

Segregation and the
Schools
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SEGREGATION AND THE SCHOOLS

PUBLIC AFFAIRS PAMPHLET NO. 209



Excerpts from Supreme Court Decision of May 17, 1954

Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education to our democratic society. It is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities, even service in the armed forces. It is the very foundation of good citizenship.

Today, it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment.

In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.

We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other "tangible" factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does.

Such considerations apply with added force to children in grade and high schools. To separate them from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone.

We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.

THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

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SEGREGATION AND THE SCHOOLS

THE NEGRO AND THE SCHOOLS, by Harry S. Ashmore, sponsored by the Fund for the Advancement of Education, and published on the eve of the epochal decision of the Supreme Court, will likely become one of the historic, educational reports of our time. Based on the research of forty-five scholars of highest competence, it is packed with information about segregation and experiences in integration. It provides the overall perspective deeply needed in making the profound adjustments required in the transition from segregation to integration of the public schools in the Southern states.

One of the signers of this introduction had favored working out the problem of the races within the states by progressive stages through the increasing influence of religion, education and the humane spirit of democracy. The second signer had held that "the separate but equal doctrine" was a violation of the 14th Amendment and should have been so declared. Both of us, along with law-abiding citizens in all the states, now support the acceptance of the decision in good faith. We recognize the timely need of both the information in the Ashmore Report and the cooperation of all groups in the school communities in working out the ways, means, and steps in the historic transition for the fulfillment of the law of the land, the principles of our American democracy and the teachings of our religion under the Fatherhood of one God in the brotherhood of all people.

FRANK P. GRAHAM, Former President,
University of North Carolina
BENJAMIN E. MAYS, President,
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IN HOLDING segregation by race in the public schools to be illegal, the Supreme Court's decision of May 17, 1954, has ended years of uncertainty and conflict over the legality of separate schools for Negro children. It still leaves, however, many practical questions to be settled before all Negro children have the same opportunities for education possessed by their white neighbors. Recognizing the problems, the Court postponed formulating specific decrees until it could consult state and local leaders. Thus, the segregation issue has, in fact, now reached its most critical stage — the stage where long-range plans must be made in states and local communities throughout the South and border states.

Since the earliest years of public education in this country, the schooling of Negro children has given rise to controversy and concern. Before the Civil War, some of the slave states made it a crime to teach a Negro to read and write. Even in the "free" states, some communities made no provision for Negro education, while some others operated racially separate schools. Fortunately, we have come a long way in the last century. No state now denies its obligation to give every school child equal opportunity in the classroom, regardless of race. But the gap between principle and practice is uncomfortably wide. At the beginning of 1954, seventeen states* and the District of Columbia still imposed racial segregation by law in their school systems. In four other states it was permissible. The long-standing "separate but equal" doctrine has for many decades meant separate but usually regrettably much inferior schools for Negroes. In the large cities of the North and West, school segregation, though not prescribed by law, frequently goes hand-in-hand with residential segregation.

the last decade

World War II brought these and other shortcomings in our treatment of Negro citizens into bold relief. The struggle against a racist enemy and the emergence of the United States as the ranking world power have made many Americans think twice about our racial practices. Negroes themselves have showed a heightened determination to eliminate the barriers to full citizenship. In the last decade, many of these barriers have fallen. Increasingly enlightened public opinion, court action, and in some cases executive orders gave Negroes access to the ballot and undermined segregation in the Armed Forces, interstate travel, sports, and higher education. But the problem of discrimination in the common schools remained unsolved. In the Southern and border states, where two-thirds of Negro Americans live, the dual school system was one of the last remaining bulwarks of legal segregation.

* Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.

In the last few years, this institution came under heavy attack. Under the leadership of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Negro parents asked the Federal courts to strike down state laws requiring separate schools. In December, 1952, five such cases were first argued before the United States Supreme Court. The NAACP attorneys charged that segregation of school children was a direct violation of the Fourteenth Amendment of the U. S. Constitution. The Amendment forbids any state to "deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." The states involved claimed that their right to maintain separate schools was the settled law of the land. They pointed to current "equalization" programs as evidence that old inequalities in the Southern school systems were on the way out.

the ashmore report

By June of 1953 it was clear that a decision was still some months off. The Court had called for more arguments on the issue later in the year. Meanwhile, people North and South, white and Negro, saw profound significance in the questions that the lawsuits had raised. Plainly the Court's decision would vitally affect the future of public education in this country. A Court ruling abandoning the "separate but equal" doctrine would necessitate major adjustments in attitudes as well as practices.

In a series of conferences held by the Fund for the Advancement of Education, educators of both races from all parts of the country agreed that segregation was perhaps the most pressing issue in American public education. They recognized that the problems involved, though brought to immediate focus by the five pending lawsuits, were long-range in nature. The basic legal question would be disposed of by the Court's ruling. But would school administrators and the general public be prepared for the consequences? There was clearly an urgent need for a new look at the whole pattern of bi-racial education in the United States.

