Unpacking Our History Article Packet

Education Part III

Segregation and Brown v. Board

THURSDAY, AUGUST 8
7–8:30 PM, ON ZOOM

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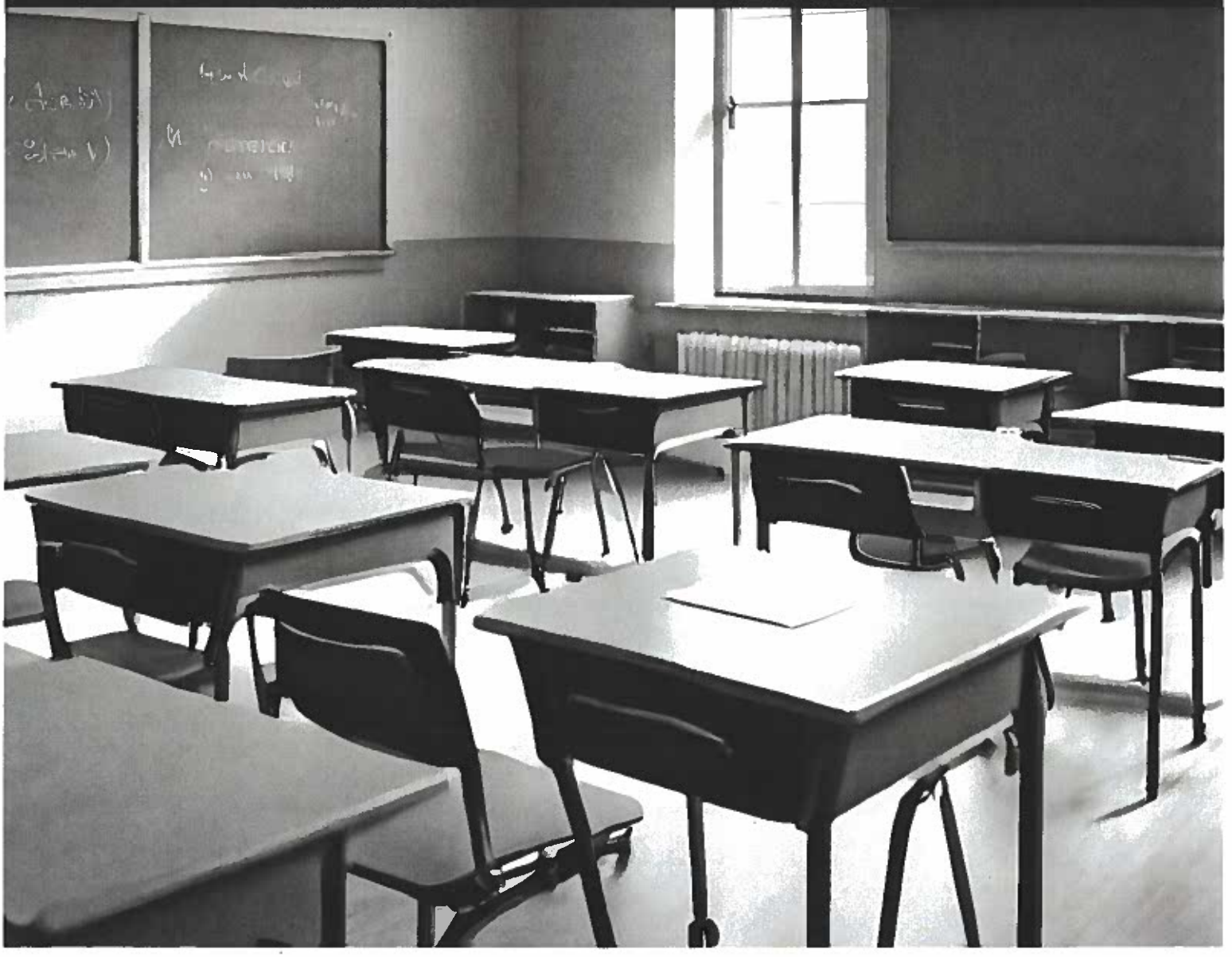

Upcoming Unpacking Our History Programs

Education Part IV
Beyond Brown
Thurs, Sept 12, 7-8:30 p.m.
Hosted on Zoom

Education Part V
School Boards and Vouchers
Thurs, Oct 10, 7-8:30 p.m.
Hosted on Zoom

Zoom ID: 823 648 5349 | Password: 691353

Please check out our
1619 Discussion Homepage
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The Library's 1619 interviews are on Youtube
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Unpacking 1619 Podcast
New episode every other Wednesday

Contact John Piche at
jpiche@heightslibrary.org

Unpacking Our History Interviews

The Unpacking Our History Interviews with national and international academics, authors, and lawyers first focused on the topics raised by the *New York Times'* 1619 Project. Over time, the interview topics expanded to include current events around policing and criminal justice.

Desegregation Court Cases Before and After Brown v. Board of Education

civilrightsteaching.org/resource/desegregation-court-cases

June 18, 2023

For more than a century, African Americans and other racial and ethnic groups have sought to ensure access to equal educational opportunity. Religion, education, and community have proven to be the cornerstones of self-determination on the part of African Americans. One of the most prominent examples of this cornerstone concept can be found in the early and unrelenting legal challenges to segregated public schools.

While most people have heard of the Brown v. Board of Education ruling, it was by no means the first attempt to use the courts to secure access to equal education regardless of race, ethnicity, or national origin.

Throughout U.S. history, families have pursued legal action in the hopes of achieving educational equality for their children. Individuals or small groups of parents appear to have acted on their own in the earliest cases. In later cases, state and national strategies of the NAACP clearly were at work. Slowly, the actions of attorneys representing parents and school children chipped away at legal segregation in schools. (Despite the Supreme Court ruling, schools in many cities are more segregated now than they were before Brown v. Board.) Court decisions began to provide some measure of protection for the idea of equality even in the bleakest of times for African Americans.

Earliest Reported Case, *1849: Roberts V. The City Of Boston*

Slavery was abolished in Massachusetts by the late 1700s. As a result of this action, Boston schools were not segregated. However, African Americans felt they were at a disadvantage because white teachers and students in the integrated schools harassed and mistreated African American children. In the face of this discrimination, parents petitioned for special schools for their children. Their efforts to open a segregated school were denied by the state legislature. Consequently, the first segregated school for African American children was established privately in 1798.

By 1840 there was growing concern about the prejudice fostered by separate schools. Two years later African American parents began publicly expressing resentment because they were taxed to support schools that their children were not allowed to attend. These parents began petition drives to close down the segregated schools. They petitioned in 1845, and again in 1846 and 1848, without success. The final effort was undertaken in 1849 under the legal leadership of attorneys Charles Sumner, who went on to become a U.S. senator, and Robert Morris, an African American activist who shared the title of "abolitionist" with his colleagues. The case became known as *Roberts v. The City of Boston*. In their petition to the Massachusetts Supreme Court, attorneys for the African American parents outlined the circumstances they believed to be unlawful. Parents explained how their children had been denied enrollment in all Boston schools except the segregated Smith School. The *Roberts* case was unsuccessful because authorities reasoned that special provisions had been made for "colored" students to have a school.

1881-1949: The Kansas Cases

Before Brown v. Board of Education became part of the national legal landscape, African American parents in Kansas had initiated 11 court challenges to segregated public schools. During a span of nearly 70 years — from 1881 to 1949 — the Kansas Supreme Court became the precedent for the constitutional question of public-school segregation. The free state heritage, central geographical location, and makeup of its

population positioned Kansas to play a central role in the major questions of educational freedom and equality. Kansas law at first had little to say on the subject of school segregation. In 1868 the law allowed, but did not require, separate schools. Some schools admitted children without discrimination, and one of the first superintendents of public instruction, Peter McVicar, vocally opposed segregated schools. The increase in the African American population with the arrival of the "Exodusters" from the South in the 1870s, however, hardened attitudes in Kansas. Some schools began to separate children by race. In 1877 the Kansas legislature passed a statute specifically allowing first-class cities (those with populations of 15,000 or more) to run separate elementary schools. This law remained in effect into the 1950s. However, with the exception of Wyandotte, high schools were not segregated in Kansas.

African American parents in Kansas challenged equal access to public schools through these legal cases, several of which are described in detail below.

