TENSION, RESISTANCE, AND TRANSITION:

SCHOOL DESEGREGATION IN RICHMOND'S NORTH SIDE, 1960-63

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Curry School of Education

University of Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

By

Carmen Francine Foster, B.S., M.S., M.P.A.

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Department of Leadership, Foundations, and Policy
Curry School of Education
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia

APPROVAL OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation, "Tension, Resistance, and Transition: School Desegregation in Richmond's North Side, 1960-63," has been approved by the Graduate Faculty of the Curry School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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Dr. Derrick P. Alridge, Advisor

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Dr. Robert W. Covert

_____
Dr. Stanley C. Trent

_____Date

This work is dedicated to:

The children, now adults, who left the nurturing cocoon of segregated black schools. They bravely faced "a different world" of white schools in Richmond during the early 1960s.

The black educators during segregation. Their heartfelt mission to care, teach, and guide black children has had enormous value, worth, and dignity in uplifting the race and upholding the cultural heritage of the black community during Jim Crow in Richmond.

My devoted mother, Dorothy Chase Hisle Foster (1925-2014). Her role in my life has been as my most profound teacher. I am always grateful for her love, caring, and encouragement, especially during my dissertation writing.

My dear father, Dr. Francis Merrill Foster, Sr. (1921-2008). He was a caring humanitarian and quintessential griot for Richmond's black community. My deepest regret is that his earthly presence was not available to tenderly guide me through the nuances waiting to be discovered and deciphered from this research. He most certainly would have known the story behind each story and the people and events behind each story. I have certainly channeled his insights for sources to guide me through this work. His spirit remains in my heart and in this work. During this research quest, I often asked myself, "What would Daddy tell me about this? Who else is around that he would tell me to talk to?" I would often hear his spirit respond, "Keep on keepin' on."

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My parents taught me how to read before I was four. I could not wait for my fifth birthday so that I could register for a library card at the Richmond Public Library as Dad held my hand to sign my name. Libraries, knowledge, and wisdom were his particular passions. They are also mine.

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conversations. This dissertation salutes the black students that desegregated Chandler Junior High. They truly sacrificed their tender adolescent years to prime the pump for school desegregation in Richmond in the early 1960s. Their courage remains unsung.

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A very special thanks to Nathaniel Lee, my "brother by another mother." His compassion, caring, loyalty, and friendship are immeasurable gifts that provided attention to my mother's eldercare needs. His support made my move to Charlottesville possible.

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My dearest son, Dr. Kenneth Xavier Warren, Jr., insisted – no – badgered me incessantly to return to UVa to finish my doctorate after he completed his doctorate in May 2011. He and my amazing daughter-in-law, Mia Matthews Warren, have stuck by me through pneumonia, family crises, injury, eldercare, extended overnight stays, and, as I near the finish line, treatments to defeat breast cancer and my dear mother's demise.

Kenneth has been my protégé and also my mentor. He is a guide, coach, classmate, critic, cheerleader, and best friend. His unconditional love always reminds me that I have worth and value. My heart glows to watch him mature to manhood, complete his education from Mr. Jefferson's university, serve as an educator, professor, digital chronicler, and manifest his own astute cultural consciousness and confidence as an independent and responsible black man. *"I am a part of you, and you're a part of me."*

This dissertation is for Kenneth and the generations that follow. As ancestors, my mother, my dad, and his first cousin, Alice Jackson Stuart, would nod with approval.

Mom and Dad represent the past. Ken represents the future.
Every moment of life's journey is a gift.
That's why it's called the ***present****.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

On September 6, 1960, two black youngsters, Carol Swann and Gloria Mead, entered the all-white J.A.C. Chandler Junior High School, the epicenter for school integration in Richmond's North Side. The *Richmond Afro-American* reported the students' first day as "normal, quite normal." Two years later, eighty black students enrolled at Chandler. The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* headlined the September 1962 opening of schools as "quiet," as desegregation's ripple effect opened the doors of five additional white city schools to about forty additional black students. The ripples reached southward to adjacent Chesterfield County as it integrated its first white school, Ettrick Elementary. By September 1963, 129 black students had enrolled at Chandler, representing a third of the 369 black students enrolled in Richmond's predominantly white schools. Henrico County, Richmond's northward neighbor, opened its white schools to fifty-eight black students. Richmond was unlike Arlington, Charlottesville, Warren County, and Norfolk school systems, which required a court order to thwart the Virginia Pupil Placement Board's authority to deny black students entry into white

schools. Richmond was the first locality to provide token desegregation without a court order.[1]

However, events leading to school desegregation in Richmond were not normal, not quiet, not fast, and not easy. By 1960, the Richmond Public School Board led a dual school system that served a student population that was over 50 percent black. Black students and educators contended with overcrowded facilities, large class sizes, and double shifts. The School Board stalled at the sidelines as the Virginia Pupil Placement Board usurped their authority to approve black student transfer requests to white schools, hedge court suits, and deny black students admission into white public schools in Richmond. Tension heated up the color divide in downtown Richmond as blacks boosted their voting strength, protested the Placement Board's application process, and staged boycotts to force integration at lunch counters downtown. Tension swelled among whites in Richmond's North Side, who were hostile and fearful for the future of their all-white junior high and their traditionally all-white neighborhoods. Tensions between blacks and whites intensified as black families surged closer to the invisible residential borders delineating white from black. Black Richmonders galvanized a collective of church,

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[1] "Normal," *Richmond Afro-American*, September 10, 1960. "Return To Classes Quiet Here," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 7, 1962. "Integration in Henrico is Quiet," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 4, 1963. "41,066 Enrolled in City's Schools," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 7, 1963. According to historian Robert A. Pratt, 312 black students were enrolled in the school system. See *Southern School News* 10 (November 1963): 8, cited in Pratt, "A Promise Unfulfilled: School Desegregation in Richmond, Virginia, 1956-1986," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 99, no. 4 (October 1991):425. However, investigation into the *Southern School News* source reveals this attendance number came from a speech by National Urban League head Roy Wilkins. For this dissertation, I use attendance figures published in the Richmond newspapers as a primary source.

civic, social, and alumni networks to endure the friction of white resistance to integration.[2]

Background of the Study

This study provides a backdrop to investigate the interplay of this community friction and tension, from the passive-aggressive measures of city and state officials to resist and constrain school desegregation, to the persistence of some and ambivalence of other black parents in seeking integration as a path to a better education for their children. Richmond had a significantly large black population with a staunch base of well-educated, politically astute black professionals and educators. Many were groomed for civic engagement and community leadership by their alma mater, Virginia Union University, a campus anchored between the fringe of Richmond's North Side and the central city. Richmond's heritage as the former Confederate capital was a symbol of southern pride to whites and of southern oppression to blacks. Therefore, school desegregation was a more nuanced matter to complicate power, privilege, and politics between whites and blacks, affecting not only the fate of the city school system, but the future of Richmond.

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[2] Christopher Silver and John V. Moeser, *The Separate City: Black Communities in the Urban South, 1940-1968* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 77-78. City of Richmond, Virginia, Richmond Public School Board. *Minutes*, (September 25, 1959), 303. Richmond Area Leadership Conference Records, 1960. L. Douglas Wilder Library, Virginia Union University. The Virginia General Assembly created the Virginia Pupil Placement Board in 1956 to support the state's massive resistance to the 1954 *Brown* decision. The Placement Board took over authority from local school boards to determine pupil transfers to thwart black transfer requests to white schools. See Sara K. Eskridge, "Virginia's Pupil Placement Board and the Practical Applications of Massive Resistance, 1956-1966," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 118, no. 3 (2000): 247.

Richmond's civic elite of white businessmen and lawyers wielded their political and economic influence along with a "genteel brand" of white paternalism, understood as the "Virginia Way," to ensure appearances of racial harmony in order to uphold the image of a stable business climate for the capital city. The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* boasted in an editorial about a 1962 *Washington Post* headline that proclaimed, "Richmond Quietly Leads the Way in Race Relations," as the *Post* heralded the former confederate capital as "one of the exciting racial stories of the South" with a "pace that astonishes many Richmonders, white and Negro." The *Times-Dispatch* editorial lauded the *Post* reporter's impressions, which claimed that "Richmond's race relations are good, and always have been good; that the Negro vote is becoming important here. . . . This is all a part of the evolutionary race pattern in Richmond." Smoldering behind headlines were realities that the "Virginia Way" had blistered from the rising heat of integration.[3]

Attorney Oliver W. Hill, a resident of Richmond's North Side and chief legal counsel for the Virginia chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), brazenly advanced against Virginia's massive resistance to school desegregation. Virginia Governors Thomas B. Stanley (1954-1958) and J. Lindsay

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[3] Marie Tyler McGraw, *At the Falls: Richmond, Virginia and Its People* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 279. J. Douglas Smith, *Managing White Supremacy: Race, Politics and Citizenship in Jim Crow Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 4. Smith attributes former *Richmond News Leader* editor, Douglas Southall Freeman, who coined the term, "the Virginia Way" to describe how white elites maintained order, stability and harmony in managing race relations. White elites managed violence and oppression by white masses and expected blacks to seek favor and redress through channels designed by white elites. In return, white elites oversaw black educational and economic endeavors. "Virginia's Story Gets Across," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 2, 1962. "Richmond Quietly Leads the Way in Race Relations," *Washington Post*, July 29, 1962.

Almond (1958-1962), the Virginia General Assembly, the political organization of U.S. Senator Harry F. Byrd, and James J. Kilpatrick, editor of the *Richmond News Leader* and self-anointed firebrand of massive resistance, marshaled white segregationist sentiment statewide to intensify resistance to school integration as an affront to their southern way of life.

Richmond dodged the national spotlight on racial tensions such as those provoked by the 1957 integration of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, even though Virginia's Capitol Square fueled the massive resistance movement to rally white segregationists statewide against the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision by the United States Supreme Court. Governor Almond had shut down school systems in Warren County, Charlottesville, and Norfolk in September 1958 to defy court desegregation orders, conceding only after the Virginia Supreme Court and a three-judge federal court in Norfolk delivered same-day rulings in January 1959 that rang a death knell to Virginia's massive resistance movement that attempted to maintain segregated schools.[4]

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[4] *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka,* 347 U.S. 483 (1954). "State, US Courts Deal a Death Blow," *Richmond Afro-American*, January 24, 1959. Pratt, *The Color of Their Skin: Education and Race in Richmond, Virginia, 1954-1989* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1992), 10-11. The Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals ruled that section 129 of the Virginia Constitution required the state to "maintain an efficient system of public free schools throughout the state;" therefore, the Governor's actions were in violation of the state constitution. The Norfolk federal court declared that the state statute used to close the schools rather than integrate was invalid and violated the Fourteenth Amendment. See *James v. Almond*, 170 F. Supp. 331 (1959), 337-38, and *Harrison v. Day*, 200 Va. 439 (1959), as cited in Pratt, *Color of Their Skin,* 114.

Richmond city schools were next in line for integration. White city officials used token integration as a slow-motion ploy to show good-faith compliance to the courts and to keep the mounting legal victories of Oliver Hill and the NAACP at bay. Hoping to marginalize the momentum of integration, white officials counted on the reluctance of black parents to cast their children into the fray of white schools and antagonistic white neighborhoods. The black children and families who dared to enter Chandler Junior High were trailblazers to advance the school desegregation movement forward in Richmond.[5]

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is twofold: 1) to present the complex and tenuous environment surrounding school desegregation in Richmond, and 2) to privilege the unheard voices and views of black students, parents, and educators who participated in and witnessed the desegregation of the Richmond schools during the early 1960s. This investigation examines Chandler Junior High from 1960 to 1963 as a case study that underscores the ambiguity and complexity of school desegregation facing black families and students and that also grapples with the impact this transition had on them as they moved school desegregation forward.[6]

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[5] Pratt, *Color of Their Skin*, 25, 32.

[6] James West Davidson and Mark Hamilton Lyle, *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 172. Davidson and Lyle describe the "bottom rail" as an approach toward crafting social histories "of those at the center of the drama" whose narratives are marginalized by historians whose bias leans toward archival documentation by privileged elites. The "bottom rail" represents the lowest rail of the fence and is used as a metaphor by Davidson and Lyle to represent those on the lowest levels of American society. The narratives of black parents and students of the school

Questions guiding this study include:

1. What were the socio-political events surrounding the eventual desegregation of Chandler Junior High School?
2. What decisions and choices did black parents make to select schools for their children during the early years of school desegregation in Richmond's North Side?
3. What social and cultural factors influenced the roles that black community institutions played in Richmond school desegregation?
4. What challenges did black students and families confront to desegregate Chandler Junior High School during 1960 to 1963?

Resistance to integration was as complicated an issue for blacks as it was for whites, but for very different reasons. By probing the tradeoffs, dilemmas, and challenges facing these black students and families who volunteered to integrate Chandler, this study expects to provide a more nuanced and insightful view of the efforts and effects of desegregation on black participants in this movement. Black parents, rather than school officials, clearly bore the brunt of dismantling Richmond's dual, segregated school system that had a significant black pupil population. As black school enrollment escalated, white enrollment sank and shifted to the surrounding counties. City school

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desegregation era provide a necessary "bottom rail" approach to broaden the documentation of school desegregation in Richmond.

enrollment was 43 percent black by 1954, 50 percent black by 1960, and 60 percent black by 1963.[7]

Black parents and children who volunteered for integration faced dilemmas that impacted connections with their neighborhood schools and relationships with their community, families, and friends. They sacrificed the comfort of childhood friends, protection of older siblings, familiar schools, teachers, and neighborhoods for unwelcoming white schools and white environments steeped in racial prejudice.[8]

Most students who pioneered integration at Chandler had their elementary education shaped by black educators at North Side's Albert V. Norrell Elementary School from junior primary (kindergarten) through the fifth grade. They spent the sixth grade at Baker Street School before entering Benjamin A. Graves Junior High School for the seventh grade.[9]

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[7] "Nearly 60% of Pupils in City are Negroes," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 13, 1963. Pratt, *Color of Their Skin*, xi.

[8] Pratt, *Color of Their Skin*, xi. Silver and Moeser, 77.

[9] Albert V. Norrell, a graduate of Richmond Colored Normal School in 1872-1873, was a respected citizen and educator at Navy Hill and Booker T. Washington Schools. Norrell served briefly as the first black principal of Navy Hill School in 1883-1884, one of three black principals during the short-lived "Readjuster" movement. See Shirley Callihan, *A Mini-History of the Richmond Public Schools 1869-1992*. (Richmond, Va.: Richmond Public Schools, 1992), 148. Benjamin A. Graves, born on November 10, 1863, was a graduate of Richmond Colored Normal School and taught in King William and Chesterfield Counties before returning to teach the sixth grade at the old Valley School. Graves was commissioned as a captain in the Sixth Virginia Volunteers, Company C, during the Spanish-American War. An educator for 30 years, Graves was active in church and civic affairs as well as a past grandmaster of his Masonic lodge and an editor for the newspaper published by the Grand Fountain of the United Order of True Reformers. He was also a member of the board of visitors for the Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute, now Virginia State University. The city opened a new high school for blacks in 1952 in Richmond's East End, naming it

Children educated at Norrell School were influenced by an educational legacy crafted by Ethel Thompson Overby, Richmond's first black female principal. Mrs. Overby was an outspoken, formidable educator with a hard-earned, Columbia University master's degree from 1932. She garnered a fierce reputation for engaging generations of black students and families with a respect for civic responsibility, literacy, and black history. Although she retired as Norrell's principal in 1958, Mrs. Overby remained a vital community presence as finance chairman for the Richmond Crusade for Voters, an influential force working to increase black voter registration. Several teachers at Norrell Elementary, such as Mrs. Overby, held graduate degrees. Advanced degrees were not unusual among black educators in Richmond. In fact, more black teachers at Benjamin A. Graves Junior High held master's degrees than white teachers did at Chandler.[10]

Armstrong High School. The old Armstrong building at Leigh and Prentice Streets in downtown Richmond's Jackson Ward was then converted to a junior high for blacks and renamed for Captain Graves. See "Old Armstrong School to Be Renamed for Educator Benjamin A. Graves," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, July 30, 1952. Norrell and Graves were two of the thirteen former Richmond slaves who pooled their resources to start the *Richmond Planet*, forerunner to the *Richmond Afro-American*. See The Library of Virginia, "John Mitchell, Jr., and the Richmond Planet," http://www.lva.virginia.gov/exhibits/mitchell/ajax.htm (accessed October 24, 2013).

[10] An analysis from the roster of teachers hired for the 1959-1960 school year shows among white schools, Chandler Junior High had a teaching staff of forty-one, eight with master's degrees. J.E.B. Stuart Elementary had a teaching staff of seventeen, two with master's degrees. Among black schools, Graves Junior High had a teaching staff of fifty-eight, sixteen with master's degrees; Albert V. Norrell Elementary had a teaching staff of twenty-five, eight with master's degrees; Baker Street Elementary School had a teaching staff of forty-six, seventeen with master's degrees. Norrell and Baker Schools served black elementary students in Richmond's North Side. See City of Richmond, Virginia. Richmond Public School Board. *Minutes*, (April 29, 1959), 231-256. Ethel Overby, Richmond's first black female principal, led Norrell School from 1950-1958 and was well known for promoting academic achievement, citizenship education and civic engagement. See Adah Ward Randolph and Stephanie Sanders, "In Search of Excellence in Education: The Political, Academic and Curricular Leadership of Ethel Overby," *Journal of School Leadership*, no. 21 (2011): 521-547. See also, Ethel Thompson Overby and Emma Thompson Richardson, "*It's Better to Light a Candle than to Curse the Darkness": The Autobiographical Notes of*

Black parents supported their neighborhood schools with caring, capable, and erudite black educators who were integral to community life in black Richmond. Black parents were fiercely protective as they taught their children how to navigate the racial divide between black and white. The tradeoff with integration limited their ability to shield their children from unwelcome white hostility as well as unfamiliar white teachers and students. It also involved deciding whether to enroll their children in white schools with better facilities, adequate resources, balanced class sizes, and up-to-date textbooks or to make the most from overcrowded black schools with shabby buildings, meager resources, double shifts, and tattered texts. Richmond's dual school system perpetuated inequity in school resources and facilities, routinely converting older white schools into black schools as neighborhoods shifted from white to black.

While black schools were woefully under-resourced, they owned a wealth of social capital in the black community, particularly through alliances with popular black high school alumni networks from Armstrong and Maggie Walker High Schools. These networks were tightly entwined with black neighborhoods, churches, families, and social and civic organizations. These networks signified an educational rite of passage for Richmond's black adolescents and provided an affiliation, identity, and connection to school legacies that epitomized their cultural and community heritage. Some parents were concerned that their children would lose access to these social networks, connections to

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Ethel Thompson Overby (Richmond, Va.: Self-published, 1975). Jean Thompson Williams, in discussion with the author, August 25, 2013. Williams is Overby's niece.

their cultural heritage, as well as college and career guidance, after they entered white schools.[11]

Black parents who worked for whites faced intimidation, and their livelihoods were at stake, due to their public support for the NAACP's effort to integrate schools. For several years, the Virginia General Assembly's Committee on Offenses Against the Administration of Justice summoned the NAACP, the branches of the Virginia State Conference of the NAACP, and the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund to disclose the names of donors who contributed twenty-five dollars or more in order to force them to reveal their supporters. During the push to integrate Virginia's schools, the NAACP appealed to reverse this summons, citing Fourteenth Amendment rights of privacy.[12]

Threats, dilemmas, and ambivalence narrowed the burden of integration to a much smaller but influential number of black self-employed professionals, business owners, educators, and activists who could withstand such pressures to enroll their children in white schools. Many lived in Richmond's North Side, were members of the

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[11] Carlotta Walls LaNier, *A Mighty Long Way: My Journey to Justice at Little Rock Central High School* (New York: One World Books, 2009), 53-54. As one of the "Little Rock Nine," LaNier's memoir describes a similar ambivalence by family members who had little confidence that white teachers would prepare and nurture black students "to be twice as good and work twice as hard" to strive for meaningful future careers that benefitted the black community. Roy A. West, in discussion with the author, July 27, 2013. Wendell T. Foster, Jr., in discussion with the author, January 12, 2014.

[12] "NAACP Seeks Reversal of Court Ruling on Donors," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 21, 1962.

local NAACP, and were connected to varied networks representing social, civic, and church groups grounded in racial uplift and social justice.

By 1963, over 300 black students enrolled in Richmond's white schools – more than one third were at Chandler. The presence of black students at Chandler from 1960 to 1963 primed the pump to motivate black parents and children in other Richmond neighborhoods to join their ranks by weighing tradeoffs and bearing the sacrifice to desegregate Richmond Public Schools. This study considers how their participation initiated desegregation and racial change in Richmond's North Side.[13]

While whites had perceived that "a good education could never be achieved within a predominantly black setting," blacks had viewed education in a white setting as a means to obliterate the inequities of second-class status and the stigma of racial inferiority. Equal access to education, as with access to public accommodations, employment, and housing, was a crucial political goal to shatter racial barriers symbolizing the core of the former Confederate capital in the 1960s.[14]

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[13] Pratt, *Color of Their Skin,* 32, 36, 44. "41,066 Enrolled in City's Schools," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 7, 1963.

[14] Pratt, *Color of Their Skin,* 108-109.

Significance of the Study

Black youth, in the context of their families and communities, have been integral to the civil rights movement in the South, through school integration, department store boycotts, lunch counter demonstrations, and freedom marches, as well as through experiencing racial violence, maiming, and murder. All these events provide a backdrop for this study to provide insight into shared experiences of black children and families, emergent black leadership, and community activism in Richmond's civil rights movement. Black parents and children struggled within their community regarding the complexities of integration. The momentum to push for civil rights locally, statewide, and nationally created an internal tension and ambivalence inside the black community that manifested an outward, public appearance of support, while the undertone of private conversations murmured skepticism and concern for the wellbeing of black children and the self-determination and survival of black institutions. Therefore, this study provides a particular context to establish a more engaged local history narrative that describes a more sophisticated analysis of the experiences of black students involved in the early phase of school integration.

Other research efforts pertaining to Richmond schools either acknowledge integration or focus on the aftermath of desegregation in white Richmond area high schools. This study probes deeper than routine acknowledgment of tattered textbooks, crowded classrooms, and substandard facilities to capture the voice and presence from those who witnessed Richmond school desegregation during the early 1960s. As a result,

this knowledge renders a cultural and historical framework for present day educators who address public education challenges and opportunities in school systems such as present-day Richmond that serve populations which are overwhelmingly black in economically distressed, urban environments.[15]

Organization of Chapters

This study consists of six chapters. Chapter One offers an introduction to present research questions and significance for the study, discusses relevant literature, and describes research methods employed. Chapter Two illustrates the interplay of two separate racial communities of Richmond in the aftermath of the 1954 *Brown* decision. Richmond, the Commonwealth's capital and former Capital of the Confederacy, is the staging platform for massive resistance to school desegregation. Friction sparks between the state legislature, the Virginia Pupil Placement Board, the NAACP and black Richmond parents concerned about disparities between black and white school facilities.

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[15] See Pratt, *Color of Their Skin*. See also, Daniel Linden Duke, *The School That Refused to Die: Continuity and Change at Thomas Jefferson High School* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995). Duke covers the school's 1930 opening through 1993. Educational historian Vanessa Siddle Walker notes that Duke's discussion of the school's "glory days" describes the school at its best during its all-white school years prior to desegregation. She counters that Duke's description of the black children who entered Thomas Jefferson after desegregation is "ahistorical - as though the children just arrived on the educational scene in the 1970s with nothing but a plethora of problems." See Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 10-11, 229, note 37. I find this critique of importance, as I attended Thomas Jefferson High from 1965 to 1969. See also, James E. Ryan, *Five Miles Away, a World Apart: One City, Two Schools and the Story of Educational Opportunity in Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). Ryan contrasts Thomas Jefferson High School in Richmond and Douglas Freeman High School in nearby Henrico County to trace the impact of 1970s court rulings on educational disparities in urban and suburban schools. See also, Laura Browder and Patricia Herrara, "Civil Rights and Education in Richmond, Virginia," *Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship & Pedagogy* 23, no. 1 (2012): 15-36. Browder and Herrara described a theater project framed around George Wythe High School in the 1970s after busing transformed the school from white to black.

The state legislature established the Placement Board as an agency to impede intentional integration by shifting student placement from local school boards to state control. These tensions trigger unease between the Richmond City Council and the Richmond School Board as they jockey their authority to ward off integration in three ways: 1) with new white high school construction, 2) by converting older white school buildings to black, and 3) through annexation of Henrico County to dilute black voting strength. Chapter Three tracks the events of 1960 as black Richmonders represent a show of force to assert their agency to integrate lunch counters, and as School Board and city officials deliberately face off about whether to convert Chandler Junior High in North Side to a black school, keep it white, or integrate it in September 1960. Chandler's token integration begins with the experiences of youngsters Gloria Mead and Carol Swann and sets the stage for the next group of black students poised to follow them in 1961. Chapter Four presents a string of events surrounding black students who sought entry into Chandler in 1961. The Placement Board admitted some and denied others, setting off a class action suit, *Bradley v. Richmond School Board*, brought by some of the parents of rejected students in order to protest resistance to desegregation in the city schools. This chapter recounts the experiences of those admitted and those denied admission to Chandler for the 1961-1962 school year. Chapter Five recalls the 1962-1963 school year as a third round of black students enter Chandler. J. E. B. Stuart Elementary, Chandler's white feeder school, integrates with several Norrell students for the first time, a tactic to ensure their placement at Chandler the following year. Chandler's desegregation creates a ripple effect in 1962 when five additional schools admit black students. Chapter Six is the

final chapter, and it features narratives from the fall of 1963. The March on Washington, the Birmingham church bombing that killed four little girls, and the assassination of President John F. Kennedy are significant events during 1963, leading to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The summary completes the study and reflects on the paradox of school desegregation in Richmond, juxtaposing themes extracted from interviews in tandem with discernment from the works of W. E. B. Du Bois and Paul Lawrence Dunbar. This reflective approach infuses meaning into the consequences faced by those who sacrificed their adolescence to participate in the Richmond school desegregation effort. [16]

Historiography

To examine resistance to integration in Richmond and the resilience of students who participated in integration in Richmond's North Side, the historiography of Virginia school desegregation establishes the historical context to investigate perspectives and debates regarding school segregation, southern politics, white antagonism, and black ambivalence toward integration and to distinguish particular circumstances that shaped local efforts to resist and persist with school desegregation.

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[16] *Bradley*, 416 U.S. 696-99 (1962). The Bradley case was not the first court suit against the Richmond School Board, but the second. *Warden v. Richmond School Board* was filed September 2, 1958 by parents of six black children from the East End and far West End, who lived closer to white schools than black schools. This case was not settled until July 5, 1961, after Chandler's 1960 integration and just before the Placement Board's decision to determine student transfers for September 1961. See *Warden*, 6 Race Relations Law Reporter 1025 (ED Va. 1961). The *Warden* case resulted in a lone plaintiff by the time the case was settled; the lone student was placed at the all-white Westhampton School in 1961. The Chandler situation, by contrast, held greater significance because of the tension it garnered between whites and the growing population of blacks in North Side.

Several historians have recounted the southern response to the 1954 Supreme Court decision that overturned the constitutionality of separate but equal school systems. Richard Kluger's *Simple Justice* relies on a wealth of in depth interviews, documents and sources to frame the personalities, cultural complexities, and legal struggles around securing educational equality against white supremacy and the Jim Crow South. As one of four state defendants defeated by *Brown*, Virginia reeled from this crushing setback by rousing a blatant backlash to galvanize white contempt and resistance to the decision. United States Senator Harry Flood Byrd, a Virginia Democrat, led the strategy to marshal the "massive resistance" movement in 1956 to halt integration in Virginia. Robbins L. Gates and Benjamin Muse provide the first studies in the early 1960s to supply accounts of the massive resistance movement in Virginia.[17]

Gates focused on his native Virginia to study massive resistance while a doctoral student at Columbia University, claiming the Commonwealth represented a microcosm of the South, detailing how politicians and legislators contested the state's response to the *Brown* decision. Embedded in the culture of Virginia's heritage, Gates affirms the state's caste system, its southern orthodoxy, and its veneration of its Confederate past to provide

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[17] Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Knopf, 1976). Robbins L. Gates, *The Making of Massive Resistance: Virginia's Politics of Public School Desegregation, 1954-56* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1962). Benjamin Muse, *Virginia's Massive Resistance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961).

context for the intense reaction of many white Virginians who considered the *Brown* decision an egregious affront to the southern social status quo.[18]

Gates slices the state into four categories to assess the reactions of Virginia and its citizens from the time of the 1954 *Brown* decision to September 1956 and to probe how the state crafted its massive resistance policy as well as how this policy represented its citizens in the state's black-belt, white-belt, middle and urban areas. Gates presents this four-way analysis to investigate how the state legislature, instigated and controlled by the Byrd organization, fashioned a one-size-fits-all policy of massive resistance for the state.[19]

Gates distinguishes his study from the journalistic narrative that Muse presents in *Virginia's Massive Resistance*, defining his work as a scholarly examination of the political processes that created massive resistance from 1954 to 1956. Muse's work, published in 1961 before Gates completed the first draft of his study, spotlights political personalities, school closings, and integration efforts in the aftermath of massive resistance up to 1960. Muse points to a top-heavy leaning of politicians, legislators, and interest groups from the black-belt region of Southside Virginia, which vehemently opposed *Brown* and coalesced with Byrd's political machine to wield an all-encompassing set of anti-integration legislation. As a result, the legislature grants the

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[18] Gates, 1-2.

[19] Ibid., 2-12.

governor authority to sever state funding to schools which integrate, to close schools that enrolled a child of one race into the school of another, and to provide tuition grants to children seeking private schools to avoid integration. Muse contends that Virginia's political leaders, trapped by the Byrd machine and the public stage, were more fanatical in their response to address desegregation than the constituents they served. Muse tracks the massive resistance movement from its inception through its demise into "token integration" as federal courts upheld desegregation rulings. While Gates frames the four aspects of Virginia's regions, Muse provides insider journeys into each of these "four Virginias" to capture local aspects of massive resistance's impact across the state and the range of organizations that either supported or tempered the movement.[20]

Muse's narrative and Gates' study from the early 1960s are anchors for subsequent Virginia desegregation studies that have since followed. Both books reflect Gates' observation that massive resistance was an issue pitting whites against whites, rather than whites against blacks. Gates contends that blacks held no agency and were trapped in the

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[20] Ibid., xvii, Note 3; 1-12. Muse, 30-21, 161, 163. North Carolina-born Muse represented Petersburg as a Virginia state senator in 1936 and unsuccessfully ran as a Republican against Colgate Darden for governor of Virginia in 1941. Muse was a columnist for the *Washington Post* and expressed his opinions on race and politics in the South for several liberal magazines. From 1959 to 1964 he led the Southern Leadership Project of the Southern Regional Council. *Virginia's Massive Resistance* was written to advise and caution white leadership in the South that massive resistance and court defiance would not prevail. Muse's papers are located in the Special Collections Library of the University of Virginia. See Matthew D. Lassiter, "Benjamin Muse (1898-1986)." *Encyclopedia Virginia*. http://www.EncyclopediaVirginia.org/Muse_Benjamin_1898-1986 (accessed October 20, 2013).

South's racial caste system as objects of southern politics during this initial chronicle of the Virginia's massive resistance movement.[21]

Robert Collins Smith examines the Prince Edward County school closure with *They Closed Their Schools,* a 1965 first account of local school desegregation. Smith uses his journalistic prowess to track events that led to the 1951 strike by black students at Moton High School, the 1954 *Brown* decision ordering desegregation, the county's response to massive resistance, and the 1964 Supreme Court ruling demanding the county to operate integrated schools. Prince Edward County's board of supervisors refused to appropriate school funding from 1959 to 1964, essentially shutting down the school system rather than integrating it. An editor for the Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot,* Smith strives for a personal and straightforward narrative of people and events to balance both sides of the desegregation issue, even though the *Virginian-Pilot* blatantly opposed the politics of the Byrd machine.[22]

The Rise of Massive Resistance by Numan V. Bartley positions the movement in Virginia in context with its southern sister states. Old South traditionalism attracted

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[21] Gates, 24, 202-203.