The Fund for the Advancement of Education assembled a temporary staff to carry out such a study under the over-all direction of

Harry S. Ashmore, executive editor of the Little Rock, Arkansas, *Gazette*. During the summer and early fall of 1953, some forty-five scholars — sociologists, educators, economists, and lawyers — took part in an objective appraisal of the Negro in the public schools. Their findings will appear in four volumes published by the University of North Carolina Press. The first of these, a report on the study by Mr. Ashmore entitled *The Negro and the Schools*, has been published and is summarized in this pamphlet.*

THE GENESIS OF BI-RACIAL EDUCATION

The struggle over segregation in education goes back more than a hundred years. In 1849 the Supreme Court of Massachusetts turned down the complaint of Sarah Roberts that she was barred from the school nearest her home because of her race. Under the terms of a Boston city ordinance, she was required to attend an all-Negro school somewhat farther away. Her attorney, the noted abolitionist Charles Sumner, argued that the ordinance violated the Massachusetts constitution, which declared that all citizens were born equal. Segregation by law, he said, “tends to deepen and to perpetuate the odious distinction of caste, founded in a deep-rooted prejudice in public opinion.” The court disagreed. Any caste distinction aggravated by segregated schools, held Chief Justice Shaw, “if it exists, is not created by law and probably cannot be changed by law.”

This decision was handed down in a social climate that was soon to be drastically changed. The abolitionist crusade was sweeping the North. Within a few years, Sumner and his friends successfully sponsored a Massachusetts law banning segregation in the public schools of the state. And not long afterward four years of bloody civil war freed the slaves in the South. Emancipation, however, marked the beginning rather than the end of the American Negro's uneven journey toward full citizenship. Under the Reconstruction state governments Southern Negroes voted freely, held public office, and in a few scattered instances went to unsegregated schools.

* New edition with text of Supreme Court decision available from the Univ. of North Carolina Press (paper \$1.50; cloth \$2.75).

But by 1877 Reconstruction was at an end. In the South, the reins of political power were returned to leadership which set about restoring "white supremacy." In the North, abolitionist zeal gave way to indifference and conservatism in racial matters.

So it was that the Roberts decision, a dead letter in Massachusetts, came to life in other states. State-enforced segregation was upheld by the courts of Ohio, Indiana, California, New York, Missouri, and West Virginia, following the same reasoning as the earlier Massachusetts court. Then, in 1896, the United States Supreme Court made that reasoning its own. The case at hand — *Plessy v. Ferguson* — did not deal with schools, but with the right of Louisiana to enforce segregation on intrastate trains. Plessy, a man of one-eighth Negro descent, had attacked the Louisiana statute as a violation of his rights under the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments. The Court denied his plea, holding that segregation laws did not necessarily imply the inferiority of either race and were plainly within the police power of the state. As the most common example of this, the Court pointed out: "The establishment of separate schools for white and colored children . . . has been held a valid exercise of the legislative power even by courts of states where the political rights of the colored race have been longest and most earnestly enforced."

"separate but equal"

This dictum, or side remark, of the Court has been the authority for the "separate but equal" rule in education ever since. It came at a particularly crucial time — when the public school system as we know it today was beginning to take shape in the Southern states. Before the Civil War there were few public schools in the South outside the larger cities. Uniform systems of "free schools" were first called for in the state constitutions adopted under the Reconstruction governments. But poverty and unrest held back the new school systems. Only after the turn of the century did the public education movement in the South gather real momentum. By that time school segregation was firmly fixed in law and in custom.

From the beginning, "separate but equal" was more a popular slogan



than a serious policy. There was no doubt of the South's determination to keep segregation, but the nod in the direction of equality was only a token gesture.

During the early 1900's public schools multiplied rapidly over the region. Contributions from such Northern philanthropists as Rockefeller and Peabody gave great impetus to the drive for public education. By the end of World War I, every Southern state had a compulsory school attendance law and enough schools to give it meaning. The Negro's share in this general movement, though far from equal, was also boosted by Northern philanthropy. The Anna T. Jeanes Fund set up the "Jeanes Teacher" program to improve the quality of instruction in rural Negro schools. And between 1913 and 1932 the Julius Rosenwald Fund helped finance the building of 5,000 Negro schools in fifteen Southern and border states.

By any measure, however, the Negro branch of the dual school system lagged far behind. At the end of the Rosenwald building program, the per-pupil value of Negro school property was less than one-fifth that of the white schools. Between 1900 and 1930, the average salary of white teachers rose from about \$200 to \$900, while the average salary for Negroes rose from \$100 to \$400. These inequalities mirrored the accepted notion of Negro education. In the view of most white Southerners, Negroes needed only the bare essentials of schooling to take their traditional "place" as servants and unskilled laborers.

Those who urged more advanced education for the Negro usually gave it the apologetic label "industrial." Booker T. Washington, the founder of Tuskegee Institute for Negroes, won the support of many white leaders by stressing the vocational side of Negro education. In practice, this had little effect on the public schools, since vocational education costs more than the usual "classical" variety. Negro children continued to get the same kind of education as the whites; they merely received much less of it. In 1916 there were only 67 Negro high schools, with fewer than 20,000 students. In 1920, 85 per cent of all the Negro pupils in the South were in the first four grades.