1881: *Elijah Tinnon v. The Board of Education of Ottawa* (Kansas)

Elijah Tinnon was an African American parent who spoke and acted for equal educational opportunity in Kansas before the concept had a name. Tinnon, listed in the census as a laborer born in Arkansas before the Civil War, addressed the Ottawa, Kan. Board of Education in 1876. He and six other parents questioned the placement of their children in a separate room within the Central School and the qualifications of the teacher assigned to this room. The board's committee looking into the matter contended that most African American parents were in favor of the Black teacher, whose certification to teach the board belatedly checked into. The protesting parents were not deterred. Superintendent of Schools William Wheeler advised the school board that Tinnon and other parents "demanded admission for their children into the proper grades of the public school." The board then voted "that the colored class lately taught by Mr. Wade be discontinued, and the pupils in attendance there be assigned to the various rooms in graded school." The board obtained the teacher's resignation and paid him one month's wage of $40. Equal access to education in Ottawa appeared to have been decided. However, less than four years later Tinnon was again at odds with board policies. The board opened a one-room school for Black children, grades 1 to 6, in a frame building across the street from the brick Central School. Tinnon's demand that his 7-year-old son Leslie be assigned to the brick school, the school nearest his home, was refused. Tinnon took his case to the courts. He was the first of more than a dozen little-known African American parents to challenge school segregation through to the Kansas Supreme Court. The 1881 Tinnon case was first tried in District Court in Franklin County. Judge Nelson D. Stephens cited the 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution, guaranteeing individual rights of citizenship, among his reasons for deciding in favor of Tinnon. The Ottawa School Board appealed the decision to the Kansas Supreme Court. In words anticipating school decisions to come, Judge Daniel M. Valentine asked in upholding Tinnon, "is it not better for the aggregate of human society as well as for individuals that all children should mingle together and learn to know each other?" This case had elements of the first desegregation case in Boston, and of later court challenges in Kansas: 1) The challenge became known by one name although several parents were often involved; 2) the victory of one year often disappeared the next year; 3) the jobs of Black teachers were at risk; 4) high schools, with one exception, were open to all; and 5) the courts offered the best avenue for equal access to education.

1891: Knox v. The Board of Education of Independence (Kansas)

Jordan Knox of Independence, Kansas, found himself in a situation similar to Elijah Tinnon. Knox's daughters, 8- and 10-year-old Bertha and Lilly, passed by one elementary school to reach the Fourth Ward School to which they were assigned. In 1890 their father informed the board of education that he wanted his

daughters to attend the school nearest their home. He argued that the Second Ward School had room for additional children. Knox sought legal help to compel the board to honor his request. When this case was decided in 1891, the Kansas Supreme Court cited the Tinnon case and found no authority for the second-class city of Independence "to exclude from the schools established for white children, the colored children." Knox and four other parents who joined as plaintiffs won their case and were awarded court costs. 1903: Reynolds v. The Board of Education of Topeka Decisions affecting other larger cities were mixed. William Reynolds lost his 1903 case against the Board of Education of Topeka. All children had attended the same building in the Lowman Hill District until it burned down in 1900. The board purchased a new site and erected a two-story brick building. Black pupils were assigned to the older Douglas building, which was moved to the area. Reynolds, a tailor, demanded admission of his 8-year-old son Raoul to the new school. In an extensive review of the laws, the Kansas Supreme Court held for the Board of Education of Topeka on the basis that first-class cities were allowed to operate separate elementary schools. The court also argued that the 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution did not supersede Kansas law. 1905: Special Legislation for Kansas City, Kansas Mamie Richardson brought suit against the Board of Education of Kansas City in 1906 after she was not allowed to attend the morning classes at the high school to which white students had been assigned. This singular case came about after a fatal incident at the integrated high school influenced the Kansas Legislature of 1905 to pass a special act permitting Kansas City to operate separate high schools. The school board lost no time in enforcing separation by dividing each day into two sessions based on race, even as a new building, Wyandotte High School, was under construction. In ruling against Richardson the Kansas Supreme Court also upheld the constitutionality of this special legislation.

1906: *Cartwright v. The Board of Education of Coffeyville* (Kansas)

In Coffeyville the school board maintained racially separate grades within Lincoln School. African American students were assigned to one classroom. Eva Cartwright, an African American 6th grader, accompanied by her mother tried to enroll in an all-white 6th-grade class taught by a white teacher. Eva was turned away and sent to the classroom reserved for African American students. Bud Cartwright demanded that his daughter Eva be admitted to the regular classroom for her grade level. One of his attorneys was James A. Guy, an African American lawyer who moved to Kansas from Ohio. In 1906, the Kansas Supreme Court ruled for Cartwright based on Kansas law governing schools in second-class cities. The legal issue in second-class cities seemed to be settled. The court's decision stated that the board of education had no power to exclude African American students from schools established for white children in the absence of a law that authorized such power in second-class cities.

1908: *Williams v. The Board of Education of Parsons* (Kansas)

In the first-class city of Parsons, D. A. Williams won a narrowly based case on the issue of safety. In 1908 the Parsons board assigned all African American children to one of the four elementary schools. Williams, whose four children had attended school near their home, refused to have the children cross seven dangerous railroad tracks to reach the designated school. He was informed that his children and other African American students were required to attend a school designated for them. The school was located more than a mile from the children's home and was plagued by railroad traffic and train noises that disrupted the classroom. Mr. Williams filed legal action to remove his children from Lincoln School because of the dangers associated with travel to the school. The Kansas Supreme Court found that on the facts presented, Williams was entitled to relief, but left the door open for other separate school arrangements.

1916: *Woolridge v. The Board of Education of Galena* (Kansas)

Classrooms at East Galena Elementary School were integrated in grades 1 through 6. Because the school was overcrowded, the board of education called a meeting to develop a plan to reduce class size. The solution chosen was to hire an African American teacher, who would teach only African American children in one multigrade class. To carry out this plan, representatives from Galena tried but failed to persuade the Kansas legislature to allow second-class cities to operate segregated schools. African American parents strongly objected to this change and filed suit to halt the board's plans. Despite vocal intolerance, W. E. Woolridge and other parents won this 1916 case against the board of education, as the Kansas Supreme Court found that racial separation "was without authority of law" in the second-class city of Galena. 1924: Thurman-Watts v. The Board of Education of Coffeyville African American attorneys and organizations factored in the 1924 challenge from Coffeyville, which had become a first-class city that legally operated separate elementary schools. Elijah Scott and R. M. Vandyne, African American attorneys from Topeka, represented Celia Thurman-Watts, whose daughter Victoria was denied admission to Roosevelt Junior High. Washington admitted both African American and white students, while only African American students attended Cleveland and only white students were designated to attend Roosevelt. In questioning during depositions, Scott probed the allegiance of school board members to the Ku Klux Klan. The president of the school board admitted membership and another testified to past membership. Scott argued the broad issue of prejudice and noted the practical grounds of overcrowding in the Black schools. He won on the narrower grounds that the 9th grade was part of high school and separate high school education was not allowed except in Kansas City.

1927: Lum v. Rice

In 1924, a 9-year-old Chinese American named Martha Lum, daughter of Gong Lum, was prohibited from attending the Rosedale Consolidated High School in Bolivar County, Mississippi solely because she was of Chinese descent. There was no school in the district maintained for Chinese students, and she was forced by compulsory attendance laws to attend school. Gong Lum filed suit, and a lower court granted the plaintiff's request to force the members of the Board of Trustees to admit Martha Lum. Gong Lum's case was not that racial discrimination as such was illegal but that his daughter, being Chinese, had incorrectly been classified as colored by the authorities. In *Lum v. Rice*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that state's rights and *Plessy v. Ferguson* applied to Asian American students, or as the court said, students of the "yellow race."

1929: *Wright v. The Board of Education of Topeka* (Kansas)

Wilhemina Wright, an African American student at Randolph School, which was reserved for white students, was transferred to Buchanan School 20 blocks away. Eugene S. Quinton of Topeka represented Wilhemina's father, George Wright, in his case. While it was agreed that Buchanan was as good a school as Randolph, the inconvenience and danger of a child walking to a school far from home did not allow equal access to education. The decision came to rest on school busing. Wright lost this case, as the board provided bus transportation. In addition, as a first-class city, Topeka could operate separate elementary schools based on race.