[22] Robert Collins Smith, *They Closed Their Schools: Prince Edward County 1951-1964* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965).

support from plantation-era cities as well as from small towns to oppose civil rights initiated by the Truman administration.[23]

J. Harvie Wilkinson and James Ely recount Byrd's pivotal role in orchestrating the politics of massive resistance statewide and on the national stage. Wilkinson's *Harry Byrd and the Changing Face of Virginia Politics, 1945-1966* provides extensive documentation to describe the rise and fall of a political oligarchy unable to respond or compromise with the needs of a post-World War II Virginia. Wilkinson uses election statistics, as well as maps and charts, to describe Byrd's local, statewide, and national influence, demonstrating how Byrd dominated Virginia politics. Subtle fractures crept into the machine before the 1954 *Brown* decision, prompting Wilkinson to probe how the starting points of massive resistance are a consequence of the eclipse of Byrd's stronghold of power. Ely provides a broader perspective to target how the Byrd organization dominated Virginia's political elite through *The Crisis of Conservative Virginia*. Ely gives a nod to Muse's 1961 self-serving research and takes advantage of the gap in time and availability of research collections that bolster interpretations that massive resisters were instrumental in holding back integration and accomplished more than expected. White attitudes toward racism, he claims, may be less vocal as whites adjust to integration; yet wherever "high value" is assigned, "such as schools and clubs," the "lines

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[23] Numan V. Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance: Race and Politics in the South During the 1950's* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), 17-18, 94, 108-14. Bartley broadens the context of massive resistance in the South and its aftermath in *The New South, 1945-1980* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995). See Chapter VII, "Interposition, Moderation, and the Federal Government," 223-260.

of caste" prevail. Ely publishes an extensive listing of primary and secondary sources to guide opportunities for further study, sources which anchor commentary on Virginia's conservative political core and challenge Muse's earlier liberal leanings.[24]

By the 1990s, the moderate stance against massive resistance emerges as a middle ground to counter the polarities of the liberal integrationist for and the staunch segregationist against school desegregation. *The Moderates' Dilemma: Massive Resistance to School Desegregation in Virginia,* a compilation of essays edited by Matthew Lassiter and Andrew Lewis, stakes new ground in scholarship about the moderate stance against massive resistance to keep the schools open and the Byrd operation at bay. Moderates did not favor integration. Instead, they sought to reframe the question of support for public education as a means to neutralize race as an issue to attract support. Lassiter showcases Muse's desire to nudge the voices of silent moderates to build a constituency rather than to remain in hushed isolation. J. Douglas Smith tracks the efforts of state legislator Armistead L. Boothe in the struggle to moderate local option and gradual desegregation as compliance alternatives to a staunchly segregationist Byrd operation. The distinctions between moderates and conservations appear narrow, as the caste system of white supremacy underpins each group's stance.[25]

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[24] J. Harvie Wilkinson, *Harry Byrd and the Changing Face of Virginia Politics, 1945-1966* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1968). James W. Ely, Jr., *The Crisis of Conservative Virginia: The Byrd Organization and the Politics of Massive Resistance* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976), vi, 206-7, 209-13.

[25] Matthew D. Lassiter and Andrew B. Lewis, eds., *The Moderates' Dilemma: Massive Resistance to School Desegregation in Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998). See also, J. Douglas

Challenging segregation in Virginia was cultural heresy among whites, yet Lenoir Chambers, editorial page editor for the *Virginian-Pilot*, had the courage to oppose Norfolk's school closings and face down massive resistance. Chambers was a counterpoint to James J. Kilpatrick, editor of the *Richmond News Leader* and the mouthpiece for massive resisters. In *Standing Before the Shouting Mob*, Alexander Leidholdt investigates how Chambers shaped public opinion during massive resistance and provides significant detail to demonstrate the paper's impact to crumple massive resistance on a local, statewide, and national level. Chambers received a Pulitzer Prize to recognize the five-year editorial campaign that stared down massive resistance and smoothed Norfolk's progress toward integration.[26]

From the 1990s on, several studies shift from recounting school desegregation as an issue among whites, as Gates noted in his 1961 work, to using localized accounts to provide new fresh perspectives on the early years of Virginia's school desegregation efforts. *The Color of Their Skin* investigates the struggle for and the cost of integration in Richmond from 1954 to 1989, the year when Richmond desegregation efforts finally ended. Historian Robert Pratt relies on school board minutes, newspaper accounts, and interviews from black and white public figures, students, and families to document the appalling price paid to integrate a system that was almost half black before the *Brown*

Smith, "When Reason Collides with Prejudice: Armistead Lloyd Boothe and the Politics of Desegregation in Virginia, 1948-1963," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 102, no. 1 (January 1994): 5-46.

[26] Alexander Leidholdt, *Standing Before the Shouting Mob: Lenoir Chambers and Virginia's Massive Resistance to Public School Integration* (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1997).

decision and almost 90 percent black thirty-five years later. Richmond's public schools remained open as officials resorted to a passive resistance strategy of token integration to comply with the courts in 1960. Pratt cites earlier works from political science professor John Moeser, urban planning professor Christopher Silver, and sociologist Rutledge Dennis, who have documented Richmond's political landscape in terms of local politics and as the site of the state capital. Those sources, among others, build Pratt's premise that "the color of their skin" was the major impediment to moving school integration forward in Richmond.[27]

In 1996, Pratt challenged researchers to delve into unchartered domains for civil rights scholarship. Historians Brian Daugherity and Charles C. Bolton edited *With All Deliberate Speed*, a collection of twelve essays representing Virginia and other states to examine efforts of NAACP officials, local blacks, and advocates that implemented desegregation in the face of white antagonism. As editors, they claim Virginia civil rights history has heretofore emphasized "the role of government officials, segregationist organizations, white liberals or moderates, and a handful of influential black attorneys."

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[27] Pratt, *Color of Their Skin*, 110. Silver and Moeser. See also, Moeser and Rutledge M. Dennis, *The Politics of Annexation: Oligarchic Power in a Southern City* (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing Co., 1982) for a local political overview of black and white tensions in Richmond before, during, and after integration.

Their work intentionally considers efforts of black activism, protests, and demonstrations that spurred the broader civil rights agenda.[28]

Jill Ogline Titus authored *Brown's Battleground* in 2011 to document the courage and sacrifice of black families in Prince Edward County, Virginia, affected by school closure. While Kluger masterfully introduced the painful history of Prince Edward in *Simple Justice*, Titus delves deeper into the sagas of black parents and children scrambling for a space and place to sustain their education as a consequence of the school shutdown. Some families moved; some children were sent away to live with relatives; some attended out-of-state schools; and others were left without a place to learn for five years. Titus traces the Prince Edward story through the early 1970s, moving through the 1963 civil rights movement, the free schools funded by sympathetic foundations, and the eventual reopening of public schools.[29]

The historiography of Virginia school desegregation was first shaped by the terrain of political and legislative wrangling by whites who reacted, responded, and resisted the Supreme Court's edict that endangered the privilege of whiteness in southern society. The first generation of historians who followed Gates and Muse placed white agency at center stage to script desegregation's threat to white authority in the first

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[28] Pratt, "New Directions in Virginia's Civil Rights History," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 104 (Winter 1996): 151. Brian Daugherity and Charles C. Bolton, eds., *With All Deliberate Speed: Implementing Brown v. Board of Education* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2008), vii.

[29] Jill Ogline Titus, *Brown's Battleground: Students, Segregationists and the Struggle for Justice in Prince Edward County, Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

decades of desegregation scholarship. The agency and plight of blacks are trapped in the shadows of white resistance and upheaval.

The next generation of scholars, such as Pratt, Daugherity, Bolton, and Titus, blazed the path for further research that aims light on those shadows, delivering agency to those most affected by segregation, massive resistance, and integration in the 1960s – black children, their parents, and advocates in a quest for simple justice and equal opportunity. This historiography of Virginia school desegregation provides a foothold to explore school desegregation in Richmond's North Side.

Methodological Approach

This study has sought useful answers and perspectives to expand the limited knowledge of how black children experienced the transition from black schools to white schools during the early years of desegregation in Richmond. David E. Kyvig and Myron A. Marty identified three purposes for historical inquiry: to describe the past, to "measure change over time," and to analyze "cause and consequence." To study community schools, Ronald Butchart advised a deeper reach to search and understand "how, and particularly, why" in comprehending consequences that sharpen insight and

interpretation. A variety of primary, archival resources, and subjects to interview have been available to pursue the how and why of this investigation.[30]

The records of the Virginia Pupil Placement Board have revealed a treasure trove of data to identify student transfer requests from Richmond as well as the entire state. Application forms, board and court proceedings, correspondence, and decision appeals have provided helpful data to construct a useful chronology to document the activism of parents who challenged the Placement Board, a state-sanctioned tool for massive resistance and school desegregation. Parents completed these applications on behalf of their children. The application did not ask for the student's race; however, the home address and the name of the last school attended provided important identifiers to develop a listing of black students who entered Chandler between 1960 and 1963.[31]

Minutes from the Richmond Public School Board are housed in the office of the Clerk of the Richmond Public School Board in Richmond City Hall. These minutes have chronicled a timeline of board deliberations and decisions leading up to the desegregation of Chandler. Official statements from the School Board Chairman, financial costs to maintain dual school systems, and petitions from black Parent Teacher Associations and neighborhood leaders regarding school overcrowding are registered in these public

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[30] David E. Kyvig and Myron A. Marty, *Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You* (Lanham, Md. AltaMira Press, 2010), 19. Ronald E. Butchart, *Local Schools: Exploring Their History* (Nashville: The American Association for State and Local History, 1986), 14-15.

[31] Records of the Virginia Pupil Placement Board, 1957-1966. Accession 26517. State Records Collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va.

documents. These minutes also include a yearly roster of all staff, black and white, hired in the system, noting their years of service and degree of education. This roster was helpful in identifying the school placement of black and white teachers identified in interviews and news clippings. These minutes also included interactions between the Richmond School Board, the Virginia Pupil Placement Board, attorney Oliver Hill, and the Graves Junior High School Parent Teacher Association (PTA) during massive resistance and desegregation, providing triangulation and confirmation of actions and deliberations.[32]

Libraries at the University of Virginia (UVa) in Charlottesville and Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) in Richmond hold microfilm of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, *Richmond News Leader*, and the *Richmond Afro-American* newspapers. The *Times Dispatch* and *News Leader* shaped white, mainstream public opinion on local school desegregation. The *News Leader's* coverage in particular shaped a platform for massive resistance throughout the state. By contrast, the weekly *Richmond Afro* penetrated the black community as a longstanding advocate against Jim Crow, revealing opinions of community activists and civil rights supporters in greater detail. I focused on

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[32] The yearly roster identifies teachers and their teaching credentials (bachelor's, master's, etc.) As a separate inquiry of research, these rosters can guide research to compare the graduate training of black teachers to white teachers. See *Minutes*, (August 27, 1958), 230-256; (May 17, 1960), 349-377; (May 15, 1961), 59-109; (May 21, 1962) 184-211). Many black teachers were able to secure graduate education at prestigious universities outside of the Commonwealth of Virginia through state tuition funding after Alice C. Jackson, a graduate of Virginia Union, was rejected by the University of Virginia in 1935. See University of Virginia, "Breaking Tradition, Separate but not Equal: Breaking and Making Tradition - Women at the University of Virginia," http://www2.lib.virginia.edu/exhibits/women/breaking_tradition1.html (accessed October 25, 2013).

coverage in the *Richmond Afro* to identify issues important to its black readership that might not be covered in the *Times-Dispatch* or *News Leader*. I also compared coverage in white newspapers to identify issues important to the white community that were of lesser importance to the black community as another means to triangulate my sources.

The Special Collections Library at VCU holds the papers of Henry I. Willett, then superintendent of Richmond Public Schools, and Virginia Hamilton Crockford, who was appointed to the School Board in 1962. I reviewed these collections to inform my research.[33]

VCU also holds *Voices of Freedom*, a digital collection of eleven videotapes and complete transcripts produced by the Virginia Civil Rights Movement Video Initiative. In particular, these tapes featured interviews with Raymond Boone, former editor of the *Richmond Afro*; Richmond attorneys Oliver Hill and Henry Marsh; Dr. William Ferguson Reid, a leader in the Crusade for Voters; and Dr. Laverne Byrd Smith, a black educator and activist. These digital interviews have informed my perspectives on desegregation and provided background for my interview with Dr. Smith, an educator who taught at my elementary school and was an unsung teacher-leader in Richmond's desegregation efforts.[34]

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[33] Virginia Crockford Papers, 1958-1980, (M283). Henry I. Willett Papers, 1946-1974, (M236). James Branch Cabell Library, Special Collections and Archives, (Richmond: Virginia Commonwealth Univ.)

[34] VCU Libraries. Voices of Freedom: videotaped oral histories of leaders of the Civil Rights movement in Virginia. http://dig.library.vcu.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/voices. (accessed May 12, 2013).

The Special Collections Library at Virginia Union University holds planning documents detailing the development of a steering committee that hosted a Richmond Area Leadership Institute, held on Virginia Union's campus in May 1960 in collaboration with the Richmond Urban League. These documents included a list of black civic and social organizations and officers, meeting agendas, proposed workshops and community issues to tackle. Handouts and rosters of the Richmond Citizens Advisory Committee, formed to support the student sit-ins and downtown boycotts, were also available to review. Several individuals, as leaders of community organizations, are noted in these documents and were parents of children who integrated Chandler. These documents provided insight into the social networks that abounded in the black community to galvanize participation in the downtown boycotts. In my interviews, I have used this data to inform my efforts to identify the variety of social networks that linked parents and children to the desegregation effort.[35]

The reference department of the Richmond Public Library has an extensive collection of news clippings regarding school integration in Richmond. Many of these articles duplicated my review of microfilm from the daily papers from 1958 to 1963. These files also included several articles before 1958, which informed my research. These news clippings disclosed early warning signals to whites that the continued growth

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[35] Richmond Area Leadership Conference Records, 1960, (AR0009). Richmond Citizens Advisory Committee, 1960, (AR0009). L. Douglas Wilder Library and Learning Resource Center, Archives and Special Collections Department (Richmond: Virginia Union Univ.).

of Richmond's black population was a major dilemma threatening the city and school system.

Researcher as Instrument

As a researcher, I have strong social, educational and community affiliations with the participants interviewed for this study. I am a product of Richmond Public Schools, have lived the experience of both segregated and integrated schooling, and am a product of the black Richmond community. As an adult, I have straddled both sides of the city's racial divide as a former teacher in the 1970s and in significant roles in local government, higher education, and museum administration, along with extensive service for a variety of nonprofit boards, spanning almost three decades,. However, I did not attend Chandler or live in North Side. My elementary years were spent at West End Elementary School, a former white elementary that had been known as John B. Cary. Cary was converted to a black school in 1954 as blacks moved into the Byrd Park neighborhood in the West End. Before desegregation, students at West End were tracked to enter the black Randolph Junior High.

In the spring of 1963, my parents conscientiously visited both Randolph and the white Binford Junior High to determine where their first born would attend. They chose Binford, which had been desegregated during the school year. Their decision was based in part on the urging and recommendation of Randolph's principal, Joseph Ransome. I was ten years old and had a twelfth grade reading level. They determined that I was prepared to handle the academic challenge of a white school, albeit one that primarily

served lower and working class whites from the nearby Oregon Hill neighborhood. As one of the more than 300 black students that comprised the first wave of black children to integrate white schools, I entered the seventh grade at Binford Junior High School in September 1963, along with a small, handpicked group of West End classmates, carefully groomed for entry into Binford.[36]

While I lived in Richmond's West End, my parents had friends and family who lived in North Side, and I grew up among their children. I also participated in occasional out-of-town field trips with Norrell Elementary students. We saw each other on Saturdays during dancing school lessons. Occasionally, I participated in excursions with the Girl Scout troop connected to All Souls Presbyterian Church.

As such, I am quite familiar with the political, historical, and social networks in both Richmond's black and white communities that span multiple generations. My family's roots in the city of Richmond extend from the 1830s from slavery to freedom. The Astoria Beneficial Club, a black men's civic group still thriving, was co-founded by my grandfather, Christopher Foster, along with twenty-one young black men in 1901 as a response to Jim Crow and black disenfranchisement. Christopher Foster was the treasurer

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[36] My parents were from the first generation in their respective families to earn college degrees. My father was a graduate of Armstrong High, Virginia Union University, and Howard University School of Dentistry. My mother was a graduate of Lincoln-Grant High in Covington, Kentucky, Clark College, and Atlanta University, where she earned a master's degree in social work. Our family moved from the centrally located black neighborhood of Jackson Ward to the near West End in Byrd Park in 1955, as whites fled the neighborhood due to "blockbusting." In 1954 a new school building was constructed in the white Carillon neighborhood, adjacent to Byrd Park, to serve white pupils. This building kept the name of John B. Cary, a former school superintendent. See Callihan, 52.

of the Richmond NAACP for over forty years, and, according to family sources, provided the name for the Crusade for Voters. My parents, aunts, and uncles held affiliations with black Greek organizations. In 1963, my mother joined the Richmond chapter of Jack and Jill, Incorporated, a mothers' club that provided cultural enrichment activities for their children, with local chapters across the country. These social networks provide deep familiarity to those who can offer personal narratives describing issues surrounding school desegregation and experiences at Chandler. Therefore, my relationship to Richmond cannot be overemphasized.

As a researcher from the community under investigation, I have attempted to model my scholarship after paradigms identified by educational historian Derrick P. Alridge, who has spotlighted three particular scholars of black education: James Anderson, Vanessa Siddle Walker, and Jerome Morris. According to Alridge, Anderson's research has lifted up themes of "agency and self determination" that have not been accounted for in mainstream historical research. Walker's research has not only offered an insider's viewpoint as a member of the community under investigation but has blended historical and ethnographic approaches to lift up community voices and to accentuate similar themes based on agency and self determination. Morris' research has claimed that black educators have important oral histories with rich insights that have been

systematically excluded from desegregation policy making, yet have been a forerunner to critical race theory.[37]

Alridge has linked the strivings for objectivity faced by black researchers as a "double-consciousness" dilemma. As thought leaders and historians, John Hope Franklin and W.E.B. Du Bois have motivated Alridge to acknowledge subjectivity and to "use consistent and rigorous methodological approaches . . . triangulation of sources" along with "conscientious claims confirmed by corroborating data." As such, I have attempted to employ these frameworks recognized by Alridge with a sense of transparency and self-reflection. While this research is substantiated and triangulated through interviews, archival sources, and analysis of documents to provide relevance and objectivity, I acknowledge that the interpretation of these findings may be shaped by my own cultural, gender, and socioeconomic lenses.[38]

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[37] Derrick P. Alridge, "The Dilemmas, Challenges, and Duality of an African-American Educational Historian," *Educational Researcher* 32 (December 2003): 30.

[38] Alridge, 26. Du Bois described "double-consciousness" as a socio-psychological duality of being black in America, "a peculiar sensation...this sense of looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.... One ever feels his two-ness..." To surmount the dilemma of this duality, Alridge points to Du Bois' premise that a foundation rooted in African and black history and culture has the "vantage point from which to neutralize the notions of black inferiority, hopelessness, and ignorance that were promulgated by white supremacists." See Alridge, *The Educational Thought of W.E.B. Du Bois: An Intellectual History* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2008), 65-66. For the complete passage regarding "double consciousness," see W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Co., 1903, Dover Publications, 1994), 2-3.

Interview Procedures

On June 28, 2013, I received authorization from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Virginia to interview participants. Participants were purposely selected using student transfer forms and documents from Placement Board files, from recommendations from retired educators, and from former students. In all, I interviewed thirty-one individuals during July 2013 to February 2014:

- fifteen students who attended Chandler during 1960 to 1963
- three students who applied to Chandler but were rejected
- two parents (also educators) of Chandler students during 1960 to 1963
- seven retired educators
- one educator whose child transferred to a white school after Chandler's integration
- one Virginia Union professor emeritus (parent of a rejected Chandler applicant)
- one Virginia Union student arrested during the downtown boycott
- one retired black businessman

. All interviews with retired educators, the Virginia Union professor, and retired businessman, were face to face. I also conducted face-to-face interviews with eleven of the eighteen students. The other eight student interviews and the interview with the Virginia Union student were by telephone. Interviews for this study followed consistent procedures and practices and all were audiotaped with permission for later transcription. Three participants shared photographs of either their black elementary schools or a class picture of Chandler, which animated our discussions. Protocol for interviews with

selected participants documented the date and location for each interview. Interview summaries were available to the participants upon request.

These interviews were open-ended and used the following questions to guide discussion:

1. What do you remember about being a student/parent/educator/activist in Richmond during the early 1960s?

2. What discussions do you recall that were important for African American students to remain in segregated schools or choose to attend an integrated school in Richmond during the early 1960s?

3. What black social and civic organizations were involved in the desegregation effort? What is your affiliation with them? Who were the leaders and members?

4. How do you compare the educational quality of the school experience at Norrell Elementary and at Chandler Junior High?

5. What challenges did black students and families confront to desegregate Chandler Junior High?

6. Who else should I interview as I continue my research to explore my question?

I maintained electronic and written field notes to detail observations of interviews and to chronicle observations, insights, and perceptions regarding the research process. An electronic file documents each interview and the amount of time spent in developing data collection efforts. I followed up with participants after interviews to use member checking to ensure accuracy of the research findings with participants.

CHAPTER TWO

RESISTING MASSIVE RESISTANCE IN RICHMOND PRIOR TO 1960

> . . . whenever in Virginia forced race-mixing is attempted,
> it will be resisted and resented, for such compulsion of
> association is contrary to our concept of a free society. . .[39]
> – Virginia Attorney General Albertis S. Harrison, Jr., 1959

Monuments of Confederate soldiers adorn the city's tree-lined streets. St. John's Church in historic Church Hill echoes Patrick Henry's famous "Give me liberty or give me death" speech. Below Church Hill is Shockoe Bottom, the now unrecognizable scene of a once thriving, major economic center in the antebellum South that garnered huge profits from the trade of slaves. This is the paradox of Richmond.

Virginia's capital city is home to Hunton, Williams, Anderson, and Gay (now Hunton and Williams), the prominent southern law firm that steered the Virginia attorney general's office through the doomed legal maneuvers designed to uphold the segregated code of the South. The former Confederate capital is also home to native sons Oliver W. Hill and Spottswood W. Robinson, III, astute NAACP attorneys trained by Howard University Law School Dean Charles Hamilton Houston. Together, they toiled to unravel and dismantle the separate but equal fallacy of Jim Crow that undermined equal

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[39] "Understanding, Tolerance Urged by Attorney General," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 26, 1959. The understanding and tolerance the attorney general sought when he spoke at the Arlington Inter-Service Club Council on November 25, 1959 was not about racial tolerance, as the headline appears to indicate. The attorney general sought their tolerance to support whites in Prince Edward County who operated white private schools to preserve the segregationist view of democratic principles "which recognize freedom from compulsion and freedom of association."

opportunity and justice for blacks in Virginia and elsewhere. Richmond's history and Richmond's realities exist in an awkward paradox for whites and blacks in their experiences of freedom, justice and equality. Massive resistance to school segregation had its roots in Richmond.[40]

Virginia's massive resistance agenda was heavily influenced by the political Byrd organization, manipulating state legislators to create the Virginia Pupil Placement Act, effective December 26, 1956, and a three-person governing body, the Virginia Pupil Placement Board, as a vehicle to barricade integration. Earlier that summer, the Virginia legislature held a special session to develop legislation to maintain tuition grants for private schools, but the same legislation also included measures to withdraw state funding from schools allowing integration and to grant the governor authority to shut down schools threatened by court-ordered integration. This legislation added a bill to intercept court action, setting up a circular, bureaucratic loop to evade the entry of black students into white schools.[41]

Legislators linked to the Byrd organization were keenly motivated to put drastic measures in place because Charlottesville, Arlington, Norfolk, and Newport News were targeted for desegregation suits filed by the NAACP. At the helm of these desegregation

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[40] McGraw, 4, 285. Oliver Hill won a seat on Richmond City Council in 1948 and was narrowly defeated in 1950. The *Richmond Afro-American* promoted his name for consideration to the Richmond Public School Board because of his legal acumen. City Council instead appointed Lewis Powell, a member of the Hunton law firm. Powell rose to chair the School Board in 1952 and served until 1961. Powell later served as a justice in the U.S. Supreme Court. See Pratt, *Color of Their Skin,* 18.

[41] Eskridge, 247-249.

lawsuits was attorney Oliver Hill, the NAACP's chief legal strategist for Virginia and a resident of Richmond's North Side. In an effort to cripple the NAACP during massive resistance, the Virginia legislature also put forward a series of laws against the NAACP to seize its membership lists as a means to intimidate those who provided financial support to challenge segregation.[42]

To safeguard school segregation, the Placement Act transferred authority from local school boards across the state to the Commonwealth itself, thereby giving the Commonwealth the sole authority to place students in schools, based on classroom space availability, safety, and disruption. The legislation intentionally did not specify race as a factor. Instead, the board stressed its responsibility to ensure "efficient" schools. The 1902 Virginia constitution required the state to maintain the "efficient operation of schools." The legislative intent was to use the word "efficient" as a code word for segregation. This way, the state constitution technically made school integration illegal, so the Placement Board would be in violation of state law to cooperate with the integration of schools. While the Placement Board lifted the legal responsibility of student enrollment from school boards, it depended heavily on guidance from over one hundred school boards for recommendations to ease their administrative burden. The Placement Act required students to attend the schools where they were registered as of December 26, 1956, the date of enactment. Black students were thereby locked into place

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[42] Ibid., 248, 264. "Subpoena NAACP Conference Officers," *Richmond Afro-American*, March 30, 1957.

in their currently black, segregated schools, barring them from seeking a transfer to integrate a white school.[43]

Black Richmond Parents Take Action

In March 1957, the Placement Board instructed parents of children newly enrolled in schools to sign a form to authorize the Placement Board to place children in whatever school it deemed appropriate. The Placement Board distributed more than 75,000 of these triplicate-printed forms to parents and guardians of children who met one of four criteria: 1) first-time entry into a Virginia school division – a copy of the child's birth certificate was required if the child was not a Virginia native; 2) graduation from one school to another within the division; 3) transfer to another division; 4) entry into a division after the start of the school session. Although the form made no mention of race, birth certificate information would certainly provide it. The application provided space for comments and recommendations by the local school board regarding school assignments. The Placement Board instructed school superintendents to expel children who did not produce parental signatures after fifteen days from receiving the Placement Board forms.[44]

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[43] Ibid., 249-250.

[44] Pratt, *Color of Their Skin*, 22. "'Keep Our Children in School' - Parents From RPPA to Thwart 'Placement'," *Richmond Afro-American*, April 13, 1957.

A faction of black Richmond parents enrolling children into Norrell Elementary resisted signing off on these applications. The principal of Norrell, Ethel Thompson Overby, subtly colluded with them, crafting a strategy to stall black parents from signing these forms. Whenever parents asked whether to sign, Mrs. Overby first steered them toward Reverend Irvin Elligan, pastor of All Souls Presbyterian Church, who brought his two children to Norrell each day so that he could discourage parents from signing the forms. Richmond Superintendent of Schools, Henry I. Willett, inquired why Norrell School had not submitted signed parental forms. Mrs. Overby could only apologize and say that parents had not cooperated. She also expressed concern about expelling Norrell students into the streets because of unsigned applications. The superintendent acquiesced and extended the deadline two more weeks.[45]

Mrs. Overby had applications in hand when the father of a five-year-old entered Norrell to register his son for school, along with thirty-four other children and their parents. When he refused to sign the application, she directed him to talk to other parents regarding his stance. Not only did he provide an explanation, but he rallied the parents to attend a church meeting that evening to discuss the issue. By April 1957, the parents soon organized the Richmond Pupil Protective Association. Chester M. Hampton, father of the five-year-old, became its president. Hampton was editor of the weekly *Richmond Afro*, a staunch ally with black community leaders to stand against massive resistance and to support the NAACP and the Richmond Crusade for Voters to increase black voter

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[45] Overby, 32.

registration. The parents' group collected funds to retain the services of attorney Oliver Hill, who also had a son attending Norrell School.[46]

The *Richmond Afro* had been tracking Virginia's new pupil placement law since its inception, reporting that U.S. District Judge Walter Hoffman in Norfolk had called it "unconstitutional on its face," on January 11, 1957, and denied the state's motion to dismiss NAACP suits to desegregate schools in Norfolk and Newport News. Hoffman set August 15, 1957 as the date for Norfolk and Newport News to desegregate their schools. Hoffman warned Virginia leaders they had "met their match" if they thought "that no federal judge would have the nerve to jail local school boards for contempt of court if they fail to obey an order to integrate their schools by the date set."[47]

While Hoffman's January order was on appeal, Hampton cautioned black parents in a *Richmond Afro* editorial that the Placement Board was being "unnecessarily hasty . . . and belligerent," and insisted that the state recall the applications until the appeal of Hoffman's decision had been decided by the U.S. Supreme Court. Meanwhile, the state also registered appeals to the Supreme Court to maintain segregation in Arlington County and Charlottesville. U.S. District Judge Albert V. Bryan had ordered Arlington County to desegregate its elementary schools as of January 31, 1957 and its secondary schools in September 1957. U.S. District Judge John Paul had ordered Charlottesville to

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[46] "'Keep Our Children in School'," *Richmond Afro-American.*

[47] "Va. Pupil Placement Laws Void," *Richmond Afro-American*, January 19, 1957.

desegregate its schools in September 1956. The NAACP represented the plaintiffs in these desegregation suits on appeal.[48]

On January 28, 1957, the Richmond Ministers Association, an inter-racial collection of clergy, published a "Statement of Conviction on Race" manifesto in the Richmond papers, condemning Virginia's massive resistance tactics to dodge desegregation and upholding the Supreme Court's decision and intention. Fifty-nine ministers signed the manifesto with harsh criticism of the governor and the Virginia General Assembly, claiming they "seriously impaired the sacred and historic traditions of Virginia democracy and lowered the prestige of the state in the eyes of thoughtful people." The ministers labeled the state's defiance as "not only poor strategy; it is poor citizenship" and called on them to lead as statesmen rather than anarchists.[49]

The chair of the state legislature's Racial Activities Committee, Delegate James Thomson of Alexandria, responded by putting the ministers on notice, threatening to investigate them along with the NAACP. The *Richmond News Leader*, the state's massive resistance mouthpiece, expeditiously surveyed every Richmond minister in the city to identify their affiliation with the association and their stance on the manifesto to pinpoint the total range of approval, reservation and opposition. The newspaper then

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[48] "2 Va. Cities Must Mix Schools Aug. 15," *Richmond Afro-American*, February 16, 1957. "Va. Asks Supreme Court to Help Preserve Segregation," *Richmond Afro-American*, February 16, 1957. "Recall That Paper," *Richmond Afro-American*, April 6, 1957.

[49] "Citizens Protest Probe of Ministers," *Richmond Afro-American*, February 2, 1957. Daniel F. Rice, *Reinhold Niebuhr and His Circle of Influence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 226-227. Bartley, 295.

published the names of all clergy surveyed and grouped them by their stance in an obvious display of public bullying. [50]

This harassment apparently roused black ministers to align their congregations to "stand shoulder to shoulder with the NAACP" as the city kicked off its 1957 NAACP membership campaign. Headlining the kickoff to rally NAACP support in Richmond was a heroic icon, baseball's integration pioneer and former Brooklyn Dodgers luminary, Jackie Robinson. Richmond NAACP branch president, Dr. Jesse M. Tinsley, a prominent dentist, framed the pressures and threats from the legislature as a "blessing in disguise" that would not intimidate current and prospective members but instead rally more determination and support for integration across the generational divide. The announcement of Robinson's visit to Richmond had followed a three-day visit by Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, leader of the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott. He spoke several times at Virginia Union's "Week of Prayer" events on the theme, "Remember Who You Are."[51]

The Richmond Crusade for Voters tapped into this community tension to organize block captains and precinct chairs to "knock on every door" to rally black citizens to pay their poll tax and register to vote. The Crusade announced a "birthright party" for

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[50] "Surveyed Clergymen Divided on Race Stand," *Richmond News Leader*, February 4, 1957. According to Muse, the NAACP "thrived in Virginia," had the largest state membership (27,000 by 1958), and had a record number of school desegregation suits filed out of all the southern states. See, Muse, 47.

[51] "Ministers for NAACP 100 P.C.," *Richmond Afro-American*, March 23, 1957. "Dedicated Audience to Hear Jackie Robinson," *Richmond Afro-American*, March 23, 1957. "Week of Prayer Opens at VUU," *Richmond Afro-American*, February 26, 1957.

