"GET ON BOARD, CHILDREN: THE STORY OF INTEGRATION IN YANCEY COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA"

A Thesis
by
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ABSTRACT

“GET ON BOARD, CHILDREN: THE STORY OF INTEGRATION IN YANCEY COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA” (May 2011)

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In the early 1950s America witnessed the beginnings of what would become one of the most significant social campaigns in the nation’s history. The murder of fourteen-year old Emmett Till in the Mississippi Delta created unrest among black communities and influenced a serious social upheaval. The arrest of Rosa Parks in Montgomery, Alabama brought more attention to a chain of resistance that eventually became known as the civil rights movement. National events, such as these, stand at the forefront of civil rights history. However, they were not the only successful movements that occurred. Textbooks and other resources devoted to America’s past tend to gloss over the struggles rural African Americans faced in the mid twentieth century, especially in Appalachia.

Black invisibility has long reinforced the myth of homogeneity in the Appalachian region. Of the limited scholarship that does address black Appalachian culture, the period of the civil rights movement is either summed up in a couple of paragraphs or is omitted all together. In the wake of the publicized political commotion that ensued after *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Pupil Placement Act, the Pearsall

Plan, and other headlining affairs of the 1950s, a small black community in Yancey County quietly fought the local Board of Education in pursuit of school integration. My work examines the struggles and successes experienced by those residents during that campaign.

This project started in the spring of 2010 when I began participant observation fieldwork in a small African American community located in Boone, North Carolina. My goal was to examine the contemporary effects desegregation had had on the local minority group. However, while in the midst of that research an interesting fact about a different small mountain county in western North Carolina emerged. It was brought to my attention that Yancey County was the first county in the state of North Carolina to implement school integration by way of federal court order. After discovering this somewhat obscure detail I soon shifted my focus from Watauga County and began to fix my attention on the history of civil rights in Yancey County. Further, instead of dissecting the impact integration had on the community I posed the following question: how did this rural Appalachian county become the first to desegregate in North Carolina?

Through the analysis of the classical collective behavior theory, resource mobilization and the concept of black resistance, I concluded that with collective action black residents were able to pool the resources necessary in developing and organizing their movement. External organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Burnsville Education Project (BEP) provided the means necessary to carry out the campaign and contest white resistance. This thesis analyzes the methods used by both blacks and whites during this drawn out

struggle, but more importantly illuminates a forgotten narrative with profound importance to both North Carolina and Appalachian history.

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Without the direction and encouragement of Drs. Patricia D. Beaver, Fred J. Hay, Susan E. Keefe, and Cameron D. Lippard this project would have never materialized. I am forever grateful for their advice, help, and teachings over the past two years. Finally, I would like express a great deal of thanks to my family, friends, and colleagues for their undying support, tolerance, and patience, especially Tom and Ginger whose loving words of “we’re proud of you” carried me all the way to the finish.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract……………………………………………………………………………...iv

Acknowledgements…………………………………………………………………vii

Timeline……………………………………………………………………………..ix

Chapter 1. Introduction………………………………………………………………1

Chapter 2. Review of Literature…………………………………………………..5

Chapter 3. Methodology……………………………………………………………41

Chapter 4. Historical Background, Part One: Yancey County History………………….51

Chapter 5. Historical Background, Part Two: The Road to Integration…………………65

Figure 1……………………………………………………………………..84

Chapter 6. Theoretical Analyses and Conclusions…………………………………………91

References…………………………………………………………………………101

Appendix A………………………………………………………………………..111

Appendix B……………………………………………………………..........................114

Appendix C…………………………………………………………………….116

Appendix D…………………………………………………………………….118

Appendix E…………………………………………………………………….120

Vita……………………………………………………………………………….121

TIMELINE

June 15, 1953: Yancey County Board of Education meets with Yancey County Board of Commissioners to discuss the best solution to the "Negro school question."

August 5, 1953: Yancey County Board of Education passes two significant resolutions by a unanimous vote: The assignment of black high school students to Asheville's Stephens Lee High School and the purchase of a panel bus to transport the students to Asheville.

May 17, 1954: United States Supreme Court declares school segregation unconstitutional in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka.*

September 7, 1954: Discussions pertaining to the possibility of building two new white high schools in Yancey County ensue during School Board meeting. Members also discuss a potential move for black children from the elementary school to a different location during the winter months.

October 4, 1954: Yancey County Board of Education meets with the local black church to "study" the basement as a possible schoolroom location for the winter.

July 21, 1955: Existing [white] educational facilities deemed inadequate for maintenance of public schools within the Yancey County Administrative Unit discussions continue concerning the "problems of the colored school."

August 18, 1955: Board of Education discusses integration in both Yancey County and the state of North Carolina.

August 28, 1955: Emmett Till is murdered in Mississippi.

December 1, 1955: Rosa Parks is arrested for refusing to give up her bus seat in Montgomery, Alabama

August 17, 1956: Yancey County school Superintendent Hubert D. Justice requests allowance of local black high school students to Stephens Lee High School and seventh and eighth graders to a "colored" junior high in Asheville, if they desire to do so.

Mrs. Pearl Oliver is approved by the Board of Education to teach at the Lincoln Park Elementary School for Negroes.

September 21, 1956: The resolution to construct two new white high schools is passed.

April 1, 1957: Hubert Justice is nominated and unanimously elected to serve a [second] term as superintendent.

The school board discusses the need for a “colored” school.

June 12, 1959: The Board of Education discusses three property possibilities for a new “colored” school site.

June 24, 1959: Property owned by local resident Emmett Stamey is considered as the new black school location.

A meeting with the black parents in the Lincoln Park community is arranged.

July 1, 1959: The Board of Education meets with Asheville and NAACP attorney Ruben Dailey to discuss the construction of a new black school.

July 6, 1959: The school board examines a petition signed by Lincoln Park community members to give Ruben Dailey power of attorney and to have the children reassigned to local schools.

August 10, 1959: A special meeting is called by the Board of Education to discuss student reassignment. The request to move black students from Asheville City Schools to Yancey County Schools is disapproved.

August 21, 1959: A special meeting is called by the board due to the black parents’ dissatisfaction with the school assignments of their children.

September 14, 1959: A meeting is called by the Board of Education with Ruben Dailey, parents John and Selelia Griffith, and other Lincoln Park community members to negotiate school assignments and the new black school.

Lincoln Park parents indicate that the new school was not satisfactory. Parents also announce that they will no longer send their children to Asheville and that the bus route should be terminated.

October 26, 1959: Emmett Stamey’s property, an old ballpark, is seriously considered as the location for the new black school.

December 15, 1959: Resolution proposed to purchase 4.6 acres of land to build the new Oak Crest School for blacks.

January 30, 1960: Discussion to submit an application for a $30,700 loan to the State Literary Fund for the purposes of purchasing land for the construction of Oak Crest School.

February 1, 1960: Four black college students conduct a sit-in at a Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina.

April 1, 1960: The Board of Education votes unanimously to build the new Oak Crest School in Yancey County.

September 1960: *The John B. Griffith et al. v. The Board of Education of Yancey County* goes to United States District Court.

October 3, 1960: The Board of Education discusses the District Court ruling that sided with *Griffith et al.*

The board assigns black students to Yancey County high schools East Yancey and Cane River and elementary students to Oak Crest.

August 7, 1961: Assignments to East Yancey and Cane River High Schools continue for the 1961-1962 school year.

The Board disapproves the reassignment of black students from Oak Crest to the white Burnsville Elementary.

April 26, 1962: The Board of Education unanimously votes to advertise and sell the defunct Lincoln Park School building and site.

July 24, 1962: Applicant John B. Griffith proposes to refrain from further court action if the school board approves reassignment from Oak Crest to Burnsville Elementary.

The Board declines the offer.

August 26, 1963: The Board of Education agrees to give Oak Crest parents a hearing on reassignment to Burnsville Elementary.

September 3, 1963: The court hearing begins at 9:30 am. The Oak Crest parents win the case.

Chapter 1. Introduction

On October 17, 1960, seven black teenagers legally entered Yancey County high schools for the first time in North Carolina history. With the exception of a few reporters, no crowd or mass media convened to observe the event. Newspapers expressed the transition as easy, devoid of any efforts to thwart the occasion. However, this notion inaccurately summarized the actual desegregation process that occurred. Downplayed by journalists and scholars, and overshadowed by resistance movements in largely populated, urban areas, this small yet successful campaign for racial equality suffered a fate of obscurity. As a result, factors that led to integration in this rural, mountain county remain relatively unknown today.

Generally speaking, the academic history of blacks in Appalachia has been limited to slavery, roles in Reconstruction, out migration and coal mining. Although those pieces of history are important, they do not tell the entire story of blacks in Appalachia. There is, however, a momentous part of history that has been overlooked in the region: civil rights. In comparison to the Deep South the civil rights movement did not have as strong of a presence in the mountain south, but black communities throughout western North Carolina and southern Appalachia did fight for equal rights. This thesis examines the struggle of a small black community, known as Lincoln Park, and their campaign for civil liberties and social change in rural Yancey County.

The content of this work is divided into five chapters. Chapter one introduces the event and the material discussed throughout the thesis. An extensive review of pertinent

literature in the second chapter places the Lincoln Park efforts within the context of Jim Crow laws, race relations, white resistance, civil rights, and education in the south, North Carolina, and southern Appalachia. To deepen the comprehension of the undertakings carried out by the members of Lincoln Park community, chapter two also connects Yancey County to the regional, state, and national circumstances that consumed American society in the mid-twentieth century. Chapter three explains the methodology used to collect and analyze the data. Efforts to illuminate educational desegregation in the rural mountain county relied on a significant amount of oral history and primary sources. Interviews with former male and female students, community members, and others who lived through the event provided information pertaining to the historic event. Further, court rulings, information on Lincoln Park's attorney Ruben Daily, school records from the Yancey County Board of Education, and other essential archival data contributed to the historical knowledge.

Yancey County boasts a complex and interesting past. Chapters four and five survey the rural county's narrative in two sections. The first, in chapter four, focuses on Yancey County, from its settlement in the eighteenth century, to participation in the Civil War, postbellum race relations, and the history of education. Chapter five devotes attention to the actual campaign for school integration. This chapter splits the struggle into three periods. The first examines the build-up to the movement, as it presents the conditions of local black education and the Board of Education's negligence towards the situation. From 1953 to 1957 Yancey County officials assigned black pupils to segregated schools in Buncombe County, even after the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling. Displeased with the state of the run-down black elementary school and the eighty-

mile bus ride their teenage children endured, parents started to pool their resources to fight the white educational system.