1931: *Roberto Alvarez v. the Board of Trustees of the Lemon Grove School District*

On Jan. 5, 1931, Jerome T. Green, principal of the Lemon Grove Grammar School in Southern California, acting under instructions from the school trustees, stood at the door and admitted all pupils except the Mexican and Mexican American students. Principal Green announced that the Mexican children did not belong at the school and instructed them to attend a two-room building constructed to house Mexican children. The children left the school and returned home. Instructed by their parents, they refused to attend the socalled new school that had been built for them. In the words of students of the time "It wasn't a school. It was an old building. Everyone called it 'La Caballeriza'" (the barnyard). The Mexican parents rallied together and (through the Mexican Consulate) acquired legal counsel and support. The school incident became a test case of the power of the District Attorney and the school board to create a separate school for Mexican children. This case, *Roberto Alvarez v. the Board of Trustees of the Lemon Grove School District*, was the first successful school desegregation court decision in the history of the United States. The ruling succeeded in Lemon Grove because the Mexican American children were defined as white, and under California law they could not be separated from other white people. The families established the rights of their children to equal education, despite sentiment that favored not only segregation, but the actual deportation of the Mexican population in the United States. The ruling did not set a precedent for future school desegregation cases because the Board of Trustees lacked funds to appeal the case to a higher court.

1936: *Murray v. Pearson*

Donald Gaines Murray sought admission to the University of Maryland School of Law, but received a response stating that "the University of Maryland does not admit Negro students and your application is accordingly rejected." After Murray's appeal to the Board of Regents was rejected, Alpha Phi Alpha, the oldest Black fraternity in the U.S., decided to take up the case. The Baltimore NAACP's Charles Hamilton Houston and Thurgood Marshall tried the case, using it as the first case to test Nathan Ross Margold's strategy to attack the "separate but equal" doctrine using the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment. They argued that Maryland does not provide a "separate but equal" law school. Laws vary from state to state, so a law school located in another state would not adequately prepare a Maryland attorney. The court agreed, and the circuit court judge issued a writ of mandamus ordering that Murray be admitted to the University of Maryland law school. The ruling was affirmed upon appeal by Maryland's highest court, but never went to the U.S. Supreme Court.

1941: *Graham v. The Board of Education of Topeka* (Kansas)

The Graham case focused on the issue of whether 7th grade was part of high school. White children attended six grades in elementary schools, then three years in junior high schools. Black pupils continued to attend elementary schools for 7th and 8th grades, then transferred to Boswell or Roosevelt Junior High for 9th grade. Tinkham Veale and William M. Bradshaw, representing Ulysses Graham's parents, argued that the junior high schools were part of high school and that by not providing similar education for Blacks these children were denied rights under the U.S. and Kansas Constitutions. The Kansas Supreme Court found that the refusal to permit 12-year-old Ulysses Graham to enroll in a junior high school was "discriminatory."

1947: *Mendez v. Westminster*

When Gonzalo and Felicitas Mendez, two California farmers, sent their children to a local school, their children were told that they would have to go to a separate facility reserved for Mexican American students. The Mendez family recruited similarly aggrieved parents from local school districts for a federal court case challenging school segregation. Unlike the later Brown case, the families did not claim racial discrimination, as Mexicans were considered legally white (based on the preceding *Roberto Alvarez v. the Board of Trustees of the Lemon Grove School* District above), but rather discrimination based on ancestry and supposed "language deficiency" that denied their children their 14th Amendment rights to equal protection under the law. On March 18, 1946, Judge Paul McCormick ruled in favor of the plaintiffs on the basis that the social, psychological, and pedagogical costs of segregated education were damaging to Mexican American students. The school districts appealed, claiming that the federal courts did not have jurisdiction over education, but the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ultimately upheld McCormick's decision on April 14, 1947, ruling that the schools' actions violated California law.

1949: *Webb v. School District No. 90, South Park Johnson County* (Kansas)

Population growth after World War II prompted construction of a new $90,000 South Park Elementary School near Merriam. The African American children were denied admittance to South Park School solely on the basis of race and color. When their children were turned away from the new South Park School, Webb and other parents took 39 children out of the poorly maintained, 90-year-old Walker School; hired Walker teacher Corinthian Nutter; and opened a home school. Willingly risking further employment in the public schools, Nutter taught these children for over a year. African American parents found a staunch ally in Esther Brown, who supported and assisted them in their case. Through her urging, attorney Elijah Scott took the lead in bringing about the Webb case. After the Kansas Supreme Court in 1949 ruled that equal facilities must be provided for all children, the board admitted Black children to South Park School. The issue of segregation per se was not part of the ruling, as facilities were so clearly unequal.

1954: *Brown v. Board of Education*

On May 17, 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a unanimous decision in Brown v. Board of Education. The case of *Brown v. Board of Education* as heard before the Supreme Court combined five cases: Brown itself, *Briggs v. Elliott* (filed in South Carolina), *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County* (filed in Virginia), *Gebhart v. Belton* (filed in Delaware), and *Bolling v. Sharpe* (filed in Washington, D.C.). All were NAACP-sponsored cases. The Davis case, the only case of the five originating from a student protest, began when 16-year-old Barbara Rose Johns organized and led a 450-student walkout of Moton High School. The Gebhart case was the only one where a trial court, affirmed by the Delaware Supreme Court, found that discrimination was unlawful; in all the other cases the plaintiffs had lost as the original courts had found discrimination to be lawful. Decades of strategic planning and brave actions led to this historic ruling. A key figure in the history leading up to the *Brown v. Board* ruling is Charles Hamilton Houston, who established an accredited, fulltime (previously it was part-time) law program at Howard University. The focus was on civil rights to prepare lawyers, including Thurgood Marshall, to lead the fight against racial injustice. Houston argued precedent-setting cases and traveled throughout the South taking photos to document that separate was not equal.

1959: Clyde Kennard arrested after attempting to enroll at Mississippi Southern College

While this is not a school desegregation court case, Kennard's case is an important part of the historical timeline of school desegregation. Korean War veteran Clyde Kennard put his life on the line in the 1950s when he attempted to become the first African American to attend Mississippi Southern College, now the University of Southern Mississippi, in Hattiesburg. Instead of being admitted, the state of Mississippi framed him on criminal charges for a petty crime and sentenced him to seven years of hard labor at Parchman Penitentiary. In response to a national campaign for his freedom, he was finally released as he was dying of cancer in January of 1963. Dick Gregory paid for his flight to Chicago for medical care, where he passed away less than six months later on July 4, 1963. Three Illinois high school students, their teacher, the Center on Wrongful Convictions at Northwestern Law School, and journalist Jerry Mitchell dedicated years to finally getting Kennard's name cleared of the crime. 1962: Meredith v. Fair In 1961 James Meredith was denied a transfer from Jackson State College (a segregated Black college) to the University of Mississippi — known as "Ole Miss," and filed suit in federal court. In 1962 the 5th Circuit Court ruled that he was being denied admission because of his race in violation of Brown v Board of Education and ordered that he be admitted. In mid-September Meredith attempted to enroll as mandated by federal court order, but Gov. Barnett, who appointed himself registrar, refused to admit him three times. Violence flared across Mississippi as Black men, women, and children are attacked, beaten, and shot at. On the evening of Sept. 30, Meredith arrived at the Ole Miss campus accompanied by officials of the Department of Justice, who intended to enforce his registration the following morning. A crowd of more than 2,000 Klansmen, students, and townsmen attacked the marshals guarding Meredith with bricks, bottles, guns, and firebombs. The crowd murdered a reporter and another man. Pres. Kennedy called up Troop E of the Mississippi National Guard, but only 67 men responded. Finally, Kennedy sent in the United States Army to restore order. With tens of thousands of soldiers occupying Oxford, Meredith finally enrolled at Ole Miss on Monday, Oct. 1. Protected around the clock by armed guards, in August of 1963 he graduated with a BA in political science.

1969: *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education*

Beatrice Alexander, mother of children, sued the Holmes County, Miss. School District, arguing that the District didn't complete any meaningful attempt to integrate its schools. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of Alexander, writing that "The obligation of every school district is to terminate dual school systems at once and to operate now and hereafter only unitary schools." This meant that the previously set pace of "all deliberate speed" in the original Brown decision was no longer permissible. In 1968 there were 771 white students in the county school system. Desegregation occurred in 1969, and that year the white student population decreased to 228. In 1970 no white students were enrolled in the public school system, with white children attending private segregated schools instead.

