2. “Regardless of Race, Color, or Creed”: Filming the Henry Street Settlement Visiting Nurse Service, 1924–1933

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“Regardless of Race, Color, or Creed”

Filming the Henry Street Settlement Visiting Nurse Service, 1924–1933

TANYA GOLDMAN

Founded in 1893 by nurse and social reformer Lillian Wald, the Henry Street Settlement was one of many Progressive Era reform organizations developed in response to industrialization, mass immigration, and urban overcrowding. Situated in the heart of Manhattan’s Lower East Side, the organization developed a wide range of service initiatives, including its pioneering Visiting Nurse Service (vns), committed to providing health care to the urban poor “regardless of race, color, or creed.”

By 1923, the vns had expanded operations from its original house on Henry Street to more than twenty offices across three of New York City’s boroughs. Approximately 250 nurses traveled the city, seeing upward of fifty thousand patients in their homes per year. Staff also managed several specialized maternity centers. What made the service so indispensable was its commitment to providing care irrespective of a patient’s ability to pay. As such, the settlement relied extensively on donations to sustain operations. Nearly half of its financial support came from benefactors and annual fund-raising drives; only 5 percent came from patients. In addition to fund-raising, community outreach to raise awareness among the city’s “needy-sick” was also a constant concern. By the early 1920s, Henry Street had developed an annual schedule of promotional campaigns that utilized nearly all of the era’s available media platforms. In 1924, motion pictures joined the organization’s arsenal of newspaper ads, mailers, posters, leaflets, and department store window displays. A total of three films—intended to either solicit funds,
educate the community, or share information with colleagues—were produced within the next decade.\(^4\)

This chapter considers Henry Street’s adoption of moving images as part of its promotional apparatus and assesses how each film depicted the organization’s efforts to serve New York’s diverse populace. Heeding Charles Acland and Haidee Wasson’s call to interrogate the complex relations between moving images, institutions, and exhibition locales, this chapter situates each work amid the organization’s broader philanthropic goals.\(^5\) Analysis of these films demonstrates how each one’s distinct intended use mediated depictions of racial and ethnic difference. What emerges is a contradictory strain of interracial and interethnic inclusion whereby Henry Street’s films—in spite of the service’s comparatively forward-thinking policies—still largely project their contemporary social mores.

Lillian Wald and the Progressive Impulse

Lillian Wald’s settlement is unique among its British and American peer institutions in that it was the first initiated and run by a trained nurse. Wald’s influence on developing public health nursing as a viable career for young women of all racial backgrounds is broadly recognized.\(^6\) While best remembered for her efforts to professionalize nursing and reform child labor laws, Wald also possessed a markedly forward-thinking approach to race relations for her time. As an early supporter and board member of the NAACP, she hosted one of its first meetings at Henry Street in 1909, when city ordinance still prohibited integrated meetings. Wald also publicly characterized segregation as “an invidious and subtle poison” and in her 1934 autobiography claimed that Henry Street was the first nursing organization to provide equal salaries to black and white nurses.\(^7\)

Wald’s commitment to interracial tolerance informed the organization’s internal politics. For example, in 1921 Wald and the board received word from a white businessman about the poor treatment that one of his “colored secretaries” received while dining with white colleagues at a Henry Street–owned restaurant. The board chastised the establishment’s proprietor, who soon resigned. Several years later, Wald stood by her decision to house a black nurse at the original settlement despite the ire of several donors.\(^8\)

The VNS, however, did not initially court the involvement of black nurses. Rather, Henry Street’s first black nurse approached Wald herself in 1906, asking for support to create an outpost to serve her own community. In her writings, Wald encouraged nurses to live within the communities they
served to cultivate an “organic relationship” with patients.\(^9\) Considering the de facto segregation of many New York neighborhoods, Wald’s focus on “organic” communal connection possesses inherent segregationist implications, even if such policies were well intentioned. Indeed, maintaining the color line was organizational policy as black nurses were forbidden to visit white homes, nor were they promoted to senior positions at clinics outside their own neighborhoods. A black nurse’s service to “her own people” is a consistent trope across VNS promotional materials, reflecting the era’s prevailing social order.