The second period in chapter five explains the steps taken by Lincoln Park members to develop the campaign and the resources utilized to do so. After internal sources proved ineffective, external help was pursued. An NAACP attorney from Asheville stepped in as Lincoln Park's official spokesman and legal representative when the community sued the county school board on the count that school assignments were unconstitutionally based on race. Outside organizations were also used for funding the black students of Yancey County during a bus boycott in 1959. Finally, the third period centers on the actual implementation of integration as it took place in high schools in 1960 and within the elementary schools in 1963.

Chapter six surveys the success of the civil rights campaign in Yancey County in conjunction with a theoretical analysis of three components responsible for achieving integration. Classical collective behavior explains how the collaborative action of a group generates social movements. Members of the Lincoln Park community took a unified approach in contesting with the all-white school board in 1959. Collective operations are important in that they allow groups to advance towards their goals more effectively and with stronger force.

Resource mobilization, the second agent accountable for the success in attaining integration, refers to the external sources, and the organization of those sources, used to develop civil uprisings. After Lincoln Park parents had united as a group they found that internal strategies were not enough to beat the system. Therefore, they sought outside help to fight the Board of Education and dismantle segregation. Throughout the 1950s,

whites tried to thwart social change in Yancey County. Such efforts were, presumably, fueled by the fear of black uprisings. This explicates the final theoretical element of the thesis. Although local officials and administrators went to great lengths to avoid desegregation and promote the "separate but equal" canon, such attempts were not enough to deter the black community from reaching their objective.

In addition to the applied theories and conclusions, chapter six looks at the racial milestones that have occurred since 1960. Relatives of pivotal leaders and courageous students have also contributed to the racial barrier-breaking events that factor into Yancey County's history. Such occasions include the granddaughter of Seleia Griffith, the woman who spearheaded the battle for integration, becoming the county's first African American teacher in 1994 and the election of Shirley Whiteside's son as a member of the Board of Education. Whiteside was one of the first students to integrate the high schools.

As evidenced throughout this thesis, the absence of documentation of civil rights in Appalachia leads to misconceptions. The purpose of this work is to not only tell the untold story of integration in Yancey County, but to also shed light on the fact that, contrary to popular belief, Appalachia is not that exceptional. Black Appalachians have a deep-rooted history in the region. Their contributions to the region's rich culture are often overlooked. The story told within these pages aims to educate readers and expose them to a frequently neglected narrative.

Chapter 2. Review of Literature

Introduction

Integration in rural Yancey County, North Carolina is one of the countless success stories often overshadowed by national civil rights campaigns. While no significant amount of literature has been devoted to this specific account, resources pertaining to the various facets of the movement have provided the information necessary to develop a deeper understanding of the events that occurred in this small mountain community in western North Carolina. Sources pertaining to the elements of Jim Crow segregation, foreign policy during and following World War II, federal court rulings, white resistance, and theoretical explanations of group solidarity add to the analysis of the efforts to achieve social equality made by African American families in Yancey County. These references provide broader context to situate the Yancey County events and contribute to the general knowledge of civil rights in America during the 1950s and 1960s.

Segregation – Its Impact on African Americans

Segregation in the United States had devastating effects on African American populations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It has been linked to generational poverty and kept many blacks bereft of democratic rights and opportunities (Dudziak, 1988; Treanor, 2003). Based on the myth of racial superiority, the ultimate goals of *de jure* segregation, particularly in the American South, were to "place a badge" of inferiority upon those who were segregated, to set the segregated apart so that they could

be treated as inferior, and to make the segregated believe that they were, in fact, inferior (Mays, 2003:46). The conception that the legalization of segregation could control African American uprisings against racial oppression seemed plausible to white segregationists. In conjunction with segregation, lynching, murders and various other forms of violence were used as fear tactics, methods of intimidation to put blacks in their "proper place within society" and redeem the South from the threat of black domination (Dierenfield, 2004).

Following the Civil War, the consternation among whites that a mass of African Americans would soon permeate mainstream society served as impetus for the creation and implementation of "Black Codes," regulations that prohibited miscegenation, ownership of guns or property, the right to testify in court, and attendance in white schools (Dierenfield, 2004:8). The common view held was that "white men must continue to rule in the South; to this end, a series of Black Codes were enacted in 1865 and 1866 which clearly and deliberately regulated the Negro to a second-class citizenship" (Trelease, 1995: xxiii). To ensure the security of a racial hierarchy, southern states exploited African Americans, employing stereotypes to further separate the races. As noted by historian Bruce Dierenfield (2004), images of "big-lipped, watermelon eating, crazed rapists" relayed the message that blacks were subhuman and permitted disrespectful interactions between whites and their minority neighbors (p.8). But the misrepresentation of African Americans was not enough; southern whites imposed legal inferiority further with modifications to the Constitution.

Although the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution ended slavery, granted equal protection of laws to both races, and provided

suffrage to black males, efforts to thwart full citizenship to African Americans continued throughout the nineteenth century (Dierenfield, 2004; Karson, 2005). Legal segregation or Jim Crow segregation, as it became known, began with the railroad system, ejecting blacks from first-class rail cars and moving them to smoky "Negro" cars. Jim Crow laws eventually extended to streetcars and other facets of public life further separating African Americans from whites (K. Lewis, 2009; Painter, 2006). The *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling of 1896 subverted the Fourteenth Amendment and sanctioned the segregation of facilities with the "separate but equal" doctrine (Dierenfiled, 2004: 9). Dierenfield (2004) concluded that southern whites generally felt that the removal of blacks from aspects of public society, such as schools and politics, would improve race relations, yet keep African Americans in their place as second-class citizens. The claim that segregation would ameliorate racial discrimination was, ostensibly, a result of ignorance and fear. Whites demanded respect from blacks but were never expected to reciprocate. Blacks were prohibited from interacting with their white counterparts out of the fear that the lines of social mores may be crossed; however, whites could "mix" with blacks whenever they wanted (Dierenfield, 2004:8). It was apparent that Black Codes were implemented to abate the discomfort and fear felt by whites, not to amend or refine race relations.

State constitutions facilitated the alienation of African Americans on the local level by appealing regulations that previously allowed for black social freedoms granted after Emancipation and Reconstruction. In North Carolina, African Americans were often "passed over" as candidates for public office and by 1900 were excluded from state political conventions (McKinney, 2001:211). Historian Gordon McKinney (2001) added further that states across the South, North Carolina included, made "increasing moves

towards segregation within the Republican party" and that mountain Republicans became "enthusiastic of segregation in churches, schools, public facilities, and public transportation" (p.211). Efforts to reduce black participation in society grew rapidly across the entire state. The idea that racial segregation was legally valid and morally right had embedded itself in the minds of countless southern whites (Karson, 2005). As a result, oppression of African Americans persisted.

Oppression and the Effects of Educational Segregation

Sociologist Aldon Morris (1984), considered segregation a "personal form of oppression that severely restricted the physical movement, behavioral choices and experiences of the individual" (p.3). However, by most white standards, segregation was not considered oppressive. Rather, it offered a "progressive legal arrangement that allowed African Americans and whites to co-exist peacefully" (Walker, 2009:56). Professor of law Anders Walker (2009) explained how "massive construction programs" worked to build new schools for African Americans in the hopes that they would voluntarily segregate. Whites considered this an agreeable arrangement for both blacks and whites.

Yet, the notion that any form of segregation would help the two groups achieve a peaceful co-existence was, of course, a one-sided and naïve belief held by whites. In essence, it imposed just another form of ill treatment on blacks. Brazilian educator and pedagogical theorist, Paulo Friere (1970:47), contested that the oppressed, or in this case, blacks, internalized the image of the oppressor and therefore, became fearful of freedom. Albeit far from fear of liberation or the misleading truth that Jim Crow laws were impenetrable, many blacks dealt with oppression by staying out of the way and acting

like “good negroes” or ‘Sambos’ (Dierenfield, 2004:9). The implementation of “separate but equal” practices intensified second-class statuses and placed blacks “behind a veil,” a thin barrier that created invisibility, especially in the area of public education (Gates, Jr. & Oliver, 1999; Painter 2006).

Historian Nell Irvin Painter (2006) posited that not only were southern schools unyieldingly segregated but also that white public schools received resources that enabled them to thrive, whereas black schools remained insufficiently funded. Due to the lack of black schools, Painter continued, many African American students had the option of leaving home for school or foregoing it all together. The scarcity of black schools inadvertently communicated the idea to white Southerners that African Americans did not need education (Painter, 2006:153). Of course, such a thought was inaccurate. One specific cultural value among African Americans is the importance of education. Historian Barry Malone (2008) stated that, “black [parents] viewed education for their children as a basic necessity; that, despite the fact that many parents lacked ‘formal schooling,’ education was held in high esteem (p.436). The value of education is deep rooted in African American culture and history and was “sought in every conceivable manner” (Caruthers, 2006; Kusimo, 2000:4). Education’s role in African American culture fueled early crusades to end segregation in southern public school systems. However, the poor conditions of black schools also motivated the need for change. Barbara A. Patrick (2008) calculated that, “in most major cities, there was only one public school for blacks compared with four public schools for whites; the lack of schools caused major overcrowding problems, especially in the South” (p.259).

Attorney Thurgood Marshall declared school segregation morally wrong, and made great efforts to expose its injurious effects to the American people by reminding them of the moral principle behind the Constitution arguing that “black students possessed the same abilities as white students (Dierenfield, 2004:21; Karson, 2005). Dierenfield (2004) and civil rights writer, Jill Karson (2005), reinforced Marshall’s segregation argument with the explanation that African American students felt inferior in segregated schools and that successful learning in such environments was extremely difficult. They believed that harm was done to an individual when they became aware of status differences within society, and that for many black children this began in their earliest years. But to southern whites, black inferiority was a goal, so, despite efforts to sway politicians and supporters of segregation, southern states failed to be moved and continued the practice of dual citizenship well into the twentieth century. The affects of World War II and the Cold War, however, would later impact political views on segregation and essentially pave the way to social change.

Foreign Policy and the Build Up to Brown

Racial oppression greatly influenced the way in which political allies viewed the United States. As American soldiers fought for democracy in the trenches during World War II, blacks struggled on the home front with issues of equality and discrimination. Sociologists Guy Johnson and Richard Simpson (1956) pointed out that with the separate but equal mentality, “Negroes were nowhere powerful enough to offer effective resistance to their subordination” (p.327). In support of this statement, law professor Mary Dudziak (1988:233) argues that foreign policy initially played a crucial role in black social movements in America; more specifically, international propaganda on

racism in the United States affected not only foreign policy but also President Truman's stand on civil rights for blacks. As a result, he took great steps toward racial equality, forming the Committee on Civil Rights in 1947 (Dierenfeild, 2004). America was severely scrutinized for its racism; to assuage censure, the President ended segregation in the military, recommended a swift federal end to racial violence and barriers to voting, and prohibited job discrimination within the federal government (Dierenfield, 2004; Dudziak, 1988). This criticism led to the belief that racial discrimination and oppression was "un American."