THE DEPRESSION

The great depression of the 30's dealt public education a crippling blow everywhere in the country — and nowhere more than in the South. At the bottom of the economic trough, the South found itself trying to educate a third of the nation's children with only a sixth of the nation's school revenue. The operating expenditure per pupil stood at \$45 — less than half the national figure. Building and maintenance funds were only \$6 per pupil, as against \$14 for the rest of the nation. Even the millions spent for school building by the Public Works Administration did not prevent many local systems from breaking down completely.

The Negro schools were hardest hit. Two-thirds of the South's Negro children attended rural schools, which were at the very bottom

of the heap. The authorities who headed up the dual school system continued to give the Negro schools the lowest priority. In those desperate times that often meant no support at all. More than half of all rural Negro schools were one-room frame buildings, wholly lacking in modern facilities. Many classes met in churches, lodge halls, or abandoned tenant houses. Although Negro pupils made up 30 per cent of the South's total school attendance in 1935, the value of Negro school property was only about 8 per cent of the total.

gains in the 30's

Nevertheless, the 30's saw some important gains in Negro education. More Negroes were attending school and were staying longer. What with the scarcity of jobs, many a youth literally had nothing to do except go to school — and Negro high-school enrollment shot up to five times the 1920 peak. The average length of school term for Negroes was extended. Negro teachers' salaries, though still far below the white level, rose substantially under pressure of suits for equalization brought by the NAACP.

Most important of all, new ideas about Negro education were stirring. The old double-standard still applied, but the whites were increasingly uneasy about it. And as Negro pressure for higher education built up, the *Plessy* doctrine was brought back to court.

two pioneers

Two cases of the 30's, sponsored by the NAACP, foreshadowed the end of legal segregation in state-supported graduate and professional schools. The first was brought by a Negro who was excluded from the University of Maryland Law School. Since the state had no law school for Negroes, Donald Murray was told that he might apply for a scholarship to an institution outside the state. Instead, he turned to the state courts. He pointed out that there were only fifty out-of-state scholarships available to Negroes — too few for a qualified applicant to be sure of getting one. Moreover, these scholarships covered only tuition, unfairly burdening the Negro students with the cost of living away from home.

The Maryland Court of Appeals ordered Murray admitted to the state law school in 1935. The decision did not directly tamper with the *Plessy* doctrine. Instead the Court carefully explained that no other avenue of relief was open. Since none of Maryland's officials had the legal authority to set up a separate law school, the court could not order them to do so. So the only way Murray could get equal treatment was by admission to the state university. Although this decision left the *Plessy* doctrine intact, it made a significant breach in the wall of educational segregation. For the first time in a Southern or border state, non-segregation was prescribed as a remedy for inequality.

supreme court acts

In 1938, the United States Supreme Court went much farther in applying the yardstick of equality to higher education. Missouri, like Maryland, offered out-of-state scholarships to Negroes in lieu of a separate law school. Lloyd Gaines protested in the state courts that he was entitled to equal opportunity within the boundaries of Missouri. Although the state courts ruled against Gaines, the U. S. Supreme Court reversed them on a new point of law:

Manifestly, the obligation of the states to give the protection of equal laws can be performed only where the laws operate, that is, within its own jurisdiction. . . . Nor can we regard the fact that there is but limited demand in Missouri for the legal education of Negroes as excusing the discrimination in favor of white. . . . Here petitioner's right was a personal one. It was as an individual that he was entitled to the equal protection of the laws, and the state was bound to furnish him within its borders facilities equal to those which the state has afforded for persons of the white race. . . .

The Supreme Court did not directly order the University to admit Gaines. His case was simply sent back to the Missouri courts for "appropriate action" under the terms of the decision. By the time a rehearing was scheduled, Gaines had dropped out of sight. But the way was paved for more far-reaching decisions after the war years.

UNIVERSITY INTEGRATION

In 1946 Ada Lois Sipuel sought to enter the law school at the University of Oklahoma. After two years of court hearings and appeals, the U. S. Supreme Court held that Oklahoma must furnish her a legal education within the state — and do so as soon as it did for any other applicant. Oklahoma authorities promptly set up a one-woman law school at the State Capitol. Miss Sipuel rejected this makeshift arrangement and went back to court. She was finally admitted to the University of Oklahoma in 1949.

In the meantime, another Negro applicant had already sued successfully for admission to the University of Oklahoma. He was G. W. McLaurin, an elderly professor emeritus at Langston University, the state college for Negroes. A three-judge federal court ordered him admitted to the only graduate courses in his field offered by the state. But once in the state university, McLaurin faced campus segregation. He was required to sit apart from the white students in the classroom, the library, and the dining hall. Once again he sought relief in federal court. When the case reached the U. S. Supreme Court, the old interpretation of *Plessy* suffered another setback. The Court found that segregation impaired McLaurin's ability to study, to exchange views with other students, and, in general, to learn his profession. It concluded that McLaurin, "having been admitted to a state-supported school, must receive the same treatment at the hands of the state as students of other races."

On the same day, June 5, 1950, the Supreme Court handed down its momentous decision in the case of *Sweatt v. Painter*. Heman Sweatt's suit — initiated in 1946 — differed from all the others in one important respect: It made, for the first time, a frontal attack on segregation as such. The NAACP attorneys representing Sweatt offered testimony by sociologists, educators, and other social scientists to the effect that segregation is harmful to personality and learning ability. In sum, they argued that the separate law school which Texas had hastily set up for Sweatt could never be truly equal.