Josh Davidson

The Ugly Backlash to Brown v. Board of Ed That No One Talks About

Opinion by LESLIE T. FENWICK
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Today, most Americans think about the segregation-shattering 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in one of three ways. We may think about Linda Brown, the plaintiff in *Brown*, a little girl forced to walk miles to a segregated Black school instead of attending the white school down the block. We may remember the famed Norman Rockwell painting featuring 6-year-old Ruby Bridges escorted by U.S. Marshals past a wall splattered with tomatoes and a racial slur. Or we may recall the tumult of busing in the South — Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia... and even much further north of the Mason-Dixon Line in South Boston, too.

But there is plenty that we have not been taught about *Brown,* which turns 68 today, or how it continues to impact us. We know about Linda Brown and Ruby Bridges. But we don't know about Pressley Giles, Mary Preyer, Virgil Coleman and Jewel Butler. They were among the 100,000 exceptionally credentialed Black principals and teachers illegally purged from desegregating schools in the wake of *Brown*.

In the years following the Supreme Court ruling, and well into the 1970s, white resistance to the decree decimated the ranks of Black principals and teachers. In large measure, white school boards, superintendents, state legislators — and white parents — did not want Black children attending school with white children. And they certainly did not want Black teachers educating white children and Black principals leading schools and supervising white teachers. The scheme devised to quickly eliminate Black educators: the closure of Black schools. Even prior to Black school closures, black principals and teachers received letters from district superintendents erroneously telling them that the desegregation decree was responsible for their firings, dismissals and demotions. Less-qualified white teachers, many of whom didn't have credentials, were hired in their stead.

As early as 1952, NAACP attorney Thurgood Marshall knew that Black educators' jobs would be threatened given the racist strictures and customs of the Southern and border states. He was correct. After Brown, the NAACP litigated thousands of cases on behalf of displaced Black educators and pressured the Nixon administration, the U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the FBI and Congress to investigate and remedy the illegal and discriminatory treatment of Black principals and teachers. Though some litigants prevailed winning back pay and reinstatement, most never got their jobs back.

Today, the nation, not to mention our public education system, is still living with the fallout: traumatized Black school children; roughly $1-2 billion in salary losses and the largest orchestrated brain drain ever experienced in the U.S. public education system. What's more, many of the beliefs and levers that were used to eliminate Black principals and teacher leadership after *Brown* are still in effect today. When I read and watch contemporary news

accounts of (mainly white) parents objecting to the teaching of Black history and a more truthful accounting of American history; threatening to burn books; and physically intimidating school board members, I think about resistance to the Brown legal decision. The tactics being used now come from the exact same script.

In conducting research for my new book, Jim Crow's Pink Slip: The Untold Story of Black Principal and Teacher Leadership, I discovered the purging of Black educators happened even though Black principals and teachers were more qualified than the white educators who replaced them. Proven Black principals and teachers were replaced on a near one-to-one basis with whites who held fewer or no qualifications. Even in segregated all-Black schools, Black educators were more likely to hold bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees, certification, and higher levels of licensure than their white peers. Yet after Brown, they were deemed unfit to teach white students for racist reasons, losing both their jobs and their ability to directly influence education policy and practice.

The loss inflicted four traumas still felt today. The first trauma was economic. As I estimate in my book, the low end of calculated salary losses is about $250 million for elimination of 30,000 Black educators' jobs. Over time, 100,000 Black principals and teachers were shunted off the payrolls due to white resistance to *Brown*, leaving Black educators nearly $1 billion poorer. Adding to the salary losses from firings were those induced from lack of hiring. Between 1968 and 1971 alone, a total of 23,000 new principal and teaching jobs were created in 11 southeastern states. Black educators were placed in fewer than 500 of these new jobs. In these post-*Brown* firing and hiring equations, Black educators were desegregation's prey and white educators its beneficiaries. They lost their jobs — and they were blocked from newly created positions producing income losses and wealth transfers from Black people to white people totaling approximately $2.2 billion today.

The second trauma was the damage done to school systems because of the loss of a high-caliber principal and teacher workforce. The mass exodus of Black teachers and principals yielded school systems led by racist fearmongers manipulating the system to maintain white power and jobs at the expense of Black people. The assault on the professional stature of Black educators ensured that the desegregated school system would be held captive by the same Jim Crow power structure that had fought vehemently against desegregation for decades.

The third trauma resulted in the "near total disintegration of Black authority in every area of public education," according to a 1972 report by the National Education Association. That served to greatly diminish the aspirations of Black educators and young people. It is reasonable to conclude that Black youth observing the fate of their elders, would worry (and be advised) that they would have limited futures as principals and teachers. The loss of leadership symbols, success symbols and symbols of aspiration were known and felt in the Black community.

The fourth trauma was the cruelest cut of all. If schooling is about the children, as all the sentimental slogans profess, Black children did not seem to count. Ushered into "integrated" schools without Black models of intellectual authority who could serve as guides and protectors, Black students were subjected to physical violence and emotional abuse, racial intimidation and hostility and illegal suspensions, according to numerous reports by the National Education Association and the American Friends Service Committee, a human and civil rights organization. In 1965 *Time* magazine published an article about the firings, quoting then-

U.S. Commissioner of Education Francis Keppel, who said, "We must not deceive ourselves that the exclusion of Negroes is not noticed by children. What can they assume but that the Negroes are not deemed by the community as worthy of a place in mixed classrooms? What can the white child assume but that he is somehow special and exclusive...How can the world of democracy have meaning to such children?" Even today, public school students of all races are taught curriculums that are nearly all-white in content, imagery and authorship.

We think about *Brown* as ancient history. It's not. School segregation was still in full effect well into the late 1970s and early 1980s. At some point in their histories even those non-Southern states that we today categorize as liberal leaning had laws prohibiting the education of Black and white students together, including California, Iowa and Ohio, among others. At least 17 states fought with all their might against *Brown* for more than 20 years. In Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia, all that might include outright law-defying governors, state legislatures, local school boards and superintendents, and white citizens groups that illegally hijacked state budgets and statutes to steer tax dollars and white students away from desegregating schools.

Most folks don't want to talk about failures and failings. Americans especially seem to prefer stories about the triumphant underdog, the up-by-my-own-bootstraps tale, and any narrative that advances an American exceptionalism void of evil intent and outcomes. It is this psychological persuasion that keeps the nation falling into the racial sinkholes that some would like to pave over, but never excavate to resolve and seal. The American myth histories that we are taught, and our schoolbooks tell, are filled with outright lies, as our (mis)understandings about *Brown* exemplify. So, what's *not true* that we think *is true* about *Brown*? And why does any of this matter in 2022?

The *Brown* decision proclaimed that racial segregation had no place in America's public schools. It did not mandate that all-Black schools had to be shuttered and closed and that all-white schools were to be the singular recipient of integrating student bodies — but that's what happened. White officials and citizens orchestrated this outcome as they aggressively, openly and illegally defied the new law of the land.

The Black educators who were demoted and dismissed had played by the rules. Many, if not most, attended historically Black colleges and universities because state laws restricted their attendance at white-reserved public colleges and universities, including graduate and professional schools. Even still, after earning degrees at HBCUs, thousands attended graduate school programs, earning master's and doctoral degrees, not in their segregated home states, but in nationally prominent, Northern universities — mainly Columbia University, New York University, the University of Chicago, the University of Michigan, Ohio State University and Iowa State University. They then returned to serve as principals and teachers in segregated Black schools completing an academic migration back to their home states.

The mass closure of Black schools and influx of Black students into previously all-white schools led to an increased need for principals and teachers in desegregating schools. With Black principals and teachers pushed out, white superintendents and school boards found themselves in a quandary: Who was going to lead the schools and teach the swelling numbers of students? Pressed by the need to hire more educators, they manufactured principal and teacher shortages, turning almost exclusively to whites outside the profession, vacating state

requirements for education degrees and teacher licensure, and creating fast tracks into the classroom through emergency certification. The NAACP and National Association of Secondary School Principals reported as late as 1971 that Black principals and teachers who held certification and years of experience were being replaced by white principals and teachers who had no certification and no experience in the communities in which they were placed.

The oft-repeated myth that Black people fled the education professions after *Brown* to pursue careers in other professions newly opened to them after desegregation is not an accurate rendering of history. The historical record shows that the Black educator pipeline was purposely decimated by racists intent on keeping schools segregated even in the face of mandates by *Brown* and numerous other legal cases that states desegregate students, faculty and staff. Prior to *Brown* in the 17 dual system states 35-50 percent of educators were Black. Today, there is no state that approaches these percentages. In fact, about 7 percent of the nation's 3.2 million teachers, 11 percent of the nation's nearly 90,000 principals and less than 3 percent of the nation's nearly 14,000 superintendents are Black. This is so, even though the nation's most credentialed educators are Black, according to my research.