After WWII, America found itself in competition with the Soviet Union for the allegiance of "darker-skinned" peoples of the Third World. This political rivalry, so to speak, essentially culminated in the widespread realization of the necessity of civil rights. In the words of Dierenfield (2004), "the post-war society spawned a reaction that pulled many idealistic young people to a cause larger than themselves." With time and continuous efforts made by locals, court cases opposing school segregation began to surface. In 1954, one of the most significant court rulings pertaining to education and racial oppression deemed school segregation unlawful. *Brown v. Board of Education* passed, but not necessarily out of the best interest of blacks. Rather, it was essentially ratified for the sanctity of American democracy (Dudziak, 1988; Verney 2006).

Brown v. Board of Education and White Resistance

Although foreign policy played a factor in the passing of *Brown v. Board*, the postwar civil rights movement continued to pose as a struggle for democratic rights (Dudziak, 1988; Verney, 2006). On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that, "in the field of education, 'separate but equal' had no place" (Finkelman, 2009:1). Complaints

that black children were forced to travel long distances to inferior schools while white students were bused shorter distances to superior facilities helped influence the overall decision. However, the ruling did not overturn *Plessy v. Ferguson,* as Chief Justice Earl Warren emphasized (Finkelman, 2009; Painter, 2006). Southern states still held the right to maintain segregated public transportation and facilities. The government had done its job and any residual racism could be blamed on the Ku Klux Klan and the "crazies" (Dudziak, 1988:234).

In contrast to Dudziak (1988), communication studies professor Kate Willink (2009) and sociologist Ray Rist (1978) followed a more optimistic approach to *Brown.* Willink (2009) described the decision as a "catalyst for social change" (p.1). Rist (1978) reached a similar conclusion expressing that it was a major effort in the transformation from "discriminatory dual systems to a single educational system" (p.261). However, the immediate implementation of integration failed to occur. Many thought that blacks would suddenly be able to attend white schools of their choice and finally have access to better facilities; *Brown* was to "set the modern stage for the building of an America which fulfills its promise of equality" (Karson, 2005: 106). As civil rights leader Julius Chambers (as cited in Karson, 2005) wrote, "the law had been announced and now people would have to obey it" (p.106-107). But not all obeyed.

Outraged by the 1954 Supreme Court ruling, the dominant white population countered with resistance to control the seemingly weaker minority (Cook, 2003). Segregationists, white supremacists, and politicians organized massive resistance against desegregation and declared *Brown* "null and void" (Dierenfield, 2004; Karson, 2005). Many whites in the South believed that desegregation encouraged intermingling between

"impressionable young students and would result in inter-racial sexual relations" (G. Lewis, 2006:11). The ongoing concern of black dominance was another reason behind massive resistance and fear tactics used in opposition to blacks (Cook, 2003; Day, 1963). To fight the system and avoid interracial interaction, southern states cut off aid to desegregated schools, empowered governors to shut down facilities and offered tuition to white students so that they could attend private institutions (Dierenfield, 2004: 24). Dierenfield (2004) noted that the federal court system allowed such efforts to continue for one year before it passed what was known as *Brown II,* an order that required local schools to comply with desegregation with "all deliberate speed." Despite the ruling on *Brown II,* massive resistance did not subside.

Political reactions to *Brown* in North Carolina resulted in legislation that prolonged segregation in public schools. Historian Karl E. Campbell (2006) explained that the state "did not rely on overt racist demagoguery or direct defiance of federal authority" (p.926). The guileful tactics used by state politicians garnered the nickname, "The Carolina Way" (Campbell, 2006:926). Three months after the *Brown* decision, governor William Bradley Umstead formed a special committee to analyze the ruling and develop a plan to deal with the new law. He appointed a nineteen-member committee to work out a program that would "preserve the state public school system by having the support of the people, a policy designated as being geographically representative of the citizenry" (Lefler & Newsome, 1973:687; Peebles-Wilkins 1987:113).

Shortly after the establishment of the board, Umstead passed away, leaving Lieutenant Governor Luther H. Hodges in power. Following Umstead's death, the committee he appointed concluded that, "the mixing of races forthwith in the public

schools throughout the state cannot be accomplished and should not be attempted" (Peebles-Wilkins, 1987:113). Historians Hugh Lefler and Albert Newsome (1973), sociologist Wilma Peebles-Wilkins (1987), and historian Sarah Thuesen (2006) explained that the decision made by the committee allowed for local control of student assignments in schools.

The committee, which was comprised of sixteen white men and three black men, communicated that because desegregation, or the "mixing of races," was not widely accepted by state citizens, it threatened the support of public schools in North Carolina to the point that they could not function properly. To avoid alienation, Governor Hodges decided that state public institutions would continue racial segregation for the 1954-1955 school year (Peebles-Wilkins, 1987; Thuesen, 2006). In 1955, the state General Assembly passed a law that, "transferred responsibility for pupil assignment, enrollment and transportation from the State Department of Education to the individual county and city boards of education" (Campbell, 2006:926). The legislation became known as the Pupil Assignment Act. That same year Hodges named his own committee to discuss education. Serving as chair, state senator Thomas Pearsall joined forces with six additional members: two additional state senators, two state representatives and two representatives from citizenry (Peebles-Wilkins, 1987:113). All seven men were white. After a special meeting with the General Assembly, the group, which later became known as the Pearsall Committee, worked to amend Article IX (Education) of the state constitution to include the "Pearsall Plan" (Lefler & Newsome, 1973:689).

The Pearsall Plan, according to Thuesen (2006), "included an amendment to the Compulsory School Attendance Law that excused students from attendance requirements

if they were assigned against their wishes to an integrated school and could claim no other public or private options" (p.873). Additional provisions were included in the plan to create a "safety valve" for parents who did not want to integrate their children with other races (Lefler & Newsome, 1973; Thuesen, 2006). Peebles-Wilkins (1987) further identified these features; the first was a local option provision, which "permitted the suspended operation of public schools by popular vote of the local community if school conditions were deemed intolerable" (p.114). The second included "educational expense grants to private schools for children whose parents objected to integration," whereas the third, as mentioned above, repealed school attendance requirements when a "segregated school experience was not immediately available to those objecting desegregation" (Peebles-Wilkins, 1987:114). The plan passed in 1956.

Other popular methods of state resistance to integration included massive school construction programs for black institutions. State officials in the South continued to maintain dual school systems in the hopes that African American parents would voluntarily segregate and opt to send their children to the newly improved black schools rather than white ones (Walker, 2009). Historian Mark Newman (2004) said that, due to strong massive resistance, the promise of *Brown* remained unfulfilled in the South (p.61). *Brown* and *Brown II* had their shortcomings, as they failed to swiftly integrate southern schools; however, the rulings did end legal segregation in public schools and "deprived it of its moral validity," as well as contribute a great deal to what would unfold as the civil rights movement (Dierenfield, 2004: 28; Rist, 1978). In spite of the fact that massive resistance had stymied much of the civil rights movement in the early 1950s, by 1955,

blacks began to step out of the shadows and moved towards campaigns of independence and equality (Newman, 2004; Treanor, 2003:127).

Social Movements of Resistance

Brown's ultimate goal was to desegregate public schools throughout the United States. Historian Raymond Wolters (2008:3) defines desegregation as the "disestablishment of segregation." To some whites, desegregation was believed to help blacks "shed" feelings of inferiority (Kusimo, 2000; Wolters, 2008:57). However, as mentioned earlier, racial inferiority did not disappear overnight, nor did white sentiment change drastically. While border-states, such as Kentucky, Maryland and Missouri, implemented desegregation almost immediately and "opened the doors for black students," the Deep South and Black Belt states worked to delay integration by using continued methods of massive resistance (Karson, 2005:86; Kusimo, 2000; Newman, 2004).

Delayed implementation of *Brown*, exclusion from most political systems, and racial violence in the mid twentieth century served as the impetus for direct action in social change (Newman, 2004). But it was the brutal murder of an adolescent Chicagoan in Money, Mississippi that sparked uproar among African Americans in the U.S. The national attention placed on the lynching of Emmett Till created frenzy; no longer would blacks wait for justice from courts to enforce equality, they would take matters into their own hands (Dierenfield, 2004). Several months after Till's death, activist Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat to a white passenger. Her protest and arrest inspired a bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, a mode of resistance that lasted over a year (Karson, 2005).

The significant events based around Emmett Till and Rosa Parks occurred one year after the *Brown* ruling (Byrne, 2005). Influenced by these monumental incidents, black citizens sought access to public accommodations and equal facilities (Kusimo, 2000; Proudfoot, 1990). Cutting edge adult educational centers, such as the Highlander Folk School in eastern Tennessee, accommodated these desires and developed integrated educational seminars to encourage and strengthen the efforts to achieve civil rights (Glen, 1988; Horton, 1989). Just as Willink (2009) viewed *Brown*, historian John Glen (1988:1) considered Highlander a "catalyst for action" against racial injustice. The revolutionary center fostered the planning and implementation of direct action to accompany education (Horton, 1989). The school developed workshops to "empower community organizers working on adult education, voter registration and civic participation" (Harris, Jr. & Terborg-Penn 2006). Short-term strategies rarely enhanced the experiences and opportunities of minorities, especially children; change required sensitivity to southern culture but also commitment to transforming it (Glen, 1988; Rist, 1978). Highlander not only recognized this notion but epitomized it.

Blacks interested in social change in the South inevitably gravitated to a "protest community, where they hoped to find solutions to their problems" (Morris, 1984:x). Resistance often translated to nonviolent boycotts and sit-ins. Clergyman Merrill Proudfoot (1990:ix) explained the purpose of sit-ins as a means to obtain access to American society: "This method of protest dramatically symbolized the injustice of denying [blacks] that access" (Proudfoot, 1990:ix). Despite the intentions of sit-ins and protests, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was apprehensive about direct action because it penetrated very few arenas in the South

(Newman, 2004; Proudfoot, 1990). Nonetheless, black populations continued to fight together for the common goal of racial equality.