Virginia Union students who reached the voting age of twenty-one before the July 1957 elections and engaged them in phone banks to urge voter registration. Barbara Grey, a Norrell parent and school librarian for Norrell and George Mason elementary schools, chaired the "dollar-a-month plan" to promote monthly funding from supporters and volunteers. As an incentive to increase black voter registration, the *Richmond Afro* published a portion of the names of black registered voters each week to recognize those who had paid their poll taxes and had already registered to vote. The Crusade joined the *Richmond Afro* and Norrell School to sponsor a citizenship essay contest for students to promote voter registration as a family project and contributed cash prizes. Fourth graders Joyce Black and Sheila Kimball, third grader Lillian Ross, and second grader Sylvia Smith split more than eight dollars in prize incentives between them. The *Richmond Afro* spotlighted the youngsters in a news photo as a lesson to their elders to "Be Sure to Vote."[52]

The Wall Street Beneficial Club, representing over 135 black Richmond men, presented Dr. Tinsley with a check for five hundred dollars to the NAACP for organizational life membership. The *Richmond Afro* listed each member's name to boldly showcase their support. Sam Owens, owner of a popular Esso service station in the heart of black Richmond's Jackson Ward, brashly staged his NAACP membership renewal in front of the White House of the Confederacy as an *Richmond Afro* photo opportunity to

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[52] "'Knock on Every Door,' Vote Crusaders Pledge," *Richmond Afro-American*, March 23, 1957. "Richmond Citizens Registered to Vote," *Richmond Afro-American*, March 30, 1957. "A Lesson for Their Elders," *Richmond Afro-American*, June 15, 1957.

endorse the NAACP in conjunction with Jackie Robinson's arrival. As if to retaliate and heighten tension on black Richmonders, the legislative Committee on Offenses Against the Administration of Justice issued subpoenas to summon Hill and his cadre of Virginia NAACP attorneys and executives on the Thursday and Friday prior to Robinson's Sunday afternoon appearance. Undaunted by the timing of the summons, an audience over 3,000 from across Virginia clamored to hear Robinson on stage in the packed Mosque auditorium. The event raised over ten thousand dollars for the NAACP.[53]

The sparring tension between the state and the black community boosted black enthusiasm for Robinson's successful NAACP rally and possibly spurred growing boldness by black parents who defied signing the Placement Board forms in April and May 1957. Hampton's newly formed Richmond Pupil Protective Association included black parents from J. H. Blackwell Elementary, located across the James River in Richmond's Southside. Baker Elementary, which also served as the transfer location for Norrell students to attend the sixth grade, joined in the protest against signing the forms. The Baker Parent Teacher Association distributed flyers to parents to discourage signatures on applications. Parents held concerns that they were signing away their children's constitutional rights. They questioned the constitutionality and legality of the Placement Board in serving the best interest of their children, particularly with the threat

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[53] "Wall Street Club Takes Out NAACP Life Membership," *Richmond Afro-American*, March 23, 1957. "Jackie Here Sunday," *Richmond Afro-American*, March 30, 1957. "$10,000 Raised for NAACP," *Richmond Afro-American,* April 6, 1957.

of expulsion looming against them and the potential conflict with the state's mandatory attendance law.[54]

By June 1957, over three hundred black parents and six white parents declined to sign the forms in Richmond. The Placement Board released a statement to clarify that time extensions could be granted for parents who failed to sign because of "misunderstanding." The Placement Board charged local authorities with investigating all failures to sign and emphasized strict compliance and enforcement for the September 1957 school year. Students completed the 1956-57 school term without expulsion. The executive committee of the Richmond Pupil Protective Association met after the Placement Board issued its directive to determine its next steps and to strengthen its organization.[55]

While black parents across the Commonwealth shared similar concerns, a white mother from Fairfax, Virginia unpredictably prompted the first test to challenge the Placement Board's authority. When Mrs. Theo Defebio and her family moved from North Carolina to Virginia, she refused to sign the Placement Board application for her sons, Nicky and Teddy. Both sons were expelled from school weeks later. She claimed that her refusal to sign "was a matter of conscience and morals." Mrs. Defebio was a

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[54] "Parents Fighting Placement," *Richmond Afro-American,* April 6, 1957. Pratt, *Color of Their Skin*, 23. Eskridge, 263.

[55] "Pupil Placement Alters Rule," *Richmond Afro-American*, May 25, 1957. "Placement Wars Opens on Two Fronts," *Richmond Afro-American*, June 15, 1957.

Washington, D.C. female cab driver and a graduate of Smith College. She was quite clear about her intentions as attorneys filed lawsuits on her behalf in June 1957: "The purpose of this placement program is to deny a segment of the American population the right to an equal education. I didn't object to putting my children in segregated schools, but I object to being pressured by the South into going along with their views."[56]

On August 28, 1957, the Richmond Pupil Protective Association called a strategy session to respond to the superintendent's memorandum to parents that emphasized unsigned forms would bar students from attending school for the 1957-58 school year. About fifty parents and attorney Hill gathered at Mount Carmel Baptist Church, pastored by the Reverend Dr. Edward McCreary, who was also president of the Norrell PTA. Dr. McCreary was also an independent candidate seeking election as a delegate to the Virginia General Assembly at the time. As parents, the association members authorized Hill to represent them in a suit to grant relief from the Placement Board as they fearlessly refused to sign the forms.[57]

As the first days of school began in September 1957, the *Richmond News Leader* juxtaposed front page reports of the integration dilemma at Central High School in Little

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[56] "Mother Tests Law," *Richmond Afro-American*, April 27, 1957. "First Test Shaping Up On Pupil Placing Law," *Richmond News Leader*, April 17, 1957. Eskridge, 252. Despite Defebio's bold stance, district and state supreme courts ultimately supported the Placement Board, forcing her to sign under protest to re-enter her sons in school. See "School Admits Defebio Boy," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 4,1958.

[57] "Placement Showdown is Planned," *Richmond Afro-American*, August 31,1957."Court Test Ordered by Parents," *Richmond Afro-American*, September 9, 1957. "Norrell PTA Meeting," *Richmond Afro-American*, November 9,1957.

Rock, Arkansas beside integration attempts across Virginia. The Little Rock School Board had attempted to crack the standoff between the federal government and Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus, who had ordered armed National Guardsmen to prevent black students from entering school. In Virginia, eight black students were denied when they applied in person to white schools in Arlington. A group of black students were denied admission when they attempted to enroll at West Point High School. And in Richmond, three black students were turned away from their segregated black schools because their parents had not signed forms. The *Richmond News Leader* published their names and addresses as a matter of public record. [58]

Superintendent Willett gave guidance to Richmond principals to admit - but not enroll - students whose parents had not signed the forms, but only if they had not expressed their refusal to sign. Several principals of black schools ousted or threatened to oust over one hundred students whose parents left applications unsigned; ten out of twenty-one black schools turned away students. Graves Junior High School sent home fifty students, while thirty students stayed away from Armstrong High School by the third day of school. Norrell Elementary School refused no child, as principal Overby claimed that 150 parents were taking the fifteen-day grace period "to think it over." Baker Elementary also refused no child but reported that thirty-four placement forms had been returned unsigned. The superintendent avoided speculation on whether their school

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[58] "Parents' Refusal to Sign Form Bars Three From School Here, Little Rock Asks U.S. Judge To Delay Pupil Integration," *Richmond News Leader,* September 6, 1957.

absence was in conflict with truancy laws, noting that parents had fifteen days to present signed forms. [59]

The Richmond Pupil Protective Association intensified this faceoff with the Placement Board and increased its active membership to over one hundred supporters. Hill filed suit on behalf of one hundred and three children and their parents or guardians, attacking the constitutionality of the Placement Act to deny students admission or enrollment into schools. This suit was not connected to the NAACP but filed by the Richmond Pupil Protective Association. Hampton, the association's president, announced the establishment of child care centers for displaced children to counteract truancy claims. While these centers were not actual schools, they were supervised by adult volunteers with experience in working with children and served as a welcome space with a particular goal to keep older children from the streets. Alice Calloway, wife of a prominent black physician and mother of two sons who attended Norrell and Baker Schools, chaired the committee to set up these centers. Mrs. Calloway used her social networks to enlist teachers, parents, and several post office workers as child care volunteers. Several church facilities responded to her call for support.[60]

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[59] "59 Negroes Stay Out of School," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 10, 1957. "Local School Turns Away Nine Pupils," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 9, 1957.

[60] Ibid. "Placement Takes Out Over 100," *Richmond Afro-American*, September 14, 1957. Pratt, *Color of Their Skin*, 23. "Negroes File Suit Challenging Virginia Pupil Placement Act," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 14, 1957. Officials from the Pupil Placement Board noted that, statewide, very few refusal cases had been reported outside of Richmond.

On behalf of the association, Hampton orchestrated a public information strategy to explain the association's stance. The Protective Association called a mass meeting for parents to receive "information and education" and emphasized the meeting was not designed to influence parents to refuse to sign the papers. "All we want to do," Hampton clarified, "is in a face-to-face situation, meet the general public and explain our situation and the significance of our battle against the state's so-called massive resistance policy." He also scheduled a radio interview with Richmond's black radio station, WANT 990 AM, joining popular radio personality Claudette Black from Richmond's Southside. This strategy, along with his oversight of media coverage in the *Richmond Afro-American*, would heighten the black community buzz and increase the resistance to signing the forms. This defiance also signaled a growing sense of black agency that could be galvanized to build black voting power and to strengthen the black community's push for school integration.[61]

Two days before the grace period expiration, Federal Judge Sterling Hutchinson granted a temporary restraining order on September 17, 1957, to hold back enforcement of the Placement Act in Richmond, citing concern for the children's welfare as the school term began. Hutchinson faced an impasse with the legal counsel for both the Placement Board and the Protective Association as they refused to concede their respective positions. The Placement Board emphasized that thousands across the state had complied by signing the forms, even though some, who had signed the forms, had also

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[61] "Placement Takes Out Over 100," *Richmond Afro-American*, September 14, 1957.

acknowledged that they signed under protest. The judge suggested that Hill's clients also consider signing while noting their protest. Hill evaded that result, claiming that he could not reach his many clients in a timely manner. Hutchinson granted the order, well aware of tensions surrounding the community and suits pending to have the Placement Act dissolved. Richmond's black community, led by *Richmond Afro* editor Hampton and attorney Hill, both parents of Norrell school children, claimed a small but significant victory against massive resistance for the 1957-58 school year.[62]

The next attempt to fully challenge the Placement Board came in July 1958 when Hill represented three black youngsters, Onslow Minnis, Jr., Sylvester Smith, Jr., and Jerome Smith, and their parents, Onslow Minnis, Sr., and Sylvester Smith, Sr., requesting the School Board to transfer the pupils from the all-black Chimborazo Elementary to the all-white Nathaniel Bacon Elementary for the 1958-59 school session or otherwise to another school "to which their assignment may be properly determined on the basis of objective considerations without regard to their race or color." City Attorney J. E. Drinkard advised the School Board that neither the board nor superintendent had power to assign students to any schools as the Placement Act was still "in full force and effect,"

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[62] "U.S. Judge Issues Order Against Placement Law," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 18, 1957. "Hutchinson Restrains Pupil Placement," *Richmond Afro-American*, September 21, 1957. Pratt, *Color of Their Skin*, 23-24.

except for the restraining order mandated by the federal judge for black Richmond pupils regarding the placement form issue.[63]

Hill also represented three black children, Lorna E. Warden, Daisy Jane Cooper, and Wanda I. Dabney, and their parents, Leonard R. Warden, Jr., Elizabeth Cooper, and Ernest A. Dabney. As residents of the small, close-knit black Westwood neighborhood tucked inside white Richmond's far West End, they sought entry into the white Westhampton Elementary School nearby to avoid the five-mile bus ride into the central city to attend the all-black George Washington Carver Elementary School. In each case, these students lived much closer to white schools than the black schools they were assigned to attend. The Placement Board denied their applications. Attorney Martin A. Martin, Hill's law partner, along with attorneys Roland D. Ealey and Samuel W. Tucker, filed suit in federal court on their behalf on September 2, 1958. Despite Martin's request for a timely hearing to start the 1958-59 school year, Richmond's first school desegregation case plodded through the federal courts, only to be settled July 5, 1961.[64]

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[63] *Minutes*, (July 17, 1958), 177. Pratt, *Color of Their Skin*, 24, 111.

[64] Ibid. Daisy Jane Cooper remained as the lone plaintiff, as the two other plaintiffs withdrew by the time the case was settled by federal court Judge Oren R. Lewis. While Cooper's initial application was to attend Westhampton Elementary, instead, she was the first black student to attend Westhampton Junior High by court order. By then, Richmond had already begun school desegregation, albeit slowly, by September 1960. See *Warden v. Richmond School Board*, Race Relations Law Reporter (ED Va. 1961). See also, Virginia Commonwealth University Libraries, Voices of Freedom: Videotaped oral histories of leaders of the Civil Rights movement in Virginia. *Interview with Elizabeth Cooper and Jane Cooper Johnson, March 21, 2003.* http://dig.library.vcu.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/voices/id/1/rec/2 (accessed May 12, 2013).

According to a *Richmond Times-Dispatch* editorial, school authorities had not anticipated that the NAACP would plan to target school desegregation in Richmond. The newspaper speculated that NAACP tactics might have shifted after publication of a letter to the editor. The letter blasted "Richmond's colored leadership here for not taking earlier and bolder action" against school desegregation in the capital city.[65]

The Placement Board was bound to reject requests to place black students into white schools in order to comply with the state constitution's expectation of an "effective" and segregated school system. During the summer of 1958, the NAACP had filed school desegregation suits in several of Virginia's counties and cities. While the administrative bureaucracy was in place to reject applications, the anticipated federal court rulings added political pressure on Governor J. Lindsay Almond to shut down Virginia school systems when mandated to integrate under court order.[66]

Local and Statewide in Black and White

The Richmond School Board faced additional pressures beyond the Placement Board's resistance to school integration that complicated policy decisions for placing black and white students in schools. Richmond whites had begun a gradual migration northward to Henrico County and southward to Chesterfield County. As a result, black student enrollments skyrocketed, rising from a third of the total population in 1943 to

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[65] "Richmond Under the Gun," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 11, 1958.

[66] Eskridge, 256.

over 50 percent by 1959. Black students and educators faced double shifts, large class sizes, and school facilities that were inadequate and too few. Overcrowding stretched Richmond's dual school system beyond its financial limits to provide proper facilities, teachers, and resources for pupils. To maintain segregated schools, the School Board converted older white schools and shifted pupil assignments to track black migration patterns as blacks infiltrated neighborhoods in transition from white to black.[67]

Community tensions aggravated the School Board's predicament. Overcrowding at Benjamin A. Graves Junior High School, a site serving black students in North Side and the central city, was "intolerable." Representing the Special Project Committee of the Graves PTA, Arthur Brown spoke on behalf of black parents, who were persistent about demanding immediate relief. The PTA presented details to describe how students scrambled between four different buildings to attend classes. To transfer from one class to another during the day, students had to go across major or secondary streets. Hazards from potential car accidents endangered their safety. Cold and wet weather jeopardized their physical health as they scurried between classes braving the rain, sleet, and snow. Transfers between buildings affected student morale and limited full engagement in class participation due to the extra time required to journey from building to building.[68]

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[67] Silver and Moeser, 77, 78. Pratt, *Color of Their Skin*, 24. *Minutes*, (September 25, 1959), 303.

[68] *Minutes*, (December 31, 1958), 208-209.

The PTA tendered the School Board three proposals for prompt consideration: 1) immediately construct new classrooms to expand the main Graves building if the school enrollment remained the same; 2) reduce pupil enrollment and only use the Graves building for instruction; or 3) restructure school attendance areas in the North Side to provide school facilities for North Side students to attend school closer to their neighborhoods – a reference to the use of the Chandler building for black children in North Side. Black parents advocated for school facilities that were truly equal to those of white students and were not pushing necessarily to integrate Chandler.[69]

The *Richmond Afro* splashed photographs of Graves students, bundled in winter coats, arms laden with textbooks, treading through snow, darting across busy intersections, crossing traffic without a "school guard or police protection," to emphasize these perils to the broader public. The superintendent, in consultation with the city manager, investigated the traffic lights and sidewalks to determine immediate solutions, yet cautiously reported that overcrowding was a long range problem requiring "further study."[70]

The Graves PTA underscored their roles as "taxpayers and citizens," forewarning the School Board that without a remedy for their children, they would be "forced to take

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[69] *Minutes,* (December 31, 1958). Alice Calloway was emphatic that black parents sought equal facilities, not integration, at the time. See Mildred Davis Bruce, "The Richmond School Board and the Desegregation of Richmond Public Schools, 1954 to 1971," Ed.D. Dissertation, College of William & Mary, 1988, 95.

[70] *Minutes,* (January 27, 1959). "Good Weather or Bad," *Richmond Afro-American*, January 10, 1959. "Patiently Waiting," *Richmond Afro-American*, January 24, 1959.

such action as may be consistent with efforts to secure a proper solution." Norrell and Baker Street Elementary were feeder schools to Graves Junior High, and several parents had participated in the Richmond Pupil Protective Association standoff with the state Placement Board. The School Board's resistance to resolving these overcrowded conditions could not be isolated from statewide protests against massive resistance. Capitol Square was a platform for protest as black parents from Richmond, along with parents and protesters from across the state, converged to rally as the Virginia legislature assembled in January 1959.[71]

On New Year's Day 1959, over 1,500 blacks from Richmond and across the state marched two miles in wintry rain from the Mosque auditorium to the State Capitol. Arm in arm, clergy led the marchers five abreast to protest Virginia's massive resistance to school integration. School systems in Warren County, Charlottesville, and Norfolk had been shut down by Governor Almond in September 1958 to obstruct court orders to integrate schools. Parents, local officials, and school staff had scrambled to set up makeshift arrangements for thousands of students, white and black, as the governor exercised his authority under massive resistance laws to blockade integration.[72]

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[71] *Minutes*, (December 31, 1958), 209.

[72] "1500 Join Pilgrimage for Schools," *Richmond Afro-American*, January 3, 1959. "Pilgrimage of Prayer," *Richmond Afro-American*, January 10, 1959. Pratt, *Color of Their Skin*, 10, 11. Muse, 122. The Mosque auditorium was renamed as the Landmark Theater in 1995, and was renamed again in February 2014 as the Altria Theater. See "Landmark Theater is Now the Altria Theater," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, February 22, 2014.

Just weeks after the State Capitol march, the Virginia Supreme Court and a three-judge federal court in Norfolk delivered same-day rulings on January 19, 1959 (coincidentally, the birthday of Confederate General Robert E. Lee), that ushered "death blows" to Virginia's massive resistance program. Almond appeared on statewide radio and television the following day to uphold the "morality" of segregation to "confederates, comrades, and allies," and maintained his defiance against integration: "I will not yield to that which I know to be wrong."[73]

Representing the Virginia NAACP, Hill countered Almond's television appeal to segregationists with a public declaration of his own proclaiming that "racial segregation is crumbling because it is incompatible with the fundamental concept of the right of the individual to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Joining Hill on television was Reverend Dr. McCreary, representing the NAACP church coordinating committee. Dr. McCreary described massive resistance as disintegrating into "massive madness." He contended that "no one in his right mind would dare to argue that Virginia can go on indefinitely without at least token integration."[74]

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[73] "State, US Courts Deal a Death Blow," *Richmond Afro-American*, January 24, 1959. Pratt, *Color of Their Skin*, 11. Muse 122 -126. The Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals ruled that section 129 of the Virginia Constitution required the state to "maintain an efficient system of public free schools throughout the state;" therefore, the governor's actions were in violation of the state constitution. The Norfolk federal court declared that the state statute used to close the schools rather than integrate was invalid and violated the Fourteenth Amendment. See *James v. Almond*, 170 F. Supp. 331 (1959), 337-38, and *Harrison v. Day*, 200 Va. 439 (1959) as cited in Pratt, *Color of Their Skin*, 114.

[74] "NAACP Spokesmen Answer Governor," *Richmond Afro-American*, January 31, 1959.

When the governor addressed the state legislature on January 28, 1959, he reversed his stance to concede the end of massive resistance and to acquiesce to the courts of law. The governor also acknowledged that "Contrary to the opinion of some, I cannot conceive how the Pupil Placement Act can be asserted either as a buffer or a bulwark between the overriding and superior power of the federal government and the operation of a segregated school. That which the state is powerless to do, it cannot confer upon an administrative agency."[75]

The day before the Governor reversed his stance on massive resistance, Hill had penned a letter to the Richmond school superintendent on behalf of eleven children and their parents, requesting their transfer from Graves Junior High to Chandler. The letter requested that these transfers begin on February 2, 1959, the start of the second term of the school year and in step with first day of school integration in Arlington County and Norfolk. Hill's correspondence stated that his request was "not only because of the discrimination inherent in racial segregation," but something more. The transfer request was a further protest to the overcrowded conditions at Graves, which he described as "deplorable" and a situation brought before the superintendent and school board several times. Parents of the Graves PTA had repeatedly warned the School Board that their

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[75] Muse, 133-134. The Placement Board, created by the Pupil Placement Act, still maintained its ambiguous role to hinder the pace of school integration. The legislature finally dissolved it on June 30, 1966. See Eskridge, 271-273.

children's safety was at risk. The federal court decisions and the governor's reversed stance on massive resistance were signals for black parents to push for action.[76]

Heading the list of parents and children represented by Hill were Dr. and Mrs. William (Alice) Calloway and their thirteen-year-old son, William "Billy" Calloway, Jr., an eighth grader, and Rev. and Mrs. Irvin Elligan, and twelve-year-old daughter Rachael, a seventh grader. Other parents and children included Mrs. Dollie Claiborne and daughter Dollie, a thirteen-year-old eighth grader; Mrs. Jean Gilpin and son, Bernard Gilpin, a fourteen-year-old ninth grader; Mr. Herman Hill and son Cordell, a thirteen-year-old eighth-grader; Mr. and Mrs. Royal Kelly and their daughters, Barbara, a thirteen-year-old eighth-grader, and Wilnette, a twelve-year-old seventh-grader; Mrs. Blanche Lanier and daughter Paige, a fourteen-year-old ninth-grader; Mrs. Mary Sugg and daughter Dianne, a twelve-year-old eighth-grader; and Mrs. Elizabeth Thompson and son Robert, a thirteen-year-old eighth-grader and daughter Carolyn, a twelve-year-old seventh-grader.[77]

On February 2, 1959, Arlington County quietly admitted four black students. Norfolk re-opened with seventeen black students in all-white schools. There was no "Little Rock" hostility, as Virginia's massive resistance appeared to end with a whimper. Richmond officials knew its city schools were ultimately in line for integration. With Hill's correspondence, local officials and the Placement Board braced to respond with a

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[76] *Records,* Series I. Correspondence and Subject Files,1957-1966. Subseries V. City Transfers, 1958-1966. Richmond - Special File, 1959. Box 0038, Folder 5.

[77] Ibid.

sluggish "passive resistance," a "considerably less conspicuous" objective – to demonstrate good faith compliance with the courts. As a matter of southern principle, they felt obliged to forestall the threat of integration in Richmond to temper the legal victories of Oliver Hill and the NAACP in the former Confederate capital and Hill's hometown.[78]

The Placement Board met on February 11, 1959 and reported that the board did not receive Hill's request until February 2 – the first day of the new school term. The board called the applications "dilatory" or tardy, resisting the transfers "in the absence of compelling evidence," stating that "[T]he mere fact that a student may prefer one school to another does not create a right to the orderly administrative practices and procedures of local school administration." Evidently, the overcrowded conditions and harsh street hazards Graves students faced when moving from building to building had not risen to the level of "compelling evidence." The board deferred action but offered to reconsider them "in ample time" for the September start of the 1959-60 school year.[79]

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[78] Pratt, *Color of Their Skin*, 11, 13. "No Flare-ups as 4 Enroll in Arlington," *Richmond Afro-American*, February 7, 1959. Richmond city councilman Robert J. Herberle considered sponsoring a council ordinance in 1959 to restrict the use of city funds to support the operation of segregated schools. Herberle based this strategy on private discussions among the mayor, the School Board chair and superintendent, city attorney and the state's attorney general, who construed that City Council was not obligated to appropriate public school funding. In order to keep the issue in the courts to stall efforts to integrate the system, Richmond planned to cite that white pupils were a minority group, as a twist to keep desegregation at bay. This appears to be another "passive resistance" scheme, yet it did not develop traction to go forward. See "City Officials Study School Issue," *Richmond Afro-American*, February 14, 1959.

[79] "11 Transfers to Chandler are Denied," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, February 12, 1959. *Records*. Series III. Minutes, 1957-1966. Board Meeting, 1958 Feb 11. Box 0066, Folder 18.

This action was not lost on North Side whites, already fearing black encroachment into their neighborhoods. In May 1955, the white Ginter Park Elementary School PTA had insisted that the School Board take action on their request for a new junior high school in North Side. The PTA had expressed frustration that Chandler's neighborhood borders were changing, much to their dismay. They urged action, predicting that the future of integration was close at hand. Two weeks after the Placement Board denied the eleven transfer requests, a group of North Side whites organized the Ginter Park Educational Fund, led by Dr. Raymond Adams, a physician; Rodney Bryson, a securities trader; and Barron Howard, general manager of local television station WRVA-TV channel 12. The Fund sought a charter from the State Corporation Commission as the city's first private school group, anticipating the eventuality of Chandler's integration.[80]

The Placement Board had Richmond on its agenda under "Special Transfer Applications" for its August 3, 1959, meeting; however, the meeting's minutes are blank regarding its resolution of the transfer requests. Interestingly, notes used to prepare the minutes are more telling. The word "Omit" is marked on the paragraph, apparently transcribed by clerical staff, which stated that "both Richmond City and Newport News City are 'out of the woods' for another year." The Board apparently reviewed the eleven transfer requests and denied nine – all seventh- and eighth-graders. The other two

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[80] *Minutes*, (May 27, 1955), as cited in Bruce, 83. "Ginter Park Pupil Unit Set Up," *Richmond News Leader*, February 27, 1959.

requests were from ninth-graders, Paige Lanier and Bernard Gilpin. The board notes claimed that additional information was needed before a decision could be determined.[81]

Correspondence had been prepared and dated February 2, 1959 for Superintendent Willett to outline procedures for the Richmond School Board to handle Hill's request. The letter, from Placement Board member Beverly H. Randolph, Jr., was marked "not mailed." This letter and attachments had detailed a complicated process for providing extensive "additional information" to the board – a "cumulative school record, personal data on both child and parents, family background and deportment of child in school and community," along with a complete academic record, aptitude tests, "health record, teacher's observation record, medical nursing records." Data was also requested to provide comparisons between the age and test record of the child and the average age and test records of students at both black and white schools. Transportation comparisons were also requested to "consider the safety of the child and exposure to avoidable hazards." The complicated process appeared designed to bewilder both school officials and parents in order to discourage them from pursuing the transfer matter further.[82]

The interview procedure for the child and parents clearly instructed the absence of legal counsel. "If counsel insists on being present, the interview should not be held, but

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[81] *Correspondence and Subject Files,* Series III. Minutes, 1957-1966. Board Meeting, 1959 Aug 3. Box 0066, Folder 27.

[82] *Records,* Series I. Correspondence and Subject Files, 1957-1966. Subseries V. City Transfers, 1958-1966. Richmond - Special File, 1959. Box 0038, Folder 5.

all that is said and transpired shall be recorded by the stenographer and promptly reported." This exact reporting was for any conversation between legal counsel and the staff of the Placement Board or school officials on this matter. [83]

The interview, both questions and answers, were also expected to be "fully recorded by the stenographer verbatim." The list of questions first focus on the child's present school experience before probing deeper into the rationale for the transfer request:

> – What do you think about and what is your attitude toward the school your child is presently attending?
>
> – Are you satisfied with the teachers there?
>
> – With the principal there?
>
> – The instruction your child is getting there?
>
> – Is your child progressing generally well and in an orderly manner there?
>
> – Would the change away from former friends or teachers be really for the benefit of your child? If answer is yes, why?
>
> – Is the application for transfer being made solely to enforce a so-called "Constitutional right"?
>
> – Just what are all the reasons you desire the transfer?
>
> – What is your occupation?

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[83] Ibid.

The administrative hurdles and interview process appear intentionally designed to frustrate and intimidate parents and children, as well as to isolate them from legal counsel in an attempt to use their words against them. The notes also deferred final judgment on two ninth-graders, Paige Lanier and Bernard Gilpin, suggesting that the students would need to fill out an application to begin the maze of administrative meanderings. By the time these two children could conceivably overcome these hurdles, they would be tenth-graders attending Maggie Walker High. Therefore, their entry into Chandler would be a moot point. These unofficial notes reveal that every impediment was carefully constructed to thwart black children from entering Chandler. [84]

Paige Lanier's parents were active in the Graves PTA and in the black community. Her parents, Earlie Hayes Lanier and Blanche Barham Lanier, were from Southampton County, the infamous site of Nat Turner's rebellion. When Paige was four, the family moved to Richmond, where her father worked for the metallurgical research division at Reynolds Metals, and her mother worked as a nurse. Her father was also a deacon at Sharon Baptist Church, located across the street from the old Booker T. Washington School that served as a building site for Graves Junior High, three blocks from the main building. Paige speculated that her parents' activism in the Graves PTA was the reason that she was one of the eleven selected.[85]

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[84] Ibid. *Correspondence and Subject Files*, Series III. Minutes, 1957-1966. Board Meeting, 1958 Aug. 3. Box 0066, Folder 27.

[85] Paige Lanier Chargois, in discussion with the author, February 9, 2014.

She remembered with reverence the "piece of steel that [Graves] teachers put in our spine. They always pictured us walking into a [white] school – that [strength] was our focus. [They said] you might have people on the sides of you, spitting at you. . . . Our teachers at Graves prepared us in marvelous ways . . . the dignity that they infused in us, the fear that they took from us. You don't need to be afraid, you need to be strong." She speculated that her mother, rather than her father, was listed on Hill's correspondence requesting their transfer not only because of her outgoing nature. The absence of his name possibly shielded him, like other fathers, from any repercussions from his employer.[86]

Political Overtones Between Council and the School Board

School integration was inescapably intertwined with policy issues involving housing, voter registration, and civic engagement as black Richmonders asserted their agency, led by its black middle class. The School Board grappled with yet another school conversion to transfer white students from East End Junior High to prepare the facility for black use. East End would relieve severe overcrowding at all-black Armstrong High School, which operated on a double shift. School conversions in the East End and North Side resulted from the brunt of displacement that black citizens endured during urban renewal. The construction of public housing and the Richmond-Petersburg Turnpike

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[86] Ibid.

(now Interstate 95) ripped into the central city core of Richmond's long-standing black community, splintering blacks to the east and north to search for adequate housing.[87]

Over 500 black citizens packed City Council in March 1958 for a three-hour hearing to protest Council's urban renewal and slum clearance proposal, which planned to displace hundreds of black families once again. The NAACP urged the federal government to withhold funding and called the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority plan a "premeditated scheme to wreck colored homes, businesses and churches . . . as thirteen colored churches, four hotels, the only colored bank, four insurance companies and the majority of colored businesses" were targets for clearance.[88]

The following week, police raided the Market Inn. A respectable club for social mingling, its patrons were considered the "cream of colored society," including doctors, lawyers, teachers, businessmen, and clergy. The Market Inn was located in Washington Park, a stable working-class black neighborhood in North Side. Richmond police arrested more than 150 patrons for "frequenting a place of common nuisance." Richmond Mayor A. Scott Anderson requested a police report on the raid after black attorney Clarence Newsome accused police of "Gestapo tactics." Newsome heightened inquiry into the raid,

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[87] The Placement Board authorized the School Board's request to grant an administrative transfer for students attending various black schools in the East End to address issues of overcrowding. As a result, the Nathaniel Bacon School was converted to a black school as an "administrative matter…and was in no way related to or prompted by the current litigation on the part of Negro parents wishing to enroll children into white schools." See *Minutes*, (September 15, 1958), 192. *Minutes*, (March 25, 1959), 228.