We are seeing new versions of those post-Brown policies today. The modern-day fast-track alternative certification programs that place non-certified individuals as teachers, primarily in schools serving Black and poor students, would be familiar to the generations of Black principals and teachers who were illegally fired, demoted and dismissed after Brown. These deposed Black educators would likely also distrust contemporary school "reform" models such as vouchers, school choice and charter schools. After all, these were the very mechanisms that they experienced during the long stalling of *Brown*'s progress that were used to siphon public tax dollars from desegregating public schools — and annihilate their careers as principals and teachers. It's worth noting that these various "reform" mechanisms likely wouldn't exist if a generation of uniquely qualified Black educators were integrated into the public school system rather than expelled from it. These were people with superior academic credentials, professional licensure, commitment to democratic ideals, consistent activism against the ideology of racism, and experience with integrated society (during their graduate school education). They were lost to the profession and their voices, perspectives and activism to the implementation of *Brown* and subsequent education policy formulation.

This disturbing history needs to frame contemporary policy and practice discussions about educator workforce diversity, because many of the beliefs and levers that were used to eliminate Black principals and teacher leadership after *Brown* are still in effect today. In other words, the disproportionately low participation of African Americans in the teaching profession is a result of institutional racism, not just a recruitment problem.

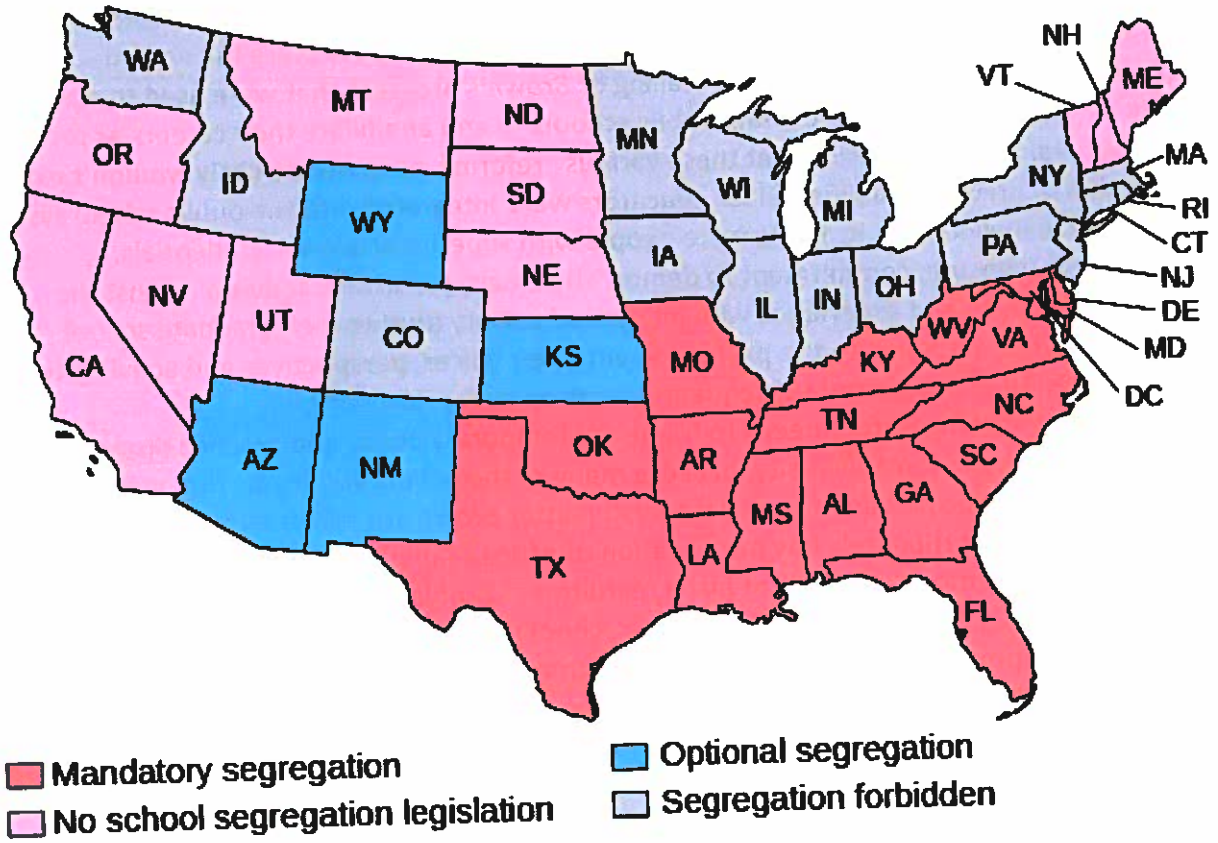
What does it mean to American public schooling, the quest for integrated schools, the formulation of progressive and inclusive education and social policies, Black children's academic achievement and attainment, and the erosion of racism to have lost these professionals after *Brown*? It means that our nation never fulfilled the full mandate of *Brown* to ensure that all students had access to diverse models of intellectual authority and leadership in their schools. Attention was turned away from this vital goal on June 15, 1971, when desegregation became a national debate about busing and pairing and clustering schools to achieve a racial balance of students. It also meant that Black, white and all other students would enter desegregated schools manufactured to be nearly all-white in their principal and teacher

workforces; with curriculums and textbooks nearly all-white in authorship, content, and imagery; and, with district leadership, funding, and policy levers controlled almost exclusively by white officials.

What if things had been different? What if the purged generations of Black principals and teachers (who against all odds attained their own education achievements and successfully taught Black students) been integrated into schools following *Brown?* How might the nation, its schools, and its citizenry have benefited? Against every challenge and even terror, these Black educators led generations out of illiteracy, modeled civic engagement through the establishment of NAACP chapters and voting rights campaigns — and offered hope and a future to disenfranchised masses.

It is difficult to untangle the damage done from any progress made. What is sure: This is the legacy our public schools and our nation's children live with — and must overcome as a path forward is crafted.

U.S. School Segregation prior to *Brown v. Board of Education*



Mothers of Massive Resistance: White Women and the Politics of White Supremacy
by Elizabeth Gillespie McRae
Chapter 7: Threats Within: Black Southerners, 1954-1956

FEAR, UNCERTAINTY, AND HOPE pervaded breakfast cables as south- ern families scanned their morning papers on Monday, May 17, r954. Like so much else in the Jim Crow South, those emotions operated in segregated spaces. Many black families weighed their hope for better education and the equality and freedom it would bring against the fears of sending their children into hostile situations. Many white families responded in ways that pitted their fear of the loss of white supremacy and of exclusive educational opportunity against the hope char "the people" could prevent the destruction of school segregation. If a sense of justice, political resolve, and activism came from the seeds of one hope, resistance germinated from the seeds of another.

"Black Monday" was the segregationist term that marked the day that Chief Justice Earl Warren released the unanimous Supreme Court decision dismantling the seventy-eight-year-old doctrine of "separate but equal." Some white southern newspapers declared a "miscarriage of justice," while others feigned surprise, even though southerners in the know had been anticipating the decision for several years. Mary Dawson Cain buried the ruling on page 4, calling for "calm, level-headed-but absolutely determined and uncompromising" commitment to racial segregation.

In her column "*Incidentally,*" Nell Battle Lewis lamented the fact that the Supreme Court was not accountable to the people. Two weeks later, she described the ruling as "together with the war of the 60s, one of the worst two things chat has ever happened to the South." Florence Ogden wrote, "My friends . . . you will know now how it feds to live in a country chat is not free." She contended that "social gains cannot compensate any group, class, or section for the loss of their constitutional rights under a Republic." In South Carolina, Cornelia Dabney Tucker doubted the expert witness testimony and the: validity of the psychological and sociological evidence employed as she dug out her 193 Supreme Court Security League stationery for a new crusade. Some of the initial news focused on the case's constitutional demerits and the questionable qualifications of the justices who handed down such a decision. By the second week, letters to editors, governors, senators, and columnists emphasized that the real threat provoked by this decision lay in black southerners armed with rising hope.