Building Solidarity for Change

Marcus Garvey emphasized the importance of racial solidarity in the 1920s as a way to overcome oppression. Identifying with "blackness," as an individual and as a group, was vital in obtaining *complete* American citizenship (Farmer, 2003). W.E.B. Du Bois believed that African Americans needed to strive for "race organization, race solidarity, and race unity" (Gates, Jr. & Oliver, 1999:181). Unity and ethnic cohesiveness, Farmer (2003:173) noted, were important in achieving the ultimate goal of equality. However, he added that individualism and self-realization must precede groupism (Farmer, 2003). Professor of philosophy Lucius Outlaw, Jr. (2005), supported this argument stating that ethnocentrism set the foundation for the comprehension of group relations. Regarding civil rights in America, some believed race was the "primary vehicle for conceptualizing and organizing group differences" (Outlaw, 2005:83).

Whether individually or in a group, blacks throughout America collectively experienced the stresses and strains tied to the denial of equality in education and democracy. Collective identity, as emphasized by Vera M. Green in *Persistent Peoples* (1981:70), was what constituted an enduring people such as black Americans. Social movements, essentially, arose in response to severe disruptions within a system and were based on public and private harassment encountered by enduring people (Button, 1989:13; Green, 1981:77). Such movements, triggered by social tension, were ostensibly executed with collective action.

Theoretical Explanations of Collective Behavior and Resource Mobilization

The theory of classical collective behavior helps to explain collective action. Social movements were motivated by the need to ameliorate psychological tensions (Button, 1989). In other words, Button (1989:13) suggested that any group was capable of “exercising influence through normal institutionalized means.” However, collective actions manipulated through a collective behavior model were rarely rational and often quite spontaneous and disorganized. In Killian, American sociologist Herbert Blumer defined the idea as “behavior that arises spontaneously and is not due to pre-established understandings or traditions” (Killian, 1984:779). Proudfoot (1990) confirms this ideology with remarks on the spontaneity centered in the 1960 sit-in in Greensboro, North Carolina. Sociologist Lewis Killian (1984) further argued that some scholars found the “uniform nature of demonstrations, such as sit-ins, well developed within southern black institutions” (p.776). Aldon Morris discovered that movement participants were ‘rational actors’ working intentionally to achieve their goals and that collective action was rooted in pre-existing organizational structure (Killian, 1984:771). Morris (1984:275) essentially found no congruence with collective behavior and civil rights. Rather, the success of much of the social movement was based on the connection with external resources.

However, the resource mobilization theory denoted tactical responses to “closed political systems” (Button, 1989; Morris, 1984). Outside sources that were available to an out-group were the means that “gave rise to social movements” (Button, 1989:14). This theoretical approach acknowledges churches, NAACP chapters and other institutions as initiators of change. Sociologist Ann Swidler analyzed cultural theory in juxtaposition to

resource mobilization and posited that, "components of culture are not the mechanisms by which end results are explained, but more appropriately are the means to processes that bring about desired results; that culture is expected to provide the impetus and meaning for these processes and undergird resource mobilization" (Barnes, 2005: 968). In his contrast of both the collective behavior and resource mobilization theories, political scientist James Button (1989:14) criticized resource mobilization the most, stating that, "it emphasizes the external and de-emphasizes the function of the internal." Sociologist Sandra Barnes (2005) supported this statement; she identified culture as a tool used by people to pinpoint issues and challenges. With culture, Barnes continued, groups could make sense out of those issues and formulate strategies to address them; it connected internal groups to community tools. Newman, on the other hand, argued that internal weaknesses were problematic and partly responsible for the limited progress civil rights witnessed in the late 1950s (Newman, 2004:59).

Major external resources and national leaders, such as Martin Luther King, Jr., of Birmingham, represented the movement yet overshadowed local participants in the process (Harris & Terborg-Penn, 2006). Historian Steven F. Lawson believed national leaders played the most important role in civil rights (Karson 2005). He considered the tandem work of the federal government and national organizations a major component in the defeat of state governments that imposed second-class statuses onto blacks (Karson, 2005:183). Civil rights scholar Adam Mack agreed with Morris and black Appalachian scholar Edward J. Cabbell, arguing that the grassroots efforts were the most influential (Karson, 2005). The civil rights movement "would not have accomplished anything if not for the local people who took to the streets and challenged Jim Crow"

(Karson, 2005:178). Campaigns like the Montgomery Bus Boycott, inspired by Rosa Parks, or sit-ins at local restaurants illustrated the "growing power of grassroots movements" but also proved that in order to achieve civil liberties and overcome white opposition to equality, the federal government had to intervene (Karson, 2005:187).

Southern Appalachia and the Road to Civil Rights

The dearth in scholarship pertaining to rural civil rights movements is overwhelming, particularly in southern Appalachia. Understudied are the oral histories that illuminate desegregation in small communities in southern Appalachia (Willink, 2009; Yancey History Association, 1993). As early as 1950, people of the Appalachian town, Clinton, Tennessee, filed legal suits against school segregation laws (Biggers, 2006:187). In 1958, parents in Burnsville, North Carolina sued the state after being denied equal educational opportunities (Bailey, 2005). Such instances dispute Johnson and Simpson's (1956) ideology that rural blacks were the least likely to push for desegregation in school systems. Further, these specific accounts debunk the myth that civil rights never reached the Appalachian Mountains and that African Americans were more or less absent from the region (Turner & Cabbell, 1985; Yancey History Association, 1993).

One of the explanations why Appalachia has maintained an image of "ethnic-homogeneity" is because minority groups have received little attention in regards to their place in regional history and culture (Beaver & Lewis, 1998:51). Following the Civil War, national interests in mountain people were piqued by their appearance in popular magazines. Local color writers turned their attention to the "depravity and viciousness of the mountaineers: moonshining, feuding, bushwhacking, inbreeding, and indiscriminate

violence became important themes" (Batteau, 1990:57). Outlandish negative stereotypes continued well into the mid-twentieth century, caricatured by media and television productions such as the *Beverly Hillbillies*, *Green Acres*, and *Hee Haw* (Branscome, 1978). In *Colonialism in America: The Appalachian Case,* James Branscome (1978) argued that, "if there were similar programs even approaching the maliciousness of these broadcasts on Blacks, Indians, or Chicanos, there would be immediate public outcry from every liberal organization and politician in the country" (p. 211). The stigmas attached to Appalachia not only conveyed negative images of mountain people, but also completely omitted the region's diversity. To many, Appalachia consisted solely of white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants, and was devoid of any ethnicity found outside of the British Isles. Of course, this slant is inaccurate. Of the various racial groups in Appalachia, African Americans are one of the more prominent groups often disregarded in regional history and cultural development.

Africans first came to Appalachia in the mid 1500s as slaves to French and Spanish explorers such as Hernando de Soto and Juan Pardo. Several of these slaves escaped and retreated to native territories in the mountains, assuring their survival (Turner & Cabbell, 1985). Essentially, many of the first blacks in Appalachia lived among the Cherokee. Blacks took refuge among the indigenous peoples. Historian Theda Perdue (1985) found it probable that the Cherokee did not initially distinguish racial differences between Africans and Europeans but were able to see that the Europeans found the Africans inferior. However, sociologist Wilma Dunaway (2003b: 17) added that, despite the fact that the Cherokee themselves were captured and used as slaves in the early eighteenth century, the development of the European market established Cherokee

involvement in the trading and owning of slaves. In many instances the military status of a young Cherokee boy relied on the number of slaves he traded or retrieved by thwarting efforts by runaways (Dunaway, 2003b).

The Atlantic slave trade in the eighteenth century brought a second wave of Africans to Appalachia. Although academically overlooked in the mountain south, slavery flourished amid non-slaveholding majorities and poor landless whites. Mountain elites, a socio-economic minority in Southern Appalachia, utilized slave labor for agricultural and non-agricultural production. Slaves worked in the timber industries, salt, iron, and coalmines, and even in tourist resorts across the mountain South (Dunaway, 2003; Inscoe, 1989; R. Lewis, 1979). Theories of slave treatment vary in scholarly discourse, yet negative racial attitudes cannot be denied. Historian John C. Inscoe (1989) argued that due to the low-density population of slaves in Southern Appalachia, and in western North Carolina specifically, the handling of slave laborers in Appalachia appeared less harsh than the treatment in the plantation south. Distance from the Deep South fostered leniency and a sense of autonomy; slaves experienced closer ties to masters in Appalachia and were given more responsibility (Inscoe 1985, 1989).

A majority of Dunaway's (2003b) work contested the notion of "relaxed" slavery in the mountain South. Her argument centered on the idea that smaller slave populations were not conducive to leniency; that deviant behavior resulted in whippings and beatings more severe than those that occurred on large plantations. Nonetheless, both Dunaway (2003a) and Inscoe (1989) concluded that the peculiar institution did influence Appalachian culture. Yet documentation of the dimensions of inequality among blacks and whites in Appalachia have been neglected; the subject of race relations is "often

viewed from a folkloristic standpoint rather than that of serious research" (Stanfield, 1985: 134). John H. Stanfield (1985: 136) noted further that when slavery and race relations are expressed in scholarly literature, the inclination is to portray and generalize master/slave, black/white relationships in a somewhat positive light, euphemizing racial attitudes and failing to explain the realities of race related ideologies in Appalachia.

In both slavery and freedom, blacks have been stereotyped as lazy yet wily; they are superstitious, with beliefs in witches and spirits. They are considered "an immoral race in which illegitimacy is not uncommon… an inferior class which seems to cower in subordination when talking to whites" (Klotter, 1985:51). Throughout the Reconstruction era and into the 1930s, race relations did not change significantly in the South. Attitudes towards blacks seemed to depend heavily on behavior. That is, if blacks were subordinate, minded their own business or performed the occasional good deed, they were seen as respectable. Blacks were not looked upon so favorably if their behavior appeared deviant. Building on historian James Klotter's argument, historians W. Fitzhugh Brundage (2001) and Allen Trelease (1995) noted that whites did not tolerate conspicuous behavior. In many cases illnesses such as alcoholism and mania were blamed for much of the aberrant behavior of blacks. Offensive or disagreeable behavior exhibited by blacks justified brutality "in the eyes of whites" (Trelease, 1995: xliii). Deviant behavior from all races was an impetus for disrespect, as can be seen from the lynchings that occurred in Southern Appalachia from Reconstruction to World War II. Both whites and blacks were lynched by mobs in response to whatever heinous crimes for which they had been accused. However, the common practice after lynching blacks was to shoot at and mutilate the bodies (Brundage, 2001). With racial violence and adverse

attitudes towards ethnic diversity found throughout Southern Appalachia it is easy to generalize race related biases.