*Helping Hands (1924)*

Henry Street’s decision to add moving pictures to its annual pledge drive was announced at a February 1924 campaign committee meeting. Bray Productions, an established producer of animated and sponsored films, began production in late September. The resultant thirteen-minute short, *Helping Hands (1924)*, depicts a philanthropist shadowing two real Henry Street nurses on their rounds.\(^{10}\)

The film opens on the lush grounds of the Pierson family estate as Alice, a white Henry Street nurse, visits her childhood friend Marion, whose father is a prosperous businessman. The three characters, all well dressed to connote their class, congregate on an outdoor patio. Marion proudly tells her father that Alice has just completed nursing school. Desiring to be “useful,” Marion urges her father to help the organization. Pierson is eager to learn more about the VNS, and Alice promises to secure permission for him to accompany her in the field.

The next day, James and Marion Pierson shadow Alice on her rounds. In a long shot, the trio walks toward the steps of an apartment building. This framing provides a glimpse of the congested neighborhood sidewalk, a counterpoint to the open green space of the Pierson estate. Inside Alice tends to a sick white mother in bed. Two children dutifully sweep the apartment as Alice works and the Piersons observe. Marion compassionately places a hand on one of the children’s shoulders, a gesture evoking “sympathetic knowledge,” a practice advocated by settlement house pioneer Jane Addams. The group soon enters a second tenement, and the Piersons vanish from the screen as Alice dutifully treats a bedridden white girl. A worried mother hovers nearby.

After this second visit, Alice informs the group that they will take a taxi to see one of the “colored nurses.” The camera cuts to a light-skinned black nurse, Miss Smith, checking her wristwatch and awaiting the trio’s arrival.

Exiting the cab, Mr. Pierson warmly shakes her hand, commenting, “Your uniform looks like the garb of a friend.” This handshake and intertitle con-note a bridge of interracial relations and Pierson’s progressive outlook on racial equality.

The camera cuts to the interior of another single-room apartment where two black children sit as their mother vigorously scrubs laundry on a wash-board. As Miss Smith enters, the mother greets her. An intertitle follows: “Laws, Miss Henry Street, honey, Gardenia am sittin’ here waitin’ for you for the last hour.” Since Alice’s previous visits do not depict patients speaking, one must question Bray’s decision to give voice to the black mother, as well as the implication that Miss Smith arrived later than expected. The intertitle’s language punctuates the class divisions between these two figures of black femininity—that of the unkempt, dark-skinned, indigent mother and the uniformed, lighter-skinned nurse, a beacon of racial uplift and middle-class aspiration. This meeting invokes a precarious balance between progressive and regressive racial representation as the depiction of Miss Smith as responsible and attentive is counterbalanced by the stereotypical portrayal of the helpless, uneducated black urban poor.

Following Miss Smith into the apartment, Alice also warmly shakes the black mother’s hand, echoing Mr. Pierson’s greeting of Miss Smith outside. Curiously, the Piersons are not shown within the patient’s home. Miss Smith administers first aid care to a wound on the young girl’s leg before the camera abruptly cuts to a vns clinic where Alice leads a class on newborn care. This lesson is shown with a series of iris transitions to condense the length of screen time. This technique also highlights the comparatively short amount of screen time given to Miss Smith, as Alice’s methodical actions contrast the basic aid performed by the black nurse.