White supremacist politics and paternalism had long collaborated to cloak black protest in the shadows of the South. As long as homegrown black resistance was cast off center stage, many white southerners had been able: to say that "their" black folks were satisfied, that disaffection with the Jim Crow order was the work of subversive outsiders, and that they knew best how to conduct race relations. Until 1954, massive support for racial segregation most

often meant minimizing collective resistance, refusing to acknowledge it, or simply being blind to the political organizing of black southerners. The *Brown* decision exposed the outcomes of decades of black organizing, damaging "the foundational truths" of Jim Crow society and the political identities that white segregationist women had cultivated. The repercussions of *Brown,* unlike all the other threats - apathetic whites, the executive branch, the Democratic Party, the UN - supported the direct challenge of their black neighbors and eroded the most fundamental fiction of the Jim Crow system, that white southerners knew best what was good for black southerners. With black parents and children petitioning over sixty southern communities for their children to walk up the steps of white schoolhouses in August, the stories segregationists told of black contentment were no longer possible. *Brown* had also diminished the possibility of a liberal white supremacist agenda that stressed gradualism or equalization efforts when the decision extended racial equality in education to all African Americans, not just those: considered the most deserving or most accomplished. Segregationist women, liberal or conservative, could no longer profess to represent the best interests of the black community or claim the authority to direct southern race relations. They could, however, continue to contest the decision.

The two years following *Brown* were high-water marks for a vibrant segregationist movement-even amid internal discord on the strategies of resistance. For a time, *Brown* brought the discourse of segregationists to focus on a single institution - each community's public schools. Because of the Court's decision to forbid class action suits for violating *Brown,* each community would era.fr and implement desegregation one district at a time, leaving much power at the local level. The decision pulled to the center of the political debate the very institution where white women had generational, complex, and multilayered authority. Schools were repositories of their efforts as mothers, educators, citizens, and cultural guardians. Faced with this new onslaught, white segregationist women made the family the center of political life and political ideology. To preserve families now threatened by a leviathan federal government that had overtaken public education, they offered a version of racialized family values. Opening up their political ranks to chose women who were not political activists but who were wary about losing authority over their families, *Brown,* in part, had feminized massive resistance.

[...]

In years just following *Brown I* and *Brown II,* which called for implementation at the indeterminate pace of all deliberate speed," moderates were not particularly visible, vocal. or public. The voices dominating the early years were those of the opponents of school desegregation. These were the people who would not consider the practicalities of integration but spent their energy denouncing its erosion of their families, their schools, their politics, and their daily lives. Their voices drowned out the response of moderates. The clamor of obstructionist voices would be identified with the movement of massive resistance. Those southern white women calling for segregated schools revealed their layered

investment in the white supremacist order. They invoked their roles as mothers, Christians, citizens, anticommunists, protectors of the constitution, conservatives, and government reformers.

Continuing to adopt the bankrupt position as spokeswomen for black communities, some contended that black southerners really wanted equal facilities, not integrated ones, and pointed to scattered black signatures on petitions to uphold segregated schools. Some claimed that the presence of black children would harm their white schools, changing the lessons they taught their children and the dictates of white motherhood that defined their lives. Not only were white women's identities as partisan political a ctors or as citizens based on a segregated social order, but the ideology of white supremacy also had racialized their understanding of the responsibilities of motherhood. With so much that they had worked for on the line, they became the mass in massive resistance.

The *Brown* decision also resonated beyond the region and beyond the South's segregationists. le offered conservatives nationally a rich opportunity to weigh in on the erosion of parental, local, and states' rights and the influence of communism in American politics, diminishing the attention paid co white supremacy. In one of her first letters on the decision, Florence Sillers Ogden reached out co Californian Frances Bartlett who had led the anti communism, anti-UN, and white supremacist campaign in the Los Angeles public schools. With no overt discussion of black and white children learning together and the perceived chaos that would cause, Ogden described the: decision as "the most outrageous seizure of power in all the history of our country" and contended that it was "absolutely a movement inspired by the Communists."

If Ogden and Bartlett focused on constitutional fiat, many white mothers saw *Brown* as a decision as much about interracial consensual sex and marriage as it was about education. Homes were early sites where racial lines were policed, and schools functioned as extensions of that domestic space. For many, segregated schools were necessary to reinforce the lessons taught in white homes about racial distance. Historically, segregation and white supremacist politics had been ushered in with rhetoric about the alleged rape of white women by black men, but many white southern women pro• testing desegregation worked as if interracial marriage was a more likely threat. Rather than invoking inflammatory rhetoric about sexual violence, they spoke in more mundane language, categorizing people to prevent interracial marriage and worrying about consensual sex and romantic attraction. In Virginia, interracial marriage remained illegal in 1954 as it was in all southern states. Montana and Oregon had just repealed prohibitions on interracial marriage, but fifteen states outside the South still outlawed it. In Louisiana, the registrar of the Bureau of Vital Statistics of New Orleans, Naomi Drake, amped up her efforts and chased down obituaries, researched family trees, changed thousands of residents' racial classifications, and publicized likely interracial surname lists, sorting om the Jim Crow order even in its dying days. Yet despite the legal and cultural prohibitions on interracial marriage, white women who protested *Brown* predicted

such marriages as an outcome of integrated schooling. White mothers believed that the Court's decision would change their homes and their families by changing whom their children chose for sexual and marriage partners. This decision about public education was really a challenge, they contended, to private family life. Many letters from white women painted schools as hothouses for consensual sex and breeding grounds for marriage.

[...]

An education in white supremacy had dearly taken hold in several high school students who echoed the positions of their elders. Jackie Robinson, a female high school student, claimed that school integration "could never take place in the near future in North Carolina." "The difference," she continued, "is not only our skin, but our manner of speaking, thinking, and our ideals." "Segregation has too long been established in the South for people to demolish it," she concluded. In Virginia, one high school girl claimed that "many high school students are mature enough to have arrived at the sensible conclusion that it is best for both races to keep to themselves."

From New Hanover County, North Carolina, came a sixty-page report documenting the deleterious effects of racial integration on schools and schoolchildren. Akin to the 192.4 publication *Mongrel Virginians,* quantitative data was used to "prove" black "intellectual inferiority," In the context of integration, this alleged intelligence gap would hinder the academic and vocational development of white and black children and create insurmountable obstacles for teachers. It would also lower property values, infiltrate the nation with communist subversives, and breed racial enmity. Repeatedly, the report credited segregation with maintaining "white supremacy by discouraging interracial contact, friendship, and ultimately consensual interracial sex." *As* a result of segregation, blacks and whites had lived together harmoniously in the South, in direct contrast, the report noted, to northern communities where "parents continuously teach racial hatred in order to counteract the influence of pro-amalgamation teachers." In an exercise in historical distortion, amnesia, and imagination, the document highlighted selective successes of black-only schools. The report praised segregated schools for instilling race pride among black girls who had learned to spurn "overtures from ... debased ... whites." Ignoring overwhelming historic eivdence of the liaisons, so often forced, of "respectable" white men-plantation owners, modern cotton farmers, senators, business owners-with black women and girls, the report claimed that the white fathers of black children were the "crude, moronic, and beastly whites-not...men of brains and culture." Moreover, because black boys developed "sexual awareness at a surprisingly young age," the New Hanover document claimed, even integration at the elementary school level would put "little white girls" with "more mature negroes" and lead to racial amalgamation.

In the segregationist discourse, it was hard to unravel the sexual from the sacred. Some women and men protested school integration on the grounds that physical segregation and anti-miscegenation laws were God's will. A North Carolina woman

blamed the Supreme Court for questioning God's authority and creative handiwork. Just as God made different species of birds, he made distinctions among humans, suggested another. "God made everything of its kind and it was good," wrote another, and "he made the birds of the air, but he didn't make them all alike [T]hey do not mix, yet they all fly in the same air." [...]

If some churches preached brotherly love and equality across the color line, most southern churches echoed the larger regional resolve to resist school integration. A member of North Carolina's Methodist Women's auxiliary replied to a church query on integration. She endorsed Christian gradualism and paternalism in the wake of *Brown.* "We can tax ourselves far harder to provide them with better separate schools, give them more separate hospitals and churches, build them better houses," she wrote, and "look after them when they are ill and in trouble, and allow them equal business and professional opportunity as they become educated to it." Integrated schools, however, she felt, would produce a "polyglot population to the sordid detriment of both races." In her response, Mrs. Thompson was not much different from Baptist and Presbyterian women across the South. Ignoring centuries of an intertwined and integrated history, segregationists cited God as their authority to defend the political, economic, and social oppression of their black brothers and sisters.