[88] "Citizens Protest Slum Clearance," *Richmond Afro-American*, March 28, 1959. "NAACP Attempts to Block Funds," *Richmond Afro-American*, April 25, 1959.

suspecting that police intimidation was linked to black activism and the pending Richmond school desegregation suit.[89]

City Council split its attention between the black community's escalating rage regarding urban renewal, the Market Inn raid, and the School Board proposal to construct the two new white high schools. The School Board rationalized new white high school construction as an immediate action strategy to respond to the increasing black enrollment. The explosion of black pupils in the school system fueled the need to address overcrowded conditions by converting the use of older white schools for black use. Otherwise, the "lack of facilities for Negro pupils may well accelerate the pressure for integration . . . because of the number of Negro residents in these areas." The promise of two new white high schools, strategically placed in North Side and Southside, roused eager support from white PTAs in North Side, led by the Ginter Park Elementary PTA.[90]

Each high school would cost three million dollars. The all-white John Marshall High School was located in the center of downtown, a symbol of "prestige unequaled by any other public high school in the state" when it opened in 1909 and considered as the "grandest, most expensive schoolhouse ever erected in the South." Its location had been the garden of noted Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall, whose historic home

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[89] "Arrest of Patrons Challenged," *Richmond Afro-American*, April 4, 1959."Anderson Asks Report on Raid," *Richmond Afro-American*, April 4, 1959. "Howard Carwile Denounces Citizens' Wholesale Arrest," *Richmond Afro-American*, April 11, 1959.

[90] *Minutes*, (May 7, 1959), 257-259. "PTA Asks Aid on Building," *Richmond News Leader*, May 1, 1959.

was across the street. The proposed new North Side high school would become the new John Marshall High School for whites. Southside whites would no longer have to travel across the James River to attend John Marshall or Thomas Jefferson High Schools. They could finally stay south of the river, nearer to their homes and attend the Southside high school that would be named George Wythe High.[91]

According to the *Richmond News Leader*, City Council was divided on whether to go ahead with construction. Council depended on public opinion of voters, black and white, to determine the upcoming June 1960 election. The School Board, however, appointed by council, had less to politically navigate as the fate of John Marshall's feeder school in North Side, Chandler Junior High School, hung in the balance. Council anticipated huge delegations of whites from North Side to participate in public discussions. The *News Leader* claimed the voice of white segregationist Richmond to create tension between City Council and the School Board to determine whether blacks or whites would have the final say on Chandler's future: "whether it will be designated for us [as whites] by Negroes or remain a white school subject to heavy integration assignment." The newspaper stoked the fears of white homeowners north of Brookland Park Boulevard and neighborhood businesses in Brookland Park Boulevard's commercial district. They anguished that Chandler's conversion to "Negro use will hasten the influx

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[91] Ibid. Callihan, 126. Overcrowding was an issue for John Marshall High School, the city's only white high school, for most of its existence. Thomas Jefferson High School was erected in 1930 in Richmond's West End to relieve overcrowding, yet both schools remained crowded during this time. Ibid., 110. White high school students from Southside had to choose between downtown's Marshall or West End's Jefferson, as there was no white high school in Southside until the School Board's proposal.

of Negroes" stretching east and north to expand black migration patterns, ultimately reducing property values and obliterating white North Side neighborhoods.[92]

On May 7, 1959, the School Board held a special session after City Council had approved the construction for two white high schools the night before. The School Board justified the decision in favor of construction of the new high schools as an effort "long before the integration problem arose," claiming that schools ". . . are in fact needed now unless the existence of the integration problem eliminates or materially alters such need . . . the simple truth is that the ultimate choice in Richmond is between some integration or the abandonment of our public school education."[93]

After City Council approved the new high school construction, School Board Chairman Lewis Powell led a special meeting the next day to deliver a public statement to Council to support the construction without delay. Powell recalled the history of building plans, noting that the 1945 City Planning Commission's Master Plan proposed the new high schools long before the "integration problem." The "fundamental question" facing the School Board was clear: whether Richmond would continue public education and integrate the schools, particularly with litigation pending in the *Warden* case. Powell

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[92] "Council Appears Split on School Projects," *Richmond News Leader*, May 1. 1959. Brookland Park Boulevard was a vibrant neighborhood commercial corridor, developed in the 1920s to serve several North Side neighborhoods. Grocery stores, bakeries, restaurants, barber shops, a hardware store, a laundry, and stores for tailoring and shoe repair were alongside gas stations and auto repair shops. See Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Purchase and Rehabilitation of 201 and West Brookland Park Boulevard. Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority. 2007. http://www.rrha.org/html/contracting/itb/07/Brookland.pdf (accessed May 17, 2013).

[93] *Minutes*, (May 7, 1959), 257-259.

acknowledged the "understandable resentment at an unwelcome social change forced upon us by law in Richmond," but directed his remarks to those who would rather "abandon public education rather than suffer any integration." Using Norfolk's brief closure as a guide, Powell detailed the catastrophic consequences of school closure: juvenile delinquency, crime, economic instability, illiteracy, diminished productivity, and limited aspirations for every child. "However bitterly many of our people resent integration (and I do not underestimate the depth of this feeling) . . . the School Board and Council must move forward . . . and these two new high schools are the cornerstone to 'ameliorate,' rather than 'aggravate or magnify,' the integration problem." The decision regarding Chandler remained yet unclear.[94]

City Council responded to Powell's message with one of their own – a different set of priorities based on political instincts rather than on Powell's principled rationale, which accepted the rule of law and limited token integration as a bitter pill. Chandler's fate, after all, was at issue with the electability of City Council and an election less than a year away. Mayor Anderson proposed a council resolution to clamp down on the School Board's final say regarding school conversion and required the School Board to report

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[94] Ibid. On September 22, 1958, Governor J. Lindsey Almond ordered the closure of six all-white schools in Norfolk to thwart seventeen black students from entering. His action impacted close to 10,000 white students as well as the black students seeking entry, although Norfolk's all-black schools remained open. After white parents and students successfully filed suit against state and local school officials in federal court, the schools reopened and the seventeen black students entered the all-white junior and senior high schools on February 2, 1959. See Antonio T. Bly, "The Thunder during the Storm – School Desegregation in Norfolk, Virginia, 1957-1959: A Local History," *The Journal of Negro Education* 67, no. 2 (Spring, 1998): 106-114. Apparently, the Richmond School Board Chairman was not eager to repeat this disruption in Richmond.

their considerations to City Council. The School Board responded with a resolution of its own to clarify its procedures for public input and consultation with City Council. By establishing procedures and policies in their interactions over conversion matters, the School Board and City Council navigated the internal politics "passive resistance" with each other.[95]

Councilman Philip Bagley inserted a wild card amendment to the city's capital budget to earmark $600,000 in the city's capital budget for two black high schools. Apparently, this forced the School Board to acknowledge that, at an appropriate time, Chandler, as well as Bainbridge, a white Southside junior high school, would be considered for "Negro use." Such an acknowledgment would inevitably agitate white North Side residents anxious to maintain the status quo in their neighborhoods. To keep City Council in check and add another layer of bureaucratic oversight to buffer tensions, the School Board emphasized that the State Board of Education would need to review and approve any new school site and building plans.[96]

What was publicly unsaid, yet on the minds of whites for several years, was how white officials planned to manage black expansion in North Side and to contain school integration over the long term. In fact, the School Board records indicated that the

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[95] *Minutes*, (July 16, 1959), 285. "School Officials Mum on City Plan," *Richmond Afro-American*, August 8, 1959. "Councilmen Study Future School Use," *Richmond-Afro American*, August 29, 1959. Silver and Moeser, 78.

[96] Ibid.

original 1945 Master Plan had initially identified property not far from Chandler for construction of a new white high school at an area "bounded by Ladies Mile Road, Noble Avenue, Westwood Avenue, and Edgewood Avenue." Subsequently, school officials speculated that construction would be better placed at the northernmost edge of the city-county border at the Pine Camp property on Old Brook Road and Forest Lawn Cemetery Road. They updated these changes to the city's Master Plan in 1958. Sites for the new white high schools were strategically situated near the edges of city-county lines. This positioning appeared designed for future expectations of annexation or city-county school consolidation, preparing for an enlargement of the city's white population base.[97]

City Council and their Henrico counterparts courted and danced around each other regarding the possibilities of a voluntary merger or annexation, a more aggressive move. In early 1959, Richmond, along with Henrico and Chesterfield counties, jointly financed a study by the Richmond Regional Planning Commission to identify metropolitan issues in anticipation of a potential city-county merger or annexation. The Richmond First Club, a non-partisan group of white businessmen promoting local government and responsible citizenship, used the report to promote the city-county merger as a solution to challenges in the region. A spokesman for Richmond First noted that Richmond only had three major problems, compared to Henrico's seven problems, emphasizing that a merger would solve them all. Richmond's three problems: 1) the city was landlocked with no space for expansion; 2) the city had a voter problem; 3) the city

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[97] *Minutes*, (August 27, 1958), 187.

had a race problem. The voter and race problems were intertwined, and a merger would be crucial to dilute the influence of black voting strength and to all the city's white population to regain dominance. Yet with a five to four split, City Council narrowly passed actions to prepare plans for either merger or annexation. Mayor Anderson, a dissenter, questioned the wisdom of "more territory, more people, and more obligations" as a result of merger without publicly stating obvious issues of an increasing black population, looming integration, and his own political future. The real obstacles to merger were securing enabling legislation by the General Assembly and gaining approval from both city and county voters.[98]

Extending the city's territory, expanding its white population, and downsizing its black population were heady issues provoked by school segregation toward the end of 1959. When the 1959-1960 school term opened, certain facts and trends were clear. Of the 38,373 pupils enrolled by the second day of school, 18,209 were white and 20,164 were black. In the elementary schools, 10,619 were white and 14,629 were black. The activism by black Richmond parents to resist the Placement Board foreshadowed the tensions and transitions ahead for Richmond in 1960. The fate of Chandler Junior High would emerge as the epicenter of this change.[99]

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[98] "Henrico, City View Relations," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 13, 1959. "Merger is Called Cure to Problems," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 20, 1959. "Council Calls for Plans on Annexation, Merger," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 24, 1959. "Edwards in Center of Merger Issue," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, December 25, 1959.

[99] "Second Enrollment is Up 1,420," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 10, 1959.

CHAPTER THREE

ENTERING A NEW DECADE: TENSIONS AND TRANSITIONS IN 1960

> We're gonna be told we're stupid and crazy. . . .We don't want any mixing in our schools, and we won't have it until they make us.[100]
> – Joe T. Mizell, spokesman for six white North Side civic associations, February 10, 1960

Richmond black clergy rallied more than 1,600 persons in below-freezing weather for a second annual New Year's Day march in 1960 to continue their protest against the school shutdown in Prince Edward County. Headlining this event was a thirty-year-old pastor from Atlanta, tapped to lead the seventeen-block march from the Mosque auditorium to the State Capitol: the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King. Earlier that day, King had addressed an animated crowd of 2,500 during an Emancipation Day service designed to support public desegregated schools.[101]

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[100] "Nearly 1,000 Agree to Fight Chandler School Conversion," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, February 10, 1960.

[101] "Dr. King Advises Schoolless Pupils to Shun Private Offer," *Richmond Afro-American*, January 9, 1960. "M.L. King at Pilgrimage Rally," *Richmond Afro-American*, January 9, 1960. White pupils in Prince Edward County attended private schools for the 1959-1960 school year, when the school system shut down rather than integrate. As a result, most black children missed formal school training until 1963. See Pratt, *Color of Their Skin*, 12. For more on the Prince Edward shutdown, see Jill Titus, *Brown's Battleground: Students, Segregationists, and the Struggle for Justice in Prince Edward County, Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011) and Kara Miles Turner, "'Getting It Straight': Southern Black School Patrons and the Struggle for Equal Education in the Pre- and Post-Civil Rights Eras," *Journal of Negro Education* 72, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 217-229. I speculate that greater interest in the Prince Edward County story abounds with the establishment of the Moton Museum in Farmville, Virginia, and the *Brown v. Board of Education* scholarship fund set up by the Virginia General Assembly in 2004 to assist those who were affected by school closings in Virginia from 1959-1964.

The week after Dr. King's appearance, the Richmond Urban League board voted to highlight "family and community life" as the theme for its 1960 program and announced a partnership with Virginia Union to develop a leadership institute in collaboration with several influential black civic and social organizations. Dr. Samuel D. Proctor, president of Virginia Union, served as chairman of the Urban League's 1960 Program Committee and tapped Dr. Henry J. McGuinn and Dr. Tinsley L. Spraggins to spearhead the initiative and to galvanize Richmond's black community organizations. McGuinn headed Virginia Union's Division of Social Sciences. Spraggins was a Virginia Union history professor. Both were active in black civic affairs. The leadership institute would provide intensive training to develop approaches to address problems in "employment, housing, parental responsibility, organization and leadership, and civic unity" in the black community. This targeted community mobilization effort, along with the voter registration efforts by the Crusade for Voters, set the groundwork for a new decade that would usher in desegregation and racial change in Richmond.[102]

Virginia Union was the hub and heartbeat of black Richmond and a touchstone for black intellectual development and racial uplift. The university delicately balanced a thin line navigating relationships with white elites, who served on its university board and leveraged philanthropic support, and maintaining its role as an institutional leader in the

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[102] "Urban League, Virginia Union Plan Leadership Institute," *Richmond Afro-American,* January 30, 1960. McGuinn and Tinsley were colleagues as scholars and activists. See Henry J. McGuinn and Tinsley Lee Spraggins, "Negro Politics in Virginia," *The Journal of Negro Education* 26, no.3 (Summer, 1957): 378-389.

black community. Dr. Proctor's vision for the leadership institute was indeed a bold move, publicly positioning the intellectual capital of the university, faculty, and alumni at the helm to strategize on all fronts for social justice.

Virginia Union had faced white intimidation on campus grounds two years earlier as tensions brewed regarding desegregation in Richmond. On Sunday, September 14, 1958, a motorist had witnessed a six-foot cross ablaze at 8 a.m. on the north end of campus at Lombardy Street and Brook Road and notified Dr. Proctor, who reported the incident to police. Dr. Proctor had called the cross burning a "bad omen" and blamed the incident on "pranksters," who had painted the foot of the cross with the letters "KKK." The *Richmond Afro* had noted that Virginia Union had not been engaged in school desegregation controversies and reported that observers had interpreted the cross burning as a "warning to all colored persons." By January 1960, Virginia Union had publicly asserted its more activist role.[103]

The winter chill of February could not stave off the heat of racial tensions occurring in the South. On February 9, the home of Carlotta Walls, one of the "Little Rock Nine," was bombed. The explosion blew out four windows and left a gaping hole in the brick wall of the home. The bombing, an obvious intimidation maneuver to protest school desegregation, came on the heels of a February 1 demonstration by four black collegians from Greensboro's North Carolina A&T College who boldly sat at the

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[103] "Police Are Investigating Cross Burning at VUU," *Richmond Afro-American*, September 20, 1958.

Woolworth's lunch counter reserved for "whites only." In the midst of community organizing and rallying efforts by both blacks and whites in Richmond, Virginia Union students caught the college protest fever, replicating sit-in protests in downtown Richmond, thereby creating a flash point for the already tense polarization between blacks and whites in Richmond.[104]

Black protest and mobilization against segregation instigated a counterpoint for Richmond whites to amass their own protest efforts to maintain the status quo the following month. Nearly 1,000 white North Side property owners and residents met at Chandler on February 9 for a last-ditch rally to oppose the School Board's consideration to convert Chandler into a facility for blacks, and to strategize a campaign to maintain white control for Chandler and the surrounding neighborhoods. Joe T. Mizell, Jr., a local lawyer and spokesman, represented six North Side civic associations: Highland Park Citizens Association, Essex-Boulevard Co-operative, Bellevue-Ginter Civic Association, Hammond Place Civic Association, and Sherwood Park Civic Association. Mizell appealed for a show of unity as the groups made plans to protest at an upcoming School Board hearing set for February 17.[105]

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[104] "Carlotta Walls, 16, one of the nine colored students who originally integrated Central High School in Little Rock, Ark. in 1957 arrived at school 10 minutes after classes started on Feb. 10," *Richmond Afro-American*, February 20, 1960. Lewis A. Randolph and Gayle T. Tate, *Rights for a Season: The Politics of Race, Class, and Gender in Richmond, Virginia*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 180.

[105] "Six North Side Civic Groups to Meet Tonight to Protest School Conversion," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, February 18, 1960.

Mizell challenged the School Board's authority to decide the final use of Chandler. Instead, Mizell took sides with City Council to control Chandler's fate, dismissing the School Board. "When we reach the point where City Council takes orders from a body it appoints and appropriates money for, then it's time we change our form of government and put the power back in the hands of the people where it belongs," Mizell chided. He also quipped, "When the homes of widows and orphans will be cut in value by 25 percent by the stupid actions of the School Board, then it is time to get another School Board." Mizell was adamant that Chandler remain a white school and acknowledged efforts of North Side whites to prevent black residential expansion north of Brookland Park Boulevard, the racial dividing line between whites and blacks. Blacks lived south of Brookland Park Boulevard; whites lived north of Brookland Park Boulevard. White neighborhoods clung to Chandler, located on the southern side of Brookland Park Boulevard, as a symbol of their dominance of North Side.[106]

It was no surprise that the Highland Park Citizens Association had stood firm against black expansion into their Highland Park community, eastwardly adjacent to Chandler. The association had sponsored a campaign in 1942 to gain signed commitments from a majority of homeowners, pledging that they would not be the first in their block to sell to black buyers. In fact, when a black outbid a white veteran for a

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[106] Ibid.

Highland Park home, the association spearheaded fundraising efforts to ensure that a white would purchase the property.[107]

"We're gonna be told we're stupid and crazy," Mizell warned white protesters at the February 9 Chandler meeting, " . . . we don't want any mixing in our schools," he pleaded, "and we won't have it until they make us." Yet, Chandler's conversion to "Negro use" was initially less about school mixing, according to the *Times-Dispatch's* coverage. The School Board anticipated that black residential expansion would place Chandler in the heart of a black community in a few years. As such, the location of the newly-constructed, more modern John Marshall High School for whites had been intentionally shifted from an area to the northernmost city limits with an expectation that the older Chandler building would convert to a black junior-senior high school. However, the School Board's foresight was an insult and affront to North Side whites who feared a drop in property values, the demise of their whites-only neighborhoods, and the collapse of neighborhood schools that had stood as a proud tradition embraced by their families and communities.[108]

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[107] North Richmond News: The Highland Park Plaza Historic District. http://northrichmondnews.com/news/2009/08/17/the-highland-park-plaza-historic-district/2370 (accessed September 22, 2013). Highland Park attracted Italian, German and Polish immigrants at the turn of the 20th century. See Virginius Dabney, *Richmond: The Story of a City* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), 223-225.

[108] "Nearly 1000 Agree to Fight Chandler School Conversion," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, February 10, 1960. "6 Groups Confer on School," *Richmond News Leader,* February 18, 1960.

Downtown Lunch Counter Sit-ins

Six stores in Richmond closed their lunch counters on Saturday, February 20, 1960, when 200 Virginia Union students conducted several sit-in demonstrations to link with the Greensboro protests to Richmond. On Monday, February 22, during the "Washington's Birthday" sales event downtown, well-dressed Virginia Union collegians repeated the sit-ins and swarmed the soda fountain area and lunch room at Thalhimer's department store, reading books and doing homework in a gesture of non-violent protest. Wendell T. Foster, Jr., then a 19-year-old sophomore, recalled, "I was in the library [at Virginia Union] when some students started talking about integration and going downtown to Thalhimer's to eat." He joined them. "I knew the [segregation] waters needed to be muddied, but I didn't know it would come about as quickly as it did." Foster remembered a white man asking them to move. They refused.[109]

William B. Thalhimer, the store president, told his granddaughter, "I will never forget seeing Oliver Hill standing there with his arms folded like this [crosses arms over chest], observing" the action. Thalhimer called the police. Police arrested thirty-four students and charged them with trespassing. Those arrested included Virginia Union seminary students Frank Pinkston and Charles Sherrod, student protest leaders. Virginia Union faculty were present to monitor the non-violent protest and the lock up. Faculty

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[109] Wendell T. Foster, Jr., in discussion with the author, January 12, 2014.

members included Dr. McCreary and Dr. Spraggins, coordinator for the community leadership program with the Urban League.[110]

According to Foster, Pinkston and Sherrod had alerted the university president, Dr. Samuel Proctor, of their sit-in plans at Thalhimer's the day before. They told students that the president "would not oppose or support the sit-in," a typical posture for black college presidents who straddled a variety of constituencies.[111]

As police transported the arrested students from Thalhimer's to the police station, nearly 500 spectators, many waving American flags, cheered on the students. Foster and others spent an hour in the police lock-up before their release. Several black businessmen and attorneys arrived at the lock-up to provide bail, including the proprietors of Eggleston's Hotel and Slaughter's Hotel, who put up their businesses for bail. These black hotels, located in the heart of Jackson Ward's renowned Second Street, became headquarters for students and supporters to gather for an "informal rededication meeting."[112]

The student activists met with Dr. Samuel Proctor, the university's president. Proctor's public statement emphasized that the university would not pursue disciplinary

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[110] "Sit-downs at Counters Begin Here," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, February 21, 1960. Elizabeth Smartt Thalhimer, *Finding Thalhimers* (Manakin-Sabot, VA: Dementi Milestone Publishing, Inc., 2010), 158.

[111] Foster, in discussion with the author. Randolph and Tate, 180.

[112] Foster, in discussion with the author. "Students Picketing Stores," *Richmond Afro-American*, February 27, 1960.

action against the students. Their participation was as individuals engaged in a student movement. Foster later learned how his family had serious concerns about how his new police record would damper his future after graduation, but when he visited his aunt, a government teacher at Maggie Walker, the day after his arrest, she proudly introduced him to her class and assured him that his family would stand by him.[113]

On Wednesday, February 24 at 1 p.m., two days after the student arrests, School Board Chairman Powell opened the public hearing on Chandler's fate in the auditorium of the old John Marshall High School downtown. The sole item on the agenda was the future use of Chandler School. Sixteen hundred whites, mostly from North Side, packed the school auditorium as the overflow crowd spilled outside to the school lawn. The hearing was "tense – and sometimes noisy," with applause and cheers. Hill later recalled the "uproar of boos, catcalls, and epithets. It was obvious that this audience had no intention for me to speak. A typical moderator would have suggested that I retire for my own safety, but Lewis stood up beside me and, with a calm demeanor and a steady voice, insisted upon the restoration of order. His doing so reminded me of depictions of Jesus calming the stormy Sea of Galilee."[114]

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[113] Foster, in discussion with the author.

[114] Robert M. Andrews, "Decision Postponed on Chandler School," *Richmond News Leader*, February 25, 1960. John Calvin Jeffries, *Justice Lewis F. Powell, Jr.: A Biography* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), 159. According to Jeffries, Powell's intervention on Hill's behalf was later rewarded when both Hill and Thurgood Marshall provided needed black support to Powell's nomination as a Justice to the Supreme Court.

Hill began by saying, " . . . [A]s strange as it may seem . . . we also oppose conversion of Chandler as a Negro school. The school should not be turned into a Jim Crow school . . . We don't want [white residents] to run out. Stay in the homes you have bought and lived in for years and let the Negro children come into the schools as a matter of natural course."[115]

North Side property owner Robert A. Lloyd, Jr., recommended Chandler's use as a city office building, lamenting that he had moved from Barton Heights because blacks had moved into the neighborhood. "You'll never be able to give them enough schools. You'll never satisfy them even if you give everything on God's green earth." Reginald R. Rooke, a druggist representing Highland Park, reminded the School Board, "I don't think I have to tell you what happens to real estate values when Negro schools come in . . . I beg of you to reconsider what would be an ill advised decision." He pleaded that Chandler should either be vacant or torn down "rather than depreciate a large and substantial neighborhood." [116]

Joe T. Mizell urged the School Board to "restudy the situation in light of the feelings of the people in these neighborhoods." Mizell, a resident of the prestigious Windsor Farms neighborhood in Richmond's West End, was an attorney representing the six North Side civic associations. He cautioned that these 5,000 North Side families

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[115] Andrews, "Decision Postponed on Chandler School."

[116] Ibid.

would have their real estate values sliced by 25 percent if the School Board permitted Chandler to become a black school. A. B. Brazley, a North Side resident, was adamant that he and others who rented homes in North Side would be the first to move, impacting not only landlords, but also neighborhood merchants.[117]

Dr. McCreary, now representing the Graves PTA, used his time at the podium to highlight the overcrowding situation at Graves. Horace H. Scott confirmed the need for improvement to Graves. Clarence Newsome, executive secretary of the Crusade for Voters, chided the School Board for "dodging integration very cleverly" by recycling to black children "old, second-hand school buildings that have been worn out by white children." Newsome challenged the School Board to "show good faith . . . [by ordering] integration instead of dodging and ducking the question. Frankly, we don't want Chandler handed down. We want integration now on a voluntary basis. . . . Richmond is ripe for integration and the time for ducking and dodging has passed." In all, five blacks, including Rev. C. C. Scott of Fifth Baptist Church, spoke along with attorney Hill at the tense and crowded School Board meeting.[118]

After all fifteen speakers had their say, the chairman acknowledged that the School Board's duty was to "provide fairly and adequately for the education all of the nearly 40,000 school children in the city without regard to race," and that Chandler's

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[117] Ibid.

[118] Ibid.

future use was one of the most difficult decisions faced by the board. He could make no promises other than "an attempt to reach a decision in the overall best interest of the community." The board postponed their decision on Chandler. Meanwhile, Virginia Union students resumed their picketing at Thalhimer's that day as rumors circulated about white retaliation.[119]

That same evening at 8 p.m., Oliver Hill joined more than a dozen speakers to address a crowd of more than 3,500 blacks that had packed Fifth Street Baptist Church. The doors of the church had been shut until twenty minutes before the mass meeting while police investigated a bomb threat to the church. Another 500 surrounded the church, listening through speakers regarding action strategies in the interest of the black community to respond to the student arrests and segregation. J. Rupert Picott, head of the influential black Virginia Teachers Association (VTA), championed a "buying hiatus" to boycott the stores.[120]

Dentist Felix Brown echoed the call to boycott downtown stores, contending that the economic strength of the black community had the power to leverage change. Dr. Brown, a former national president of the Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated, had been a victim of intimidation merely weeks before. The local Iota Sigma chapter of Phi

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[119] *Minute*s, (February 24, 1960). Andrews, "Decision Postponed on Chandler School." "Picketing of Store Resumed," *Richmond News Leader*, February 24, 1960.

[120] "Negroes to Expand Picketing," *Richmond News Leader*, February 25, 1960. "Negroes Support Boycott," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, February 25, 1960.

Beta Sigma Fraternity had just purchased 2704 Chamberlayne Avenue in the white section of North Side. Vandals had broken into his white Thunderbird and his Studebaker Lark and smashed the windshields. He was a target of phone call threats and offers by whites to buy him out to keep the property in white control.[121]

Johnny Brooks, an NAACP voter registration leader, urged mothers, ministers, and others to share the load on the picket lines to maintain the momentum of the student protest. The Upsilon Omega (Richmond graduate) chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, canceled a formal affair at the Mosque auditorium and donated funds intended to purchase invitations to help the students and the cause. The student sit-in had ignited a flashpoint for community action in the black community. The push for desegregation would slash deeply into Richmond's business coffers through the power of the dollar.[122]

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[121] "Negroes to Expand Picketing," *Richmond News Leader*, February 25, 1960. "Soon After House Buy," *Richmond Afro-American*, February 2, 1960. Richmond blacks were no strangers to organizing economic boycotts to protest against segregation. In 1904, the Virginia Passenger and Power Company required Jim Crow segregation on its trolley cars in Richmond, Manchester and Petersburg. John Mitchell, editor of the *Richmond Planet* (forerunner to the *Richmond Afro-American*), vehemently opposed such laws and forewarned that blacks will "protest and protest. We shall agitate and agitate. We shall never willingly submit." Mitchell's clarion call galvanized black business and social and fraternal organizations to support the boycott, yet black ministerial leadership hesitated with their full support. Controversy and propaganda swirled between the *Richmond Times- Dispatch* and the *Richmond Planet* regarding the boycott's commitment and effectiveness. The transit company went bankrupt in the summer of 1905. In June 1906, the Virginia legislature enacted a law requiring streetcar segregation throughout the state. See August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, "Negro Boycotts of Segregated Streetcars in Virginia,1904-1907," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 81, no. 4 (Oct. 1973):479-487. Blair L. M. Kelley provides a fresh re-examination of the 1904 Richmond streetcar boycott in context with similar protests in other southern cities. See, Kelley, *Right to Ride: Streetcar Boycotts and African American Citizenship in the Era of Plessy v. Ferguson* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

[122] "Negroes to Expand Picketing," *Richmond News Leader*, February 25, 1960. Dr. Laverne Byrd Smith, in discussion with the author, August 26, 2013. Dr. Smith was basileus (president) of the Upsilon Omega

Thalhimer's department store and its retail competitor across the street, Miller & Rhoads, led by Webster Rhoads, were prime targets for the downtown boycott. William Thalhimer and Rhoads sought out Tennant Bryan, head of Richmond newspapers for help. The three of them were baffled beyond belief as blacks asserted their agency. Thalhimer did not want to alienate his white clientele, yet the buying power of middle-income blacks yielded eight million dollars in sales volume at the downtown basement operations alone.[123]

Richmond's retail community was aghast when the March 7, 1960, issue of *LIFE Magazine* headlined a photo of a demure, petite, and well-dressed black society matron with pocketbook and gloves being hauled across the street by Richmond police, accompanied by a German shepherd, in front of the Thalhimer's store marquee. Mrs. Ruth Tinsley, a senior advisor for the Richmond NAACP's Youth Council and wife of Dr. Jesse M. Tinsley, a prominent black dentist and former president of the Richmond NAACP, had been waiting for a ride home outside the store during the student arrests.

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graduate chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority and an elementary school teacher at West End School from 1958-1960. Her activism as an educator is noteworthy. She recalled that many blacks, whether employed by whites or white-controlled organizations and businesses, feared for their jobs and retribution against their families if they were visible activists. Her father, Charles Edward Byrd, served as a head waiter at the prestigious, all-white Commonwealth Club and later became maitre d' at the Jefferson Hotel. Mr. Byrd overheard many discussions by white elites and officials at club functions where decisions and business deals were discreetly made. His daughter recalled conversations he had heard from whites regarding housing strategies to shift blacks from Jackson Ward toward the East End during the 1950s downtown urban renewal and highway construction. According to Dr. Smith, some activist-oriented black professionals discounted his observations because of his position as a waiter. Yet, he passed along helpful information to aid the black cause in Richmond.

[123] Smartt, 158-160.

She was arrested for refusing to move from the store. The photo was a national embarrassment.[124]

By the end of March 1960, the thirty-four Virginia Union students had police court hearings, were convicted of trespassing, and were fined twenty dollars each. Their appeals were set for April 6. The student sit-ins galvanized parents and adults to organize the Richmond Citizens Advisory Committee (RCAC) to support the students, as well as a "Human Dignity Campaign" designed to swell the numbers of picketers involved on the student picket lines. Reverend P. B. Walker, pastor of Third Street Bethel AME Church, served as chairman. Dr. J. Rupert Picott, executive director of the VTA, sent communications to its 1,200 VTA leaders, emphasizing that college students, "many [of] whom we have taught[and are] now in college have been the focal point of the new effort of human dignity." The *Richmond Afro* highlighted photographs of prominent black women – a well known beautician, a society club woman, and an office secretary – wearing last year's Easter hats to inspire the black community not to spend money in stores that refused to serve all patrons.[125]

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[124] "Lunch Counter Segregation Skirmish," *LIFE Magazine*, March 7, 1960, 42. The Tinsley home was known as the "headquarters of the civil rights movement" in Richmond. Mrs. Tinsley, like Rosa Parks, was a trained seamstress. They had the distinction of hosting a dinner in their home for First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt when she arrived in Richmond for the 1939 NAACP national convention to present the Spingarn Medal to Marian Anderson. See "Remembering A Heroine: Ruth E. Nelson Tinsley," *Richmond Free Press*, February 17-19, 1994.

[125] "34 Va. U. Students Now Look to Appeals Hearing," *Richmond Afro-American*, March 27, 1960.

