freedom Quilting Bee.

Marketing Plan

The availability of the Business Service Center will be advertised in the community. This will be accomplished by the use of posters, church announcements, and word of mouth. The cost for items generated by the Business Service Center for the general public will be calculated and posted. The board will re-evaluate the public use of the services from time to time.

IMPLEMENTATION

The business service center was designed to meet the needs of the Freedom Quilting Bee and the surrounding community. The business services that were available were very limited. The business has not updated its office equipment much since it opened thirty years ago. By not updating, the obselete business practices were in themselves limiting the ability of the organization to use new marketing techniques. The office equipment on hand consisted of a rotary telephone, typewriter and an adding machine. We decided to examine the most severe needs of the business office and try to raise money to meet them. The manager knew that customers requested a fax number on a regular basis; potential customers also called when the office was closed; the closest copy machine was over five miles away and when they needed copies, that was a ten mile round trip. The Freedom Quilting Bee

operated a UPS shipping center from the sewing plant. People in the community used it as well. We decided to build on that service and to offer other business services to the public as well.. We raised the funds for the project from a small foundation that also provided leadership training on working women's issues for the manager. We purchased a touch tone telephone, fax machine, answering machine, and a copy machine. We were then able to get a new computer, computer work center, and software donated through a university that had obtained major funding to work in the area. We then purchased additional software for the computer to round out the needs of the Business Service Center. Computer training was also provided by the university as a part of the project. Several of the young women who learned to operate the computer found full time employment in a near by city.

RAG DOLL PRODUCTION PLAN

The objective of this operation will be to provide additional working hours to women at the Freedom Quilting Bee. From time to time the Freedom Quilting Bee will have a lull between orders for quilts and other goods, and this added line of items can help in providing additional work for their staff and members in order to prevent lay-offs. The staff of the Freedom Quilting Bee have developed a prototype rag doll. There has never been a

RAG DOLL OPERATION PLANNING GUIDE

WHAT SHALL BE DONE	HOW	BY WHOM	WHEN
Evaluate previous rag doll efforts.	Collect records, patterns, dolls, and develop a written document detailing what has taken place historically. Decide why the effort did not produce the desired result and make this effort reflect those findings.	Nettie Young	January 10
Make production decisions	Based on past records and information the board will develop a production plan with an eye toward sales and profits. The board will develop a preliminary market plan.	Nettie Young	January 15
Obtain production inputs	Develop a production plan based on the number of dolls to be marketed.	Rennie Miller	February 10
Conduct training	The quality control unit will make preliminary dolls. They will conduct training for membership on the process to be used in making dolls.	M. Pettway	February 15
Implement production procedures	The agreed upon number of dolls will be produced for inventory	Rennie Miller	March 1
Develop and implement marketing plan	Dolls will be sent to various outlets including the Bear's Paw, FSC, craft shows, etc.	Rennie Miller	April 20
Develop and implement order procedures	As orders are received for dolls, the production and inventory replacement process will begin	Rennie Miller	May 3
Production	As orders are received	Rennie Miller	On going

concerted effort to produce and market this item. A few were sold at their fall festival and purchases have been made by individuals visiting the Quilting Bee. The interest in the rag doll on the part of the board is that the item can be produced by persons who are now working at the Freedom Quilting Bee. The equipment is available for production and there is always a market for dolls. This is the type of item the board can add to their catalogue, take to festivals and shows for individual sales, keep on display at the center, and can try to market for contract sales as well.

Resources and Financial Assets

The production resources that are necessary for the development of this business include sewing machines, fabric, filling, yarn, and accessory items. The board will not need to develop any special funding for this project. Initial costs can be covered for inventory items by the general operating fund of the Freedom Quilting Bee. Fabric, filling, yarn and accessory items for demonstration dolls will not exceed $500.00. Initially, clothes for the doll can be made from any appropriate fabric that is left over from quilts as well as purchased material.

Marketing Plan

Marketing of this item will be through usual methods employed by Freedom Quilting Bee. A selection of sample dolls will be sent to the Bear's Paw, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, and any other outlets where we can expect to receive orders on a regular basis. They will be added to the items taken to craft show. When anothe catalog is produced, it will be added to the selections.

Training and Human Resource Development

The Board of Directors will assure the training of women already on the staff to make dolls. The quality control unit will be responsible for initial training and for re-training as needed.