Finally, a staged shot captures a large group of nurses. The camera pans left to right, revealing roughly 45 of the service’s 250 uniformed nurses. A small cluster of light-skinned African American nurses stand together at the far left of the overwhelmingly white group. The appearance of these nurses, dressed identically to their white peers, projects an image of professional parity, specialized knowledge shared across racial lines. This projection, however, is tempered by the posture of a white nurse standing immediately to the group’s left, back turned to her black colleagues. While it is impossible to know the subject’s intent, the resultant positioning suggests an internal ambivalence toward racial integration and equality among members of the vns, even while publicly touting its employment of African American

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personnel. The film ends with Pierson pledging his financial support to the cause.

*Helping Hands* reflects what Constance Balides characterizes as reform publicity’s tendency to blend didacticism with sociological display, an “address both to a social subject who [is] part of a social formation of reform and to a civic subject who [is] enjoined to do something about social problems based on social facts and a sympathetic understanding of the circumstances of others.” Additionally, in demonstrating the value of the VNS by presenting examples of its activities, *Helping Hands* enacts what Allyson Nadia Field has characterized as a “before-and-after” syntax of uplift narratives whereby an institution’s transformative powers are illustrated by contrasting pre- and postservice conditions. Pierson’s journey through the field also echoes a subset of the industrial process film, the factory-tour or visitor film. Writing of the Volkswagen Autostadt factory films, Patrick Vonderau likens the spectator’s experience to touring in a cultural sense, which “has more to do with regulated action in semiotic arrangements toward a concrete economic result. What is made productive in the cultural technique of the tour is less the factory than the visitor him- or herself” (emphasis added). While Vonderau is speaking of automotive assembly and its effects...
on tour attendees, a similar point can be made with regard to diegetic philanthropy in *Helping Hands*. That is, through his tour, Pierson is produced as a philanthropic subject. Thus, through didacticism, sympathetic appeal, and a show-and-tell model, *Helping Hands* constitutes an attempt at philanthropic mimesis by presenting behavior that the film hopes its similarly wealthy, civic-minded addressees will replicate.

In the absence of exhibition records, campaign committee meeting minutes allow for reasonable speculation about the circumstances of the film’s exhibition and its intended use to solicit donations. At the start of production, members discussed placing the film in “better-class picture theaters” during the fall canvass. Plans were also discussed to screen *Helping Hands* at a fund-raising gala dinner, on-site at VNS headquarters for visitors, and at several “parlor conferences” hosted at patrons’ homes. The decision to commission a new one-reel motion picture in late 1926 also indicates that the organization continued to value film as a mode to persuade and promote—though they committed only $500 to the new production, a quarter of the $2,000 spent on the earlier project. An independent producer named Frank R. Abrams was hired for the project.

*The Visiting Nurse* (1927)

Perhaps due to its lower budget, *The Visiting Nurse* dispenses with a frame narrative and proceeds like a travelogue. This less structured syntax allows the film a more flexible mode of address and the leeway to speak to a broader audience. While produced specifically for Henry Street’s spring 1927 fund-raising drive, extant records indicate that the film played for a dual audience: local donors and potential patients. Given its need to simultaneously speak to two difference audiences, *The Visiting Nurse*’s depiction of racial and ethnic service differs subtly from that of *Helping Hands*.

The fifteen-minute film begins with a series of intertitles informing the viewer that the VNS “answers calls from the people of all nationalities and all faiths” and is driven by “universal brotherhood.” A uniformed white nurse is characterized as “a guardian of New York’s homes.” Amid scenes of white nurses working, an intertitle reminds the viewer that service is free of cost for those unable to pay, informative for potential patients and justifying a need for donations from wealthier viewers.

*The Visiting Nurse* deviates from its focus on undifferentiated whiteness about six and a half minutes into the film. As a white nurse walks along a busy street, she is directed toward someone requiring attention. In the next

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shot, the nurse speaks to a woman holding a child in front of a bread shop. The storefront's signage, Panetteria Siciliana e Napolitana, signals the area's Italian populace. In the absence of an intertitle indicating locale, the Italian window text gestures to VNS outreach in Little Italy, one of Manhattan's well-known ethnic enclaves.