Just as with slavery in antebellum Appalachia, race relations in the late nineteenth and early to mid twentieth centuries have, to an extent, been sugar coated. Robert Frazier (1942) claimed in his undergraduate thesis that there was less segregation in the mountains than elsewhere in the South. However, documentations of segregation in coal camp towns, Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps, and state parks, such as the Shenandoah National Park and Blue Ridge Parkway, located in Virginia and North Carolina, proved otherwise (Jones, 2009; R. Lewis, 2004b; Shifflett, 2000). Historian Crandall Shifflett (2000:60) contended that, "racism and nativism were familiar residents in the coal towns, regardless of location in the southern Appalachian fields. Segregation in housing areas was common as were derogatory terms used by white miners to identify those separate areas. Epithets such as "Colored" or "Niggertown," or "Hunky" or "Hunkytown" were used in reference to African American and Hungarian residences, respectively (R. Lewis, 2004a; Shifflett, 2000).

Segregation found its way into federal aid programs, as well. In the 1930s, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt established the New Deal and implemented work programs for the unemployed. One of these programs was the Civilian Conservation Corps, a plan of action that "put young men from ages 18 to 25 to work with public funds on conservation projects such as landscaping, forest culture, flood control, wildlife, and soil conservation" (Jones, 2009:14). The CCC helped build several national parks in the country; the Blue Ridge Parkway was one of these. Although African Americans served in the CCC, they worked in segregated units and lived in separate camps (Jones, 2009).

Following the completion of the Parkway, provisions were made to segregate parks, picnic areas, camping grounds and even comfort stations. As explained by Blue Ridge Parkway researcher Rebecca Jones (2009), most of the parks along the "scenic highway" were designated for whites only; however, accommodations were made for African Americans as certain parks held "colored only" designations.

Racial discrimination and segregation in public facilities, restaurants, stores, and various work environments also persisted in parts of Appalachia. Literary critic Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (1994), a native of Piedmont West Virginia, recalled black VFWs and "colored" Legions in his hometown. Mineral industries in western North Carolina remained segregated, as blacks were not hired by some of the operators (Anglin, 2002). Prejudices, ostensibly, emanated from the home. In interviews with elderly African Americans in and around the mountain south, folklorist Patrick Mullen (1992) found that interviewees realized that "skin color mattered in the social world" (Mullen, 1992:33). Other participants in Mullen's (1992) folklore project concluded that racial animosities were held by parents, and usually not by innocent children: "children could play together but their parents could not" (p. 64). Children, however, were not spared the effects of racial division. While segregation persisted in public places across the mountain south, its greatest effect was, perhaps, on education.

Education in Southern Appalachia

School systems in Appalachia lacked the ability to completely and effectively teach fundamentals compared to the rest of the country (Thomas, n.d). According to James Ogletree's case study of Appalachian education (1974), "schools reflected social-political-economic structures of society which create and maintain them" (p.169). The

responsibility of school financing oftentimes fell on the shoulders of local residents (Ogletree, 1974:172). Ogletree (1974) concluded that salaries in poorer Appalachian counties were not enough to provide the support needed to run formally organized schools. Therefore, many Appalachian schools in the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries were bereft of sufficient resources.

Following the Civil War, educational opportunities for blacks in western North Carolina, and the South in general, were very poor. In response to the situation, missionaries came to Appalachia during Reconstruction to establish schools and "enlighten" newly freed blacks (Ostwalt & Pollitt, 2001:237). In the late 1800s, Connecticut nurse and Christian proselytizer, Emily Prudden, made her way south to the war-torn Carolinas to provide education for newly freed blacks. Dissatisfied with initial efforts in South Carolina, Prudden eventually made her way to western North Carolina. It was in the town of Elk Park that she inconspicuously purchased several acres of land to establish a school for local blacks. The property sat on top of a big hill overlooking the hamlet. Once town members discovered Prudden's intentions for purchasing the four acres, tempers flew and an angry mob eventually forced her out of what was then Mitchell County (Ostwalt & Pollitt, 2001:239). However, Prudden and what would become known as the Salem School in Elk Park, North Carolina, persevered and educated local African Americans until 1912.

Prior to 1900 it was believed that blacks could not be educated and that the taxes whites paid should not be spent on such a purpose (Lefler & Newsome, 1973; Parker, 1975). Teaching blacks to read and write was viewed as criminal. Appalachian scholar David Whisnant (1983) noted how many whites believed that blacks should work in

agriculture and should therefore be educated accordingly. Former slave owners often made remarks expressing this opinion stating that, "since the negro is not far enough from nature to live in cities and towns he should be trained for agriculture work by industrial schools" (Whisnant, 1983:72). In other words, blacks were only capable of agrarian work and incapable of becoming civilized.

Educator Booker Taliaferro Washington used this widely held opinion to his advantage. Founder of the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, Washington believed the best way for the black race to advance economically and socially was through the education and training in basic trades; industrial education needed to come first (Moore, 2003: 61-62; Smock, 2009: 3). Washington was born into slavery and worked in the Kanawha Saline Mines as a young boy. Education, he believed, was his way out of the mines. The Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute was where Washington escaped. Hampton had two basic missions, the first was to help students become teachers and the second was to prepare them for a life of agricultural pursuits and business skills necessary for success (Smock, 2009: 43). Washington's experience at the Hampton Institute had a strong influence on his pedagogical beliefs and methodology at Tuskegee. Agricultural training provided useful skills for everyone and catered to the idea that industrial instruction was the only way most blacks could afford any kind of education (Smock, 2009: 76). However, not all black educators agreed with Washington.

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois emerged as one of Washington's biggest critics. Educated at Harvard, Du Bois believed in higher education and the "Talented Tenth." In the midst of a Tuskegee-obsessed America, Du Bois countered the idea that industrial education was the answer. Rather, it was apparent to Du Bois that it was

necessary to make the black race one of power and thought, a goal attained through higher education; consequently, the most promising of students must be selected (Aptheker, 1973: 14). These exceptional pupils, or the Talented Tenth, would continue to teach other blacks, creating a culture of thinkers and leaders and provide more opportunities for improvement (Aptheker, 1973: 5; Moore, 2003: 62). It was this ideology that added to the white concern over black dominance.

Du Bois referred to the angst as "The Great Fear." He explained this phenomenon as the time when:

> A human being becomes suddenly conscious of the tremendous powers lying latent within him, when from the puzzled contemplation of a half-known self, he rises to the powerful assertion of a self, conscious of its might, then there is loosed upon the world the possibilities of good or of evil that make men pause. When this occurs in a case of class or race people react (fear or rejoice) the way in which they have been 'trained' to react or contemplate change (Du Bois quoted in Aptheker, 1973: 8).

The Great Fear fueled white resistance to black education, but Du Bois stood firm in his beliefs. And although their approaches to education differed, Du Bois and Washington were not outstandingly disparate. According to historian Jacqueline Moore (2003), the two leaders differed in the emphasis placed on each method (p. 61). Both men acknowledged the fact that the other's formula was suitable for some blacks. In other words, Du Bois agreed that industrial training worked best for some blacks, and Washington agreed that higher education benefited certain students (Moore, 2003: 61). Despite the fact that Du Bois was a strong supporter of women's rights and suffrage, his

overall purpose seemed to be to empower the black man and put him in a position to succeed (Moore, 2003; 131). Although admirable and important, this approach excluded women, as pointed out by Anna Julia Cooper.

Cooper, who was an African American teacher in Washington, D.C. in the early 1900s, countered the commonly held belief that women needed less education than men (Keller, 1999: 53). She valued classical studies but believed that women had to work harder for education. The popular belief, held primarily by men, was that women did not require the equal amount of schooling as men. All a woman needed was to find a husband with enough education to support his family. Cooper took the Du Bois approach to education and championed the inclusion of classical studies in higher education for both men and women (Keller, 1999). As principal of the college prep M Street Colored High School in Washington, D.C., Cooper pursued educational opportunities for all black people. But opportunities were more prevalent in the North. Established black schools in the South were few and far between.

Historian Mary S. Hoffschwelle (2006) acknowledged that blacks fought against the notion that they were only capable of agrarian work and, at the turn of the century, made efforts to focus on and improve African American schools in the South. This was partly accomplished through the installation of the philanthropic Rosenwald Schools. Discrimination and segregation laws essentially forced black education into churches, private homes and farm buildings; whites, on the other hand, started massive school construction campaigns in the early twentieth century (Hoffschwelle, 2006: 18). Successful businessman and Tuskegee trustee, Julius Rosenwald, was convinced by Booker T. Washington to support the construction of six new black schools in 1912.

Rosenwald was Jewish and could easily sympathize with other groups affected by discrimination and prejudices. However, he did not believe in political agitation as a means to obtain legal rights; rather, he felt the best was to achieve equality was through education. As stated in Hoffschwelle (2006), Rosenwald said, "too much injustice has been practiced against the negro… he needs education and a chance to earn a good living" (p. 29).

The purpose of the Rosenwald schools was to establish black education through a grassroots or ground-up process. Unfortunately, not all black schools received the same support as those associated with the Rosenwald Foundation. Throughout the first fifteen years of the twentieth century, whites continued to oppose taxation for black schools in North Carolina. Democrats found themselves with serious tax burdens as Republicans raised taxes after the Civil War to help pay off war debts and build new schools for blacks (Olson, 1983: 2). From the frustration of imposing taxes and the increasing fear of black uprisings fostered by education arose the staunch belief that blacks should be educated in the same way as whites, but should only be taught to work.

Ironically, white men taught the first black schools. It was not until the twentieth century that black teachers were allowed to teach in the segregated schools; however, these teachers were usually "local pastors or some black person with enough education to be certified by a county examiner" (Parker, 1975:30). Teachers were not the only resources lacking in the public education system in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Historians Jeffrey J. Crow, Paul D. Escott, and Flora S. Hatley (2002) validated Parker's findings with historical events significant to education in North Carolina. In 1907, the General Assembly gathered funds to support a statewide public education

system, yet it was not until 1910 that public black elementary schools received funding (Crow, Escott & Hatley, 2002). Crow, Escott and Hatley (2002) explained that in North Carolina, high school education for blacks was prohibited until 1918 when the first secondary schools for African Americans were established. Black high schools seemed hard to come by in the early twentieth century, especially in the western end of the state.