Governance of Production Process

The production process will be organized and run on a day-to-day basis as a part of the sewing production process already utilized at the Quilting Bee. The management staff will decide, based on available resources when and how many dolls to produce after initial 50 dolls are made and distributed. When orders are received, they will be processed with dispatch. Doll production will be a part of the regular weekly staff meeting discussions and evaluations.

Decision Making and Collective Distribution

A separate process will not be developed for the rag dolls. This is a part of the regular sewing production process.

Implementation

The rag doll had been developed and introduced to the membership as a possible items for sale. It was never moved beyond the early production stage. No attempt had been made to market the product or to make it at a large scale. We decided to investigate why the doll was never promoted as a regular item that could be produced by the membership. When we looked at the history of the doll, we found that it was one of several ideas that were presented to the membership and that before the quality control committee could look at it, a large contract came in that took six months to complete. In the mean time, the member who had an interest in producing the doll left and nothing ever came of it.

We decided to re-visit the doll concept. Dolls are an item that hold the interest of the consuming public year after year. Even though sales may be seasonal, production can be carried on while the other actives are at a lull and sales can take place later. The equipment needed to make the dolls was already owned by the Freedom Quilting Bee. Dresses could be made from left

over quilt fabrics and the other inputs were fairly inexpensive. We began to investigate sales possibilities and found someone who was in the market for alarge number of handmade rag dolls and was willing to finance the production with a down payment. Because this was a contract sale, the doll had to be made to the buyer's specifications. A source for the fabric was located and other inputs. The quality control committee worked on a smaller version of the original doll, and production began to fill the order.

This order was not expected and it caused us to deviate from the plan in a very positive way. This development showed the members that a market does indeed exist for dolls and that this is an item that should always be included in the inventory.

SILK SCREENING OPERATION

The silk screening component will be operated as an entity of the canvas conference bag production component. The objective of this new operation will be to provide expanded employment opportunities and provide an outlet for the creative expression of staff. The board expects to silk screen the canvas bags that we already produce. The silk screening for contracts is now being sub-contracted with a number of individuals. We will also seek contracts to silk screen other items such as T-shirts.

Resources and Financial Assets

The physical resources that will be necessary for the development of this business include the silk screening machinery, ink, and supplies; ventilated work space; storage space and; equipment for drying. The board of directors will need to raise funds to gain access to the assets that will be needed to develop working capital for the project. The initial space and ventilation requirements will be provided as in-kind contributions. The board will locate equipment and will study lease purchase arrangements if they are available. It is estimated that an initial investment of $4,000 will be needed to start up the silk screening operation.

Training and Human Resource Development

The board of directors will canvas the membership to determine interest in learning to silk screen. An initial training program will be designed and implemented by a consultant identified by the Federation of Southern Cooperatives. This initial training will have several objectives: to determine interest in the enterprise, to determine which individuals are best suited to perform the operations of the silk screening processes; and to bring the group together as a production unit.

SILK SCREEN OPERATION PLANNING GUIDE

WHAT SHALL BE DONE	HOW	BY WHOM	WHEN
Report to board on the essentials of silk screening	Visit silk screening operation, talk with operators, obtain trade publications, etc.	Carrie Williams and Alice Paris	January 10
Develop a fundraising plan	The management will be authorized to seek funding resources for this effort. It may be delegated to FSC consultant.	Nettie Young and Alice Paris	January 30
Develop and implement a training plan	Locate a silk screening consultant who will develop and implement a training design that will meet the following goals: 1] To introduce the silk screening concept to the membership 2] To make members aware of the resources needed for a successful silk screening operation and 3] To assist in the start up of the operations	Carrie Williams and Alice Paris	February 15
Obtain equipment and supplies needed	Purchase supplies and equipment	Carrie Williams	May 30
Begin production.	Silk screen conference bags	Production Crew	July 15

Governance of Production Process

The production process will be organized and run on a day to day basis as part of the canvas bag component.

Decision Making and Collective Distribution

A separate process will not be developed for the silk screening. This is a part of the regular canvas bag production process.

Implementation

Silk Screening was an enterprise that was developed as a complimentary operation for the conference bags. All the bags needed to be silk screened. This entailed finding a sub-contractor, delivering the pre-cut bags to the subcontractor, sometimes over a hundred miles away, and having the bags delivered back to the Freedom Quilting Bee before any sewing could take place. The silk screening operation could add efficiency, and cut down on time and transportation costs. Since there was an immediate need for this type of operation, the board readily adopted it as one of the three projects.