The RCAC's Human Dignity Campaign received financial as well as picket line support from a variety of black organizational leaders. The black Richmond Medical Society committed to man the picket lines every Friday with the support of black medical and allied health professionals. The Beta Gamma Lambda (Richmond graduate) chapter of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated, cancelled its annual dance and donated funds to support the student movement, an effort led by its president, Frederick F. Black, Jr., a teacher and department head at Maggie Walker High School. The Old Dominion Bar Association, the black lawyers group headed by Martin A. Martin, the lead defense attorney for the arrested students, publicly acknowledged its active support. The Astoria Beneficial Club, a noted black men's civic group, supported the campaign, as its leader, Reginald Dyson, praised the students as "New Pioneer Warriors for Freedom." The Tobacco Workers Local No. 202 made a financial contribution, along with the Richmond branch of black postal workers, headed by Wendell T. Foster, Sr., the father of one of the arrested students.[126]

The *Richmond Afro* provided consistent promotional leverage to maintain the pulse and fervor of the downtown boycott and participation in the picket lines. Beresenia Hill, a teacher at Baker Elementary School and wife of attorney Hill, was featured in the

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[126] Ibid. *Minutes*, (April 1959), 238. The Astoria Beneficial Club was founded on August 8, 1901, by twenty-two young black men in response to black disenfranchisement and Jim Crow in Virginia. As a social and civic men's club, the group paid the poll taxes of its members to ensure their eligibility to vote during black disenfranchisement. Astorians supported equal pay for teachers, joined with the NAACP's efforts against lynching, and provided merit scholarships to students at Armstrong High School and Virginia Union. They personally reached out to a list of 5,000 blacks who had once been registered voters but were delinquent with poll taxes in order to re-establish their eligibility to vote. www.astoriabeneficialclub.org/historical-reflections.html (accessed October 7, 2013).

Richmond Afro among the picketers. Active in a variety of black women's social clubs, Mrs. Hill's own activism was a magnet to mobilize support from the large number of black women's social clubs that claimed her as a member. Many of those women were educators.[127]

Thelma Mealy Robinson was a teacher at Randolph Elementary in the near West End and active on the picket lines. An energetic activist with a master's from Columbia University, she worked with the Crusade and voter registration campaigns. Each year, black and white teachers took turns with an in-service day for field trips to local companies, like Philip Morris. During the boycott, some black teachers passed on the visit. Instead, they stayed at their schools to signal their backing for the boycott. Her principal, Charles Julius E. Burrell, supported these efforts. She learned decades later that he had been passed over for a position as a junior high school principal. The superintendent had chided Burrell for not "controlling his teachers" and had penalized him for his teachers' activism. Despite the professional sacrifice, "his heart was in the movement," she recalled.[128]

Richmond Afro columnist Ruth Jenkins announced Clara Kersey Jackson's passing in her column, noting that in lieu of flowers, the family wanted bereavement contributions channeled to support the Human Dignity Campaign. Mrs. Jackson, widow

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[127] "Prominent Women's Clubs, such as the Moles, Inc. are supporting the Richmond students' Human Dignity Campaign," *Richmond Afro-American*, April 9, 1960.

[128] Thelma Robinson Mealy, in discussion with the author, August 25, 2013.

of a prominent black druggist, James E. Jackson, Sr., had opened her home to young mothers with children and had supervised childcare to enable them to carry placards and picket downtown. She was a Virginia Union alumna like her daughter, Alice, a teacher and activist who unsuccessfully tried to integrate the University of Virginia in 1935. The end of Jenkins' column hinted that the black community "grapevine" was abuzz with hearsay that Chandler would become a black school by September 1960, speculating that an announcement would be made after the June City Council elections.[129]

On April 22, 1960, nearly two months after the Thalhimer's demonstrations and downtown boycotts, Chairman Powell called for the School Board vote on Chandler School, an already tense issue now thickened with racial polarization. The board had reviewed the public hearing testimony, deliberated with City Council regarding various choices, and issued its long awaited decision. Chandler would continue as a white school for the 1960-1961 school year. Beyond that, Chandler's fate depended upon its future. The board stopped short of determining Chandler's longer term fate. The tense political climate pitted the School Board and the city against each other in the upcoming council elections. With race relations strained to the hilt, the board sidestepped the discord "during this period of emotional tension, political activity, and controversy." While the board determined that Chandler's conversion to a black school would forestall school

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[129] "Sob-Sister," *Richmond Afro-American*, April 9, 1960.

integration, it acceded to the political demands of white North Siders and the acrimony of City Council to keep Chandler white.[130]

At the end of the School Board vote, Dr. McCreary, as president of the Graves PTA, reminded the board once again about overcrowding. Now that Chandler was unavailable for black students, the conversion of the soon-to-be "old" John Marshall High School as a possible facility was "undesirable for several reasons." He extended the PTA's help to resolve the matter. When the PTA met in May to discuss overcrowding matters, attorney Hill attended the meeting and encouraged parents to apply for transfers to Chandler before the July 9 deadline. This time, Hill had hoped for 150 applications, pushing for blacks to apply "in great numbers for years" to garner "impressive results," but lamented that "parents just haven't shown the proper interest."[131]

On May 17, 1960, six years after the *Brown* decision, more than 3,500 blacks packed the Mosque auditorium to hear Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. He urged the crowd to respond to massive resistance with "massive insistence," a plea that appeared to have much more salience with the school shut-down in Prince Edward County than in Richmond.[132]

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[130] *Minutes*, (April 22, 1960), 342-343.

[131] Ibid. "Three Seek Admission to Chandler," *Richmond Afro-American*, July 9, 1960. "Chandler School to Be Mixed," *Richmond Afro-American*, August 20, 1960. Pratt noted that for black parents the point was not "social interaction with whites, but merely a matter of equal access" to better facilities and resources. See, Pratt, *Color of Their Skin*, 108.

[132] *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, May 18, 1960.

Chandler in Transition

The June council elections were the first to test the black political power of the Crusade for Voters. The Crusade, buoyed by civic energy with the sit-ins and boycotts, galvanized the black vote to elect seven of the nine candidates with Crusade endorsement and to defeat two candidates that the Crusade found "unsatisfactory." This civic energy flexed the economic and political muscle of the black community, tilting the "Virginia Way" off balance and destabilizing the status quo path of separate and unequal in Richmond.[133]

On June 30, 1960, Roy Puckett, the Richmond superintendent's administrative assistant, forwarded four placement applications to B. S. Hilton, executive director of the Placement Board. Two were described as "normal" transfers for pupils enrolling in the soon-to-be opened George Wythe High School, while the other two were evidently not normal – they were transfer requests from pupils to transfer from Graves to Chandler. Since the George Wythe High principal had not yet been selected, the transfer requests to George Wythe, apparently from white students, lacked signatures from the building level authority. The signature authority remained blank for the Graves to Chandler application as well. Puckett noted, "it is assumed that the Chandler situation," as he framed it, "is understood." The two transfer requests to Chandler were from Mrs. Frank Swann for

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[133] Silver and Moeser, 74-75.

Carol, a twelve-year-old seventh-grader at Graves, dated June 1, 1960, and from Mrs. Alice R. Calloway, for her son, Wallace, dated June 2, 1960.[134]

Viola McGhee Swann was a homemaker, an accountant, and a graduate of Hampton Institute (now University). Viola's father owned Manhattan Cab Company, a successful black taxicab business, as well as rental properties in Richmond, family enterprises that guided her sense of business acumen. She met her husband, Frank Swann, when they were college students at Hampton. Frank and her brother, Thomas McGhee, opened a fine dining restaurant, Abe's Seafood Grill, in November 1957 at 2410 North Avenue as a complement to their casual neighborhood restaurant, Abe's Grill. The Swanns supported the Richmond NAACP efforts and participated in the downtown picket lines. Their daughter, Carol, was a member of the Richmond NAACP Youth Council, headed by Mrs. Ruth Tinsley.[135]

Mrs. Alice Reid Calloway, as a Norrell School parent, was a dynamic force in the Richmond Pupil Protective Association protest during 1957-58. Active in several social clubs along with her close friend, Beresenia Hill, they were both members of the Richmond alumnae chapter of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated., and the Richmond chapter of Jack and Jill. Alice was the daughter of Dr. Leon Reid, Sr., a 1915

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[134] *Records,* Series I. Correspondence and Subject Files, 1957-1966. Subseries III. City Applications, 1957-1966. Box 0011, Folder 4.

[135] "Your Invitation to Our Open House," *Richmond Afro-American,* November 9, 1957. "Chandler School to Be Mixed," *Richmond Afro-American,* August 20, 1960. Carol Swann-Daniels, telephone discussion with the author, July 27, 2013.

graduate of the Howard University School of Dentistry, and the granddaughter of Dr. David Ashbury Ferguson, the first black to pass the Virginia State Dental Board examination in 1900. Known as the "patron saint of black dentistry," Ferguson had been a leader in the formation of the black National Dental Association, an activist against race and class discrimination in early 20th century Virginia, and an advocate for black entrepreneurship. Alice Reid Calloway inherited a spirited family torch of activism that had burned for at least two generations before her.[136]

Carol and Wallace had been classmates since their early years at Norrell School and had avoided entry into Baker School when their fifth grade teacher, Mrs. Ruth Chiles, prepared them to skip the sixth grade and thus enabled their entry into the seventh grade at Graves Junior High. According to Carol, Graves was a significant disappointment. She remembered overcrowded classes, sitting on the windowsill instead of in seats, using dilapidated textbooks handed down from whites, and walking three blocks to change classes. During one trek between school buildings, the two of them passed a store frequented by neighborhood hooligans. The hooligans punched the mild-mannered Wallace red in the face. Youngsters attending Graves not only had the

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[136] Oliver Hill Jr., in discussion with the author, August 13, 2013. Jack and Jill was a black mothers' club that began in 1938 in Philadelphia and spread to other communities nationwide with a mission "to provide social, cultural and educational opportunities for youth between the ages of two and nineteen." See Jack and Jill of America, Incorporated, http://jackandjillinc.org/test-page/ (accessed October 7, 2013). Francis Merrill Foster, Sr., D.D.S., "The Richmond Minority Ministry in Dentistry, 1850-1950," *Virginia Dental Journal* 74, no. 5, (July-August-September, 1997): 12-13.

challenge of walking between school buildings in the snow, wet weather, and traffic, but sometimes also the challenge of street hooligans jeopardizing their safety.[137]

The black transfer applications grew from two to four by the end of the first week of July. Dr. McCreary signed an application dated July 4, 1960, to transfer his daughter Edwina to Chandler. Dr. McCreary had earned master's and doctoral theology degrees from Union Theological Seminary in Richmond (now Union Presbyterian Seminary) as their first black graduate, and had attended the University of Chicago, Columbia University, and Princeton Theological Seminary, among others, for post-doctoral work. McCreary was pastor of Mount Carmel Baptist Church and taught at Virginia Union, his undergraduate alma mater, where he had been inducted into Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity. A second- generation pastor, McCreary was influenced by his father, the pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Charlottesville.[138]

Mrs. Florence M. Mead, a nurse at the black St. Phillip's Hospital at the Medical College of Virginia, submitted an application dated July 8, 1960, for her daughter, Gloria, a thirteen-year-old seventh-grader at Graves, to transfer as well. Her husband, E.B. Mead, was a pipefitter. The Mead family attended Mosby Memorial Baptist Church. The Meads

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[137] Swann-Daniels, in discussion with the author.

[138] *Records*, Series I. Correspondence and Subject Files, 1957-1966. Subseries III. City Applications, 1957-1966. Box 0011, Folder 4. Dr. Edward D. McCreary, Jr. in discussion with the author, September 6, 2013. Mount Carmel Baptist Church, http://www.themountcarmel.org/dr__edward_d__mccreary__jr_. (accessed October 13, 2013).

were spurred to action when someone at a mass meeting pleaded, "If no one applies, no one will ever go."[139]

On July 26, 1960, Puckett submitted cumulative records of the four black applicants to Chandler for the Placement Board to review their scholastic scores and included a map to locate their residences. Puckett also forwarded a letter received by the Richmond superintendent. In mid-July, a white parent residing on North Side's Chamberlayne Avenue requested the School Board to transfer her daughter from Chandler to Albert H. Hill Junior High, located in the West End. Puckett had recommended that the Placement Board deny the request "since there is no substantial reason for this transfer. Should this be allowed, it would be the beginning of a host of similar requests. I believe that the primary purpose of this request was the result of the four applications [from black students requesting entry into Chandler]." The Placement Board did not act on the white parent's request, citing that it was made after the sixty-day threshold prior to the school session's opening.[140]

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[139] "Chandler School to Be Mixed," *Richmond Afro-American*. "'Brave Little Kids,' The Integration of Chandler Junior High," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, August 25, 1991.

[140] *Records*, Series I. Correspondence and Subject Files, 1957-1966. Subseries III. City Applications, 1957-1966. Box 0011, Folder 4. Puckett's concern regarding white transfer requests was astute. Whites were already fleeing Chandler in anticipation of desegregation. For the 1959-1960 school year, Chandler enrolled 980 white students. For the 1960-1961 school year, white enrollment was 772, an eleven percent enrollment decrease from the year before. White enrollment gradually plummeted to 123 by the 1969-1970 school year, as 875 black students dominated the enrollment figures. See James Doherty, *Race and Education in Richmond* (Privately published, 1972), 56.

When the Virginia Pupil Placement Board met on August 15, 1960, the three new members of the board, E. J. Oglesby of Charlottesville and A. L. Wingo and E. T. Justis of the state education department, had an hour-long meeting with Superintendent Willett, Chairman Powell, City Attorney J. Elliott Drinkard, and Assistant City Attorney E. T. Justis to review the black applications. Wallace Calloway and Edwina McCreary were rejected with the rationale that their families resided closer to Graves Junior High. Gloria and Carol, however, lived a few blocks from Chandler. Breaking the tradition of the Placement Board's previous denials for black students' requests to transfer to white schools in Virginia, the Board voluntarily assigned Carol Swann and Gloria Mead to Chandler without a court order – an unprecedented move. Behind closed doors, these men hammered out a decision that continued Chandler as a white school to pacify white North Siders and pried open a narrow opening for school integration to pacify black North Siders, particularly attorney Hill, with hopes of tempering the financial disruption to the downtown retail core. Yet, throughout the summer, neither the scorching heat nor rain deterred black picketers as they continued the boycott downtown.[141]

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[141] Pratt, *Color of Their Skin*, 25. *Records*, Series I. Correspondence and Subject Files, 1957-1966. Subseries III. City Applications, 1957-1966. Box 0011, Folder 4. The original members of the Placement Board resigned February 24, 1960. They asked to be relieved of their duties after the legislature amended the law to enable localities to assign pupils to schools, starting March 1, 1960. The initial legislation establishing the Placement Board had intentionally shifted the authority for transfers and assignments from local school boards to the Placement Board to maintain segregation. See Allan Jones, "Placement Unit Quits Over Free Choice Law," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, February 25, 1960. "Chandler School to be Mixed," *Richmond Afro-American.* "March for Rights," *Richmond Afro-American,* August 20, 1960. On an interesting note, the July 9, 1960, *Richmond Afro-American* headlined that three children had applied for Chandler. Gloria Mead's application is dated July 8, 1960. It appears that her application was the fourth one received.

The parents of Edwina McCreary did not contest the Board's decision. Edwina McCreary Richmond later admitted her reluctance to attend Chandler, even though her father, who had been president of the PTA from the time she entered kindergarten at Norrell through her years at Graves, had submitted her name for transfer. Because she was an only child, she preferred to stay with the classmates who had become her friends since Norrell Elementary and was pleased with teachers at Norrell and Graves.[142]

Dr. McCreary recalled that he had pulled Edwina's application."We decided it wasn't to her advantage," although he and his wife were prepared to send her. He and other black educators had compared the mathematics curriculum at Chandler and conferred with Rozeal L. Diamond, an Armstrong math teacher with a master's degree. Mrs. Diamond taught honor students on Sundays in her home and used a widely read textbook by Dr. George B. Thomas, a noted mathematics professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. They questioned whether the Chandler curriculum was up to the standards of Maggie Walker and Armstrong, as several black teachers, like Diamond, had earned master's degrees from prestigious northern universities. They considered themselves much better trained than local white teachers. Dr. McCreary noted that over one hundred Richmond-area black educators were at Columbia University to earn

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[142] Dr. Edward McCreary, in discussion with the author, September 6, 2013. Edwina McCreary Richmond, in discussion with the author, September 6, 2013. While Dr. McCreary stated that he had pulled his daughter's transfer request, the Placement Board's executive secretary sent a denial letter regarding the board's actions on August 16, 1960. See *Records,* Series I. Correspondence and Subject Files, 1957-1966. Subseries III. City Applications, 1957-1966. Box 0011, Folder 4. The denial is also in the minutes of the Placement Board meeting. See *Correspondence and Subject Files,* Series III. Minutes, 1957-1966. Board Meeting, 1960 Aug 15. Box 0067, Folder 3.

graduate degrees during the summer of 1952 alone. "We were beyond the teaching of the white [Richmond] teachers," he emphasized.[143]

Alice Reid Calloway, and her husband, a prominent physician, Dr. William Calloway, however, protested the Placement Board's decision to reject their son. The Calloways attended a protest hearing with Oliver Hill to address their concerns with the Placement Board on September 12, 1960. A day later, the board requested bus schedules and route maps for the Country Club and Chamberlayne Avenue bus routes "in connection with a question pending before this board," to probe whether the Virginia Transit Company was considering route changes or had made route changes in the past two years.[144]

The Placement Board also contracted the services of Austin Brockenbrough and Associates, consulting engineers, to conduct a field survey of the nearest walking distance from the Calloway home at 1302 Dubois Avenue to each of the two schools. Chandler was 8,530 feet away, while Graves was 8,150 feet, a mere difference of 380

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[143] McCreary, in discussion with the author. Thelma Mealy Robinson, a Columbia graduate, also recalled the large numbers of black educators attending graduate school each summer at Columbia and New York University. *Minutes,* (May 17, 1960), 354. "George B. Thomas, 92, Dies; Wrote Calculus Text," *New York Times,* November 13, 2006. According to the *New York Times* obituary, Thomas' text was "widely read." The mathematician had taught at MIT for four decades.

[144] *Records,* Series I. Correspondence and Subject Files, 1957-1966. Subseries III. City Applications, 1957-1966. Box 0011, Folder 4.

feet. Yet, it was enough of a difference to deny Wallace Calloway from attending Chandler.[145]

This was now the third time that the Placement Board had had their authority challenged by the Calloways. The first time was when the Richmond Pupil Protection Association won a restraining order against the Placement Board on September 18, 1957, Civil Action 2616, decided by U.S. District Court Judge Sterling Hutcheson. Listed at the top of the petition was the lead plaintiff, William C. Calloway, Jr., Wallace's older brother.[146]

Desegregating Chandler: 1960

When Gloria and Carol entered the white Chandler Junior High on September 6, 1960, *Richmond Afro* writer Tom Mitchell described the moment as a "normal, quite normal" first day of school. No angry mobs or political leaders jeered at the two youngsters, unlike the hostile desegregation of Central High School in Little Rock. Instead, they were surrounded by flashing cameras, reporters, and police escorts as they climbed the granite steps to the school's front doors. School Board Chairman Powell had called for civility despite the board's misgivings toward integration and the racial tension in the city. White acquiescence to token school integration made no impact on the black

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[145] Ibid.

[146] *Records,* Series I. Correspondence and Subject Files, 1957-1966. Subseries V. City Transfers, 1958-1966. Richmond - Court Case, 1957-1962. Box 0036, Folder 4.

economic boycott and picketing that continued downtown. Richmond would never be "normal" again.[147]

Gloria first learned that she would be attending Chandler two weeks before school began. When a *New York Times* reporter called her home with the news and asked for a comment, she demurred and waited for her mother to return from a beauty shop appointment to respond to the media. Gloria recalled the concerns "about the deficiencies of the black schools," and how she received tutoring during the summer to bolster her scholastic success.[148]

Threatening phone calls started right after the newspapers published names and addresses of the Swann and Mead families. "My parents didn't curse. But in a week, I think I heard every word there was, just by virtue of those phone calls," Carol recalled. "All summer . . . it was scary. . . but largely peaceful compared to what was going on in other places. No one dragged you and beat you up. It was more like little tortures each day." Soon after the phone calls started, her parents screened the calls. Carol was no longer permitted to answer the phone. Some of the telephone taunts were not only hostile but sexual, causing the family much distress. Before the start of school, Chandler's

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[147] *Minutes,* (August 24, 1960), 10. "Normal," *Richmond Afro American*. "'Brave Little Kids'," *Richmond Times-Dispatch.*

[148] "'Brave Little Kids'," *Richmond Times-Dispatch.*

principal, John Madden, had met with the children and families, advising them to ignore the teasing and taunts, expecting that the harassment would subside over time. [149]

Newspaper headlines described the first day of integration at Chandler as "smooth" and "normal." Principal Madden credited teachers and parents for the day's ease at Chandler's first PTA meeting two weeks after the start of school. He noted that discipline problems were minimal for that first day, but made no direct mention regarding the day's significance.[150]

The smoothness had been a carefully orchestrated effort. More than fifty white students had gathered on the sidewalk at the entrance to Chandler as early as 8:15 a.m. before the school's final bell to report to classes at 8:45 a.m. School officials broke up the crowd and beckoned them inside the school. School officials were posted as sentinels at every entrance to monitor everyone who entered the building. Reporters and photographers were forbidden entry. Police cruisers circulated around the school's neighborhood. At least a half dozen officers, in uniform and plain clothes, patrolled the

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[149] Juan Williams, *My Soul Looks Back in Wonder: Voices of the Civil Rights Experience* (New York: Sterling Publishing Company, 2004), 65. Carol Swann-Daniels, in telephone discussion with the author, July 27, 2013. The "little tortures" described by Swann-Daniels are now considered by educational psychologists as "microaggressions." Derald Wing Sue, a Columbia University professor, frequently cited for his research on multiculturalism, attributes Chester Pierce for coining the term in the 1970s to describe the insults and putdowns directed toward blacks. Sue describes microaggressions as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, sexual-orientation, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group." See Sue, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender and Sexual-Orientation* (John Wiley & Sons: Hoboken, New Jersey, 2005), 5.

[150] "Smooth Desegregation at Chandler Noted," *Richmond News Leader*, September 20, 1960.

school area. About thirty whites, some eager to photograph the action, perched on the sidewalk across from school.[151]

Carol and Gloria, along with their parents, were inside a black sedan that drove up to the school entrance at 8:45 a.m. The girls exited the car, surrounded by about thirty reporters and photographers who witnessed their entry into the school and history. Carol told reporters later that day that the most harrowing part of the day was getting out of the car. "You wouldn't want to get out of the car and have all those people charging at you like a bunch of bulls, would you?" When Gloria added that no one sat with her and Carol during lunch on the first day, Principal Madden responded that pairs of white students also ate lunch alone to subdue any concern. Superintendent Willett acknowledged that "we're trying to make this as much of a normal situation as possible."[152]

The new "normal" was vastly different than the normalcy they had taken for granted at Norrell and Graves. Over the school year, the girls were left to tolerate the aggravation alone. Chandler's teachers ignored the racial bullying and sneers, silently sanctioning the agitation with their inaction. Carol remembered the name calling, being tripped up, and having ink squirted all over the back of her clothes. She and Gloria were the targets of one-sided food fights at lunchtime while adults disregarded the agitation.

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[151] "Token Integration in Richmond Started at Chandler Junior High," *Richmond News Leader*, September 6, 1990. This particular article was written in retrospect thirty years later, complete with actual behind-the-scenes detail not in the 1960 coverage.

[152] Ibid. "Integrated City Pupils Report Talk Scarce," *Richmond News Leader*, September 7, 1960.

"The teachers didn't intervene," according to Carol, who emphasized, "They didn't want us there." While Carol and Gloria were not familiar with each other before their entry to Chandler, they relied on their new friendship to endure the daily harassment. Assigned to the same homeroom, the girls "hung on to each other like life rafts sometimes," Gloria recalled. They were constant lunch companions.[153]

The transition to Chandler had no resemblance to the nurturing cocoon at Norrell, where teachers cared about them. Carol described the Norrell teachers as "wonderful" with high expectations. Norrell Principal Ethel Overby had been a disciplinarian with high expectations for behavior and achievement, quite a different learning environment from Chandler. Inside of Norrell's cocoon, Carol had no awareness of being a "black child," but just a child.[154]

Carol feared what would happen if her parents knew about the constant harassment at Chandler, not just from white students, but from white teachers whose indifference kept them from responding to the harassment she endured. Whites "took a risk if they talked to you with other people present . . . [I]t was hurtful," she recalled, not knowing who was "trying to be a friend or too afraid to be a friend." Carol's home economics teacher inappropriately hit her bottom. She reported the incident to her father

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[153] Ibid., 67. "'Brave Little Kids'," *Richmond Times-Dispatch.*

[154] Swann-Daniels, in discussion with the author.

only later, as she feared for her parents as well. "I tried to protect them. I didn't want them to come to school, get involved and cause a scene."[155]

Gym classes were a "nightmare." Girls wore all-in-one gym bloomers to participate in physical education activities, which meant that they had ten minutes to change in and out of school clothes between classes. Besides the usual pushing and shoving in the locker room, white girls screamed if they accidentally touched Carol or Gloria, claiming they were "contaminated" by brushing against them. When girls took partners to do sit ups, no one wanted to touch Carol or Gloria. "Gym class was a horror every day," Carol recalled.[156]

The one class that Carol and Gloria did not take together was advanced science. On a very warm day, Carol and her advanced science classmates took a field trip to a quarry to hunt for rocks. After the excursion, the class stopped to get snacks and use the restroom facility in the store. Carol, however, could not use the restroom and could not purchase a soda to quench her thirst. A school field trip was another indignity, and no one stood up for her.[157]

Anonymous phone calls added to the tension. Her mother received a phone call from a man who identified himself as a substitute teacher at Chandler and announced that

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[155] Ibid.

[156] Ibid.

[157] Ibid.

he had pulled down her pants. Another phone call came from a man who identified himself as a school custodian. He said he watched Carol in the halls every day and described what he would do to her when she was in the halls alone. Such crank phone calls caused fear, anxiety, and intimidation. Carol remembered, "I was afraid all the time."[158]

Carol and Gloria lost several of their black friends that they had grown up with at Norrell School. Much community discussion revolved around grades and IQ scores as the criteria for being selected to desegregate a white school. Negative feelings arose from former classmates who scorned and retreated from the girls as the "chosen ones." Former friends backed away, assuming that the girls thought they were better than everyone else because they attended a white school. The isolation then doubled. "What I remember most is the isolation," Gloria recalled. "We had broken a lot of ties in the black community, and we never got a sense of camaraderie from the white students. The best white friends we made turned out to be outcasts."[159]

The two girls existed in a fishbowl with the anxious burden of holding up the race on their young shoulders. Carol recalled how blacks unknown to her would recognize her and emphasize their high expectations, as if "the whole future of the race depended on our performance," lamenting that the community pressure was "very scary" and provoked

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[158] Ibid.

[159] Ibid. "'Brave Little Kids'," *Richmond Times-Dispatch.*

a "great deal of anxiety." She was afraid she would not be able to fulfill their expectations and would then let down the entire black race. At Norrell and Graves, Carol was an A student. At Chandler, her grades dropped significantly and she became a C student. Her school performance caused her much anxiety, particularly with speculation that her grades would be published in the newspaper. Chandler may have offered smaller classrooms, new textbooks, and academic rigor, but the tradeoff was daily anxiety, harassment, and isolation.[160]

While the girls faced their first months at Chandler, the boycott and picketing of white retail establishments downtown continued. Just before the girls entered Chandler in August 1960, Richmond Mayor Claude Woodward appointed a 12-person bi-racial committee during the peak of picketing and protest. However, retail merchants only offered partial desegregation as a means to end of the boycott. The Richmond Citizens Advisory Committee, acting on behalf of the black community, insisted on complete integration in order to call an end to the boycott. While five of the eight retail stores voluntarily integrated their lunch counters, Thalhimer's, Miller and Rhoads, and the W.T. Grant drug store were still hold outs. Thalhimer's and Miller and Rhoads had agreed to serve blacks at their downstairs lunch counters but had refused to integrate Thalhimer's Richmond Room and Miller and Rhoads' Tea Room, their respective fine dining restaurants. The mayor dismissed the committee amidst the deadlock. The boycott against

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[160] Swann-Daniels, in discussion with the author.

these three stores continued throughout the Christmas holiday shopping season to negatively impact holiday sales.[161]

On January 20, 1961, John F. Kennedy took office as president of the United States. Thalhimer's and Miller and Rhoads finally relented and opened their fine dining restaurants to all on Inauguration Day. The boycott ceased. Just as downtown stores shifted gears from token integration to full integration during 1960-61, several black parents lined up their children to follow the courageous example of Carol and Gloria to step up the desegregation of Chandler Junior High for the 1961-62 school year.[162]

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[161] "Race Relations Unit Still Needed," *Richmond Afro-American*, December 17, 1960.

[162] "Sob Sister," *Richmond Afro-American*, January 28, 1961.

CHAPTER FOUR

UNMASKING THE TRAUMA IN 1961

> The two personable young misses who did the city proud last year as pioneer integration students at Chandler Junior High will add to their history-making laurels at John Marshall High School in September . . . Having come through a trying experience with such flying colors (B or better averages, both girls are winning) [sic] plaudits from family and friends. And having made a number of fast friends among their Chandler classmates, who also will be going on to John Marshall, the girls can look forward to the new school term with less anxiety, more self confidence, and normal teenage excitement. . . .The community is wishing for both girls nothing but the best.[163]
> –Ruth Jenkins, *Richmond Afro* columnist

Ruth Jenkins praised Carol and Gloria's successful school year at Chandler in her June 24, 1961 column. However, the realities of the trauma of the indignities that Carol and Gloria endured were masked by those who were eager to recruit the next group of North Side black students to attend Chandler.

Two weeks earlier, Jenkins' column of June 10, 1961 had reported that twenty-two black students had applied to the Placement Board to attend white schools. Nineteen students had applied for Chandler, while three had applied to enter the newly-built John Marshall High School. Chandler served as a feeder school for John Marshall. Jenkins

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[163] "Sob Sister," *Richmond Afro-American*, June 24, 1961.

expressed disappointment that Norfolk "outdid Richmond by a long shot, as 113 black students had applied for transfers to white Norfolk schools."[164]

Stalling the Momentum of Student Transfers

The Placement Board met on July 11, 1961, to determine the fate of forty-nine black students requesting transfers to white schools. The jump from two in 1960 to almost fifty at Chandler in 1961 would rapidly attract more blacks to consider transferring to Chandler by the next (1962-63) school year. The School Board's conversion strategy to designate formerly white schools for black use was also a strategy linked to maintain residential segregation during the neighborhood shift from white to black. This conversion rationale was also a guise to confuse their response to the black community's concern regarding school overcrowding. While the School Board made no reference to race in their conversion efforts, the school reassignments from white to black were clearly a way to stall desegregation. However, the Chandler situation was more delicate because of the tensions expressed by the white North Side community over Chandler's possible conversion. To decelerate black enrollment at Chandler, the

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[164] "Sob Sister," *Richmond Afro-American*, June 10, 1961. More black students had applied for transfers to desegregate schools in Norfolk in 1958 than in Richmond in 1960 – 151 to four. Only seventeen of the 151 Norfolk students had survived the intense scrutiny of the Placement Board in 1958 before the governor shut down the schools rather than desegregate. After Norfolk schools reopened in February 1959, the "Norfolk 17" were subjected to humiliation, taunts, indignities and threats of violence. One black Norfolk student, Lavera Forbes, was stabbed in the back and taken to the emergency room. Yet, her father and lawyers silenced her from acknowledging the incident, fearing it might sway the Norfolk desegregation effort. See "School Desegregation in Norfolk, Virginia: The Norfolk 17," http://www.lib.odu.edu/specialcollections/schooldesegregation/n17/index.htm (accessed November 14, 2013). Andrew Heidelberg recently authored a memoir of his experience in *The Norfolk 17: A Personal Narrative on Desegregation in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1958-1962* (Pittsburgh: RoseDog Books, 2006).