In most western North Carolina counties black high schools did not exist; however, those that did exist were located in urban centers such as Asheville. Two of the more prominent schools in Buncombe County were Stephens-Lee, a public institution, and the Allen School, an all-girls' high school specifically for African Americans. Stephens-Lee, formerly the Catholic Hill School, became a center for black culture and education in the mountains of western North Carolina (L. Davis, n.d.). Known for its art and music programs, the school held many concerts and social events for students and community members. The Allen School, although private, also served as an integral piece of black education in the twentieth century. Just as Davis championed Stephens-Lee for its contribution to educational opportunities for blacks, Jamie Butcher (2005) described Allen's attempt to create improvements. The Allen School not only reached out to local girls but to young women in surrounding areas as well (Butcher, 2005b). Students from counties across western North Carolina travelled significant distances to board at the Allen School until desegregation of local school systems occurred. Many of these local attempts, unfortunately, remain unknown to scholars, students, and the public alike.

Appalachia has often been popularized as a region comprised solely of white descendents of European settlers. Therefore, it is of little surprise that, although there exists a plethora of generalized resources based on race and community in America, very

few specialize in black Appalachia. A majority of the existing literature on African Americans in Appalachia concentrates on slavery and Antebellum Appalachia, the Civil War, Reconstruction and the out-migration from the Deep South to the coalfields of Central and Northern Appalachia. Civil rights movements, on the other hand, rarely receive mention. However, struggles for equality did exist in the mountain South.

The Highlander Research and Education Center advocated desegregation and established itself as a champion and model for racial equality. Highlander served as a meeting place for both black and white activists and allowed them to discuss, evaluate, and organize civil rights labor not only in the South but also in mountain communities (Biggers, 2006:187; Glen, 1988:1). Social resistance movements in Appalachia occurred in urban centers and rural locations alike.

Kate Willink (2009) concluded that the study of major national movements dominated the historiography of civil rights in America. This is certainly true for southern Appalachia. The first court ordered case of school desegregation in North Carolina was in the rural Appalachian town of Burnsville (Yancey History Association, 1993). The fact that the events in Yancey County are not known plainly exemplifies how national campaigns and leaders dominated the media. Nonetheless, parents in the black community took direct collective action to bring desegregation to the Yancey County schools, but the white political system resisted (Yancey History Association, 1993). Unwilling to back down, the black community sought external resources, successfully battled segregation, and ultimately initiated change in the rural county.

Researching Yancey County and School Desegregation

Located in the Toe River Valley and taken from parts of Burke and Buncombe Counties, Yancey County became a "complete political unit" in 1833 (Deyton, 1947; Sheppard, 1991:38). Local historian Jason Basil Deyton (1947) explained that the Toe River Valley is named for the tributary that flows through it, the Toe River. Toe is an abbreviation for the word *Estatoe.* According to legend, Estatoe was an Indian princess who lived in the valley. She fell madly in love with a warrior from the Watauga area. The couple tried to elope, but were overtaken by Estatoe's clansmen. The warrior was killed and she was taken back to her home. Overwhelmed with grief over the loss of her love, she threw herself into the river and drowned. From that day forth the river was called Estatoe (Deyton, 1947:437).

The Toe River runs through the entire valley, making its way to the Unaka Mountains in the west and on to the Nolichucky River after passing into Tennessee (Deyton, 1947:424). Spanish explorers in search of gold were the first Europeans to enter the valley. English and Scots-Irish settlers dependent on subsistence farming followed later (Beaver 1992; Deyton, 1947). Anthropologist Patricia Beaver (1992) and Toe River Valley in-migrant Muriel Sheppard (1991) both emphasized the importance of trade in the Toe River Valley, specifically Yancey County. Beaver (1992:12) argued that poor road conditions made the movement of exports, such as cattle and hogs, and imports, like coffee and sugar, difficult. Sheppard (1991:43) added that although the conditions appeared substandard, they still remained "typical mountain roads" and the constant travel kept them passable. Deyton's (1947) mention of the production of corn and wheat corroborates the use of slaves and the practice of intraregional trade as explained by

Dunaway (2003). Deyton also confirmed the existence of health resorts and tourist spas in the Toe River Valley and, more specifically, Burnsville, concurring with Inscoe's (1989) claim of non-agricultural slave labor in antebellum Appalachia. Timothy Silver's (2003) account of the Toe River Valley found, in accordance to Inscoe (1989), that although most residents farmed holdings no bigger than fifty acres, approximately 110 farmers in Yancey County worked tracts of one hundred acres or more (p.118).

Agriculture was not the only cash commodity in the Toe River Valley. Minerals such as kaolin, feldspar and mica were extracted, providing public work and wage labor for mountain families (Anglin, 2002: 37; Thomas, n.d.: 34; Sheppard, 1991). Yancey County native Monroe Thomas' (n.d.) manuscript, consistent with Sheppard (1991), explained that the emergence of the railroads allowed for the expansion of extractive industries in the valley, increased the local economy, and provided better internal and external communication, thus breaking Yancey County out of isolation (p.33). However, Dunaway (2003b) would dispute the last point made by Thomas (n.d.); Dunaway argues that Appalachian towns and villages were tied to global markets from the beginning of European settlement. Nonetheless, the development of open roads and railroad lines brought progress to the Toe River Valley, not only economically but also in education.

Burnsville, the county seat, obtained its name from the Captain Otway Burns, Commander of the Privateer *Snapdragon* in the War of 1812 (Sheppard, 1991:38). By 1836 the Yancey County courthouse was completed and political endeavors ensued. The establishment of Yancey County stemmed from the inconvenience experienced by county court members throughout the Toe River Valley. Deyton (1947) noted that members of the Buncombe County court, which lived in the Toe River Valley, often travelled forty

plus miles to attend sessions, a strange parallel to the burden black students faced more than a century later. With the newly formed county and courthouse, legislation on education eventually unfolded.

Prior to the Civil War, very little attention was paid to public education in Yancey County (Deyton, 1947). In the election of 1839, the vote was "against the state scheme of education, which was based on the principle of joint support by local taxation and by participation in the income of the State Literary Fund" (Deyton, 1947: 448). Funding for schools in many regards was seen as burdensome and it was not until 1844 that Yancey County participated in the state Literary Fund. By 1853, twenty-two schools were held in session, each term lasting two and a half months out of the year (Deyton, 1947: 448; Sheppard, 1991:43).

The first high school in Yancey County was called Bald Creek (Higgins, 1981:58). As taken from the *History and Geography of Yancey County* (1933), prior to the establishment of Bald Creek, high school sessions were held at the Burnsville Academy. Conditions at the academy proved too dangerous for students and so classes were moved to the courthouse (Higgins, 1981). Most schoolhouses in the early twentieth century were constructed from logs and rough lumber, contained wood stoves for heating, often inadequate heating, and lacked resources such as maps, books and pictures, and playgrounds (Thomas, n.d.: 30). The Baptist affiliated Yancey Collegiate Institute offered facilities for high school education in the early 1900s (Higgins, 1981). Thomas (n.d.) concluded that compared to both tax supported public schools and community backed subscription institutions, denominational facilities offered the best education (p.32). But not everyone could afford privately run academies.

In 1913, construction began on five new public high schools; however, they were never completed. According to Yancey County resident Jody Higgins (1981) the Collegiate Institute was eventually sold to the county board of education and became Burnsville High School; further, the management of public education was put into the hands of the school board and the county superintendent (p.58). It appeared that support for white public education in Yancey County was slowly growing, but not for blacks.

Racial tensions and discrimination emerged in the Toe River Valley as early as the twentieth century, as a great deal of this strain stemmed from job shortages (Anglin, 2002:143). Sheppard (1991) examined race-related violence in the 1930s and 1940s, recounting one particular incident involving an escaped black convict and an angry white mob. The narration suggested a slight fear of black dominance, disputing Newman's (2004) claim that small black populations posed less of a threat to whites. The native people "are willing to admit white 'furriners' into their country-within-a-country, but they have no intention of being colonized by colored people" (Sheppard, 1991:131). Just as railroads helped expand local economies, they also allowed for more diverse populations to make their way into the Toe River Valley.

Convict labor played a large role in the construction of Toe River Valley roads in the early 1900s. Many of the workers in the area, and Appalachia as a whole, were African American (R. Lewis, 2001; Sheppard, 1991). Sheppard (1991) noted that mountain whites "would almost rather not have the highway than let in the Negroes" (p.131). These sentiments explained the actions taken by a local white mob after a black convict escaped and allegedly attempted to assault two white women. Angered by the encounters, a group of white men tried to track down the fleeing convict. Unsuccessful,

the mob turned their focus to the other black laborers and road gangs staying in nearby convict camps (Sheppard, 1991;132-133). Sheppard (1991) concluded the story, pointing out that, despite violent attempts, the black workers left the valley unharmed. The escaped convict, however, was captured, tried, and executed in Raleigh.

Anthropologist Mary Anglin (2002) recounted a similar story of racial violence in the Toe River Valley, stating that, " the situation became so volatile that the prison crew was quickly transported out of the area and the National Guard dispatched to quell the ensuing riot" (p.143-144). Both Sheppard (1991) and Anglin (2002) verified bigotry and brutality expressed overtly towards African Americans in and around Yancey County. The presence of the Ku Klux Klan in Yancey County further corroborates Sheppard (1991) and Anglin's (2002) reports of racism. Klansmen were active in the 1920s and ostensibly made little effort to remain inconspicuous. Photos in the Yancey History Association's (1993) chronicle of Yancey County highlighted the participation of KKK members in the local sheriff's funeral. These suggested that ideologies of white supremacy had not only permeated the communities but also the public offices and political systems. Yancey County was not devoid of racism or race-related prejudices. However, not all peoples of the region felt negative sentiments towards minority races. There existed alternative communities that aimed to turn a blind eye to skin color.

The utopian community known as Celo saw racial discrimination in a different light. Located in the southern part of the Toe River Valley, the community was "started as an attempt to build an alternative way of life, to establish a more satisfying social and cultural milieu, Celo was one of a number of efforts to revitalize and reform America in the 1930s and 1940s" (Hicks, 2001:5). According to anthropologist George Hicks (2001),

utopian communities flourished in the early to mid twentieth century in reaction to "dissatisfaction with social and cultural arrangements" (p.23). Celo founder Arthur E. Morgan (1957) added that many families were drawn to alternative lifestyles because it provided their children with strong personal integrity, considerateness, and simplicity (p.1).

One of the many goals of Celo was to diminish racial discrimination in Yancey County. Hicks (2001) noted that the results of a 1950 survey favored an inter-racial community (p.144). In the summer of 1946, the community planned to implement an integrated work camp supported by the pacifist organization known as Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), but community members appeared wary out of concern with local peoples' negative reactions (Hicks, 2001:144). In the end, members decided that Celo was not ready for integrated living within the community but, rather, African Americans visiting as guests seemed more appropriate until a work camp could be planned "with more confidence" (Hicks, 2001:144). Inter-racial interactions did occur between local blacks and Celo community affiliates.