When the board decided to investigate the silk screening operation, none of us had any technical knowledge or hands-on experience in this skill. The first step was to locate someone who would be willing to train the members in the skills and techniques needed to operate a silk screen

business. I sought a referral and was given the name of a retired extension agent who specialized in photography and other related fields. Silk screening was one of the areas he specialized in teaching. I met Mr. Alex Brown at an unrelated workshop and spoke with him briefly about the project. He invited me to visit his shop and to talk about our needs in depth.

I went out to see his operation, which is to date, the most extensive silk screening operation that I have seen. He briefed me about the steps needed to go through from developing designs to printing and drying. Mr. Brown was familiar with the area where the Freedom Quilting Bee was located, he had taught school in the area as a young man and still owned some property in the area. He was excited about the possibilities of helping this group of women start up a silk screen operation.

I arranged for the manager of the Freedom Quilting Bee to come to Tuskegee to visit with Mr. Brown and to get an understanding of what would be needed to operate a silk screening business. Mr. Brown took her through the same briefing as he gave me and they agreed that he would train the membership in silk screen processes. Mr. Brown also agreed to provide technical assistance after the training phase.

Mr. Brown came to the Freedom Quilting Bee and trained eleven women in the silk screening processes. They were able to move through each step from design development to printing. The equipment that he brought with him was also reviewed. He provided the specifications for a light box,

the main piece of equipment they would need, but also taught the women how to complete the process without a light box using a very inexpensive technique. The women who went through the training were able to produce their logo on some bags as the final outcome.

The next training session took place at Mr. Brown's shop. Mr. Brown reviewed all the equipment in his shop and all of the processes needed for a traditional silk screening operation.

The following session took place at silk screening business, *Creative Awards and Tees*, where a field visit had been arranged. Here we found a more modern type operation that utilized computer imaging. The Freedom Quilting Bee has a computer and printer and using it will eliminate many of the steps in the process taught by Mr. Brown.

The manager located someone who could make the light box, obtained necessary chemicals for photo processing the screens and the cooperative is now prepared to complete one-color silk screening when they get an order for bags that require this type of process.

We learned that we could manage a one color printing but that we were not experienced enough to go any further. Two, three and four color screening call for more experience and after doing one color jobs, we will evaluate our competence and interest in moving forward.

and the quilters. Soon the plan changed and called for the organization of a cooperative which would return all the proceeds to the quilters' cooperative [Callahan 89 -91]. The cooperative charter was adopted on March 26, 1966 and the first officers were elected on the same night.

The members of the cooperative had no formal education, no knowledge or use of the tools associated with the commercial sewing industry, no access to the materials needed to make a product that could be sold on the open market, and had never been paid cash for their labor, yet, they worked hard, developed skills, sought the resources they needed and continued to work in their own homes to make quilts and other hand-crafted items which were sold through the cooperative. During this period of development which lasted until 1969, the new cooperative received national publicity. *Vogue, House and Garden,* and *Life* all carried articles and photo displays on the quilts. The result of this work on the part of the members of the Freedom Quilting Bee and their many friends and supporters who offered their skills and talents to the Freedom Quilting Bee during this period, was that the quilts from Wilcox County found their way into Bloomingdale's Department Store and from there to many other sales outlets. Estelle Witherspoon, a member of the Freedom Quilting Bee, became the manager and the Bee became a founding member of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives [Callahan 95 -97].

In 1968 the membership voted to purchase 23 acres of land which included an old house and space to build the much needed manufacturing plant. Miraculously, the Freedom Quilting Bee was able to develop financing to build a sewing plant that same year in order to facilitate their work. Foundations learned about their plight and their work to develop a business that would help move their families out of poverty through their own self-help efforts. A number of small foundations supplied the cooperative with $50,000 to purchase land and build a sewing plant.. The tradition in Alberta, as in other parts of the Black Belt, had been to not sell land to Blacks. Mr. Lee Rose was only the second white in the history of Alberta to break that tradition. The members of the Freedom Quilting Bee reached an agreement with Rose to buy his land. They fully expected Rose to repudiate his agreement with them to sell the land if other landowners found our about the agreement and put pressure on him. Their challenge was to close the business transactions as fast as they could before pressure from the white establishment caused the deal to fall thorough. After they crossed this hurdle and felt secure that their effort would not be challenged in an overt manner from the white power structure, the despair began to turn to hope [Callahan 92].

The members were still very poor but the quilt sales were a welcomed supplement to their meager incomes. Orders came in from all quarters including one from Sakowitz, a department store in Houston, that was

twenty feet wide by forty-four feet long. The Freedom Quilting Bee continued to receive publicity for their work and learned to manage their business with the help of volunteers.