The Court obviously gave weight to this argument, though it refused to outlaw segregation as such. After finding the Negro law

school inferior by the usual measurements— size of faculty, courses, library, and the like — it went on to say:

What is more important, the University of Texas Law School possesses to a far greater degree those qualities which are incapable of objective measurement but which make for greatness in a law school . . . : reputation of the faculty, experience of the administration, position and influence of the alumni, standing in the community, traditions and prestige.

Few state-supported Negro colleges in the South could meet this test posed by the Supreme Court. And obviously no brand new institution, created to meet the threat of a court order, could point with pride to its traditions and prestige. In law, the “separate but equal” doctrine still stood. In effect, however, the Supreme Court had undermined it in the field of graduate and professional training.

Seeing the legal trend in bordering states, Arkansas moved voluntarily to admit the first Negro to its school of law in 1948. Since then — with a spattering of lawsuits to spur the process — twenty previously segregated public institutions have followed suit. By 1954 state universities had opened their doors to Negroes everywhere except in Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina. Most of the new Negro students have been enrolled in graduate and professional courses. The only significant exception is the University of Louisville, which absorbed the Municipal College (for Negroes).

It is impossible to fix the exact number of Negroes who have entered formerly all-white institutions. The best available estimate is 1,000 to 2,000 during regular sessions. If summer school attendance is taken into account the total figure is probably three to four times as large. Moreover, racial bars have been dropped by thirteen private or church-related institutions, twelve Protestant theological seminaries, and twenty-one Catholic institutions in Southern and border states.

campus experience

How have these newly integrated Negro students been received? Donald Murray, the first to cross the color line, later wrote:

My experience, briefly, was that I attended the University of Maryland Law School for three years, during which time I took all of the classes with the rest of the students . . . and at no time whatever did I meet any attempted segregation or unfavorable treatment on the part of any student in the school, or any professor or assistant professor.

For the most part, Mr. Murray's experience is typical. With only a few exceptions, Southern universities have followed a consistent pattern: First, official resistance to Negro enrollment until — either voluntarily or as a result of court action — the admission policy is changed; then impartial treatment of the Negro students, once they are admitted. Field studies of seventeen of the twenty-two integrated campuses in the summer of 1953 turned up several minor instances of near-friction. But Professor Guy B. Johnson of the University of North Carolina, who directed the studies, concluded that the process of transition was a peaceful one. He reported: "In almost every instance when a state institution was faced with the fact that it might actually have to admit Negroes, there were serious predictions of violence and bloodshed *if* this thing came to pass. To the best of our knowledge, the first drop of blood is yet to be shed."

faculty

The attitude of faculties toward the new Negro students has been generally sympathetic. In 1946, a survey at the University of Kentucky showed 60 per cent of the faculty in favor of removing all legal obstacles to non-segregated education. Only 22 per cent were opposed, and only 11 per cent said they would find the presence of Negroes in their classrooms offensive. On the question of whether there was a racial difference in intelligence, 66 per cent said no, 7 per cent said yes, and 26 per cent didn't know.

This mainly favorable attitude has carried over in actual classroom experience — at Kentucky and elsewhere. There have been some academic problems. Many of the Negro students have had difficulty competing on equal terms with the white students. This is not the result of any racial trait. Rather, it reflects the inferior quality of

education that most Southern Negroes have received under the dual system. A few have performed well at the state universities, but the majority have fallen below their class average. The problem is made worse by the fact that some of the best qualified Negro students still go outside the South for their graduate or professional training.

students

Most white students have been either indifferent or sympathetic to their newly arrived Negro colleagues. There have been few cases of rudeness or antagonism. On some campuses a small minority is quite bitter about the presence of Negro students. On the other hand, white students have championed equal privileges for Negroes, both on and off the campus. And at the University of Arkansas, a Negro law student was elected president of his predominantly white dormitory. In the main, however, the white students have made no show of special interest, one way or the other.

Prevailing Southern customs make relaxed, give-and-take relationships difficult. White students often fear that they may unintentionally offend their Negro classmates. They are also aware of the social risk if they are overly friendly. Racial practices in the surrounding communities are an added bar to normal social activity. Segregation is still rigidly observed in off-campus resorts where students gather.