The nurse's interactions with the community appear natural, suggesting familiarity and acceptance. During the same sequence, she is later shown conversing with two additional mothers, and she warmly places her hand on the head of a child, echoing Marion's similar gesture in the previous film. By showing the nurse walking the neighborhood and speaking with multiple residents, the filmmaker illustrates her value to the community at large. This white nurse's specific heritage is never explicated, contrary to Henry Street's frequent efforts to explicate the value of service to “one's own kind” within the black community. Given that the organization's policies upheld segregation of services along the color line, this occurrence suggests that white skin tone—even given the cultural contingency of whiteness during this period—overrides the nuances of European ethnic distinction.

Language is similarly used to mark difference during a brief sequence in Chinatown. An intertitle sets the stage: “For Chinatown there is Miss
Zing Ling Tai.” Two establishing shots follow the nurse along streets heavily populated by Chinese-language signs. A third and final shot shows Ling Tai awkwardly posing alongside a stone-faced Asian child. Her hand is placed on the child’s back. Both look directly at the camera, the nurse offering a tentative smile.

This twenty-second stretch of screen time contrasts with the Little Italy sequence that precedes it. Unlike the nurse in Little Italy who is portrayed as a beloved figure within the community, the assumption of the Chinese nurse as a welcome presence in the neighborhood is undercut by the visible unease of the child beside her. Second, Ling Tai is not shown interacting with any adults in the community, implicitly muting her appearance of professional expertise. Finally, and most pointedly, the intertitle that introduces Ling Tai is, in and of itself, an anomaly in a film where no other nurse is identified by name. In addition to strongly suggesting that Ling Tai is the only Henry Street nurse to serve her community, this singularity also renders her a token at best. Her fleeting appearance feels less about displaying vns care than about showing her as a novelty, specimen, or emblem of inclusivity.18

Later, the film travels uptown to Harlem, where an intertitle informs the viewer, “24 colored nurses serve their own people.” After an establishing
shot of the center’s exterior, a smiling employee holds the door for three entering patients. Two brief examples of care follow: the first depicting a nurse writing a doctor’s referral for a patient seated beside her, the second of a blind mother passing her infant to a nurse as her older son looks on. This Harlem tour occupies about one minute of screen time.

The Harlem sequence comes immediately after a lengthy sequence capturing an infant care class led by a white nurse. Compared to the meticulous series of actions performed by the white nurse in the preceding sequence, the black labor here appears less skilled. Thus, while the aforementioned white nurse provides detailed instructions, the Harlem nurses engage in nonspecialized tasks—opening a door, sitting at a desk, and picking up an infant—and the black nurse’s need to refer her patient to a doctor, rather than manage care herself, minimizes her appearance of expertise. This lesser capability is mirrored in the comparative inaction of the Harlem patients. Thus, while a white woman dutifully stands and practices her skills during the infant care class, both black mothers are seated. Though an intertitle explains that the blind mother had created a layette for her infant, the image that follows only depicts her passing the child off to a nurse. The more limited scope of activity performed by the Harlem nurses and their patients (as well as the absence of care administered by Ling Tai) creates a perception that skill is allotted unequally across racial and ethnic lines, a prevalent stereotype that contemporary black nursing professionals and educators specifically worked hard to counteract.19

The perception of inequality is also mirrored in the comparatively unpolished camera work that depicts the black nurses. For example, while shooting the infant care demonstration, the instructor is often centered and shown from the waist up. Subtle shifts in scale suggest multiple camera setups. In contrast, the seated black nurse and her patient are positioned in the very bottom left corner of the frame, partially clipped by its edge. Poor framing is also evident in the establishing shot of Ling Tai in Chinatown, where she is awkwardly cut across the upper chest while occupying only the very bottom of the frame.