The members sold eight lots to families in the area that had been evicted from rental property for participating in the Civil Rights Movement and needed a place to build homes. They also renovated the house on their property and acquired another house that they rent to families in the area who need housing. Later, the Freedom Quilting Bee added another dimension to their enterprise, a day care center opened in 1970. The day care center provides child care services to both the women who work at the Freedom Quilting Bee and other families in the community. In 1972 the Freedom Quilting Bee obtained a contract from Sears and Roebuck making corduroy pillows and by 1974, the members were finally making minimum wages. At this time, the median income for black families in Wilcox County was $2,000 and some of the quilters were making $3,000 a year. This period in the history of the Freedom Quilting Bee was also marked by a lessening of interest in American crafts by major decorators and quilt sales declined dramatically. A new and regular sales outlet for the quilts, however, was opened through the establishment of the *Artisan's* crafts sales cooperative in Pennsylvania of which Freedom Quilting Bee became a member and several years later a craft sales outlet in New York, the *Bear's Paw*, became another

important outlet for retail sales of the quilts. These outlets marked the stabilization of the business as a major producer of American made quilts.

Today, the Freedom Quilting Bee is still considered to be a premier manufacturer of American quilts. The members of the Freedom Quilting Bee face challenges in a competitive market. The years of working together, the joint experiences, and the knowledge of the need that the community has for this business make it imperative that the women continue to find solutions to their problems.

In the midst of their business activity, the Freedom Quilting Bee also serves as a hub of community service activities aimed toward the development of youth, their most precious resource. After school tutoring, a summer feeding program, a clothing bank, and a mini-resource library are the core of a growing community development center. The Freedom Quilting Bee is a model of a business activity that can be political, economic, and social advocates for the good of the community.

Bibliography

Alabama ARISE. *Per Pupil Spending.* Montgomery, AL. 1995.

Associated Press. Montgomery Advertiser, Friday March 15, 1996. *Rural Aid Chief Says Home-Grown Jobs Key to Growth.* p. 8B

Bogie, Donald, Danny Harrison and Doris Moffett. *Alabama Population Data Sheet.* Montgomery: Center for Demographic and Cultural Research. 1993.

Brown, Albert. 1996.

Callahan, Nancy. 1986. *The Freedom Quilting Bee.* Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.

Drucker, Peter. 1994. Management. New York: Harper and Row.

Franklin, John Hope. 1979. *From Slavery to Freedom A History of Negro Americans.* New York: Alfred Knopf, Inc.

Harper, Malcom. *Their Own Idea: Lessons from Workers Cooperatives.* IT Publications. 1992.

Hawkins, Martha. 1996.

Poostchi, Iraj. *Rural Development and the Developing Countries: An Interdisciplinary Introductory Approach.* The Alger Press Limited, Oshawa, Canada. 1986.

Ramsey, Caroline. "Microcredit Developments". *Craft News.* Volume 7, Issue 27. Spring 1966.

Rogers, William, Robert Ward, Leah Atkins, and Wayne Flint. 1994. *Alabama: The History of A Deep South State.* Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.

Salamon, Lester M. 1979. "The Time Dimension In Policy Evaluation: The Case of the New Deal Land-Reform Experiments," *Public Policy,* 27 (2):129 - 183.

Smith, Nina. "CARE's Craft Production Creates Hope in Kenya". *Craft News.* Volume 7, Issue 27. Spring 1966.

Stevens, Robert D. and Cathy L. Jabara. *Agricultural Development Principles.* The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London. 1988. 478 pages.

Stifoff, Harvard. 1984. "The Impact of the New Deal on Black Southerners:, *The New Deal and the South.* Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

Tinker, I., and Bramsen, M. B.., eds. 1977. *Women and World Development.* Washington, D.C. Overseas Development Council.

Torado, Michael P. *Economic Development.* Longman, White Plains, NY. 1994.

Trend, M. G. and W. L. Lett. 1986. "Government Capital and Minority Enterprise: An Evaluation of a Depression-Era Social Program," *American Antrhopologist,* 88(3): 595-609.

Wimberley, Ronald, Libby Morris, and Douglas Bachtel. 1990. "Agriculture and Life Conditions In the Land Grant Black Belt: Past, Present and Policy Questions", *Public and Private Partnership for Rural Development.* Tuskegee: Tuskegee University Press.

Witherspoon, Estelle. 1966.