In her Ed.S dissertation, Gwendolyn Harris (1994) found that "Celo supported blacks in their efforts [to integrate]" (p.96). She also reported that black people sometimes "fraternized" with people in the alternative community as a means of "getting used to white people," suggesting that integration was possible (p.96). Both Hicks (2001) and G. Harris (1994) describe a desegregated Celo, affirming that integrated work camps built a boarding school that both black and white students attended after 1962 (p.144). This, of course, occurred two years after the United States District Court ordered integration in Yancey County public high schools.

Very little has been published on black education in the Toe River Valley (Yancey History Association, 1993:67). Although Yancey County was the first county in North Carolina to integrate its high schools, literature pertaining to the event is scant. The attention given to the history of blacks in the rural mountain county presumably parallels countless other African American communities lost in the sea of white Appalachia. Nonetheless, academic publications regarding segregation, racial oppression, influences of foreign policy, social movements, solidarity and theory help bolster a stronger, fuller understanding of the integration that occurred in Yancey County, North Carolina in the early 1960s.

To fully grasp the struggle for equality in Yancey County, one must obtain a broad knowledge of the injustices that transpired throughout the United States in the early to mid twentieth century. Discussions on foreign policy, the uprisings of whites against desegregation and the actual campaign efforts themselves, provided a more comprehensive outlook on civil rights, whereas theoretical sources and contrasting ideologies applied a deeper meaning to the success of the movement. Integration in Yancey County did not solely result from the enthusiastic efforts of concerned local black parents; rather, it began with the struggles faced by countless African Americans throughout the United States before them. To make sense of this local success story, one must make connections to the broader picture. The resources used in this research contribute to that bigger picture and help illuminate the significant event that happened in rural western North Carolina so many years ago.

Chapter 3. Methodology

Fifty years have passed since both East Yancey and Cane River High Schools first opened their doors to African American students in Burnsville, North Carolina. While Yancey County humbly prides itself in the fact that it was the first county in the state to integrate its public schools, there is very little tangible evidence to show that such an event occurred. Today, the preservation of the desegregation story in Yancey County depends heavily on the collective memory of a handful of individuals and archival records located in courthouses and libraries across the state. This chapter describes the means used to locate and gather the information needed to explore civil rights in the Toe River Valley. Research methods mentioned herein included primary source analysis and guided interviews with local community members.

The concept for this project began in the spring semester of 2010. I was nearing the end of my first year of graduate school and was embarking on a project that explored desegregation in Watauga County, North Carolina. My research interests to that point primarily concentrated on African Americans in Southern Appalachia, with an emphasis on civil rights. Following a conversation with the Director of the Center for Appalachian Studies, Dr. Patricia Beaver, I learned that court mandated educational integration in North Carolina first took place in Burnsville, a rural mountain town located at the foot of Mount Mitchell. I found the idea that the state's first legal case of integration

materialized in Appalachia compelling and it was soon after that office visit that I decided to turn my focus to Yancey County.

Unfamiliar with the Toe River Valley, I realized that I needed to explore the area to better orient myself with Burnsville and its proximity to Asheville, an urban hub that provided outside resources to African American families in Yancey County in the mid twentieth century. Located nearly forty miles north of Asheville, Burnsville is located in the heart of Yancey County. Residential homes, tucked away in the mountain backdrop, overlook the courthouse and public library, both situated in the town square. Commercialism has made its way to the county seat but has not overwhelmed it. The people are friendly and willing to accommodate to the needs of others, a demeanor I found to be very helpful in conducting my research data.

Data collection began with an analysis of primary sources such as newspaper clippings and content-specific publications to establish a broad comprehension of the local campaign. From these data, I was able to get an overview of the actions of Lincoln Park community members and the other African American figures involved. Lincoln Park is the colloquial name used to identify the black community in Burnsville; for the sake of continuity, I too refer to the black population involved in the movement as Lincoln Park. Located on the outskirts of the town center, the community was home to most of the African American families living in Burnsville in the 1900s. Named for its location within the community, the Lincoln Park Elementary School was the only black school in Yancey County. The facility offered only eight grades; therefore, students were required to travel outside of the county to attend high school in Asheville.

The demanding travel required for young Yancey County teens to attend high school served as the impetus for the petition to integrate local public schools. Lincoln Park community members worked with various groups and individuals to fight the political system that thwarted educational equality. The Asheville chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) helped concerned parents of Lincoln Park take action against the Yancey County Board of Education. Asheville based attorney and NAACP member, Ruben Dailey, provided his services to the local black residents, representing them in the federal case known as *John B. Griffith et al*. In addition to the NAACP, an organization from Asheville called the Burnsville Education Project (BEP) arranged monetary funds that allowed for the development of the movement. The involvement of these individuals and organizations arose out of the recognition that not only had a social and moral injustice occurred, but that also, the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution had essentially been violated. It was with the collaboration of the Lincoln Park community and these influential "outsiders" that Yancey County schools were eventually mandated to integrate.

After I acquired a general understanding of what had taken place, I began to search for crucial records such as minutes from the Board of Education meetings that were held to discuss the issue of integration in the 1950s. The Lincoln Park parents initially petitioned the Yancey County school board to integrate all public schools in 1959. However, their request was denied and for the next year the Board of Education found creative ways to continue segregation. In 1959, while African American students travelled to and from Asheville for school, the Board of County Commissioners approved a $30,700 grant to the Board of Education for the purposes of building a new black

school in Burnsville. Strategies to avoid integration, such as these, were implemented by school boards across the state, but the effort in Yancey County proved ineffective.

To supplement public records and support findings in newspapers, I looked for court hearing transcripts and records from the District Court case that was held in the Federal Building in Asheville. Following the struggle against the Yancey County Board of Education, the Lincoln Park community, with the help of Ruben Dailey, the NAACP, and the BEP filed a legal suit against the school board. Due to the political nature of the case, it was taken to United States District Court in Asheville in the fall of 1959. By September of 1960, the court reached a verdict and ordered the Yancey County School Board to integrate eight African American students into its high schools. The actual transcripts of the case were not obtained; however, information and dates found in the District Courts' digital archives verified the *John B. Griffith et al.* lawsuit.

In addition to court records, I sought archives from NAACP chapters in the surrounding area. The Asheville branch of the organization assisted the Lincoln Park community in their fight for equality. Aside from their involvement with the case through Mr. Dailey, the NAACP covered the attorney's legal expenses. The national headquarters also showed their support by publishing an advertisement in the *New York Times*, describing the grueling travel students were forced to endure the year of the suit. Chapter archives were utilized to develop a more detailed familiarity with Ruben Dailey's work with Lincoln Park and Yancey County. My contact at the Asheville NAACP chapter indicated that their participation was minimal. However, I gathered from archival data and newspapers that Mr. Dailey met with parents and families in the Lincoln Park community at the local church on various occasions.

In the search for these data, a few bumps in the road did surface, one of the more jarring being the unknown storage locations of relevant public records. Conversations with administrators at the Yancey County Court House and the Board of Education suggested that either the records were no longer in existence or were buried under countless other obscure archives in some office building basement. While I realized that a request to see outdated school board and court case records required thought and effort, I found it disconcerting that public officials were uncertain as to their whereabouts. However, after a brief discussion with a retired Board of Education employee and current Yancey County Finance member, I was soon directed to the location of the school board minutes. Following an e-mail correspondence, the assistant to the Superintendent of Yancey County Schools graciously sent me digital copies of ten years' worth of relevant school board transcripts. It was through those records that I obtained a great deal of data pertaining to the events that led to integration.

Several of the documents were also found on microfilm in the W.L. Eury Appalachian Collection at Appalachian State University. These included minutes from the Yancey County Board of County Commissioners meetings that verified the purchase of 4.65 acres of land for the new black school in Burnsville in 1959. Records corroborating the resolutions passed by Yancey County officials concerning the acquisition of the land and construction of the new Oak Crest Elementary School for blacks were identified in the Yancey County courthouse with the help of the employees of the Register of Deeds office.

In addition to public offices and courthouses, university and public libraries and librarians served as beneficial research aids, as various collections at Appalachian State

University, and the Yancey County Public Library all provided valuable pieces to the puzzle. The W.L. Eury Appalachian Collection offered valuable information pertaining to civil rights in North Carolina and Yancey County. Multiple conversations with Burnsville native and retired Yancey County librarian, James Byrd, led to the review of insightful primary sources and willing interview participants. Although Mr. Byrd was not directly connected to the desegregation process in the late 1950s, he has expressed a great deal of interest and knowledge on the subject and voluntarily took on the role of key informant.

To accompany the data collected from archives and documentations, interviews were conducted with Yancey County community members to gather first hand experiences from the incident. An interview guide was created to help facilitate conversation. However, the prompt was not strictly followed as it disrupted the flow of natural conversation. Although the guide was written to assess the African American experience with desegregation, it was adapted to correlate with the white voice as well. A complete outline of the questions and form of consent can be found in Appendices A and B of this thesis.

The pilot interview conducted was with Shirley Whiteside, the first black female to integrate East Yancey High School in 1960. Although I attempted to follow a question guide, Mrs. Whiteside began addressing various aspects of the civil rights campaign that took place without any prompting. Fortunately, the issues raised by Whiteside coincided with the questions formulated on the template. Generally speaking, the interview had a favorable outcome as replies to questions corresponded to information found in newspaper articles. Yet, some responses contradicted data collected from primary sources, causing some discrepancies among previous findings. Further, inquiries

pertaining to emotion did not elicit detailed answers; she was willing to answer questions about fears and concerns but failed to go into great depth. Nonetheless, Whiteside graciously shared the uneasiness she experienced when riding the school bus the first day of integration and the continuous anxiety felt towards large groups of white males.

In addition to the most recent interview conducted with Whiteside, former Appalachian Studies graduate student Jamie Butcher spoke with her five years prior to discuss her experience at the Allen School, an all-black girls school that was located in Asheville, North Carolina. The Allen School was established by the Women's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the late nineteenth century and served as a boarding school for African American girls for many years. In 1924, the Allen School became an accredited four-year high school and offered quality educational opportunities for young black women until its closing in 1974 (Butcher, 2005). A project was coordinated several years ago concerning the history of the Allen School and some of its students. Several alumni were approached to talk about their experiences at the private institution. Mrs. Whiteside was one of these women. Interviews indicated, among other things, a dearth in public high schools for blacks and bolstered details of long bus rides to and from Buncombe County on a daily basis during the petition for local integration.