These fleeting moments of ethnic and racial variation within the film—three minutes of total screen time in Chinatown and Harlem—can be admired for inclusivity at a time when segregation was an entrenched social norm, even in a diverse city like New York. But, just as in Helping Hands, these inclusive gestures are fraught with contradiction. While The Visiting Nurse documents black and Chinese labor within the Henry Street nurse network, their presence and presentation project a secondary, separate, and unequally skilled status.
The film closes on an image of VNS headquarters. An intertitle informs the viewer that the building was bequeathed to the organization by a long-time patron, information certainly provided to exert pressure on wealthier viewers. However, the extant version of this film contains three additional intertitles that prove the film’s exhibition in less affluent local communities: the first title mentions a souvenir calendar; the next instructs viewers with health problems to visit their nearest center; and the last lists addresses of the six VNS clinics in the Bronx. That these titles are specifically tailored to the Bronx suggest that other contemporary copies (though no longer extant) contained similar neighborhood-specific information. These titles confirm The Visiting Nurse’s use as a platform to share information with audiences it directly intended to serve. In these exhibition contexts, then, The Visiting Nurse offered black, Chinese, and Italian Americans the opportunity to see themselves represented on screen in unsensationalized form. Perhaps local screenings even inspired viewers to offer small-scale donations by illustrating the direct benefits of VNS service within one’s own community. This dual vocality illustrates ways specific exhibition contexts frame audience reception, a point similarly demonstrated by Field in her analysis of the circulation of Hampton Institute and Tuskegee School fund-raising films in the 1910s, which reached both Northern white philanthropists and Southern black audiences.

The intended double audience for the film—wealthy donors and local communities served by the VNS—is confirmed by organizational records that estimate it was shown about fifty times in the spring and fall of 1927 at headquarters and in neighborhood clubs and small movie theaters. Memos also indicate that ten- and twenty-minute speeches were tailored to precede or follow the film when it was shown to donors or neighborhood audiences. The film’s more flexible syntax grants it the leeway to speak to a broader, more diverse audience than Helping Hands and opens it up to a wider range of readings.

*The Work of the Henry Street Visiting Nurse Service in the City of New York* (1933)

In 1933 a third silent film about the VNS was completed. Titled *The Work of the Henry Street Visiting Nurse Service in the City of New York*, this twenty-two-minute film was directed by Anne Marvin Goodrich, a 1926 graduate of Yale’s nursing school and niece of a Henry Street board member. Contrary to the alliterative *Helping Hands*, the text-heavy, prosaic title reads like a

“Regardless of Race, Color, or Creed” [61]
FIGURE 2.6. Anne Marvin Goodrich, Yale School of Nursing Class of 1926 yearbook. Yale University, Harvey Cushing/John Hay Whitney Medical Library.

professional report, and a need to foreground the service’s geographic location suggests it was not designed for local audiences. Three pages of instructional commentary, highlighting specific points to bring to the attention of spectators, were prepared to accompany the film. In aggregate, this suggests the film was created to exhibit at industry gatherings. Thus, designed to solicit professional attention rather than stimulate community action, Goodrich’s project, with its depictions of labor, serves as a generative point of contrast to Helping Hands and The Visiting Nurse.

Since it is addressing public health practitioners, The Work is notably unencumbered by the demands of fund-raising and salesmanship (the film also goes unmentioned in meeting minutes, suggesting the project was made independently of Henry Street’s publicity committee). Its intended audience is further borne out by the matter-of-fact prose of the film’s intertitles. Whereas the florid titles of 1927’s The Visiting Nurse tout the organization’s commitment to “universal brotherhood” and characterize its nurses as domestic “guardians,” here titles such as “the nurses respond to calls not
only on city streets but also to those from the outlying districts of New York” are simply functional. This change in language indicates a shift from promotional and sympathetic display to straightforward reportage that distinguishes Goodrich’s film from its predecessors.25

The Work also provides greater detail and range of services than the prior Henry Street films. While the previous films featured only infant care, here Goodrich documents service to the elderly and adolescents. The film also offers a broader representation of the city’s varied landscape, documenting nurses in urban Manhattan as well as in less-developed areas in Queens and the Bronx. Finally, whereas Alice and Miss Smith’s *Helping Hands* home visits were quick, Goodrich focuses on step-by-step processes. Close-ups of hands unpacking medical bags demonstrate expertise using a specialized set of tools.