Placement Board only admitted twenty-nine blacks for the 1961-62 school year. Twenty others, mostly eighth-graders, were rejected over their proximity to Graves Junior High or, more often, by their presumed lack of academic qualifications.[165]

The parents of fourteen of the twenty rejected students filed an appeal of the Placement Board's decision. The rejected students were Carolyn Nell Bradley, Johnnie Toney Burton, Daria Antoinette Cameron, Rosalind Marie Dodson, Elva Jane Binford, John Edward Johnson, Jr., Bruce Wendell Johnson, Phyllis Antoinette Johnson, Robert Sylvester Meyers, Barbara Jean Scott, Gloria Jean White, Lemuel Roberts Wimbush, Jr., Brenda Harris Williams, and they were all assigned to remain at Graves Junior High. Morgan Norris Jackson, a rising tenth grader, was assigned to enroll at Maggie Walker instead of John Marshall.[166]

Brenda Williams, the fourteen-year-old daughter of Mrs. Albert L. (Constance) Williams, and Morgan Jackson, the thirteen-year-old son of Dr. Isaiah A. Jackson, Jr. and Alma Norris Jackson, requested transfers from Graves Junior High to integrate John Marshall High School in 1961. The two would join Carol Swann and Gloria Mead, who were in line with their white Chandler classmates to attend the ninth grade at John Marshall High.

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[165] Pratt, *Color of Their Skin*, 30-31.

[166] *Records*, Series I. Correspondence and Subject Files, 1957-1966. Subseries V. City Transfers, 1958-1966. Richmond - Court Case, 1957-1962. Box 0036, Folder 4.

Brenda's application was denied for lack of academic qualifications. Mrs. Williams objected to the Placement Board's decision, stating that "this protest is based upon the fact that the requested placement has been denied by reason of criteria which are applied only in the cases of Negroes seeking transfers to or enrollment in particular schools and not in the cases of white children." In fact, Mrs. Williams had written to James Brinkley, principal of Graves Junior High, for his help on April 18, 1961. Mrs. Williams wanted her daughter "to enter to high school closest to her. She has had to go a great distance for a long time and I have several other children who travel a distance to attend classes and it is quite expensive and inconvenient. I would like for you to help me apply through the right channels for her to attend John Marshall High School which is almost walking distance for us." The Williams family lived at 315 East Ladies Mile Road in North Side's black Providence Park neighborhood. After reviewing the distance to each school, the Placement Board rescinded and placed Brenda at John Marshall.[167]

The Placement Board also denied Morgan's application, but on the basis that the Jackson family residence at 2707 Brook Road was closer to Maggie Walker than to John Marshall. Morgan's childhood playmate, Wallace Calloway lived five blocks away from the Jacksons and had received a similar rejection when he had applied to Chandler the

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[167] July 28, 1961, letter to Placement Board by Mrs. A. L. Williams, April 18 letter to J.A. Brinkley from Constance J. Williams. Mrs. Williams had also made a transfer request on September 7, 1960, for her daughter to attend Chandler. Her request was denied by the Placement Board at its October 10, 1960, meeting because it was filed past the deadline. *Records,* Series I. Correspondence and Subject Files, 1957-1966. Subseries III. City Applications, 1957-1966. Richmond, 1960-61. Box 0011, Folder 4. According to Google Maps, the Williams home was 2.4 miles from Maggie Walker, located at 1000 North Lombardy Street. The Williams home was 1.5 miles from John Marshall, located at 4225 Old Brook Road.

year before. The fathers of Morgan and Wallace were well-respected black physicians, family friends, and activists in Richmond.[168]

The Jackson family had significant prominence in the black community. Dr. Isaiah Allen Jackson, Sr., Morgan's grandfather, had received his medical degree from Shaw University in 1911, had practiced in Richmond since 1922, and had participated in the modernization of the black Richmond Community Hospital. Dr. Jackson, Sr., worked alongside his sons, Dr. I. A. Jackson, Jr., a surgeon, and Dr. Reginald C. Jackson, a radiologist, at the Jackson Clinic located in Jackson Ward. Morgan's maternal grandfather, Dr. Morgan E. Norris, Sr., practiced medicine in Kilmarnock, Virginia. Morgan, as well as his older brother, Isaiah A. Jackson, III, were expected to follow the Jackson family tradition to complete college and continue the family's medical dynasty.[169]

Morgan's parents appeared at the Placement Board hearing and expressed their intent to provide the best possible education for their children. Dr. Jackson acknowledged that his son's intelligence quotient measured over 160 and argued that Morgan would have better opportunities as a student at John Marshall than at Maggie Walker. The Placement Board held firm on the issue that Maggie Walker was closer to the Jacksons

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[168] According to Google Maps, the Jackson home was 0.8 miles from Maggie Walker and 2.0 miles from John Marshall.

[169] "Dominion Medical Practice Still Serving Patients After 100 Years," *Richmond Times-Dispatch,* Monday, July 25, 2011. "Professional News," *Journal of the National Medical Association*. 51, no.1 (January 1959): 73. Sara D. Kash, "Isaiah Jackson-A Leader in the Classic Sense," *The Crisis* 90, no. 10 (December 1983): 36.

than John Marshall. Unspoken was the fact that many white students attending John Marshall lived closer to Maggie Walker, yet they would never be assigned to a black school.[170]

Morgan's older brother, Isaiah, III, was featured in the *Richmond Afro* the same week as the report of the Placement Board hearing. The younger Isaiah had returned from a 64-day tour of the United Socialist Soviet Republic, Poland and Czechoslovakia, as well as Canada and Italy. As a senior at the exclusive Putney School in Vermont, the younger Isaiah had joined a professor and fourteen of his Putney classmates to explore issues in "Iron Curtain Countries." As a second-year Russian language student, Isaiah also provided translation for the group. When Russians asked the traveling students about America's race problem, Isaiah recalled that he had been briefed to follow State Department protocol to acknowledge the problem and to claim that a solution was in progress. Yet, his family was in the thick of the tensions in Richmond.[171]

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[170] "Now This is Richmond: Behind the Headline, or Why They Tried to Embarrass the Jacksons," *Richmond Afro-American*, September 9, 1960. The Virginia State Department of Education received a special appropriation of $610,000 from the Virginia General Assembly to expand intelligence testing from kindergarten to twelfth grade for the 1959-1960 school year. According to the *Richmond Afro*, the expansion of testing results was a determining factor for school boards to use to place students in schools in the face of desegregation. Previously, such tests were offered only to junior and senior high students. Alfred L. Wingo was coordinator of guidance, testing, research and surveys for the Virginia Department of Education. He framed the use of the testing results as a means "to improve instruction and guidance." See, "Va's 800,000 Pupils Face Intelligence Tests," *Richmond Afro-American*, September 12, 1959. Months later, Wingo was appointed to the Placement Board on February 20, 1960. See Eskridge, 267.

[171] "I.A. Jackson [sic] Jr. Back From Behind Iron Curtain," *Richmond Afro-American*, September 2, 1961.

Dr. Jackson was a member of the Old Dominion Medical Society, a group that had supported the picketing downtown. Mrs. Jackson was a member of the Richmond chapter of The Links, Inc., an elite national association of society-minded black women, as well as a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority. While the couple was non-partisan politically, Dr. Jackson had made an unsuccessful run for City Council in 1957. The Jacksons were active participants in the downtown picket lines and often traded oversight of the children so that each could participate in the picketing protests.[172]

On Tuesday afternoon, September 5, 1961, black attorneys S. W. Tucker, Henry L. Marsh, III, and Roland D. Easley filed a class action suit on behalf of the student plaintiffs rejected from attending Chandler and John Marshall. The students and parents, as plaintiffs, were Carol and Michael Bradley, children of Minerva Bradley; Daria A. Cameron, daughter of James and Evelyn Cameron; Rosalind Dodson, whose guardian was Mary Carter; Morgan Jackson, son of Dr. and Mrs. Isaiah A. Jackson; Bruce W. Johnson, son of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Johnson; Phyllis A. Johnson, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Ford Johnson; Robert S. Myers, son of Mr. and Mrs. E. C. Meyers; William D. Quarles, son of Mrs. Rosa Quarles; and Lemuel Wimbush, Jr., son of Mr. and Mrs. Lemuel Wimbush, Sr. The Richmond School Board, its superintendent, Henry I. Willett,

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[172] Morgan Norris Jackson, in discussion with the author, July 21, 2013. "Dr. Jackson, 2 Others Seek City Council Seats," *Richmond Afro-American*, November 16, 1957.

and Placement Board members E. J. Oglesby, Alfred L. Wingo, and E. T. Justis were named as defendants.[173]

The suit declared that the rejection by the Placement Board violated the students' right under the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution and requested the court to take four actions to remedy the matter: 1) to issue a permanent injunction to forbid officials from denying children to attend schools, based on their race and color; 2) to issue a permanent restraint to forbid all actions that regulated student assignments and transfers, based on race and color; 3) to forbid officials from using criteria to determine assignments and transfers for black students that are not applied in a similar manner to white students; and 4) to require city and state officials to submit a plan to the court that establishes a system for placing, transferring, and enrolling students with no racial basis. This plan would require regular progress reports to the court. The suit charged that officials had been intentionally stalling the desegregation process to maintain school segregation by their actions.[174]

Morgan's parents had joined the suit against the Placement Board. However, Morgan followed his brother's footsteps by entering the Putney School after Isaiah, III,

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[173] "U.S. Asked to Enforce School Law," *Richmond Afro-American*, September 9, 1961.

[174] Ibid.

graduated from Putney to enter Harvard University. Morgan later followed his brother to enter Harvard as well. [175]

Racial tensions remained tight in North Side when Chandler opened in September 1961. The *Richmond Afro* reported that an unnamed all-white neighborhood organization purchased 3209 Woodrow Avenue, three blocks from Chandler and north of Brookland Park Boulevard, to prevent blacks from purchasing it. Jim Stanley, a white businessman, had listed the property with a black realtor, Walter H. Loving. After the listing was public, his wife, Joyce Stanley, received threatening phone calls. She was nearly killed in an automobile accident when her brakes failed. Her brake cables had been severed. When she reported the threats on her life, one police officer commented, "For the record, we're investigating; but we don't think that too much into it."[176]

Richmond schools anticipated an enrollment of 41,700 for the 1961-62 school term. Thirty six black students were enrolled in white schools that year, while total black pupil enrollment was 21,269, marking 51 percent of the total school population. Chandler had thirty black students while John Marshall had three black students. Brookhaven School for the Handicapped admitted one black student. Westhampton Junior High

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[175] Jackson, in discussion with the author. The School Board provided tuition stipends for several Richmond Public School students to attend private schools, such as the Miller School in Charlottesville, Phillips Exeter in New Hampshire, and military schools. The majority of tuition recipients were enrolled at Gill's Country Day School in Chesterfield, Virginia, and received a $125 stipend. Dr. Jackson took advantage of this benefit and received $137 for Isaiah, and later for Morgan, to attend the Putney School in Vermont. See *Minutes,* (February 22, 1961), 43.

[176] "Whites Purchase House to Block Sale to Colored," *Richmond Afro-American*, September 2, 1961. "This Is Richmond," *Richmond Afro-American*, September 2, 1961.

opened its doors to one black student, Daisy Jane Cooper. School desegregation remained slow and tokenistic, a strategy historian Robert Pratt coined as "passive resistance."[177]

In the meantime, the School Board had already initiated several new building projects and additions to schools that served black students as an attempt to respond to and remedy issues of overcrowding and double shifts that plagued school instruction. Presumably, this initiative, which provided modern school design in black neighborhoods, would make black families prefer to keep their children closer at neighborhood-based schools and dull the growing momentum to desegregate white schools.

Desegregating Chandler: 1961

As Carol and Gloria departed for the ninth grade at John Marshall in September 1961, a larger group of black students entered Chandler for the first time. "We were admitted on the basis of test scores," Etna Green Carr recalled. "We knew it was something we had to do, but I don't think any of us realized the significance of that day."

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[177] "$100,000 Machines at Armstrong High," *Richmond Afro-American*, September 9, 1961. Daisy Jane Cooper, Wanda Irene Dabney, and Lorna Renee Warden lived in the black Westwood neighborhood, within walking distance of the white Westhampton Elementary, closer than the black Carver Elementary School, five miles away in Jackson Ward, where they were enrolled. Onslow Minnis, Sylvester Smith, and Jerome Smith lived closer to the white Nathaniel Bacon Elementary than to the black Chimborazo Elementary. When the Pupil Placement board denied their 1958 transfer requests, their suit languished in the court system until 1961. By then, all but Cooper had withdrawn from the case. She became the lone remaining plaintiff in *Warden v. Richmond School Board*. See *Warden*, 6 Race Relations Law Reporter 1025 (ED Va. 1961). The district court narrowly ordered her admission to Westhampton, as an individual plaintiff, rather than as a class or group. Cooper would be the first black to enter the all white Thomas Jefferson High School in 1962. See Pratt, *Color of Their Skin*, Notes, Chapter 2, 117. According to Pratt's description of "passive" resistance, school officials "dragged their feet, hoping to bury school desegregation under the weight of gradual compliance." See Pratt, xi.

Etna Armistead Green, young Etna Green's mother, was a well known educator, mathematics instructor, guidance counselor, and an assistant principal at the black Armstrong High School. Mrs. Green earned her master's degree in mathematics from Boston University in 1943. Mrs. Green was also a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority and a board member of the Phyllis Wheatley branch of the Young Women's Christian Association. Etna's father, Dr. William Arthur Green, was a well known dentist in the black community. The South Carolina native was a graduate of Virginia Union, like his wife, and had earned his dentistry degree from the Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee. He was a member of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity as well as the local, state, and national black dental societies. Black dentists like Dr. Green were very engaged in the desegregation struggle.[178]

This second group of students to attend Chandler went to several sessions prepared by the NAACP and the local human relations council to prepare them to face the challenges of attending Chandler. "I remember that we were taught that if you get hit, you fall down. You don't speak against. You aren't negative. We were taught a passive resistance," Etna recalled.[179]

The core of this student group had attended school together, many starting at the nursery school housed at Virginia Union, and then attending elementary school at

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[178] "'Brave Little Kids'," *Richmond Times-Dispatch.* Etna Green Carr, in telephone discussion with the author, September 4, 2013.

[179] Carr, in discussion with the author.

Norrell. "Norrell was a very privileged environment, academically focused . . . all of the [children of] doctors and lawyers, educators, dentists, and the college president's children stayed together. I don't know if it was a Jack and Jill thing. Knowing my mother, she was never for exclusivity, but inclusivity." The premise of Jack and Jill during that time was to provide children of well-to-do blacks exposure to cultural arts, and to the world around them . Children in Richmond's Jack and Jill chapter during segregation attended plays, concerts, and ballet events, at times in Washington, to fulfill this mission.[180]

When the students arrived at Chandler for the first day of school, Etna remembered, "my biggest fear was the dogs. All these people are standing outside, and I am scared of dogs." A white classmate, Clark Bustard, told her later that his mother was standing on the front porch watching the scene as police and police dogs guarded the premises while whites carried signs that proclaimed "two-four-six-eight, we don't want to integrate." Black parents carried their children to Chandler that day and protectively took turns shuttling them that first year.[181]

Bonita Bickers Bell also remembered the scene that day as she climbed the long flight of steps to the front of the school, vaguely recalling the police in the area. "We were going to school with what I would call rednecks. We had been brought up with what was proper and taught etiquette. They didn't have that. We were surprised at some of the

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[180] Ibid.

[181] Ibid.

ways that they behaved. They made us afraid of them, like . . . they might really do something to us. There was a different class level than what we were used to. I noticed it right away." Bonita recalled leaving school on that first day when a white student spat in her face, shouting "two-four-six-eight, we don't want to integrate." She said the police grabbed him immediately. The overt racism appeared to stem from teens connected to the adjacent Highland Park neighborhood. She described them as "rough and ready."[182]

Bonita was the niece of Milton and Odessa Randolph. Milton Randolph was a postal worker who delivered mail in the black Barton Heights neighborhood of Norrell School. He also was involved in real estate with his wife, who owned a lot of rental property. His wife, Odessa, was a music teacher in the Richmond Public Schools and taught private piano lessons in their home at 3908 Moss Side Avenue in the black Washington Park neighborhood. The Randolphs were very active in the NAACP and the Richmond Crusade for Voters.[183]

Bonita, a native of Atlanta, moved to Richmond to live with her aunt and uncle and attended Norrell for the third grade. "The KKK was in full dress in a parking lot in Atlanta, a very visible presence, handing out literature" when she was a young child. Her grandmother was eager to place Bonita in a better school system and sent her north to Richmond. Bonita fell in love with Norrell's principal, Ethel Overby, and visited Overby's

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[182] Bonita Bickers Bell, in discussion with the author, September 13, 2013

[183] Ibid.

home on Dubois Avenue several times for tutoring. Bonita had no clue of how she was selected to attend Chandler. "They told us it wouldn't be easy, not the nurturing environment of Norrell . . . but that we would be with our same friends" from Norrell.[184]

Norrell classmate Pearl Green Anderson recalled the preparation that parents had made to ready their children for that first day. Reading clubs, math activities, and tutoring were scheduled at parents' homes and at All Souls Presbyterian Church to ensure their academic preparation. Several black teachers were members of All Souls. The pastor's son, Irvin Elligan, Jr., was involved in the Chandler desegregation effort. "I remember being escorted to school by policemen, and dogs around in case there was any violence. It was more a concern about safety," Pearl recalled. Pearl's parents had a strong interest in politics and had a regular ritual to vote together. Howard Green was a member of the Excelsior Club, a black men's social club, and worked at the Liggett and Myers tobacco factory. His wife, Mabel Fleming Green, was a private duty nurse.[185]

Milwood Motley, Jr., another Norrell classmate, remembered his mother walking with him to enter Chandler on that first day. They were met with a "mob of white people across the street yelling, 'Nigger, go home,' and 'we don't want integration.'" John Madden, Chandler's principal, met the black students in his office and distributed homeroom assignments. "There were very angry white folks outside of the school. The

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[184] Ibid.

[185] Pearl Green Anderson, in telephone discussion with the author, July 30, 2013. Pearl Green is not related to Etna Green.

anger outside the school was the same that I felt in homeroom. The children of those white adults picked up where their parents left off inside the school with taunting and name calling. As soon as I sat down, they called me 'nigger' and 'tar baby', saying 'we don't want you here.'"[186]

Gloria Mead's younger brother, Robert, followed in his sister's footsteps when he entered Chandler that year. His mother, Florence Mead, had been assured by the school principal, John B. Madden, that the black students would have a safe and pleasant experience. "In turn," Mrs. Mead recalled, "Mr. Madden expected the children not to react too much to every little thing."[187]

Milwood agreed. "My folks warned me what to expect – said don't do anything to get in a fight. When they taunt you, don't get in a fight. We did our best to ignore it, you couldn't respond to it. . . . It was tortuous, to put it mildly. We had to take all this abuse and pretend it wasn't happening." The fear of getting expelled from school kept black students like Motley anxious about reacting to the intimidation.[188]

Milwood's parents, known as "M.A." and Myrtle Hobson Motley, moved from Martinsville to the "big city" of Richmond in the early 1950s. They were involved in the Crusade for Voters and NAACP, participating in efforts to get out the black vote. The

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[186] Milwood Motley, in telephone discussion with the author, August 3, 2013.

[187] "'Brave Little Kids'," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*.

[188] Motley, interview.

Motleys and the Hills were good friends, and Milwood knew Oliver Hill, Jr., better known as "Dukie" to his young friends. While Mrs. Motley was not a member of Jack and Jill, she and her children were good friends with several members. Mr. Motley owned a successful plumbing business and also invested in real estate. He was one of the founders of Club 533, a social club for black men involved in civic, business and political activities, located at 533 North Second Street in Jackson Ward. Mr. Motley played a major role in a professional association of black plumbing professionals across the southeast, many who were active in local civil rights activities.[189]

Myrtle Motley, who was also a Cub Scout den mother at All Souls Presbyterian, picketed the downtown department stores, an action unknown to her son until she came home with her picket sign. "I remember vaguely the incident at Little Rock and the National Guard in the news. My folks were following it very closely because they were very much into that kind of thing. [Places like Arkansas and] Alabama seemed like across the Atlantic to a nine-year-old kid," Milwood remembered. A few years later, he and his Norrell classmates would join Carol and Gloria as Richmond's version of the "Little Rock Nine."[190]

Kay Coles James, Etna Green Carr's first cousin, lived in North Side, yet did not attend Norrell Elementary. Instead, she attended Webster Davis Elementary. Kay was the

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[189] Ibid.

[190] Ibid.

niece of J. B. Williams, an insurance agent with the Universal Life Insurance, a member of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated., and one of the first members of Club 533. His wife, Pearl Armistead Williams, was a teacher at Webster Davis Elementary. Pearl Williams also worked together with Mrs. Hill in the school system. The Williamses, a childless couple, raised Kay as their daughter after Kay's mother faced hardships raising six children alone as a divorcee.[191]

Webster Davis Elementary was located in Fulton Bottom, an economically distressed black neighborhood in Richmond's East End. Mrs. Williams conveniently enrolled Kay at Webster Davis for the daily trip to school, confident that her niece would receive a solid education, as Mrs. Williams knew her teaching colleagues well. "What I remember was the quality of teaching at that school. . . . Elsie Graves Lewis was a phenomenal principal." The teachers were committed to their students and emphasized the importance of dress, speech, hard work, and excellence. "These kids were not part of the black elite, and they got a great education . . . because they were committed to us as students. To be a teacher was the highest and noblest calling in the black community. Doctor or teacher – they were both equally revered." Kay often did homework assignments while her aunt attended teacher meetings for long hours after school.[192]

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[191] Kay Coles James, in discussion with the author, September 13, 2013.

[192] Ibid. Elsie Graves Lewis was a second generation career educator and daughter of Captain Benjamin A. Graves, the namesake of Graves Junior High School. Daniel Webster Davis, a contemporary of Captain Graves, was a prominent leader, minister, writer, and educator in Richmond's black community, serving as a seventh-grade teacher at Baker Street School for thirty three years. See Joan R. Sherman, "Daniel

Kay's mother, Susie Armistead Coles, was the youngest of six Armistead sisters: Etna Armistead Green, the eldest, was Armstrong's assistant principal; Beatrice Armistead Harrington, was a mathematics teacher at Maggie Walker and the wife of the pharmacist of Harrington's Pharmacy; Pearl Armistead Williams; Wilnette Armistead Banks; and Mary Armistead Singleton. Their mother, Susie White Armistead, was a minister's widow and daughter of Reverend William Henry White, Sr., founder of Mount Carmel Baptist Church. She was the sister of William Henry White, Jr., the father of Oliver White Hill, Sr. Attorney Hill took his stepfather's last name after his parents' 1911 divorce and was a first cousin to the Armistead sisters. The sisters kept their strong connections to Mount Carmel Baptist Church when Reverend Dr. Edward D. McCreary, Jr., became its pastor in 1954.[193]

Kay recalled her Aunt Pearl discussing her placement at Chandler during their daily afternoon ritual to visit Susie White Armistead, her grandmother, who lived with the eldest daughter, Etna Armistead Green. Kay and her first cousin, Etna, were daily companions. "Uncle Oliver was working with other groups who were looking for students willing to go through the process. Most of them came through Norrell. With the family connection, it made sense" to go, Kay remembered. Chandler was also walking distance from the Williams' home at 121 West Lancaster Road. Otherwise, Kay would

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Webster Davis: A Black Virginia Poet in the Age of Accommodation," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 81, no. 4 (October 1973):457-478.

[193] James, in discussion with the author. Jonathan K. Stubbs, ed., *The Big Bang: The Autobiography of Oliver W. Hill, Sr.* (Winter Park, Fl: FOUR-G Publishers, 2000) 3-5. The Mount Carmel Baptist Church: Our History, http://www.themountcarmel.org/church_history (accessed January 3, 2014).

have transitioned to East End Junior High, the feeder school of Webster Davis. By attending Chandler, she would walk with her cousin Oliver "Dukie" Hill, Jr., each morning. In the afternoon after school, she would return with her cousin Etna to continue her daily visits with her grandmother. Aunt Pearl would join them after her daily teaching duties to visit and then retrieve Kay for the trip home.[194]

Kay remembered being told that it was "going to be difficult, significant, [and] important. It was bigger than I was . . . significant for the movement, for black people. What little I had to suffer was insignificant for what it meant. When you go to junior high school, [typically,] it's more important about what you are going to wear. It's stressful under any circumstance." School desegregation was an added, burdensome layer to bear for any preteen. "We knew it was going to be academically challenging, not because we were not capable of doing the work. We were prepared."[195]

Dukie Hill entered Chandler on the first day of school after the police and whites had disbursed, escorted by Henry L. Marsh, III, and his aunt, Evalyn Walker Shaed, his mother's sister and office manager of the Hill, Tucker & Marsh law firm. He walked the long stairs and entered the building alone. Hill was not able to escort his son to school that day. The Kennedy administration had appointed him to serve with the Federal Housing Administration, a role in intergroup relations which dealt with housing patterns

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[194] James, in discussion with the author.

[195] Ibid.

across the nation. Hill returned to Richmond on weekends to be with his family. Marsh was from Richmond, a graduate of Virginia Union and a Howard University-trained lawyer. Hill had lured Marsh to leave the federal Department of Labor and return to Richmond to aid Hill's former law partner, Samuel W. Tucker, with several pending civil rights cases, including those that emerged from Prince Edward County's use of public funding for white segregated private academies. Marsh served as a fatherly surrogate for Dukie on his first day at Chandler.[196]

Dukie echoed glowing sentiments of his elementary education at Norrell as preparation for Chandler. "While the physical plant[s] of the schools were poor, [and] supplies were not adequate, the teachers were first rate. Every teacher I had was inspiring, excited about what they were doing. Everyone was expected to perform at a high level. We got the message that everyone was expected to perform, [and] had a duty to the race to perform well." Norrell evoked happy memories. His mother was a well-respected, dedicated teacher who taught the second and third grades at Baker Street Elementary. He marveled at his mother's enthusiasm while preparing bulletin board projects, organizing creative activities, and planning trips for her students, much the same as teachers at Norrell. Mrs. Hill even invited students to her home for overnight stays, rotating class members for visits. Her social networks included many female educators.

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[196] Dr. Oliver W. Hill, Jr., in discussion with the author, August 13, 2013. Stubbs, viii, 183. Henry L. Marsh, III later followed Hill's path and was elected to City Council in 1966. Marsh served as the first black mayor of the city of Richmond from 1977 to 1982. He has represented the sixteenth senatorial district as a state senator in the Virginia legislature since 1991. See Voices of Freedom, VCU Libraries Digital Collections. http://dig.library.vcu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/voices/id/6 (accessed January 12, 2014).

He recalled that she was active in "the Suavettes, the Moles, the Links, the Bridgettes, Jack and Jill, the Girlfriends, and Delta Sigma Theta," organizations that valued her influence and knowledge of education and civil rights matters. "My father was doing all these desegregation cases. It was in the air that at some point I was going to have to go to a white school. I was nervous about that."[197]

Dukie grew up in a sheltered environment like other students at Norrell, a neighborhood school within walking distance of his home. "When my father first explained desegregation, I told him that Norrell was already desegregated," he quipped, with the naive, child-like assumption that many of his black classmates at Norrell were white because of their lighter complexions.[198]

"Moving into the white world was intimidating. We would always have a lot of conversations at the dinner table about what was going on," he said. Dukie's parents shielded their only child from some of the hostile negativity. Despite their protectiveness, the Ku Klux Klan left their mark by burning a cross in the Hills' backyard. The family phone was off limits for him in the evenings. Dukie acknowledged that his mother was not only his father's staunch supporter, but also his fierce protector. One night his mother answered a threatening phone call while her husband was away. "She stood on the back porch waiting for [her husband] to come home" armed with a gun on loan from her

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[197] Hill, in discussion with the author.

[198] Ibid.

cousin, although, Dukie said, "she wouldn't have known what to do with it." His father kept a sense of humor about these indignities and even kept a file of his favorite hate letters."My parents gave me a lot of self esteem," he recalled. They emphasized to him that "prejudice is about other people's ignorance. This is not about you." Despite all of their buffering, as a child "I would never color anyone's face brown. [I'd] always leave it white. You would see white images on TV." Whenever blacks were scheduled for rare TV appearances, he remembered the buzz of phone calls by friends and family to watch the program as a sign of solidarity. "All of that was leading up to Chandler."[199]

Dukie entered the Chandler principal's office on the first day to join the black students, hovering for homeroom assignments. Pairs of black students entered their new homerooms together to find seats among white students, who had been already seated in place to start the first day. He was "steeled" to anticipate an incident that first day, but recalled that nothing happened. Over time it became clear that Chandler was not a welcoming environment, and he navigated the hallways for safety."Certain hallways I would tend to avoid [because of] students who would call you 'nigger' or give you grief."[200]

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[199] Ibid.

[200] Ibid.

"Little Tortures" Redux

As the 1961-1962 school year began, fights, taunts, and skirmishes were inevitable. Black students at Chandler employed strategies to minimize the difficulties. "We would protect ourselves through our social networks," Dukie stated. "We learned how to negotiate and protect ourselves. You learned your ropes. You would be together with others, not by yourself." Black students ate together in the cafeteria for protection, as no one had an interest in sharing lunch with hostile white students. Black students walked home together in groups. "That shielded us from more potential clashes," he said. They deftly fended off clashes from more prejudiced white students from the blue collar Highland Park neighborhood. Dukie recalled a few, but "not a lot of interracial fights," as black students coped with overt taunts of name calling, such as "Calhoun," "Amos and Andy," "burnt biscuits," and mostly, "nigger."[201]

"There was strength in numbers," recalled James "Butch" Cameron, Jr., who was Dukie's close friend. Butch's older sister, Daria, an eighth-grader at Graves Junior High, had been denied admission to Chandler. Daria and their parents were plaintiffs in the suit pending against the Richmond School Board. Mr. Cameron was a mail carrier and had attended Virginia State College. Mrs. Cameron was a stay-at-home mom for their five children and had attended Virginia Union.[202]

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[201] Ibid.

[202] James Cameron, Jr., in telephone discussion with the author, January 9, 2014.

Butch recognized that the bonds Norrell students had formed in elementary school helped them to survive Chandler's hostile environment. "It was a very intimidating situation. I was a timid, shy person anyway. People had looked to our class [at Norrell] as leaders and the smartest at the school. It was fun, and we learned." Butch described Chandler as alienating. He felt like an outsider and not a part of Chandler. "You knew that you weren't wanted there." Butch always felt on guard with the name calling and spitballs aimed in his direction. "I lost my desire to go to school when I went to Chandler. I just gave up."[203]

The "little tortures" that Carol Swann had described from her experience at Chandler the year before still haunted the classrooms and hallways, taunting the next class of Chandler's black students. There was a "lot of roughhousing . . . and mischief," particularly during physical education classes when white students would spit water on black students. "We had to decide whether to take it or get in a fight and get kicked out of school," Dukie said.[204]

Butch remembered when white students brought snowballs inside the school during winter and pounded his head with one. Tucked inside was a rock to harden the blow. White youth who harassed black students resembled characters from the movie, "Grease." Butch described them wearing "rolled-up jeans with white socks, penny loafers

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[203] Cameron, in discussion with the author.

[204] Hill, in discussion with the author.

and white tee shirts with cigarette packs rolled up in their sleeves." Their style of dress was very different from the more conservative style of the black students from North Side.[205]

Some white students nestled stickpins in between their fingers as they moved through the hallways for their next class, striking students anonymously as a mean prank. Their targets were unsuspecting black students. "No one would know where [the pinprick] would come from," Etna recalled. The culprits were difficult to identify in the crowded hallways.[206]

The racial slurs, face spitting, and pin stabbing that Kay endured remain bitter memories. "I felt overwhelmed. I walked softly down the halls, my head down, intimidated. . . . For the first month, I never made it from one class to the next without at least one student pricking me with a pin. Sometimes I was stuck so many times, I had to press my dress against my body to keep the red streams [of blood] from dripping down my legs. I tried to be discreet. I didn't want them to know that their taunts or jabs hurt me."[207]

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[205] Cameron, in discussion with the author.

[206] Carr, in discussion with the author.

[207] James, interview. Leslie Montgomery, ed. *Were It Not For Grace, Stories From Women After God's Own Heart* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2005), 37, 52.

Etna was close by when her cousin Kay was kicked down the long, steep granite steps at Chandler's entryway. As Kay descended the stairs, she faced a group of white students moving up. "Most of them ignored me as I tried to step down the side . . . but one of them waited until my back was turned and pushed me, hard, down the stairs. I landed at the end with my shins and back bruised. Apparently, it wasn't enough for him, so he kicked my books all over the hall as well. The crowd laughed and made jokes," Kay recounted. Etna moved forward to pick up Kay's books, only to endure antagonists stepping on her fingers while she struggled to help her cousin.[208]

Out of the crowd, Kay described something "amazing." A white student entered the scene and helped her pick up her books. In response, the white crowd ridiculed and accused her of being a "nigger lover." She walked with Kay to the principal's office. "She didn't say much, but she said enough to make it clear that the boy who pushed me spoke and acted for himself, not for all white people. I will never forget her act of courage."[209]

The sense of protection and security that black students relied on from caring teachers was minimal at Chandler. They endured the "little tortures" from white teachers as well. "Most teachers went about their jobs," Milwood recalled. "I'm not assuming that the white teachers were socially enlightened, but I think they did their best,"

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[208] Montgomery, 38. Carr, in discussion with the author.