[...]

Integrated schools also threatened to disrupt the intellectual reproduction of segregation. Textbook censorship, control of curriculum, and whitewashed citizenship instruction had all been central to the reign of Jim Crow. Integration promised to bring to schools black students instructed in a history taught by black men and women perhaps exposed to the curriculum developed by the Association for the Study of African American Life and History but certainly armed with stories from their pasts. [...] When Pat Watters's lone black second grade student stood in line for his hug on the last day of school, Watters's remembered being stunned that a black seven-year-old would expect a hug just like his white classmates. In this integrated climate, how could the lessons offered in essay contests about the nobility of the Confederacy or the benefits of racial segregation work?

Segregationist women also argued that the academic preparation of their white children would suffer in newly integrated schools. The leader of the District of Columbia Public Schools Association sent a treatise to South Carolina's Cornelia Dabney Tucker noting that in just one year of integration "only 39% of children in schools are white" and that some have "3 or 4 white children in all 'negro schools' with 'negro faculty.'" As a result, white children's "education is being impaired." The New Hanover report claimed that on IQ tests given co 5,946 students, 71 percent of black children were "morons" and that North Carolina's median IQ of black sixth grade pupils was between 77 and 83. In Mississippi, Cain opposed equalization efforts in the aftermath of *Brown,* claiming chat "most of our colored friends are getting just about all the education they can absorb." [...]

School textbooks served as another front for opposition to *Brown.* In her March 1956 column, Ogden suggested subverting the Supreme Court decision by adopting "such textbooks in Mississippi schools as we see fit." Noting that unless "we understand the past, we cannot hope to understand the present, much less look to the future." Ogden called for "sound" textbooks that "would show something of the development of the races." Ogden was aware that maintaining control of the curriculum fell below federal oversight and remained largely controlled by local and state committees when she encouraged combatting racial equality through textbook selection. "Even the Supreme Court will surely find ... [that] difficult to prevent," she concluded. For the rest of the century and into the next, activists from Texas to West Virginia sought to control textbook content, often minimizing nonwhite contributions to American society and recasting historical events from Reconstruction through the civil rights movement to uphold white supremacy.

Merging opposition to integration with anti-communism, segregationists argued for the need to shore up the free market and secure states' rights, parental authority, and local control. One indignant female taxpayer wrote that "I see no reason to pay taxes ... to fight a Communist nation if we are going to allow the Supreme Court to take over the duties of the legislative branch." Another suggested that "if the communists can break down the churches and the schools they can control America." Across the South, white women implicated the NAACP in the domestic infiltration of communism, and others blamed America's new course on the "sinister aims of the Jewish Communist revolutionaries ... [working for] a world government." In South Carolina, the newly formed Women's States Rights Association muted its overt segregationist politics and came out for "constitutional government" and against "socialism and communism." [...]

Segregationist women across the South encouraged white women to work with male political leaders and organizations but to also build ties with national conservative groups like West Coast-based Pro America, Chicago-based We the People, and the Minute Women as well as more local, grassroots organizations. To combat *Brown,* Ogden called on white southerners to speak up and to meet the federal betrayal with open, strong, and civilized opposition. She warned against meeting it by "slipping up a dark alley or wearing a hood," and instead encouraged white southerners to courageously and " openly endorse a way of life that has existed from the day of the inception of the United States." Fellow Mississippian Wilma Sledge, a state legislator, responded from the statehouse floor urging whites to support the newly formed Citizens' Council.

In North Carolina, Nell Lewis had feared that apathy and resignation would overcome her state's white citizens and that they would not resist integration, Her concern seemed misplaced. In the immediate aftermath of *Brown,* many North Carolinians were already mobilized to oppose the decision. Within days, seven women signed the letter that Mrs. Preston Andrews of Charlotte, the mother of a two-year-old boy, wrote to Governor Umstead claiming that the Supreme Court's decision betrayed "States' Rights" and cultivated

the rise of a dictatorship. She suggested that the taxes she paid were "for our own children," not all the children in the state. Until the "Negroes can pay their own way; she continued, "they have no right to say what will be done with our money." She did not want her son "to go [to school] with Negroes." Anticipating the proliferation of segregationist academies, she wrote, "It is an outrage that we have to support them [public schools] and then have to enter our children in private schools-bearing this additional expense." She also predicted race riots and claimed that "you can't get Negroes to work at all." Finally, she accused integrationists of being communists. Packed with numerous reasons to oppose *Brown,* Mrs. Andrews's letter was unusual only in its ability to cram so many reasons on one neatly typed page.

Between May and October, North Carolina Governor Umstead received eighty-one petitions signed by over 28,000 citizens who opposed *Brown.* Seventy-five percent of the petitions arrived in the first two months, suggesting that resistance did not need time to coalesce. It was immediate and widespread. The first protest petition with fifty-four signatures was sent to the governor's office on May 18, the day after the decision. [...] Initially, Raymond Price of Pender County distributed a set of petitions, and many seemed to copy his format. Most petitions began "We strongly recommend that the State maintain segregated schools regardless of the consequence." Other petitions were original letters with signature pages attached. The language in some took a harder stance. In June, one Winston-Salem mother suggested an abandonment of public schools entirely. A year later, the Durham United Political Education Council (DUPEC), an organization of over 4,500 white residents, pledged to get 10,000 signatures for the privatization of public education and the redistribution of state funds to support private segregated schools, a stance associated with hardline segregationists, then, and much later with conservatives nationwide.. Women signed or wrote cover letters for about thirty-seven petitions, telegrams, or letters; men circulated sixty- one others.

In the Mississippi Delta, white men formed the Citizens' Council to counter any efforts to promote racial equality in their state. Composed of white middle- and upper-class men, the Citizens' Council used economic boycotts and intimidation, political repression, and threats more often than violence to subdue civil rights activists and to try to ensure that black Deltans remained outside of the burgeoning civil rights movement. The Councils initially banned women from membership, but white women could still support the organization. [...]

As the Citizens' Councils spread across the South, white women soon joined and did much grassroots work. In South Carolina, Council women conducted membership drives, served as social chairs, organized recruiting events, and planned meetings. On John's Island, white women "constituted more than one third of the chapter's membership" and served on the Political and Election, Membership and Finance, and the Legal Advisory Committees, Council literature encouraged women to vote, counting on them to support hardline segregationists for office. Independent organizations, local in reach, also formed

among white women to organize against integration, such as the Women's States Rights Association in South Carolina. In some states these new clubs joined more established and ostensibly mainstream organizations that came out in one way or another against school integration- the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Business and Professional Women's Organization, the Women's Society of Christian Service, the South Carolina Educational Association, the UDC, the Alabama PTA, the Methodist Women's Auxiliary, and the Republican Party.

[...]

Beyond supporting segregationists in elections and drumming up membership for the Citizens' Councils, some women organized for more specific policies that aligned with massive resistance. Again using her 1937 Supreme Court Security League stationery, Tucker began another letter-writing campaign to change the nomination process for Supreme Court justices. As usual, she targeted United States senators, representatives, and all the governors. The choice of her old letterhead was a shrewd political move. Distancing her- self from the most strident segregationists in the South, she placed her protest in a more politically palatable anti-New Deal tradition, aligning herself with national conservatives who opposed integration and a behemoth federal government. Tucker publicized what she deemed to be the arbitrary and unconstitutional testimony used in the *Brown* case and pushed for greater state control over Supreme Court nominees. Her solution-and one later absorbed into the anti-communist, ultra-conservative fringe organization, the John Birch Society--was to have each US Senator suggest a short list of candidates for federal judicial appointments, ostensibly representative of their state's interest.

In her correspondence, Tucker denounced *Brown* as an invalid decision, part of a worldwide communist conspiracy and an indicator of the federal government's excessive power. She minimized her role as a mother and focused not on her domestic duties but on a clash between fundamentally opposed philosophies of government. Initially, she wrote a letter to Chief Justice Earl Warren protesting the segregation decision and passed on copies to other South Carolinians, including gubernatorial hopeful and anti-segregationist George Bell Timmerman. By the beginning of 1955, she had found a champion in Senator James Eastland from Mississippi. Eastland had been instrumental in encouraging the formation of the Citizens' Council and Mississippi's State Sovereignty Commission, a taxpayer sponsored secret intelligence force targeting civil rights activists and their supporters. In August 1954, he had circulated a pamphlet entitled "To the Mothers and Fathers of Jackson" encouraging them to guarantee their children the same "social protection" that they had experienced.