While this level of detail should not be confused with the rigors of a medical training film, it indicates an audience familiar with the practices and concerns of public health nursing. In light of its supplemental talking points and the absence of a soundtrack, the film was certainly conceived as a hybrid presentation intended to be accompanied by someone lecturing beside the screen. By the end of the 1930s, Goodrich had established a successful career as a health care publicity consultant with clients including the National Organization of Public Health Nursing, which had been founded in 1912 by none other than Lillian Wald.26

In addition to reporting on a greater breadth of nurse services, Goodrich’s representation of black labor is markedly different from the VNS’s previous filmed depictions of service. In a more than four-minute sequence, an African American caregiver visits a houseboat on the Harlem River. The camera spends considerable time showing the nurse’s arduous journey to meet her patient. In a series of five shots, she carefully navigates a rickety walkway and wooden plank to reach her client’s floating home. Once inside, she immediately starts working. A black mother passes her infant to the smiling VNS visitor. In the more than two minutes that follow, the nurse cares for the newborn. She warmly wraps the baby in a clean sheet, records its weight, and administers a shot. Close-ups focus on her hands and equipment, while the talking points document draws attention to the information she’s been sharing with the mother while weighing and dressing the baby.

While still abiding by VNS policy to serve only members of her own race, this extended sequence—especially compared to the aforementioned films—celebrates the expertise and dedication of a black Henry Street nurse. Shown from a similar range across several shots that emphasize her methodical care, Goodrich visually treats her equally to her white peers. The

“Regardless of Race, Color, or Creed” [63]
**Figure 2.7.** *The Work of the Henry Street Nurse in the City of New York* (Anne Marvin Goodrich, 1933). Visiting Nurse Service of New York Collection, USC Hugh M. Hefner Moving Image Archive.

**Figure 2.8.** *The Work of the Henry Street Nurse in the City of New York* (Anne Marvin Goodrich, 1933). Visiting Nurse Service of New York Collection, USC Hugh M. Hefner Moving Image Archive.
script also foregrounds her ability to multitask by telling the lecturer to note “that nurse has been busy discussing with mother baby’s diet, health habits, et cetera, during time she has been weighing and dressing baby.” This episode is the first time in any VNS work that a filmmaker devotes such attention to black labor. It appears that only when free from fund-raising imperatives can the organization depict the quality of African American and white nurses equally. Thus, while still showing the racial segregation of services, Goodrich’s film implicitly makes an argument in line with the organization’s promotional ethos: a Henry Street visiting nurse’s care is meticulous “regardless of race, color, or creed.”

Conclusion

Paul Monticone observes that the “1920s remain something of a lacuna” within the field of nontheatrical film scholarship, eclipsed by a larger body of work on films from the 1910s and 1930s. Attention to Henry Street’s films helps address this historiographical gap by offering a case study in the ways a specific health care organization used moving images to achieve its fund-raising, promotional, and informational goals at a time when systematized welfare initiatives, the professionalization of nursing, and nontheatrical film practice were rapidly becoming institutionalized within American culture.

The visiting nurse films also illustrate the extent to which a philanthropic institution sought to promote and visualize the service of its nonwhite employees. The organization and the filmmakers working on its behalf projected a comparatively inclusionary impulse by showing both white and nonwhite nurses and patients within the same films. At the same time, these images upheld the era’s prevailing segregationist social mores by presenting service divided by the color line. In these conflicting tendencies, we see how the service’s desire to visually translate its policies to the screen was mediated by efforts to cater to their audiences’ attitudes. Such considerations and Henry Street’s films reflect the fraught nature of cinematic representation and interwoven dynamics of uplift, reform, and racial and ethnic difference in 1920s and 1930s America.