[209] Montgomery, 38. During our interview, Kay Coles James recalled not one, but two female students, Beth Bennett and Martha Dunn, who helped her retrieve her books. She remembered their names because she sat in between them in alphabetical order in one of her classes.

acknowledging instances when bigotry slipped through. Once, when his history teacher defended slavery, "I wanted to say something, but I kept my mouth shut because I didn't want to get into trouble. I just had to ignore everything the teacher said about the subject. I couldn't accept it." In gym class, Milwood lamented that no one wanted to share a locker next to him. The gym teacher avoided having students pick teams by arbitrarily dividing the class into two teams. This also avoided any opportunity for black students to lead and select a team.[210]

School discipline seemed very different in a white school environment. At Norrell, black students "didn't mess around" because teachers knew their parents. If teachers "wanted to spank you, they would, and then your parents would spank you again," Butch emphasized, describing a strong, disciplined environment at Norrell. "Certain behaviors black kids learned not to do in school, whereas the white kids didn't care how they acted in school, and the teachers didn't have a lot of control over it. They cut up as much as they wanted to. Black kids didn't do that. It was so different," he emphasized.[211]

Dukie described Chandler's teachers in advanced math and English as "very good," but depicted his history teacher as a "daughter of the Confederacy." He identified

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[210] Motley, in discussion with the author.

[211] Cameron, in discussion with the author.

her as the one teacher that was overtly resistant to their presence at Chandler. She "let the black kids know she was not into integration – races shouldn't be mixing."[212]

One teacher's disparaging comment remains indelible for Kay. Her homeroom teacher read the menu for the day, she recalled. "Today we're having grilled cheese sandwiches, vegetable soup, milk, and brownies for dessert." The teacher directly turned her head toward Kay, looked down her glasses at her, and wisecracked, "And heaven knows why they're having brownies. We have enough of them already." Kay was aghast and humiliated. "Every moment between classes was difficult – hostile students, hostile teachers. To be expected to learn in that environment – it was a lot in retrospect." [213]

Butch recalled how the physical education teacher, Mr. Putney, a strong built, crew-cut ex-Marine, "got great pleasure out of making us go outside as long as the temperature was at least forty-two degrees. . . . He knew that [the] black kids didn't like cold weather, and white kids could tolerate it." They wore only tee shirts and gym shorts in the brisk, chilly weather. Butch looked forward to Fridays after school, however, when Mr. Putney, organized a bowling league for Chandler students and scheduled a school bus to take them to Azalea Bowl, a white bowling alley in North Side's Azalea Mall.

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[212] Hill, in discussion with the author.

[213] Montgomery, 38. James, in discussion with the author.

Dukie and Bobby Mead also participated. Dukie brought along his own shoes and bowling ball, while Butch, Bobby and other students rented theirs.[214]

Another teacher, Nancy Cole Reveley, worked "undercover," according to Etna, to support her against the frequent hallway bombardment of stickpins that black students endured. "She was one of those model teachers. She knew we could get hurt in the hallway." Before class ended, Mrs. Reveley always gave Etna a note to deliver to Louise Carlton Luck, the school's guidance counselor. Leaving the class before the bell gave Etna a reprieve from stickpin assaults when students changed classes. Etna was not sure whether either teacher may have known that her mother was also a guidance counselor and assistant principal at Armstrong.[215]

Despite resistance from her biology teacher, Etna won a Junior Academy of Sciences award as a seventh grader taking an accelerated biology class. The teacher had refused to sign the necessary paperwork for Etna to get bacteria for her experiment. However, her father, Dr. Green, secured the bacteria and materials needed to conduct the experiment and maintain his daughter's interest in science. "Dad was great with science. We did the experiment, took pictures, [and] had a great time," Etna remembered. "There

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[214] Cameron, in discussion with the author. Swann-Daniels also described bowling on Fridays with her gym class. Her gym teacher directed her to go to the other end of the counter to rent bowling shoes. The School Board had purchased pink bowling shoes in various sizes exclusively for blacks. She determined that the proprietor of the bowling alley could assure his white clientele that they would not be wearing the same bowling shoes worn by blacks. See Williams, 67. Cameron did not recall renting special shoes for blacks at the bowling alley.

[215] Carr, in discussion with the author.

wasn't supposed to be a winner," but Etna's experiment was stellar. Her award was announced during a PTA meeting, but she was absent during the announcement. "Other black parents were upset that my parents didn't bring me to the PTA meeting. They wanted the white parents to see that a black child had won the award. [The PTA] only announced my name." Etna's explanation was that her parents were not "showy," but humble people. Her father had told her to "never feel pride that you are the only black student. Feel pride when it can be any black child," adding that her parents provided "good lessons about not being too full of myself."[216]

Etna recalled another episode where her father's support enabled her to make an A in French class, but ultimately got the French teacher fired. Dr. Green learned French so that he could tutor Etna, motivating her to earn an A in the class – the only A among all the students. When white students and families learned that Etna received the only A, she recalled that the white parents pushed and got the French teacher fired.[217]

Etna's tenacity to excel was also evident with her math class. Etna and her mother would often work on math problems after the evening meal. Her math teacher, Miss Cheatham, cautioned her parents about pushing Etna too hard. Dr. Green responded that Etna was not being pushed to achieve by them; Etna was strongly motivated internally to

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[216] Ibid.

[217] Ibid.

push herself. "My parents did more to calm me down than to push me," she said. Etna was determined to excel at Chandler.[218]

Pearl Green Anderson experienced Chandler's schoolwork as "not difficult. You were in the class, but you were watching it, as opposed to being a part of it," she said. Pearl felt like a distant observer, rather than engaged participant in school life at Chandler. This was a different experience from Norrell, where she fondly remembered every teacher since kindergarten. The only Chandler teacher Pearl remembered was Mrs. Wright, a very young teacher who taught physical education and history. "In her class, I realized I liked history and government. I felt like we were learning things that we had already learned in elementary school." Civic participation had been at the core of Principal Ethel Overby's influence on Norrell students and had prepared Pearl well to continue her interest in the subject at Chandler.[219]

Kay admitted that her grades plummeted. She was an A student at Webster Davis and then a C student at Chandler. She recalled "going home crying after school when not getting an A. Every day was getting buffed up to go back in there and to not be discouraged."[220]

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[218] Ibid.

[219] Anderson, in discussion with the author.

[220] James, in discussion with the author.

Milwood also struggled with the shift from achieving as an A and B student at Norrell to a C student at Chandler. "Some of it was the level of education at black schools, but a lot of it was [that] for the first time I am going to different classrooms, and the hostility that we had to deal with on a daily basis. All our grades suffered to some extent because of the environment that we were in. Schools were definitely not equal." When he compared his experience with his black classmates, he was not surprised that others were struggling as well. "Our grades suffered. We were no longer at the top of the class but just struggling to pass the class."[221]

After school, black students went straight home. White students converged at the corner drug store's soda fountain to mingle with their friends. "I literally ran home every day after school," Butch recalled. "One of the reasons was because I had to go to the bathroom so bad. I didn't want to go to the bathroom by myself," at Chandler. He was in fear of the harm that might come to him by white boys if he was trapped in the rest room alone as a black male.[222]

Black Chandler students braced themselves for "little tortures" and masked these indignities from public view as the black Virginia Teachers Association held their annual convention in Richmond in November 1961. The convention theme was "Call For Commitment." Thousands of black educators swarmed the capital city. *Richmond Afro*

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[221] James, in discussion with the author. Motley, in discussion with the author.

[222] Cameron, in discussion with the author.

columnist Ruth Jenkins reported that the conventioneers "enjoyed a much more congenial atmosphere downtown than they did last year when the hotels, the restaurants, and the shopping centers had been 'off limits' racially."[223]

James Jackson Kilpatrick, editor of the *Richmond News Leader*, accepted the invitation to speak at the first convention session, along with Carl T. Rowan, deputy assistant secretary for public affairs in the U.S. State Department, another guest speaker at the convention. Kilpatrick contended that "the conservative South is changing . . . [and] grows less belligerent year to year," but emphasized to the audience of educators that "equality with the white race must be earned, it cannot be given or awarded like a cash prize in a magazine contest."[224]

Rowan challenged Kilpatrick's assertions with a counterpoint:

> "The common thread of arrogance running through his remarks, and those of white men in other lands, is that it is they who have the power, the right, the ability to decide when another people has earned 'equality' or the right to freedom and independence. . . .What today's colored youngsters are asking for is equality of opportunity. They are entitled to it by mere virtue of their membership in the human family; they are entitled to it as a fundamental right

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[223] "Sob Sister," *Richmond Afro-American*, November 11, 1961. The VTA relied on these yearly gatherings to maintain the organization of black teachers across the state, and to expose them to nationally-recognized thought leaders on education, both white and black. The VTA focused on the needs of the black child and teacher in Virginia to support "better teaching, improvement of pupil learning, and fostering better living." See J. Rupert Picott, *History of the Virginia Teachers Association* (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1975), 82-83.

[224] "Kilpatrick Concedes Changes in the 'Conservative South'," *Richmond Afro-American*, November 11, 1961.

> bestowed by our Constitution. This is a right that no child – colored or white – has to earn."[225]

Yet the right for black children to attend Chandler was paid for with "little tortures" by belligerent whites who resented their presence. Despite their own commitment to persevere, segregation at Chandler was a difficult cash prize to earn.

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[225] Ibid.

CHAPTER FIVE

RIPPLING THROUGH THE SYSTEM: SLOW MOTION DESEGREGATION IN 1962

> It is surprising and disheartening to note that the Richmond NAACP has only 3,375 members. Among this number are the too few dedicated members who work, sacrifice, and contribute to the objectives of freedom, justice, and equality for all mankind. The NAACP has set as its immediate goal, the elimination of all state imposed segregation by 1963 – centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation. To achieve this objective, means for the branch an ever greater intensity of work between now and the Emancipation Centennial.[226]
> –*Richmond Afro-American*, March 17, 1962

As black students at Chandler made sacrifices for school desegregation during the 1961-62 school year, local civil rights activists widened desegregation efforts across the state as well as in Richmond. In March 1962, the Virginia NAACP announced its campaign to accelerate school desegregation across the state. This campaign responded to a Supreme Court of Virginia ruling that Prince Edward County was not subject to a constitutional requirement to provide free public education. NAACP General Counsel Robert L. Carter, headquartered in New York, activated Virginia NAACP lawyers to sue the School Board in nearby Chesterfield County and sue officials in Fredericksburg to

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[226] "Richmond NAACP Needs Funds to Continue Operation," *Richmond Afro-American*, March 17, 1962.

admit black students to white schools. Lawyers caucused to review further strategies to reopen schools in Prince Edward County.[227]

Richmond black activists had widened their desegregation efforts to challenge segregation in city employment, municipal facilities, and the courts. The Crusade for Voters, represented by Ethel Overby and Johnny Brooks, submitted to City Council a petition signed by thousands of voters, demanding the city to hire and promote city employees based on merit, rather than race. This demand became a priority issue for the June 12, 1962 council elections. The Crusade's black voting network flexed its muscle as City Council unanimously adopted a resolution for fair employment two weeks before the elections.[228]

The VTA's Executive Secretary, J. Rupert Picott and Reverend Elligan of All Souls Presbyterian filed appeals to the Supreme Court of Virginia against the city to abolish segregation in the Mosque auditorium, a city-owned theatre. Dr. Felix Brown and black leaders filed appeals against the city to desegregate Parker Field, the city-owned baseball stadium. Martin A. Martin, their attorney of record, chaired the legal staff for the

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[227] "NAACP Steps Up Drive to Integrate Va. Schools," *Richmond Afro-American*, March 17, 1962.

[228] "City Job Policy Campaign Issue," *Richmond Afro-American*, May 12, 1962. "Council Approved Resolution for Fair Employment," Richmond *Afro-American*, June 2, 1962.

Virginia NAACP and had been a law partner with Hill and Robinson before they were tapped by the Kennedy administration for federal positions. [229]

Twenty-year-old Ford T. Johnson, Jr., one of the "Richmond 34," refused to sit in the segregated section of Richmond's traffic court in late April 1962. When the judge asked him to move from the white section, Johnson moved to the colored section but stood instead of taking a seat. The judge held him in contempt of court. The Johnson family was known for taking a stand. His sister Betty had also been among the "Richmond 34" and had appeared on the "Today" television show regarding the student sit-in movement. His sister Phyllis had been rejected from attending Chandler in 1961. Phyllis and their parents, Dr. and Mrs. Ford T. Johnson, Sr., a dentist and educator, respectively, were plaintiffs in the class action suit that had been pending against the Richmond School Board and the Placement Board.[230]

Transfer Requests Slowly Increase

By the May 30, 1962 deadline, 108 additional black students had applied to enter white schools for the 1962-1963 school term, adding to the thirty-six already in the system at Chandler and John Marshall. Applications to Chandler came from thirty-two

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[229] "Fight to Open Park, Theatre Goes On," *Richmond Afro-American*, July 28, 1962.

[230] "Student Buck Court Jim Crow," *Richmond Afro-American*, May, 5, 1962. The "Richmond 34" were Virginia Union students who organized the 1960 sit-in at Thalhimers department store.

boys and thirty girls, sixty-two students in total, from Baker and Mary Scott Elementary Schools and Graves Junior High.[231]

The Placement Board reviewed a total of 113 transfer requests by black Richmond students at the June 13, 1962 meeting and assigned eighty-nine black students to white schools. The Board accepted forty-six transfers to Chandler but rejected fifty applications and refused to consider one application. The application pool was broader than the North Side neighborhoods this time. As a result, four new schools were desegregated: J. E. B. Stuart Elementary, a feeder school to Chandler, seventeen black students; Binford Junior High in the near West End, eleven black students; Westhampton Elementary in the far West End, six black students; and George Wythe High School in Southside, six black students. Thomas Jefferson High School in the far West End would receive its first black student, who had attended Westhampton Junior High the year before. Westhampton Junior High would have one black student. Westhampton Elementary would receive six.[232]

Two black students scheduled to transfer to Binford requested a reversal, seeking to remain at the all-black Randolph Junior High. The Placement Board refused to rescind the transfers. The *Richmond Afro* pointed out the irony of the Placement Board's decision. As an agent to minimize desegregation, the Placement Board was now "in the position of

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[231] "108 Negro Bids Made in Schools," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, June 1, 1962.

[232] "89 Negro Transfer Bids Ok'd to Attend White Schools Here," *Richmond News Leader*, June 13, 1962. "10 Negroes Assigned by Pupil Board," *Richmond News Leader*, June 14, 1962.

forcing integration where it is unwanted." The Placement Board maintained that the students' request to return to their black school was filed after the June deadline for placements.[233]

The following month, officials from the Placement Board and the Richmond School Board testified in federal district court to respond to the suit filed the year before by black parents and students rejected from Chandler and John Marshall. The Placement Board chair, E. J. Oglesby explained that the board was not expected "to try to integrate every school we could," adding, "We assume the Negro wants to go to the Negro school unless he asked to go to the white school." School superintendent Willett acknowledged that Richmond's junior high schools were overcrowded for blacks and not at capacity for whites. Oglesby defended the board's review of academic qualifications and residency. Academic scores were a benchmark to ensure that white school standards were not lowered and to avoid setting up a black student who would "obviously fail" at a white school.[234]

Black attorneys countered that academic qualifications only compared black student scores with "the best white students," noting that many white students have worse academic records than the black students denied admission. Their argument was not to

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[233] "29 Schools Mix Quietly," *Richmond Afro-American*, September 8, 1962. "New Arrival Is Assigned by Pupil Unit," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, August 28, 1962.

[234] "Officials Say Positive Mixing Action Lacking," *Richmond News Leader*, July 23, 1962.

challenge the constitutionality of the Placement Board in this matter, but to desegregate Richmond's entrenched dual school system.[235]

On July 26, 1962, U.S. District Court Judge John D. Butzner instructed the Placement Board and the Richmond School Board to admit the rejected students, but did not order them to prepare a comprehensive desegregation plan. The judge noted that the school system had begun "a reasonable start toward a non-discriminatory system resulting in the attendance of 127 Negro students in white schools for the 1962-63 school term" and provided discretion for school officials to make changes to the feeder system that the black attorneys had challenged.[236]

The feeder system provided a pipeline for white elementary students to move into a white junior high and then senior high school. A similar pipeline was in place for black elementary students to move to a black junior high and senior high as a routine matter. The court opinion modified this routine so that any black child could attend a white public school if they lived in the attendance area of that school. As such, any black student who attended a white elementary would move on to the white junior high. Additionally, any black student residing in a white attendance area would be assigned to the white school. For example, George Wythe High School was built to serve white students in Southside; the ruling provided black students in Southside the option to attend

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[235] "Officials Say Positive Mixing Action Lacking," *Richmond News Leader*.

[236] "City Told to Admit 10," *Richmond News Leader*, July 26, 1962.

George Wythe. The court ruling came after the Placement Board's May 30 deadline for school transfers. Otherwise, perhaps more black parents would have opted to consider a white school after the ruling recognized that the white attendance area applied to black children as well.[237]

Desegregating J. E. B. Stuart School

Overcrowded black schools continued to be an issue, creating a sharp increase in double shifts for several black schools as the 1962-63 school year began. Overcrowding impacted Norrell School, where four classes were scheduled for double shifts. A new Norrell School building was in the works for the 1963-64 school year, designed to house 660 students.[238]

Fifth-grader Faithe Norrell was one of eighteen Norrell students – twelve girls and six boys – approved to transfer from the overcrowded Norrell Elementary to integrate Stuart Elementary for the 1962-63 school year. The Norrell School was named after her grandfather, Albert V. Norrell, and was by her account, a "fabulous school," a "wonderful environment" with "great teachers." Norrell teachers had a circle of friends inside and outside the school that fostered "camaraderie" with Norrell parents. Fourth- and fifth-graders learned French and participated in a "Little Red Riding Hood" play, *en francais*.

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[237] "City Told to Admit 10," *Richmond News Leader*.

[238] "City's Schools Expect Rise in Double Shifts," *Richmond News Leader*, July 30, 1962.

While Norrell had no playground for the upper grades, the school closed off the street behind the school for third- to fifth-graders to safely play at recess.[239]

Many of her Norrell classmates were also in her play group. Many of her childhood friends were also in the Brownies with her or were children of close family friends or church members. Her playmates were from the North Side neighborhood and throughout the city. They were also from Jack and Jill, and their ages varied.[240]

Faithe grew up unaware that she was a "Negro" until she was about ten. Parents like hers had shielded their children from much of the caste division of segregation, instead, promoting their self confidence, providing them with "first-class activities," and navigating their exposure. Faithe recalled going Washington, D.C., with Jack and Jill friends for cultural activities. Her mother, Faith Morris Norrell, a school teacher, would also take her friends to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond. Mrs. Norrell was very fair-skinned and "pushed the line a bit," her daughter recalled, taking advantage of her light complexion to get tickets and enter quickly into whites-only venues.[241]

Her mother was close friends with Julia Thornton and her husband, Dr. William Thornton, a founder of the Crusade for Voters. Mrs. Norrell and her husband, attorney

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[239] Faithe Norrell, in discussion with the author, July 26, 2013. "108 Negro Bids Made in Schools," *Richmond News Leader*.

[240] Norrell, in discussion with the author.

[241] Ibid.

Edinboro Norrell, were members of the Crusade and were active in get-out-the-vote campaigns for local elections sponsored by various fraternal and social organizations. Mr. Norrell was a past grandmaster of the Prince Hall Masons for the state and was also a member of Omega Psi Phi fraternity. Mrs. Norrell was also a member of Delta Sigma Theta sorority.[242]

Several children in her childhood friends' group joined her to enter Stuart Elementary in September 1962. The parents worked behind the scenes, she recalled, through various social organizations and informal get-togethers to orchestrate their entry into Stuart. Entering Stuart would assure their child's placement at Chandler the following year.[243]

Faithe remembered her entry into the sixth grade at Stuart as seamless. Her teacher, Mrs. Schwartz, provided a "nourishing" classroom experience. Faithe's gregarious personality, however, earned her her first C, in conduct. Her father responded with a reprimand: "[Y]ou are there to uphold the race." Faithe incredulously replied, "[W]hat do you mean, 'uphold the race'?" The realization emerged that her presence at Stuart was more significant than her sociable chatter with friends.[244]

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[242] Ibid.

[243] Ibid.

[244] Ibid.

Bert Motley, another Norrell student, remembered arriving on the steps of Stuart Elementary to see Faithe and three other black children at the front steps. His older brother, Milwood, had entered Chandler the year before. Keith Cameron, Butch's younger brother, had also entered Stuart. On opening day, Bert recalled that black parents had been told to bring their children at 9 a.m., although white students had arrived at the school an hour earlier. He speculated that teachers wanted to prepare white students for their arrival. He and another Norrell classmate, Charles Hinton, were assigned to a male teacher, George Yearwood, prompting him to speculate that perhaps black males were purposely assigned to a male teacher. He walked three steps into the classroom when he heard someone sneer "niggers." Overall, he recalled, "I did not see any racial incidents in the sixth grade. Everything went relatively smoothly" at Stuart.[245]

He was stunned to receive brand new textbooks at Stuart. The books at Norrell had been "torn up and torn out." It was a new experience to go from hand-me-down textbooks to fresh, new books along with white students. Despite Norrell's worn out textbooks and facilities, Bert emphasized that Norrell "might have been in bad shape, but what was inside was top notch."[246]

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[245] Bertram Motley, in discussion with the author, September 8, 2013.

[246] Ibid. Cameron, in discussion with the author.

Desegregating Chandler: 1962

The black student population at Chandler doubled in September 1962, and the *Richmond Afro* featured photos of black and white children on the school's granite steps. Chandler had enrolled 659 students on the opening day; eighty were black. The school system reported 40,103 children attending the first day of school, expecting almost 43,000 by month's end. The school population was now 57 percent black. Thirty-two schools served over 23,000 black children. Twenty-two schools remained exclusively white and eight white schools were now integrated, serving close to 17,000 white and 131 black children. Chandler had enrolled over 60 percent of the black children in integrated schools. According to school officials and observers, the first day "went off smoothly."[247]

Yet black students new to Chandler experienced a hazing and culture shock no different from those who had entered the year before. Their strength in numbers had grown, but racial undercurrents remained. "I persevered, though, not through some extraordinary courage on my part," Kenneth Whitlock, Jr., remembered, "but through the support of my family and the strength of Richmond's broader black community.[248]

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[247] "Richmond School Children," *Richmond Afro-American*, September 11, 1962. "Crusade for Voters to Meet on Monday," *Richmond Afro-American*, September 11, 1962. "Return to Classes Quiet Here," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 7, 1962.

[248] Kenneth E. Whitlock, Jr. "Segregation, Massive Resistance and Desegregation: Personal Reflections on Growing Up in Richmond, Virginia – 1950-1967," January 21, 2013. https://www.mxschool.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/Whitlock%20speech.pdf (accessed January 5, 2014)

The Whitlock family lived four blocks from Chandler. "Despite Chandler's proximity to my house, I felt like I was crossing miles in this racially-charged battleground. . . . Despite my family's strong standing within the black middle class, whites demeaned me as an outcast. Coming from a family of educators meant nothing when I crossed the color line." Kenneth had attended Chimborazo Elementary. His father, a former Marine, was principal of the black East End school. Kenneth spent the seventh grade at East End Junior High in 1961-62, and transferred to Chandler to enter the eighth grade in 1962.[249]

Kenneth's older sister, Linda, had rebuffed the opportunity to attend Chandler or John Marshall. She chose the familiar path of many black North Side teens by attending Graves and Maggie Walker. "Having heard stories of black children in other southern cities finding thumb tacks on their seats in school, I guess I was a coward. I didn't want to have to confront those people. I wanted more choices in school. I wanted to participate freely in the life of the school. I wanted to be a leader."[250]

Michael Howlette entered the seventh grade at Chandler that same year. His older brother, John, Jr., like Linda, had passed on the opportunity to attend Chandler during the first year of its integration. One summer day, John, Jr., known as "Whistle," and his neighborhood pals dared to cross the color divide of Brookland Park Boulevard. They

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[249] Ibid.

[250] Ibid.

curiously explored the outside of the empty Chandler building, peering through the windows of the unfamiliar school in territory off limits to blacks. They dared to go even closer toward Hotchkiss Field, a white playground adjacent to Chandler. They scrambled home in a flurry when white youths chased them off their turf and ran them back toward the black Battery Park playground. According to Michael, that encounter blunted Whistle's interest to ever attend Chandler.[251]

Their father, Dr. John Howlette, Sr., was an optometrist active in the Crusade, the NAACP, Club 533, Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, and the Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated, also known as "the Boulé." The Howlettes had strong family roots in First Baptist Church South Richmond, where Dr. Howlette taught Sunday School. His wife, Fay Anderson Howlette, was active in the Richmond chapters of The Links, Incorporated, and Jack and Jill. She worked alongside her husband while raising their four children. Michael, who had attended Norrell and Baker Schools, joined several Jack and Jill children such as Kenneth Whitlock who entered Chandler in 1962 to helping build the momentum toward integration. Robert Grey, Michael's best friend joined him.[252]

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[251] Dr. E. Michael Howlette, in discussion with the author, September 6, 2013.

[252] Ibid. "The Boulé" was founded in 1907 as a national organization and is recognized as the first black Greek-letter fraternity. Their membership is composed of prominent black men who have already earned their college and professional degrees. See "Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity: History of the Boulé," https://www.sigmapiphi.org/home/history_of_the_boule.php (accessed April 10, 2014).

Robert's mother, Barbara Radcliffe Grey was Norrell's librarian. The library was a safe meeting place for parents involved in school desegregation efforts. Norrell's principal, Mrs. Overby was her idol and mentor. Mrs. Grey served as an instrumental activist behind-the-scenes with Mrs. Overby to orchestrate the Crusade's fundraising efforts. Mrs. Grey had raised the Crusade's first hundred dollars for postage and participated as a Crusade insider and NAACP member.[253]

Mrs. Grey was in a circle of Jack and Jill mothers who met to discuss sending their children to Chandler. "No one wanted their child to be a martyr," she recalled. These mothers often discussed how to support their children through this ordeal. Through Overby's influence, Norrell students had been "pushed to reach their potential," Mrs. Grey emphasized, and had "compassionate, caring teachers. . . . They were not going to have them [at Chandler]." Their conversations focused on their children's experiences at Chandler and "how to plug in the holes from what they were not going to get in the white schools," especially lessons in civic participation and voting. Mrs. Grey frequently questioned her son "to make sure that he was not dehumanized." He talked with her about how black students stuck together for protection.[254]

The mothers' circle included Julia Thornton, wife of Dr. William "Bill" S. Thornton, a podiatrist and a founder of the Crusade. Mrs. Hill and Mrs. Thornton were

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[253] Barbara Radcliffe Grey, in discussion with the author, August 3, 2013.

[254] Ibid.

fellow teachers at Baker Elementary where the Thorntons' only child, Laura, had attended elementary school. Laura described Baker as "a great school . . . homey, cozy, comfortable, embracing, loving. . . . Katherine Johnson had the reputation as a strict principal." At Baker, Laura played the clarinet and participated in plays and performances.[255]

Laura's mother, a native of Ashland, Virginia, was a graduate of Armstrong High and Virginia Union and held memberships in Richmond chapter of The Links, Incorporated, and Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority. Her father, a member of Riverview Baptist Church in the Randolph area of the near West End, grew up on Idlewood Avenue with Dr. Isaiah Jackson. He was a member of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity and the Boulé, as well as the NAACP and the Urban League. Dr. Thornton, the black community's only podiatrist, had an office at Second and Clay Streets in Jackson Ward, around the corner from Club 533. The Thorntons' kitchen was a gathering place and an informal headquarters for the Crusade's voter registration and desegregation strategies. Dr. Thornton, surgeon Dr. William Ferguson "Fergie" Reid, and NAACP voter registration leader Johnny Brooks filled the kitchen with hazy cigar smoke as they devised tactics to mobilize Richmond's black community. "My father had a passion for voters being heard

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[255] Laura Thornton Wesley, in telephone discussion with the author, January 10, 2014.

and having rights, having a voice. The voice was very dim at that time. We had been on the back burner for so long," Laura remembered.[256]

The shift from Baker to Chandler was "traumatic." Laura admitted that the trauma "felt like the norm. We didn't know it, [and] our parents didn't know it, because they hadn't gone to integrated schools." What soothed the trauma for her were the friends and classmates who joined them on the journey.[257]

Sherrard "Sherry" Dyson Gardner also experienced that trauma. "I did not know it was bad to be black until I went to Chandler. . . . I had been nurtured, felt secure [at Norrell]. . . . My parents had expectations that I would do well in school. I didn't know I was inferior until I got to Chandler. It was very eye opening." Sherry described the inferiority imposed on her as a travesty that did not reflect her reality, because it was "not the experience of where I grew up and how I grew up. I was in a neighborhood of two-parent homes, some parents had college degrees, [and] some had trades." Some branded Norrell as "the university," a moniker holding education as a valued commodity with futures that included college training.[258]

Her father, Reginald J. Dyson, a leader with the civic-minded Astorians, was a purchasing agent for AT&T and a business owner. Her mother, Elizabeth Moody Dyson,

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[256] Ibid.

[257] Ibid.

[258] Sherrard Dyson Gardner, in discussion with the author, August 2, 2013.

a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority, taught at the black George Washington Carver Elementary. While Sherry described her parents' civil rights activity as minimal, voting was a high priority in the household. Sherry's parents "never really talked about how to be better because you are black," but she knew she "had to always be my best and ahead of the crowd."[259]

Chandler was also four blocks away from the Dyson home. Sherry's parents did not ask whether she wanted to attend Chandler. Instead, her business-minded father quipped, "why would I pay bus fare for you to go to Graves when you can walk to Chandler for free?"[260]

Chandler's close proximity was a convenient enticement for some black students to attend the school, but the behavior of some white students and teachers aggravated black students who were vexed by racial slurs and degradation. Kenneth Whitlock and Michael Howlette dredged up a familiar taunt by white students who sniffed while black students walked down the hallway: "I smell a gar. A cigar? No, a nig-gar." Kenneth noted that teachers used the demeaning term "nigra" rather than "Negro" to identify blacks, compounding his frustration with the name calling by white classmates. Michael recalled the word "negro" was written in small letters in his seventh grade history book. He spoke up in class to explain that "Negro" designates a race and should begin with a capital letter

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[259] Ibid.

[260] Ibid.

as a proper noun, a point he remembered from his fourth grade history lessons at Norrell. Michael landed in the principal's office, his first interface with Chandler principal John Madden. "Madden was a good principal though," Michael reflected. "He kept the transition going."[261]

Laura had favorable impressions about her teachers, particularly math class and in an English class taught by Lillian Poff. "She set a good example for us to write well." Chandler's art teacher, Thomas Gay, was another favorite, exposing students to Van Gogh and providing excursions to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts for art appreciation. While physical education class exposed her to archery, bowling, and ice skating, she recalled "for no [apparent] reason, some students received a D or F." Chandler's routine was "limited. . . . [Y]ou went to school and then came home. We didn't have any white friends and didn't think it was a big deal. We did have the support of each other." Church and social activities filled a gap after school to provide extracurricular activities and events that had once before been seamlessly woven into the fabric of black schools they had left behind.[262]

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[261] Whitlock, "Segregation." Howlette in discussion with the author. Pratt, *Color of Their Skin*, 32.

[262] Wesley, in discussion with the author.