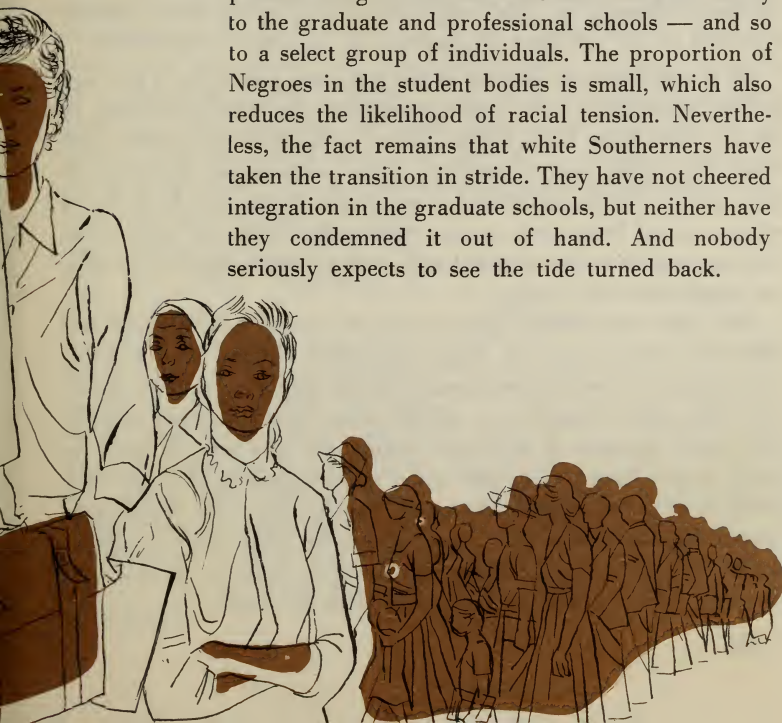
The Negro students have generally gone out of their way to avoid unpleasantness. The first Negroes to enter each institution usually thought of themselves as "pioneers" — and were so looked upon by the Negro community. Negro leaders have actively encouraged studious, well-balanced persons to blaze the trail. By the same token, they have discouraged inferior students and those with personality problems.

Official discriminations against Negro students have now disappeared, except for occasional special housing arrangements. Yet university administrators are more conservative than faculty or students on the question of Negro enrollment. In practically every school surveyed, administrators were concerned with holding down the number of Negro students — or at least making sure that any



increase would be gradual. So far this has come about naturally, since the demand for admission by Negroes has been quite small. University officials have also sought to limit or control publicity about their Negro students. Their general attitude might be described as the hope that everybody on the outside will forget that Negroes are on the campus. In practice this has usually been the case, once the first flurry of public attention has died down.

The new policies of the state universities have aroused remarkably little public protest. Nowhere have they occasioned anything like a boycott or become a major political issue. This may be explained in part by the limited nature of the experience. Negro enrollment has been confined mainly to the graduate and professional schools — and so to a select group of individuals. The proportion of Negroes in the student bodies is small, which also reduces the likelihood of racial tension. Nevertheless, the fact remains that white Southerners have taken the transition in stride. They have not cheered integration in the graduate schools, but neither have they condemned it out of hand. And nobody seriously expects to see the tide turned back.



CURRENTS OF CHANGE

The admission of Negroes to Southern universities was only one manifestation of the huge forces buffeting education in the 40's.

The war and its aftermath first drained, then flooded the college campuses; delayed the school-building effort so badly needed after the depression; produced a record crop of post-war babies; sharpened the ideals of democracy; and, above all, redistributed the population of the country as if by a giant eggbeater. For the Negro, the war and post-war changes had profound meaning. Within ten years, Jim Crow had been drummed out of the armed forces. By 1950 there were more than a million eligible Negro voters in the South, as against a handful in 1940. A presidential Committee on Civil Rights flatly recommended "the elimination of segregation, based on race, color, creed, or national origin from American life." By the beginning of 1954, segregation had ended in all schools operated by the Defense Department on Southern installations.

All Americans were affected by the push and pull of the war years, but the movement of the Negro population was without parallel. In the ten years after 1940, the migration of Negroes was greater than in all the earlier years combined. Large numbers left the South to seek jobs in the big industrial cities of the North and West. Many others moved from farm to city within the South. In both cases, Negroes settled in the blighted and overcrowded sections that skirt the cities' downtown areas.

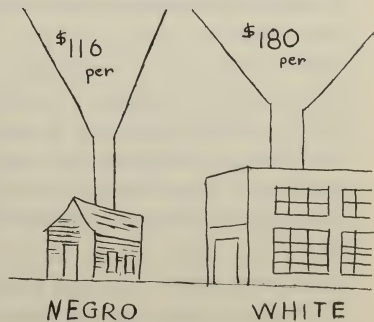
More than one million Negroes left the South between 1940 and 1950. The region's gain in Negro population was less than 150,000, in contrast to a two million increase in the rest of the country. Moreover, the ratio of Negroes to whites in the South dropped sharply. The white increase of 4,500,000 during the 40's was 33 times as great as the Negro gain. The same trend appeared in population shifts *within* the region. The great exodus from the rural areas caused Negro farm population to shrink by more than a million. Although many of these migrants moved to Southern cities, even there the white population grew faster than the Negro.

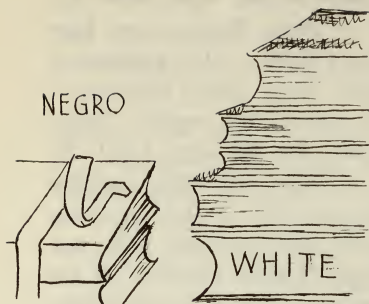
These great population changes held critical significance for Negro education. In the rural South — where Negroes have been most concentrated and school facilities poorest — the pressure of numbers is easing up. This means fewer Negro school children — and a growing economic problem of maintaining separate Negro schools for a steadily falling attendance. On the other hand, the cities are facing increased demands for more and better facilities in the central sections, where the schools are old and often run down. At the same time, there are growing white suburbs with new school needs of their own. Underlying all these problems is the continuing rise in over-all Negro attendance. Higher family income and fewer infant deaths have resulted in more Negro children going to school, and staying in school longer.