FILMOGRAPHY

All available films discussed in this chapter can be streamed through the book’s web page at https://www.dukeupress.edu/Features/Screening-Race.

Helping Hands (1924), 13 min., silent, 35mm (original), 35mm and 16mm (extant prints)

“Regardless of Race, Color, or Creed” [65]
UNTITLED/ THE VISITING NURSE (1927), 15 min., silent, 35mm (original), 16mm (extant prints)

Production: Frank R. Abrams. Director/writer/camera: Unknown. Access: Hugh M. Hefner Moving Image Archive. Summary: The Visiting Nurse explains the mission and scope of the organization's operations. Viewers are privy to expectant mother classes and calls to Chinatown, Little Italy, and Harlem. Note: A 1947 VNS inventory memo reports that elements of the film were damaged, resulting in the loss of the title slide and unspecified amounts of footage.

THE WORK OF THE HENRY STREET VISITING NURSE SERVICE IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK (1933), 21 min., silent, 35mm (original), 16mm (extant prints)

Director/writer/camera: Anne Marvin Goodrich. Access: Hugh M. Hefner Moving Image Archive. Summary: The film depicts a series of calls made by visiting nurses across Manhattan, Queens, and the Bronx. Note: A three-page talking points document was created to accompany the film.

RELATED FILMS

Three additional films were commissioned by the VNS before it formally split from the Henry Street Settlement in 1944. Henry Street's African American nurses were also filmed by Fox Movietone News.

Day after Day (1940), 14 min., partial sound, 35mm (original), 16mm (extant prints)


Keep 'Em Fighting (1942), 2 min., sound, 16mm

We Carry On (1943), 2 min., sound, 16mm
production: Unknown. director/writer/editor: Unknown. access: Hugh M. Hefner Moving Image Archive. summary: This fund-raising trailer—coinciding with the Henry Street Settlement's fiftieth anniversary—demonstrates the organization's continued efforts to use moving images to bolster their fund-raising efforts. The film also recycles considerable footage from Day after Day.

MVTN 3-885: Care and Hygiene of Colored Babies (1929), 6 min., sound, 35mm
production: Fox Movietone News (Outtakes). access: University of South Carolina's Moving Image Research Collection. summary: This sound footage depicts black nurses demonstrating how to care for and bathe infants; similar dialogue and actions are repeated and performed in multiple takes. This footage was never incorporated into a Movietone newsreel.

NOTES

In 1944, the VNS formally separated from the Henry Street Settlement House and became the Visiting Nurse Service of New York (VNSNY). Both organizations continue to operate as separate entities today. I wish to thank John Billeci of the VNSNY for helping me to locate these “lost” films, and Stephen E. Novak, head of Archives and Special Collections at Columbia University's August C. Long Health Sciences Library, for his assistance during my many visits.

1 Henry Street Settlement (HSS), The Visiting Nurse: A New York Institution (New York: Harry Powers Story, 1925). The organization’s commitment to serve “regardless of race, color, or creed” is first among a list of “ten key facts” about the organization. Box 200, folder 19, Visiting Nurse Service of New York (VNSNY) Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Columbia University Health Sciences Library. Similar verbiage is present across promotional materials throughout the decade.

2 HSS, “Visiting Nurse Service Administered by Henry Street Settlement,” brochure, 1930, box 201, folder 17, VNSNY Collection. Interest from financial investments and fees collected from industrial organizations constitute the remaining 16 percent and 33 percent, respectively, of the organization’s 1929 income.