On May 26, 1955, Eastland delivered on the Senate floor a speech calling for an investigation of the scientific authorities who had shaped the Supreme Court's desegregation decision. He charged them with being influenced by Karl Marx and "alien ideologies...not the Constitution." Tucker was primed to seek support for Eastland's cause, and Eastland sent *her*

over 500 copies of his speech to distribute with her letters and petitions. Two other South Carolina women, Mrs. Albert Taylor and Mary K. Mathis, joined her efforts. Eastland praised her powerful pen and her "hard and efficient work." He also encouraged her to continue "to try to reach as many people outside of South Carolina and the South as possible." By the end of July, Tucker had sent hundreds of letters with copies of Eastland's speech to governors and attorneys general, Sons of the American Revolution chapters in Texas, Wisconsin, and Illinois; newspapers and periodicals including the *Constitution Press;* and chapters of the DAR and American Legion. Her articles reached as far as the West Coast. In each case, Tucker told her readers that the Court's decision was an "example of the alarming march of communism."

[...]

Not content to let the Sarah Patton Boyles of the world say otherwise, white segregationist women reinvigorated their effort to tell stories of segregation as a system that suited white and black southerners. Ogden offered her own version of an appropriate interracial family just a week after Boyle's article appeared. In several columns, Ogden wrote about an orphaned black boy whom her grandmother had raised and called Alex Sillers. In her hands, his story was one of interracial amity between white and black Sillers families. She published letters from his children, both of whom noted that they read Ogden's columns in the *Clarion-Ledger.* Ogden's celebration of relationships with the black Sillerses countered national and international versions of southern race relations that focused on political and economic inequities and violence. Her stories also emphasized that these relatives reached out to her, implying in her mind their approval of her columns and their deep connection to her grandmother, who most likely had owned Alex Sillers's ancestors. In this whitewashed version of history, Ogden held up a social order built on a benevolent recognition of white superiority and a white supremacy practiced by the best white people. If let alone, Ogden's stories suggested, racial segregation would produce appreciative, deferential beneficiaries of white charity and guidance who would continue to love their white benefactors.

[...]

If Boyle's article prompted an outpouring of interracial friendship stories, the 1955 murder of Emmett Till in Money, Mississippi, and the subsequent trial that resulted in a quick acquittal of the accused murderers exposed the deadly realities of white supremacy-realities that both Lewis and Ogden had tried co silence in their storytelling. Before *Brown,* the brutal murder of a young black boy might have earned the condemnation of some of the more moderate white supremacists. In the 1930s and even the 1940s, Lewis might have used Till's murder to highlight the repressive nature of Mississippi's race relations as opposed to North Carolina's more benevolent, humane, and "progressive" system of segregation. Even Mary Dawson Cain might have condemned the act or blamed it on Eleanor Roosevelt. But with school integration on the horizon in Mississippi. Emmett Till had shown a picture of his girlfriend who looked "white" and then "wolf-whistled" at Carolyn

Bryant, the white store clerk. In the stories that described his last few days, Till came to serve as a symbol of what white southern women had claimed would happen with school integration: their white daughters would go out with black boys. While the wolf-whistle has served as the narrative arc of Till's story, the affirmation of interracial relationships evidenced by the photograph spoke to the pervasive fears that white women had articulated about integrated schooling.

Faced with defending the brutal murder of a black child, some female segregationists turned to conspiracy theories, denying the body was Till's. In North Carolina, Nell Battle Lewis doubted that the corpse pulled from the river was in fact chat of young Emmett Till. A Mississippi woman rationalized the decision by claiming that if Till had been murdered, "every responsible white person would find it a horrid crime and miscarriage of justice," since there was no outcry, it was not Till, her reasoning went, suggesting that there had been no murder.

Instead, Lewis and Ogden among others referred to the murder as an "alleged killing," and Lewis suggested that the whole set-up looked like an NAACP conspiracy. When *Look* magazine ran the confessions of the white men who murdered Till just a few months after they were acquitted, Lewis offered no comment. Her nonchalant reaction to the Till murder was a long way from her fiery condemnation of the mistreatment of black prisoners Shropshire and Barnes in the 1930s. One North Carolina woman even applauded the events in Mississippi. "The boy in Mississippi was no child," she wrote; "he knew how to insult a woman." "Do you condone such conduct?" she asked. "Certainly the men in Mississippi do not," she concluded. With white supremacy under fire, some white women no longer attempted to call for the white protection of any black citizens, even if they were children.

[...]

By 1956, after two years of concentrated efforts to organize against integration, Nell Battle Lewis reflected that since 19S4 the "defeatism, which together with burning resentment undoubtedly was widespread in the South" had changed to "determination to stand up against judicial dictatorship." The political defeat of two of the three representatives from the state who had refused to sign the Southern Manifesto, the rising prominence of Senator Samuel Ervin, and her increased correspondence all served as signs for Lewis that white southerners were ready to resist integration. For Lewis, who died of a heart attack returning home one evening in late November 1956, the story of the white South was not moderation but resistance. Certainly, the events of the next decade revealed the misplaced optimism of her prediction, hut in 1956 the voices of moderation and of accommodation, even token accommodation, had not risen to prominence, and signs indicated that implementation would be delayed and difficult. Lewis could have died knowing that her work had contributed to the grassroots mobilization of segregationists.

The same month that Lewis died, Tom Etheridge, columnist for the *Jackson Clarion-Ledger,* observed: "One reason why the overall timetable of America's integrationists has gone haywire is chat intelligent independent women of the South are not swallowing propaganda as readily as was hoped." White southern women's opposition to the National PTA's pro-integration platform inspired chis statement. At its 1956 national convention, the PTA adopted a resolution endorsing integration and calling on local chapters to help implement it in their schools. While the policies of the national organization were not binding, the statement still engendered a protest in Alabama. Led by the state's PTA president, the state chapter sent a resolution co national headquarters demanding that the pro-integration resolution be amended. On September 27, 1956, the National PTA issued a revised statement that accommodated the minimum compliance, obstructionist stance of southern segregationists. Shorn of its former commitment to school integration, the new statement read: "The National Congress urges parent-teacher leaders, in cooperation with schools and other governmental authorities in each community to study and pursue effective means of working toward a just solution to the complex problem of segregation in the public schools." This reversal, Etheridge claimed, "was literally compelled by aroused Southern women," And it was just one example, Etheridge wrote, "of their [southern women's} resistance generally."

By 1956, white segregationist women had organized effective and wide- spread resistance to integration. In fact, it was clear that the school integration crisis elevated their positions as the most experienced proponents and sustainers of white supremacist thought in public education. In the letters they wrote, they linked their authority over their children and their vision of motherhood to their political mobilization. While their diverse politics and political strategies manifested themselves differently across southern communities, hardline segregationists who advocated the abolition of public schools over any school integration and practical segregationists who worked on plans to delay and circumvent the ruling both found the politics of public education particularly receptive of their activism. This link between maternal authority, public schools, and political mobilization also animated the white southern women who would join the open-schools movement, calling for an acceptance of at least token integration and the importance of continued state funding. All along the political spectrum, white women invoked their gendered identities co justify their intervention in the policies of public education.

The South's female segregationists had long worked to maintain racial distance, to teach the lessons of white supremacy, and to cultivate the "natural- ness" of Jim Crow segregation. Physically segregated schools were the most obvious expression of this work, but segregation's constant gardeners had repeatedly worked co cell the right stories, to approve the right textbooks, to craft the right kind of teacher training, and to ensure racial segregation in marriage and social life. The consensus that Lewis saw in 1956 hid cracks in the facade of massive resistance. With little pressure for implementation, however, the opposition, even hardline opposition, to desegregation dominated the

discourse and the politics of resistance without having to confront the full economic, social, and political consequences of maintaining absolute school segregation. Soon the voices of those who were unwilling to sacrifice business investment and economic development would gain some ground, pointing to the diverse positions within the South's white supremacist politics and beyond it. Even then, white southerners committed to the Jim Crow order could point to their allies across the nation to make this fight one with national import-a fight about family autonomy and family values, and about states' rights to direct public education. And in the face of implementation, token or otherwise, they could continue to work co make sure social welfare, public education, elections, and the stories they told upheld an investment in white supremacy.