Since 1940 the South has made its greatest efforts on behalf of public education, and Negro children have received a larger share of the total outlay than ever before. In 1951-52 the thirteen Southern states spent more than \$1,200,000,000 for school operations — nearly four times as much as in 1939-40. Of this amount, some \$220,000,000 went for Negro schools. The same states spent \$315,000,000 for school construction and upkeep in 1951-52 — nearly eight times the 1939-40 figure. An estimated \$65,000,000 to \$70,000,000 of this went into Negro schools and equipment, approximating for the first time the Negro proportion of school attendance.

Despite these gains, the gap between white and Negro education is still far from closed. The size of the gap varies from state to state, of course, but for the South as a whole these were the facts:

Operating expenditures in 1951-52 amounted to \$116 per Negro pupil as against \$180 for each white pupil.





There were 25.6 Negro pupils per teacher as compared with 23.6 white pupils for each teacher.

No state showed a difference of as much as ten days between length of school term for whites and that for Negroes.

Near equality had been attained in the average training of white and Negro teachers, but Negroes lagged behind in salaries by 15 per cent.

The number of books available through school libraries per Negro pupil was less than half the number per white pupil.

Nearly twice as large a proportion of white as Negro students ate in federally-aided school lunchrooms. An average of \$8 more per pupil was spent to feed the white pupils.

CLOSING THE GAPS

The size and shape of the task ahead of the region in the next decade were measured by a staff of educators and economists for the Ashmore report. They pointed out that no simple or final answers could be given. In the first place, their findings were cast in region-wide terms, thus smoothing out great differences from state to state and from community to community. Moreover, they had to take into account many variables — political and educational as well as economic — which could not be forecast with pin-point accuracy.

In theory, of course, the white wing of the dual school system could have been “frozen” at present levels until the Negro wing had caught up. But in practice this was hardly a serious possibility. There are other serious shortcomings in the South’s educational system that make their own demands on school budgets.

Foremost among these is the gap between rural and urban schools. Though increasing state aid and the move toward consolidated

schools have narrowed the gap percentage-wise, it is still considerable. In 1952 the per-pupil expenditure for instruction in metropolitan counties was \$44 more than in rural counties, and for capital outlay it was \$37 more. The question of racial inequalities is closely bound up with the urban-rural gap. Many urban Negro schools are far better than many rural white schools. At the same time, the inferiority of Negro to white schools is much greater in the country than in the cities of the South.

The several deficits that burden public education in the South must be measured two ways — in terms of current expenditures for day-to-day operation of schools, and in terms of capital expenditures for school buildings and equipment.

costs

The region's white-Negro gap in current expenditures has been closing at an accelerating rate, particularly in the large cities. If every Southern community had equalized them in the 1953-54 school year, the additional cost for the thirteen states would have been about \$90,000,000 — 6 per cent of the yearly operating budget. If the South undertook to close the urban-rural gap as well, another \$240,000,000 would have to be added. This would have brought the expenditure per pupil in rural areas up to the metropolitan level, estimated at \$200. Together these increases would raise the region's estimated current expenditures in 1953-54 from \$1,450,000,000 to \$1,780,000,000 or 26 per cent.

Measuring the deficit in school buildings and equipment is much more complicated. In the light of both long-range goals and political reality, most state officials have lumped racial inequalities in with the other deficiencies. The resulting "capital deficit programs" are aimed at wiping out all sub-standard schools, white and Negro. Their total cost currently is about \$1,700,000,000. Some \$600,000,000 was estimated for new Negro facilities.

The \$1,700,000,000 deficit has to do with the replacement or improvement of existing facilities. Over and above that is the need for new classrooms to house the growing school population. It is

estimated that by 1962 the South's average daily school attendance will reach 9,100,000 pupils — a 16 per cent increase over the current figure. The farm-to-city flow of the population adds to the pressure for new buildings. More consolidated schools are needed to serve the increasingly scattered population of the rural areas, while new buildings must also be built in the expanding metropolitan suburbs. To meet these demands — quite apart from the "capital deficit" — would cost another \$1,300,000,000.

The total bill of \$3,000,000,000 is clearly more than the South can handle in any one year. Therefore, it was assumed that the outlay would be spread over an eight-year period, at the rate of \$375,000,000 a year. If this were done, the South's total school budget for all expenses in the eighth year would amount to \$2,500,000,000.

can the south afford it?

Can the South afford it? The experts concluded that it can — if its income continues to rise and it continues to spend the same percentage on schools. For though the Southern states have less income per person than the other states, they have spent proportionately more of it — 3.3 per cent — for public education. Even with the increased expenditure mentioned above, the South's average expenditures per pupil would still be well below the 1951 average of many non-Southern states.

No weight was given in these estimates to the effects of possible integration. For segregation has not been as big a factor in school costs as some people have supposed. Under integration some Negroes may go to better schools and some whites to worse. No great economies may result, however.