4 Given the well-established institutional ties between sponsored media producers and health and reform organizations by the late 1910s, Henry Street’s adoption of moving images in 1924 can be viewed as a belated development, particularly in New York, an early hub for sponsored film production. For example, Marina Dahlquist notes that New York City’s Department of Health began holding instructional film screenings as early as 1909. Elsewhere, Kirsten Ostherr and Miriam Posner have discussed early health films sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation and the National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis, respectively. Jennifer Horne and Gerry K. Veeder have also examined the work of

“What Regardless of Race, Color, or Creed” [67]


8 HSS, Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, March 25, 1926, and April 7, 1927, box 132, folder 38, VNSNY Collection.


10 The title card explicitly identifies the film’s two nurses as VNS employees.

11 Balides, “Sociological Film, Reform Publicity, and the Secular Spectator,” 15. While Balides focuses on “sociological films,” an early iteration of the social problem genre, I find this configuration equally well suited in describing the narrative strategies of Henry Street’s fund-raising works, which are similarly indebted to the performative visual cultures of reform she discusses.


14 HSS, “Publicity Program for Visiting Nurse Campaign, November 1924,” box 134, folder 21, VNSNY Collection.

15 HSS, Executive Nursing Committee Meeting Minutes, March 18, 1927, box 135, folder 9, VNSNY Collection. Abrams was president and general manager of the Cameragraph Manufacturing Co. in New York until July 1917. He reemerges in the trade press in 1928–29 with brief notices identifying him as the producer of “fashion reels” for the Garment Retailers of America and a series of twenty-six “song shorts.” See Exhibitors Daily Review, August 25, 1928, 4; and Film Daily, August 4, 1929, 7.

16 The surviving version of this film lacks a title card. I base its title here on text references in contemporary Henry Street memos.

17 These early scenes recycle footage from Helping Hands, including one of Alice’s home visits. In this film, she is unnamed.

18 Ultimately, this episode is one of less than a handful of Asian representations within VNS promotional materials from this period.

19 Hine’s Black Women in White recounts the extensive efforts of black nursing professionals and instructors to counter racial stereotypes.

20 A 1947 inventory of the VNS film collection points to the existence of reels with endings directly tailored for Manhattan and Staten Island. It also documents damage to the film’s negative and the presence of footage from a board meeting (now lost). Box 29, folder 24, VNSNY Collection.

21 See Field, Uplift Cinema.

22 HSS, Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, April 7, 1927, and October 20, 1927, box 132, folders 44, 46, VNSNY Collection.

23 Anne (Marvin) Goodrich Waters, “Sequence of Scenes in Henry Street Movie, with Suggestions for Possible Teaching Points,” and letter to Katharine Faville (director of VNS), April 1, 1938, box 183, folder 5, VNSNY Collection. Incidentally, Goodrich shares a surname with Annie Warburton Goodrich, appointed in 1917 to head the VNS and dean of Yale’s nursing school during Anne Marvin Goodrich’s studies. I have been unable to establish a familial connection between the two.

24 Based on my review of extant Henry Street records, it is unclear who originated the project or how it was funded.

25 This film also has the distinction of being the only one to feature footage of Wald herself, who is shown working at her desk at the very end of the film.

26 Goodrich presented moving images at a gathering of the Wisconsin State Nurses’ Association in October 1934, and two of her photographs are featured in an article published by the American Nurses Association four years later. See “News,” American Journal of Nursing 34, no. 4 (October 1934): 1023; and “For a Square Deal: For Private Duty and General Staff Nurses through Professionally

“Regardless of Race, Color, or Creed” [69]
Organized Effort,” *American Journal of Nursing* 38, no. 4, section 2 (April 1938).

A professional brochure (circa 1937) advertises Goodrich’s services as including custom-shot stills and moving images, exhibition design, and stock photographs. In addition to the Henry Street project, her filmography includes later commissions from organizations including the New York State Nurses’ Association, the Children’s Aid Society Housekeeper Service, and the Visiting Nurse Association of Plainfield, New Jersey, among others. Box 183, folder 5, VNSNY Collection.

27 Waters, “Sequence of Scenes in Henry Street Movie.”