CHAPTER SIX

CHOOSING FREEDOM OF CHOICE IN 1963

> I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.
> – Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, August 28, 1963 [263]

By September 1963, Chandler's slow but steady transition toward desegregation had ripple effects that prodded additional schools in the city and neighboring counties to desegregate schools. Chesterfield County, which began desegregation in 1962 with one school, now had ninety-two black students in four white schools. Henrico County desegregated its school system in 1963 with fifty-eight black students. Richmond's total enrollment of 43,053 was close to the enrollments at Chesterfield and Henrico combined. Richmond's system was nearly 60 percent black: 25,704 black and 17,349 white. Twelve Richmond schools were now desegregated, up from five in 1962. Only 1.4 percent of Richmond black students attended school with whites; 369 black students had been assigned to predominantly white schools. Chandler started the school year with 129 black students, as forty-nine new students swelled their ranks. Chandler black students represented one third of those counted at integrated schools. Overcrowded schools

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[263] U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, "'I HAVE A DREAM...' Speech by the Rev. Martin Luther King at the 'March on Washington.'" http://www.archives.gov/press/exhibits/dream-speech.pdf (accessed January 28, 2014).

remained a burden, particularly in East End schools and at Maggie Walker, where two wings were under construction for relief.[264]

Earlier in March 1963, black attorneys Samuel W. Tucker and Henry L. Marsh, III, filed a suit that successfully challenged two crucial elements that had propped up the policies of the Placement Board and had held back progress on desegregation: dual attendance zones and the feeder system. Residential neighborhoods defined boundaries for school assignments. The feeder system moved children from these zones from elementary to secondary schools. As a consequence, these segregated zones kept school assignments inflexible. The School Board responded with a "freedom of choice" plan to provide pupils with broader choice to select schools according to their residence, school space, educational program, and in the "best interest" of the child. Black students had the "freedom of choice" to enter Chandler for the 1963-64 school year.[265]

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[264] "Schools of Area Open This Week," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 1, 1963. "41,066 Enrolled in City's Schools," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 7, 1963. "Nearly 60% of Pupils in City Are Negroes," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 13, 1963. The number of black students in integrated schools ranged from 357 to 369, depending on various counts from the Placement Board and school officials from week to week. According to Pratt, NAACP executive secretary Roy Wilkins cited 312 blacks in Richmond schools in a speech to Virginia NAACP conventioneers. See Pratt, *Color of Their Skin*, 36.

[265] Pratt, *Color of Their Skin*, 36-37. On the same day as the August 28, 1963 March on Washington, attorneys Tucker and Marsh filed suit to challenge 1) the role of the Placement Board in executing the School Board's "freedom of choice" plan, 2) the issue of faculty segregation, and 3) lack of provisions for desegregating special education and adult education programs. Despite their challenge, the "freedom of choice" plan was affirmed by Federal Judge John Butzner and affirmed by the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. See Pratt, 37. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 influenced federal education funding that leveraged greater desegregation in Virginia, despite the state's tactics for "minimal compliance." The Virginia General Assembly dissolved the Placement Board in 1966. See Eskridge, 272.

The "freedom" to go to predominantly white schools was an ambivalent freedom for black families and students. Administrative barriers put in place by the School Board and Placement Board had been significant impediments to move desegregation forward with more deliberate speed. The unfriendly reception from white students and teachers made the adventures of young racial trailblazers harsh and bittersweet. However, some black families struggled with the choice to desegregate. Their struggle to choose stemmed from initial ambivalence about abandoning venerable educational, cultural, and social traditions embraced by generations of black Richmonders since Reconstruction. The intertwined legacies of Armstrong High, Maggie Walker High, and the Baptist-affiliated Virginia Union University forged a close-knit triumvirate that had made the best of the dual nature of Richmond's segregated school system, despite its obvious inequalities.[266]

Armstrong and Maggie Walker were "well known and well respected" among black high schools in Virginia, Dr. Russell Busch recalled. A graduate of I. C. Norcom High School in Portsmouth and Virginia Union, Busch began his teaching career at Armstrong as student teacher in social studies. Black Richmonders considered Armstrong

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[266] Margaret Meagher, *History of Education in Richmond*, (Richmond, Va., 1939), 130-31. Richmond's Colored Normal School, built in 1867 by the Peabody Fund to train black educators, later became Armstrong High School. Virginia Union University takes its establishment date as 1865. Maggie Walker High School, named for America's first black female bank president and a noted fraternal leader for the Independent Order of St. Luke, was built in 1937 on the site of Hartshorn Memorial College. Hartshorn was a private black women's academy and college founded in 1883 by the American Baptist Home Mission Society as a sister school to Virginia Union. See Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

as the "cream of the crop" because of school pride, competitiveness, and the foundation provided by teachers to ensure student success after high school.[267]

Armstrong was known for its strong college preparatory program. In 1952, Armstrong moved from its central city location in Jackson Ward to a new facility in the East End. Its former site was renamed Benjamin A. Graves Junior High. Maggie Walker was established as a black vocational school prior to World War II. Its mission shifted to provide college preparatory classes after the war's end and served students from the largely black middle-class North Side and West End.[268]

Algernon Brown, a mathematics teacher at Graves, had strong opinions about the slow movement of school desegregation. Brown had attended Maggie Walker before serving in the Navy during World War II. He returned to Maggie Walker in 1946 for college preparatory and post-graduate work and later graduated from Virginia Union. "Parents felt secure about the training that their children were getting [in black schools]. Your children were safe and not allowed to mistreat each other," he recalled. Black teachers "were not just teaching to earn a living. They enjoyed working with young people and were concerned about their progress and character. We could speak to young

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[267] Dr. Russell Busch, in discussion with the author, September 6, 2013.

[268] Algernon Brown, in discussion with the author, September 5, 2013.

people at that time about racial pride . . . establishing good, wholesome habits, and preparing them for life."[269]

Black families with generational ties to black schools maintained those allegiances during the early call to identify black children to attend white schools. Gloria Johnson, the school system's first black registered dietitian, and her husband, Henry Johnson, an insurance broker, were newcomers to Richmond from Tuskegee Institute (now University) in Alabama, unlike her close friend Lillian Briggs, a native Richmonder and public health nurse with strong family ties to the traditions of Richmond's black schools. The Briggs and Johnson families were neighbors in the near West End. Their daughters grew up as close playmates and attended the same elementary school, one grade apart. The Briggs family opted to send their daughter to the black Randolph Junior High School in 1962 rather than to help desegregate the white Binford Junior High. Mrs. Johnson recalled that the Briggs family had well-established roots in Richmond, with relatives who taught at Maggie Walker. The Briggs family intentionally kept their daughter on track to attend Maggie Walker and to maintain family ties and traditions. Mrs. Johnson recognized the significance of how an "old [Richmond] family structure takes care of its own."[270]

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[269] Ibid.

[270] Gloria Johnson, in discussion with the author, August 25, 2013.

However, the Johnsons were "willing to explore to get the best for my child. It was the bottom line." The Johnsons transferred their daughter Neldyne to Binford in 1963 for the seventh grade. Their decision was surrounded by "all the unknowns. . . . [W]e were willing to try, but there was confusion. We had mixed emotions. We thought it would be fair. Our children had been so protected in their own little environments. School climate is so important to learning," Mrs. Johnson emphasized. "It was a very emotional experience. . . . We didn't want anything to happen to our children."[271]

Some black families, particularly from modest means, had concerns about jeopardizing their livelihoods by transferring their children to white schools. Algernon Brown, the math teacher at Graves, raised concerns that some black families "were fearful that their white employers might get rid of them or fire them" for engaging in desegregation efforts. Domestics and maids were even more "fearful of retaliation." For them, black schools were a safe haven for black children to learn and for black parents to keep their jobs.[272]

Armstrong graduate Wendell Foster, Jr., praised Armstrong's leadership guided by its first black principal, George Peterson. "I don't remember any teacher that wasn't professional and caring. No teacher slacked off. These were the same people that had their hands in the community . . . went to the same church that I went to, [and] lived in

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[271] Johnson, in discussion with the author.

[272] Brown, in discussion with the author.

our neighborhoods." Foster recalled being in a class where his teacher, Mary Wingfield Payne, had taught the fathers of at least four of his classmates. Armstrong's generational legacy solidified school loyalty and pride.[273]

The Armstrong-Walker football game was an annual celebration of high schools, neighborhoods, and families. The rival schools faced off on the gridiron on the Saturday after Thanksgiving from 1938 to 1978. Across the state, Foster recalled, "people were in awe of Armstrong and Walker. They set the tone for other black schools [in Virginia]. The football games were packed. It was a black community homecoming" and the biggest sporting event in Richmond and the state. Throngs of alumni, students, and fans strutted in the latest, most elegant fashions, sporting the orange and blue of the Armstrong Wildcats or the green and white of the Maggie Walker Mighty Green Dragons.[274]

"It was more than a football game," noted Dr. Roy West, a graduate of Maggie Walker and Virginia Union and a former educator at Armstrong. "It drew twenty-five to thirty thousand people to the city stadium, . . . more than any other event in the entire state of Virginia. . . . [T]he bands were beautiful, the school queens were queenly, the cheerleaders were exciting; and in that mix was a sense of belonging, a sense that this is

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[273] Foster, in discussion with the author. George Peterson, Jr. was principal at Armstrong High from 1947 to 1974. See Callihan, 15.

[274] Foster, in discussion with the author. Michael Whitt, *United in Rivalry: Richmond's Armstrong-Maggie Walker Classic* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2009): back cover.

ours, that no one can take it from us, nor will they ever take it from us. . . . It was [black] society saying to the other [white] society, that you may have segregated us, but we are still a classy group of people."[275]

"Black Richmond lived inside its own bubble," according to businessman Clarence Townes, Jr. A graduate of Armstrong and Virginia Union, he had been a treasurer for the Human Dignity Campaign during the downtown picketing in 1960. "Richmond had been a mecca for black business and leadership, the black business capital between Atlanta and New York. We weren't that aggressive about integration at first because we had our own thing. . . . Richmond wasn't a very aggressive, race changing city. Richmond was way behind."[276]

Oliver W. "Dukie" Hill, Jr., had wanted to go to Maggie Walker for high school, describing it as a "natural progression and where most of the kids that I knew were going to school." His social life as a teen "was still with my black peers rather than those we went to school with." He was often ribbed about "going over there [to Chandler and John Marshall High] with those white boys rather than with blacks." Dukie observed a possible correlation between more educated black parents wanting to send their children to white schools, compared to lesser educated blacks who were less anxious about the need to send their children to white schools. Students not connected to the black middle class, but

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[275] Carver-VCU Partnership Oral History Collection, Dr. Roy A. West. http://trane.uls.vcu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/car/id/57 (accessed January 20, 2014).

[276] Clarence and Grace Townes, in discussion with the author, September 21, 2013.

who resided close to Chandler and John Marshall, were also more likely to attend white schools closer to their homes. Black students attending Mary Scott Elementary represented working class black neighborhoods in North Side's Washington Park and Providence Park. Some blacks, like them, were more likely to consider white schools within easy walking distance from their neighborhoods than to travel to black schools farther away in central neighborhoods downtown, such as Jackson Ward.[277]

Dr. West, a former postal worker, had taught at Armstrong in 1963 when his daughter Debra entered Chandler for the seventh grade. The West family lived in the modest village of Washington Park. Debra had attended Mary Scott Elementary, a black school that Dr. West described as "mediocre, because there was a white school five blocks away [Ginter Park Elementary – a feeder school for Chandler] that had all the privileges, central heat, and air conditioning." Mary Scott struggled with overcrowding, teaching in morning and afternoon shifts. According to Dr. West, one particular principal at Mary Scott had been a "roadblock" and did not encourage the school's parents, a "struggling people" compared to the well-to-do black parents of Norrell. Dr. West lauded Ethel Overby as "a pioneer, a go-getter, a fearless advocate for black children." By comparison, West was frustrated that Mary Scott's principal was, in his opinion, "an instrument of segregation."[278]

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[277] Hill, in discussion with the author.

[278] Dr. Roy A. West, in discussion with the author, July 27, 2013. West later became director of food services for the school system and principal of John Marshall High School, just blocks away from his

Dr. West confirmed Armstrong's reputation for providing essential guidance for black students. "We had a system to direct every phase of a child's development – teaching, learning, the future of the children." Debra, however, did not receive the same level of attention at Chandler. "If I didn't fill the gap as a parent, my daughter was not going to get it." Unlike Chandler, Armstrong offered black history as a course, and Dr. West taught black history to Debra in the home to enrich "her overall development."[279]

Dr. West questioned the fairness of Debra's teachers at Chandler. Debra revealed her grade in a foreign language class, and West detected an illogical procedure in determining her grade. As an educator, he understood grading procedures. He confronted Debra's teacher, as well as the principal, who backed up the teacher's grading system. "It left a bitter taste in my mouth," he remembered.[280]

Dr. West recalled another bias regarding school-wide testing that bolstered the scores of white students at the expense of black students to perpetuate the myth of black inferiority. STEP (Sequential Test of Educational Progress) and SCAT (Student and College Ability Test) tests were given across Virginia. STEP tests determined student

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Washington Park residence. He was transferred to Albert H. Hill Middle School in 1979. In 1982, West was elected to City Council and represented North Side. He became the city's second black mayor, a largely ceremonial role, ousting Henry L. Marsh, III, as mayor. Marsh continued to serve on City Council. See "Black Backed by Whites Is Richmond Mayor," *The New York Times*, July 4, 1982. I served as executive staff assistant to the mayor during the last months of Marsh's term as mayor and for four years with West as mayor.

[279] Ibid.

[280] Ibid.

aptitude. SCAT tests appraised student achievement in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. These tests were used for student guidance and, according to Dr. West, to limit black students from entering white schools across the state. Black schools such as Armstrong had been instructed to account for every test booklet they received from and returned to the state to ensure that no extras were left behind. Many years later, after integration, Dr. West's white colleagues revealed the double standard regarding instructions. White schools had been allowed to keep extra STEP and SCAT test booklets to coach their students for the tests.[281]

In 1963, Karen Brown Wentt transferred from Graves and entered the eighth grade at Chandler. "My parents thought that I should be the sacrificial lamb." As a child of Jack and Jill, she transferred "because Jack and Jill was doing it – it was the thing to do." She had left behind teachers from Norrell, Baker, and Graves who were "terrific, very strong, demanding teachers." While her Norrell kindergarten teacher, Audrey Britt, was very nurturing, she described her Norrell teachers as "tough task masters. I never remember anyone mentioning race, but they knew what was coming" and worked to prepare her classmates to achieve their best in an integrated world.[282]

Her siblings attended Graves and Maggie Walker. "They had such a wonderful time," she lamented, comparing their experience to hers at Chandler. "It was the drama

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[281] Ibid. "SCAT, STEP Explained; Purpose Told," *The Fredericksburg Free-Lance Star,* September 24, 1960.

[282] Karen Brown Wentt, in telephone discussion with the author, January 7, 2014.

mask of comedy and tragedy. They were the comedy, and I was the tragedy. They had a great experience and received nurturing that gave them that extra kick, that extra burst. The guidance counselors at Maggie Walker really cared. When I got to John Marshall, the counselors told us we weren't college material. We weren't encouraged to do the best that we could do. The guidance counselors did not waste time or energy on us."[283]

Her father, Milton K. Brown, Sr., sympathized with Karen's struggles when she presented her report cards from Chandler. Brown rewarded his children for good grades. "You got nothing for a C. You might get five cents for a B, ten cents for an A. When I brought my report card home, Dad said, 'Now those white people aren't treating her right. So every grade she has, we're going to up it one letter. They are not going to give her what she deserves.' That was so insightful of him. He suspected that things weren't equal and made it known to my brother and sisters." That conversation, along with support to do her best, provided much encouragement.[284]

Milton Brown was a graduate of Virginia State University, a member of Omega Psi Phi fraternity, and a federal loan officer for Farmers Home Administration. His family roots were in Smithfield, Virginia, where his great-great-grandfather had served in the Virginia legislature during Reconstruction. His wife, Mary Hewlett Brown, was a

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[283] Ibid.

[284] Ibid.

graduate of Armstrong and Virginia Union. The family's social life revolved around All Souls Presbyterian and their connections to extensive family with Smithfield roots.[285]

Karen's first exposure to racial integration was not at Chandler, but at Camp Hanover, a Presbyterian camp. She described whites affiliated with the camps as "very kind, not my peers, but older, do-good white people. [All Souls] was a jump start for many of us into desegregation and how to handle it nicely. We were programmed to be kind and gentle," she recalled. "It was just an expectation that you were not going out and embarrass your people." When Karen experienced white teachers who were "nice," she suspected them to be "missionaries," like the Presbyterians who had treated her well.[286]

One Chandler teacher, however, "was the meanest, nastiest person, like a witch. She let us know she lived in Windsor Farms and she didn't have to put up with [integration]. She said this to our faces. I don't think I ever opened my mouth in her class." Other adults, she lamented, "truly felt sorry for us – [the ones] who knew [integration] was a stand we had to take."[287]

Karen described the Chandler experience as "frightening." She added, "I think we were so afraid – trying to please. Peer pressure is not new. Everyone wanted to be accepted." Karen wore name-brand Villager blouses and Trotters shoes, like the white

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[285] Ibid.

[286] Ibid.

[287] Ibid.

girls, to fit in. "You just wanted to be accepted . . . and wanted them to leave you alone." When Karen's mother caught her trying to iron her hair for a straight style like white girls, she received "the worst spanking in my life. . . . All you wanted was to either be invisible or be accepted" at Chandler. She admitted that she would not have ironed her hair if she had been a student at Maggie Walker and quipped, "Those who hold the power hold the pressure."[288]

Karen described her Jack and Jill friends as a subculture of black students at Chandler. "We didn't go to the same parties" as the black children who lived in the more modest-income neighborhood of Washington Park."There was a disconnect between us and other black students. We had to band together, but there were some instances when we couldn't continue" the interactions more broadly because of neighborhood, class, and social distinctions.[289]

Robert Payne entered Chandler in 1963 along with Karen and Debra. He lived in Barton Heights near Norrell School, but went to Van de Vyver, a black Catholic school affiliated with St. Joseph's parish in Jackson Ward. When he entered Chandler, he knew only two or three of the black students. "The black kids all knew each other. Cliques had

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[288] Ibid.

[289] Ibid.

been formed, and I was out of the mix. I didn't try to mix. Other friends had been ostracized by the cliques."[290]

Robert attended Van de Vyver from kindergarten through sixth grade. "Discipline and corporal punishment were sanctioned. The parents were fine with it," he recalled. The transition from Van de Vyver to Chandler was not difficult because "all the teachers I'd ever known were white. I saw teachers in the same light" at Chandler. Thanks to Van de Vyver's preparation, Robert entered Chandler confident of his strong math background. "When I got to Chandler, everything was new." Van de Vyver, much like black public schools, had supplied students with worn textbooks, haggard facilities, and classes filled with thirty or more students. His parents chose Chandler to shield Robert from the influence of any "thugs" who attended Graves.[291]

Robert's father, Haywood Payne, had been a military staff sergeant and had worked as a porter for the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad's private executive car. He catered and served private parties at the Jefferson Hotel, later retiring as the produce manager at Bellwood, the Defense Supply Center for the military in Richmond. He graduated from St. Emma Military Academy, a black Catholic military academy located

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[290] Robert Payne, in discussion with the author, August 13, 2013. Van de Vyver School was named for Belgian-born Bishop Augustine Van De Vyver, who served as the sixth Bishop of Richmond from October 20, 1889, until his death October 16, 1911. "Black Alumni Asked to Promote Catholic Schools," *The Catholic Virginian*, November 14, 2011. http://www.catholicvirginian.org/archive/2011/2011vol87iss1/pages/article3.html (accessed January 12, 2014).

[291] Payne, in discussion with the author.

in Powhatan County, where he converted to Catholicism. Robert's mother, Rose Royall Payne, was a member of Moore Street Baptist Church and one of the first black female school patrol guards.[292]

Robert had little concern about fitting in with white students. "The black kids were equally mean, because I was new to them." He wasn't invited to weekend parties or other social activities with black middle-class kids. "They would gang up on the misfits." While black and whites sat at separate tables for lunch, Robert would sit with a few black guys who were "unaffiliated." The black clique sat together. They were "a world that didn't matter" to him.[293]

Physical education class was Robert's most challenging experience, when the "most evil nature came out from boys. In gym class, the 'alpha dogs' are gonna pick at any imperfection with the weaker kids. The bad ones want to pop you with a wet towel. Bullying was accepted." Robert hated gym class. "Never did I see a teacher put a halt to the bullying."[294]

Faithe Norrell and Bert Motley entered Chandler in 1963 after integrating Stuart Elementary in 1962. That "one grade difference," according to Bert, "was a wake-up

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[292] Ibid.

[293] Ibid.

[294] Ibid.

call." His older brother, Milwood, had described what to expect at Chandler, so he was prepared for a repeat of the harassment that his brother had endured.[295]

Faithe concurred that Norrell and Stuart were vastly different from Chandler. She was terrified of "horrible kids from Highland Park" and scared by the cafeteria fights that occurred almost every morning. In Virginia history class, Faithe and Bert endured similar encounters that had bristled black classmates ahead of them: teachers who continued to use the term "nigras," rather than pronounce the word "Negroes." While "some teachers were nice, kind and fair," others were "so opposed and angry at having black children. Those teachers," she surmised, "had been so brainwashed that black students are stupid and bad – stereotypes that still exist today."[296]

Three months after the 1963-64 school year started, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963. That fateful day provoked a range of reactions at Chandler. Faithe remembered white students cheering out a "rebel yell" as they walked down Chandler's long flight of steps. Some appeared elated, proclaiming "the nigga lover is dead." Faithe's father retrieved her at the end of the school day.[297]

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[295] Bertram Motley, in discussion with the author.

[296] Norrell, in discussion with the author.

[297] Ibid. Because of her Chandler experience, Faithe's parents enrolled her at Marymount, a Catholic girls' high school nestled in Windsor Farms. She was Marymount's second black student. Kathy Reid, the daughter of Dr. Leon A. Reid, Jr., a dentist, and his wife, Kathryn Reid, had been the first to enter Marymount the year before. Kathy was the niece of Alice Reid Calloway and Dr. William Ferguson Reid.

A white student from Sherry Dyson's English class returned to class from the library after learning the news of the president's assassination. "She came back bawling, crying her heart out." Sherry recalled lots of tears from blacks and whites that day.[298]

Milwood and Dukie had entered their first year at John Marshall in 1963, and on the day of the Kennedy assassination, someone ran "from classroom to classroom announcing that the president had been shot," Milwood recalled. "At some point, classes were suspended for us to go around the flagpole for a moment of silence to pray for the president. The principal had said a few words. It affected the whole school, black and white."[299]

Dukie joined the football squad his freshman year. The football banquet had been scheduled for November 22, 1963. School officials had considered cancelling the banquet because of the president's assassination, but held it as planned. After the banquet, one of the cheerleaders invited the football team to her home for a party. It was the first time any black students had been invited into the home of a white student to socialize. The hostess, Lisa Thompson, lived on Seminary Avenue in Ginter Park, Dukie recalled, and was from "a very prominent liberal family. . . . It made an impression on me." Yet it was to be his first and only social interaction with white students outside the halls of John Marshall.[300]

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[298] Gardner, in discussion with the author.

[299] Milwood Motley, in discussion with the author.

[300] Hill, in discussion with the author.

SUMMARY

> To sum up this: theoretically, the Negro needs neither segregated schools nor mixed schools. What he needs is Education.[301]
> – W. E. B. Du Bois, 1935

Ambivalence across the black community demonstrated the paradox of desegregation amidst the activism, tension, and tradeoffs that faced black students, parents, and educators during the process of Richmond's school desegregation. A paradox, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, is "made up of two opposite things and . . . seems impossible but is actually true or possible." Richmond has remained a paradox – a white city, a black city – a duality that tussles with the legacy and residue of lingering tensions and resistance from the aftermath of segregation and integration.

A slow but steady stream of brave black students entered Chandler from 1960-63. Yet by 1963, for every one hundred black students, little more than one black student had been transferred to a white school. The tradeoff for new textbooks and better facilities appeared to be isolation, rather than integration, as the first group of black children found few, if any, opportunities for social growth and scholastic achievement at Chandler. As

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[301] Du Bois, "Does the Negro Need Separate Schools?" "*The Journal of Negro Education* 4, no. 3, The Courts and the Negro Separate School (July, 1935): 335. Du Bois had linked black education to black economic cooperation, an opportunity that black educators were best suited to convey to black students. See Alridge, *Educational Thought,* 79-85. Alridge also spotlights the relationship between Du Bois and Charles H. Thompson, editor of *The Journal of Negro Education*, in a more nuanced context regarding the essay's controversy and submission. See Alridge, 93-95.

such, the material gains from better educational facilities and resources were offset by social, emotional, and cultural losses in desegregating Chandler. The presumed first-class world of whiteness, with its implicit privilege of a higher quality educational environment, was, by the accounts of black students interviewed, a daily paradox to navigate and a daily encounter with Du Boisian "double consciousness."[302]

W. E. B. Du Bois had prophesied their dilemmas twenty five years earlier when he penned "Does the Negro Need Separate Schools?" for the July 1935 *Journal of Negro Education*, declaiming, "There is no magic, either in mixed schools or in segregated schools." Du Bois foretold the "principle at the cost of discomfort" involved with the task of having black children enter a mixed school, a discomfort expressed repeatedly by the narratives of black Chandler students from this study:

> I have repeatedly seen wise and loving colored parents take infinite pains to force their little children into schools where the white children, white teachers, and white parents despised and resented the dark child, made mock of it, neglected or bullied it, and literally rendered its life a living hell. Such parents want their child to 'fight' this thing out, – but dear God, at what a cost! Sometimes to be sure, the child triumphs and teaches the school community a lesson; but even in such cases, the cost may be high, and the child's whole life turned into an effort to win cheap applause at the expense of healthy individuality. In other cases, the result of the experiment may be complete ruin of character, gift, and ability and ingrained hatred of schools and men . . .

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[302] Merriam-Webster. http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/paradox (accessed January 25, 2014). "Double consciousness" was identified earlier in note 38 to describe the identity duality of blacks in America.

> [W]e must give greater value and greater emphasis to the rights of the child's own soul.[303]

Du Bois contrasted how black segregated schools created the self-esteem that cultivated young black minds through educational experiences that nurtured and valued students, similar to those from this study who attended Norrell:

> We shall get a finer, better balance of spirit; an infinitely more capable and rounded personality by putting children in schools where they are wanted, and where they are happy and inspired, than in thrusting them into hells where they are ridiculed and hated. [304]

Du Bois had also envisioned circumstances where well-trained black educators, trained at prestigious universities like Columbia University, would return to teach at southern schools to create a "fantastic" situation as educators "who understand their audience, and are not afraid of the truth." The year that Du Bois published this essay – 1935 – the Commonwealth of Virginia held firm to bar blacks from attending graduate schools in Virginia. The state anted up the financial wherewithal for hundreds of black teachers to earn graduate credentials at Columbia and a variety of elite northern universities, paradoxically, with greater prestige and recognition than its own white institutions. As a result, many exceptionally well-trained black educators during segregation embraced a professional and cultural mission that nurtured and vigorously

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[303] Du Bois, 330-331.

[304] Ibid., 331.

prepared black children for a changing world. The benefit of this advanced education, in turn, strengthened the collective value of the social networks, fraternal affiliations, and political capital of a well-educated black vanguard as the black population swelled.[305]

Richmond's growing black population provoked fears and tensions between blacks and whites, fueling the quandary of segregation in Richmond's two separate cities. For blacks, overcrowded and underfunded schools motivated the push for desegregation. For whites, desegregation was not Richmond's "real problem," according to University of Virginia law professor Edward A. Mearns, Jr. "The whites in Richmond fear 'engulfment' and all that that term signifies. . . . Richmond white people fear that the poetry of southern life will soon be gone, if it has not gone already." The parallel worlds of two separate cities – their traditions and legacies – were on a collision course to either defend or neutralize the "Virginia Way" of southern life.[306]

Certainly, the Richmond School Board and Placement Board colluded in a "passive resistance" approach to decelerate school integration, the maneuver emphasized in the research by historian Robert A. Pratt. Yet educational traditions and legacies were significantly at risk for blacks as well as whites, a necessary and unfortunate consequence of school desegregation and its aftermath.[307]

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[305] Ibid., 332.

[306] Silver and Moeser, 78-79.

[307] Pratt, *Color of Their Skin*, xi.

Many black parents struggled with the trials their children were apt to face once they moved outside the perimeters of the racial divide. Certainly, the quality of black teachers appeared not be in question – only school overcrowding and scant resources. Yet one black activist educator dared to allude to an unspoken reality about class and color issues within Richmond's black community. From her vantage point, school desegregation was indeed supported by a small group of black middle-class parents who wanted their children to go to white schools and others who longed to be more fully connected to the white world. Black families with more modest and marginal incomes showed scant interest, a struggle that attorney Hill acknowledged as he urged black parents to transfer their children before and during 1960. It was a "quiet division in the community" not openly discussed, yet everyone knew the ambivalence was there.[308]

Alice Calloway summed up her vantage point as an advocate for school desegregation during an interview with historian Robert Pratt:

> I pushed so hard for integration because I knew that the city would appropriate sufficient funds for the schools as long as white children were in them, and that my children would benefit as a result of that. I've been around long enough to know that if the white child is there, the money will be there.[309]

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[308] Smith, in discussion with the author.

[309] Pratt, *Color of Their Skin*, 108-109.

Black Chandler students in this study consistently acknowledged the value of caring black elementary school teachers who had high expectations for the success of their students. These students acknowledged the isolation and harassment at Chandler. They left behind a familiar interconnectedness that linked schools, families, social networks, and neighborhoods. They sacrificed an educational path that had embraced community rituals and school loyalties that affirmed racial uplift and pride. They left behind childhood friendships that were tarnished by assumptions that somehow they were "better, or smarter" than other black students. They struggled with how to make new friends in a school climate that was indifferent, isolating, and intimidating. Du Bois recognized the positive value of what these children would leave behind, "due to the fact that American Negroes have, because of their history, group experiences and memories, a distinct entity, whose spirit and reactions demand a certain type of education for its development."[310]

Apparently, both white and black newspapers manufactured public relations ploys regarding the normalcy of integration in Richmond, but for different self-interests. For the sake of economic development, Richmond's integration experience was heralded by the *Washington Post* in 1962, ostensibly to gain favor with northern business investors leery of racial troubles farther south. The *Richmond Afro* billed the first day of integration in 1960 as "normal," seemingly to plant seeds of encouragement for black parents to consider transfers for their children to boost the number of transfers for the following

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[310] Du Bois, 333.

year. Black Norfolk parents had made a significant push for transfers their first year, while black Richmond parents lagged behind. *Richmond Afro* columnist Ruth Jenkins promoted Carol and Gloria's Chandler experience as an apparent effort to entice the next crop of black Chandler students. Her well-intentioned message belied the realities that black children actually experienced during early years of Richmond's school desegregation saga. Their collective experiences are emblematic of the Paul Lawrence Dunbar poem, "We Wear the Mask," a lament about the paradox and ambivalence of the black experience in America:

> We wear the mask that grins and lies,
> It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,
> This debt we pay to human guile;
> With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
> And mouth with myriad subtleties.
> Why should the world be over-wise,
> In counting all our tears and sighs,
> Nay, let them only see us while
> We wear the mask…[311]

Black Chandler students courageously endured the insults, harassment, and academic stumbles for the sake of the race and the civil rights movement. Laura Thornton Wesley, daughter of the leader of the Crusade for Voters, glibly acknowledged that the trauma they experienced "felt like the norm," as they sacrificed their adolescence for the movement. "Integrating the Richmond Public Schools was worth it," according to Carol Swann-Daniels, one of the first two black youngsters to enter Chandler. " . . . [B]ut as a

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[311] Paul Lawrence Dunbar, *The Complete Poems of Paul Lawrence Dunbar* (New York: Mead and Company, 1915), 71.

result of those years, I always doubt myself. I don't have the sense of self confidence that my abilities would merit. If I do something well, it seems to me a fluke."[312]

Richmond may not have had the scale of notoriety that made Little Rock a national symbol of resistance to school desegregation. But for children at the front lines of tension, resistance, and transition in Richmond, they bravely masked and endured the hostility and trauma to pioneer school desegregation all the same.[313]

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[312] Wesley, in discussion with the author. See Williams, 70.

[313] Silver and Moeser contend "it is significant that the public schools of Virginia's capital never closed and that they functioned in the absence of great public disturbance. Richmond was not Little Rock," 83. Yet, I contend Richmond's public face has masked the private and traumatic struggles of black Chandler students, who endured struggles inside the school walls that are no less traumatizing than those faced by black students during the Little Rock crisis. As such, their personal narratives heretofore have been a marginalized footnote in the history of Richmond's early desegregation experience. This research provides a platform to highlight their sacrifices and contributions to the civil rights narrative of Richmond.

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