Examples of waste can be cited, of course. Some rural counties with few Negroes have paid heavily to haul their Negro pupils long distances to a segregated school rather than admit them to a local white school. And in some cases a thinly attended Negro school might be eliminated entirely if the white school were opened to all pupils. But these cases have not bulked large in the total school budget of the region.

The price of segregation has, however, gone up in recent years, and would have gone up still more as schools continued to improve. The higher the quality of schooling, the higher the cost of duplication. The shrinking proportion of Negroes in many rural counties would also have made separate schools more expensive. Shifting residential patterns in the cities would produce the same result in "fringe" areas where white and Negro neighborhoods overlap. Thus a real economic pressure for integration has been building up. Many schoolmen, recognizing this, have privately conceded that integration is inevitable as the logical outcome of basic trends. In the long run the big question is how!

OUTSIDE THE SOUTH

Following the first great wave of Negro emigration from the South, Charles S. Johnson wrote, "With increased numbers of Negroes in the Northern cities the tendency to segregation increases, and this tendency is viewed with apprehension by many Negroes." The Negroes, like many an immigrant group before them, have settled in the decaying hearts of the large cities. But unlike the earlier arrivals — the Jews, the Poles, the Germans, the Irish — they have not moved upward in the social order and outward from the older neighborhoods. As a "visible" minority, they have remained hedged in by discrimination. This has inevitably made for school segregation. A child normally attends the school nearest his home. If he lives in an all-Negro neighborhood, he will most likely attend an all-Negro school.

There have been exceptions, to be sure — in small towns, in mixed neighborhoods, in many places where Negroes are few in number and take full part in community life. But for the majority of Negroes outside the South, school segregation has been the rule. In some cases, this "natural" segregation has been bolstered by administrative policies that ignore or violate state law. Only four non-Southern states — Arizona, Kansas, New Mexico, and Wyoming — leave it to local school authorities to decide whether school children

shall be separated by race. Of the remaining Northern and Western states, eleven have no laws regarding segregation, while sixteen have laws prohibiting it.

New Jersey, Indiana, and Illinois have lately taken measures to root out segregation where it has been practiced in defiance of the law. In other states, communities have moved voluntarily to desegregate their schools. These actions are part of the general trend toward integration that has followed in the wake of World War II. The broad underlying cause is the new concern for minority rights that grew out of the war. This has been reflected in heightened pressure by Negroes themselves, human relations agencies, church and civic groups, the press — and by enlightened school administrators as well. The threat of court action and economic factors have played a part, too. There has been a growing realization that it is cheaper to integrate than to provide new or improved facilities for a small group of Negro pupils.

In the late summer of 1953, field studies were made of twenty-five communities which had made or were making the transition from segregated to integrated elementary or secondary schools. All of these communities were, necessarily, outside the South. They ranged in size from 8,500 to 3,600,000 and in location from New Jersey to New Mexico. The experiences reported were as varied as the communities themselves; the following brief samplings can only suggest the general nature of the findings.

tucson, arizona

Tucson integrated its public schools with noteworthy smoothness. The city's substantial Mexican-American community had not been segregated for some years. However, Negroes, who made up 6.1 per cent of the population, had been required to send their children to separate schools below the high school level.

In 1951 Arizona amended its segregation law to make school segregation a matter of local option. The superintendent of schools was ready with a plan for desegregation, which he promptly put before the Tucson Board of Education. Within a few days the

board announced that the dual school system would be abandoned at the beginning of the next term. The decision was actively supported by church and civic groups. A call for white volunteers to teach in the mixed schools produced twice the required number of teachers. A Negro principal was accepted without protest by a mixed teaching staff. The superintendent summed up Tucson's experience this way:

We treated the program as a natural, democratic, and right thing. The School Board, the administrative staff, and the community backed us up completely. I had expected some opposition, but I actually received far less than I anticipated.

evansville, indiana

Evansville lies across the Ohio River from Kentucky and has a distinctly Southern orientation. Negroes make up 6.6 per cent of its population. Until 1949, when Indiana passed a statute making integration mandatory within five years, the Evansville schools were completely segregated. The school board met the new law by allowing the pupils to decide which schools they would attend. This, said the official announcement, will "provide the people of our community with a choice and their own actions in the coming years will indicate the pattern our schools will follow in the future." When the new policy went into effect, only eighteen Negro children enrolled in formerly all-white schools. Three years later, approximately fifty Negroes were attending the six "integrated" elementary schools, and only one high-school student had made the change. There had been no move to integrate the faculties. This was not surprising, since the dual system had continued virtually intact under the new policy.

new jersey

In 1947, New Jersey put teeth into its long-standing ban on school segregation. Up to that time, separate schools had been provided as a matter of custom in the ten southernmost counties of the state. The job of enforcing the desegregation policy fell to a new Division Against Discrimination, created in the Department of Education.

Although it has the power to cut off state aid to districts that fail to comply, it has relied mainly on persuasion — and with remarkable results. In 1948 the Division found forty-three school districts with deliberately segregated schools. By the opening of the next school term the number had dwindled to thirteen, and by early 1954 to three. Integration of teachers has usually kept pace with integration of pupils.

WAYS AND MEANS

No two communities are exactly alike, and no two of those studied went about integrating their schools in exactly the same way. In general, the communities with small Negro populations and good race relations have gone the whole way at a stroke, as in Tucson. In every instance of this kind reported, the transition was rated a complete success. It must be noted, however, that these cities, having few Negro residents, were not handicapped by large-scale housing segregation.

the gradual approach

Most communities have taken the more roundabout way of gradual integration. Some have started at the top, like one New Mexico community that began with grades nine through twelve. Others have started at the bottom with kindergarten and the first few elementary grades. Still others combine the gradual approach with a “voluntary” system that puts the burden of choice on the pupil. This is the ultimate in delayed integration. It is based on the theory that when a choice is provided, most Negro pupils will elect to remain in segregated schools. So far, that theory has held true in most cases. But it is not clear whether this expresses real choice or only inertia bolstered by negative official attitudes.

The reason usually given for the gradual approach is fear of adverse public reaction, but other reasons have also played a part. Some public officials have expressed doubt that Negroes could hold their own in mixed classrooms. So, they argue, the dual school sys-

tem should be abandoned in easy stages to soften the problem. Many officials are reluctant to assign Negro teachers to white or mixed classes. Yet many of these teachers are protected by tenure laws and cannot simply be dismissed. The readiest way to avoid the issue is to postpone the end of all-Negro schools.

criticism of gradual approach

The gradual approach has been criticized on several counts. Some school officials believe it makes for more, rather than less, public resistance. They argue that it not only encourages troublemakers but also gives them time to organize. The case histories show clearly that, once the question of integration is raised, both sides are likely to apply political pressure. And when policies remain unsettled for some time, the pressures mount. One school board member privately said he wished the state law had ordered all-out integration, so that the local board would not have been "on the spot."

Most officials have considered the question of mixed faculties thornier than that of mixed classes. Even in places where pupils have been integrated successfully, school authorities frequently are doubtful that white parents will tolerate Negroes teaching their children. For entirely different reasons some Negro teachers have quietly opposed faculty integration. Their fear has been that discrimination or competition with better trained whites might cost them their jobs.

Actual experience with mixed faculties has not borne out these doubts and fears. With few exceptions, white teachers have accepted the new policy in a professional spirit, putting aside any personal prejudices they may have had. Protests from parents have been common but have tended to melt away after the first few weeks. The school systems that made the smoothest transition handpicked the teachers to serve on the first mixed faculties. They also saw to it that the change was explained in advance to parents of both races.

Some white parents who resisted the idea initially had a change of heart after first-hand experience. In one community the local PTA asked that a popular Negro teacher be rotated, so that more white



pupils might have a wholesome interracial experience. The shortage of trained teachers has also curbed discrimination against Negroes. In 1945 no less than 415 of New Jersey's 497 Negro teachers were employed in the nine counties that maintained segregated schools. The most recent record shows 425 Negro teachers still employed in the nine counties after integration, while the statewide total has risen to 645.

In most of the communities that have desegregated their schools the common reaction might be summed up by the remark, "It wasn't as bad as we thought it would be." Wherever there has been an active and well-planned program to sell integration to the community, it has succeeded. And success has come most easily where there is a history of cooperation across group lines. State laws and regulations can play an important part in the shaping of local school systems. But the final outcome rests with the skill and good faith of community leaders.

A COMMUNITY CHALLENGE

How can we work for more democratic school systems in which race will not be the measure of the child?

The Ashmore report, as an objective appraisal, took no partisan stand on segregation. The facts presented in the report, however, are useful to people in every part of the country who are concerned about bi-racial education. They point to many things that we can do — as parents, voters, club members, teachers, church workers, and so on — to help our public school administrators develop a calm, sensible, and democratic method of carrying out the Supreme Court's decision.

local attitudes important

Local attitudes are vitally important in the shaping of the school system. People feel strongly about public education because it affects the family more closely than any other public institution. Out of long experience, superintendents and boards of education have learned to keep a sensitive finger on the pulse of the community. In matters involving the delicate question of race, they need the cooperation and support of right-thinking citizens.

Intergroup relations in the schools cannot be separated from intergroup relations in the community as a whole. The places where classroom integration has worked best are those in which there have been effective efforts to eliminate prejudice and discrimination. This is a goal that all of us can further through the organizations to which we belong.

what groups can do

Organizations of many different kinds can play a part in advancing sound human relations in the schools. Church groups have a special opportunity to foster understanding and acceptance of group differences. Parent-teacher groups can be agencies of wise planning in which persons of all ethnic and racial backgrounds can pool their efforts. Civic organizations can strengthen the hand of forward-

looking public officials and can create a favorable climate of opinion. Trade union members, as parents and citizens, can also play a constructive role in shaping school policies. Citizens' groups of whatever kind can collect information from communities where school integration has succeeded — and profit from their experience. All the channels of communication can be put to effective use — the press, the pulpit, speakers' bureaus, radio, television, conferences, workshops, and the rest.

Owen J. Roberts, former associate justice of the United States Supreme Court, aptly summed up the task which lies ahead when he wrote in his forward to the Ashmore report: "The ultimate solution of (this) problem will rest with the men and women who make and execute public school policy in thousands of local school districts, and their actions will be conditioned by the degree of understanding of the general public which supports their efforts with its tax dollars."



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