Whiteside noted in her 2005 interview that the Lincoln Park community was unified in the decision to boycott school buses traveling to Asheville the year before desegregation, data that buttresses theoretical explanations explored in this research. Lastly, Mrs. Whiteside confirmed cross burnings, an indicator that massive resistance was present during the campaign, yet another reality overlooked by reporters.

Whiteside's and others' stories confirmed many theories and presumptions based on the affairs that happened in Yancey County during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Additional interviews, conducted by Dr. Beaver, Mr. Lloyd Bailey, Ms. Jamie Butcher, Ms. Rebecca Baird, Ms. Dare Cook, and myself, were used to examine the black voice on issues of segregation and civil rights in western North Carolina and parts of southern Appalachia.

An interview with Selelia Griffith's granddaughter, Jeanette Henson, and grandniece, LaVerne Glover, offered a detailed account of the struggles Mrs. Griffith battled while fighting the Yancey County School Board. Mrs. Griffith, a well-known figure in the Lincoln Park community, was the primary agent in resisting segregation in Burnsville. Frustrated by the evident inequalities within the local educational system, Griffith stood at the forefront of the civil rights movement in Yancey County. Henson, a retired educator, was the first African American teacher in Burnsville. Her enthusiasm towards this project stemmed from the fact that very few people outside of the county know about the efforts made by the Lincoln Park community. Further, both Henson and Glover's cooperation also emanated from the desire to contribute to what they called the "accurate" telling of the integration story in Burnsville. Many of the newspaper articles failed to address the real battle fought, one that started long before 1959.

Jane Crowder, a long time Yancey County resident, shared stories of her father who taught at East Yancey High School. Although Mrs. Crowder was not a student during Yancey County's transition from segregation to integration, she recalled the tension and concern felt by her father, offering not only a teacher's perspective but also the sentiments felt by some of the local white citizens. Mrs. Crowder offered compelling stories about the first day of integration at East Yancey High School, noting that great

lengths were made by her father and then principal Woodrow Anglin to keep the event as low-key and stress-free as possible. Although an attempt was made to analyze all of the information objectively, these interviews helped narrate the human dimension of the story. By combining archival data and personal accounts, I was able to deepen my understanding of what it took to bring integration to Yancey County schools.

To accompany contemporary interviews I also used older interviews with black former residents of western North Carolina. Figures such as the Reverend Ronda Horton and Nell Ray of Boone presented the black voice during segregation and civil rights. These transcripts were located in the closed archives of the W.L. Eury Appalachian Collection. Manuscripts and personal notes written by Yancey County residents Thomas Monroe and Arthur Morgan revealed local history and the concerns of various groups of white people. Monroe scrutinized the educational system of Yancey County, stating that the schools should focus more on agriculture and job skills, much like the teachings of Booker T. Washington. Morgan, the founder of the utopian community known as Celo, also discussed education and the desires of Celo members to desegregate. This information supplemented the general information found on education in Yancey County in primary and secondary literature.

Maintaining objectivity during the data collection and writing process proved challenging. Primary and secondary literature in conjunction with oral histories and archived records illuminated the civil injustices imposed upon African American communities not only in Burnsville but also in North Carolina, southern Appalachia, and the South. However, efforts were made to explain the opinions and influences of those who opposed desegregation and civil rights. The methods applied in this thesis allowed

for a somewhat objective approach. Yet it must be mentioned that the main goal is to communicate the black experience more so than the white. The following chapters set out to do just that.

Chapter 4. Historical Background, Part One: Yancey County History

"Each county in western North Carolina has stories of its African American past and sites of significance to those stories" (Beaver, 2011: 27). Yancey County's story of its African American past is unique to the region as it tells how the rural mountain district became the first county to integrate by federal court order in North Carolina. Yet, aside from this distinctive feature, the county experienced a past not unlike most Appalachian communities. When contiguous parts of Buncombe and Burke Counties merged in 1833, Yancey County was formed, making the Toe River Valley an official political unit (Sheppard, 1991: 38). Burnsville, the county seat, was soon after established and named for Otway Burns, captain of the *Snapdragon,* a privateer in the War of 1812. However, origins of Yancey County date back much further.

Following the Native Americans, the first Europeans settled the southern tip of the Toe River Valley in the eighteenth century. Moderately isolated by the Black Mountains, Yancey County was comprised of "eight valleys and numerous coves," a geography that offered settlers a sense of "solitude" (Sharpe, 1961:1646). Before the nineteenth century, access to the area was minimal. Anthropologist George Hicks (1976) found that commercial agriculture was precluded by a lack of roads (p. 8). Further, with very few local markets, pioneers were forced to live self-sufficient agrarian lives. However, intra-regional trade did occur. Families often pooled their crops and livestock for export in South Carolina and Georgia, a round trip that required thirty to sixty travel

days (Sharpe, 1961:1643). Eighteen hundred and forty brought the construction of the region's first road; open passages and turnpikes allowed rural farmers to prosper and provide plantation owners in the Deep South with livestock and grain to feed their workers. During the antebellum period, Appalachia was a major livestock-raising region, a trade that boosted local economies (R. Lewis, 2004b: 51). Additionally, convenient roadways gave way to slavery in the mountains. An influx of blacks in western North Carolina did not occur until the 1830s but by 1860, there existed nearly nine thousand slaves in the western part of the state (L. Davis, n.d.: 8).

Slavery in Appalachia can be traced back to the seventeenth century when European explorers such as Hernando de Soto and Juan Pardo came to the region in search of gold and silver. De Soto brought African slaves with him on the expedition but also enslaved many of the native people he encountered (Beaver, 2011: 3). Anthropologist Patricia Beaver explained that both Africans and Indians were used as slaves in the South until the early eighteenth century (p. 3). Many of these slaves escaped bondage, retreating to the mountainous terrain of southern Appalachia, specifically to Cherokee territories. Because race and racism were initially foreign concepts to the Cherokee, blacks were able to take refuge among the indigenous peoples. However, the later development of the European markets in the eighteenth century created drastic cultural changes, resulting in Cherokee involvement in the trading and owning of slaves. In many instances the military status of a young Cherokee boy relied on the number of slaves he traded or retrieved by thwarting efforts of runaways (Dunaway, 2003b: 17). The Cherokee elite would later own their own slaves, a phenomenon that created a rather complex social hierarchy in the region.

The Atlantic slave trade in the eighteenth century brought a second wave of Africans to Appalachia. Although the institution has been generally overlooked in the mountain south, sociologist Wilma Dunaway (2003) claimed that slavery flourished amid non-slaveholding majorities and poor landless whites (p. 1). Prior to the Civil War, approximately 360 documented slaves resided in the Yancey County vicinity, as a boom in agriculture and livestock production increased their utility (Sharpe, 1961). Census records indicated that in 1860 a majority of white county residents owned farms. Most of these farms rarely exceeded fifty acres, yet, roughly 110 farmers toiled tracts amounting to one hundred acres or more (Silver, 2003: 118). Due to the smaller size of the local farms, slaves were not utilized in great numbers. As a result, African American residents represented a small percentage of the total population in Appalachia. This remained the case for the next century.

Similar to counties throughout western North Carolina and southern Appalachia, opinions toward secession and the Civil War were sharply divided in the Toe River Valley. Of the documented three hundred plus slaves, most of them worked in the southern half of Yancey County. Bitter feelings held by Unionists in the northern part resulted in a political and physical split. In 1861, the pro-Union northern section separated itself from the pro-Confederacy south to form Mitchell County. Hostilities transcended the battlefields as bushwhackers, home guard, and guerilla bands used violence to control local civilians and draft dodgers. Incidents like those of the Shelton Laurel Massacre, which occurred in neighboring Madison County, exemplified the horrors of war on the home front. Union sympathizers accused of sabotaging a Confederate officer's home and looting local salt stores were murdered execution style by

rebel soldiers of the North Carolina 64th regiment. Among those killed were an elderly gentleman and a twelve-year-old boy. Violence seemed to be the rule (Sharpe, 1961: 1646). Brutality had permeated the system and would continue to play the role of powerful enforcer for many years after the war.

Emancipation allowed for black families to obtain land through methods such as sharecropping; it also gave way for African American neighborhoods and communities to flourish. Two years following the end of the Civil War freed slaves were given the right to vote. It was during this time that they considered themselves first-class citizens with "all the rights and obligations of other citizens" (L. Davis, n.d.: 20). In 1882, Newton Sheppard, a former black street foreman, was elected as city commissioner in Asheville, North Carolina. By the late nineteenth century blacks in urban centers, such as Asheville, owned businesses and worked as doctors. The western portion of the state had progressed but could still feel the impact of an escalating white supremacy movement (L. Davis, n.d.: 22-24). And so as black men procured limited civil liberties in 1867, white men joined forces to counter those rights.

In the wake of Civil War defeat, southern whites realized that millions of freed slaves would soon enter modern society. Such a notion influenced the belief that white men must maintain power in the South. To ensure their authority, "black codes" were implemented during Reconstruction. These regulations forbade blacks to testify in court, own property or guns, marry whites, or attend white schools. Historian Bruce Dierenfield (2004) noted that, "southern states rewrote their constitutions to separate the races from birth to burial," (p. 8). To prevent suspected black revolts and redeem the South from an impending "black dominance," or uprisings, whites began to terrorize and slaughter

African Americans (Dierenfield, 2004:7). Groups like the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) were responsible for such atrocities, using violence and the threat of violence to "prevent blacks from exercising their civil rights" earned with Emancipation (Stentiford, 2008a: 442). The KKK also set out to maintain control by raping African American women and castrating and lynching men. These practices primarily served as fear tactics and modes of intimidation to keep freedmen and women in their proper societal place. Blacks were not considered as equals and therefore Klan members went to great lengths to maintain their supremacy.

Origins of the KKK date back to1865. The guerilla violence that terrorized the home front during the Civil War carried over into the postbellum era in the South. Upon their return from war, six young Confederate veterans formed the white supremacy organization in the Tennessee town of Pulaski. Initially established as a "fraternity devoted to pranks," the Klan soon transformed into a "terrorist organization" agitated by the fear of what seemed to be an inevitable uprising of freed blacks (Trelease, 1995: xi). Historian Allen Trelease (1995) explained that the name Ku Klux Klan derived from the Greek word *kuklos*, meaning circle or band (p. 4). Although the name was redundant, members favored the appellation because of its unique quality and alliteration. Trelease (1995) also noted that the KKK did not officially make its way into North Carolina until 1867, claiming that two incidents of Klan related activity occurred in the western part of the state in the fall and winter of 1867 and 1868, respectively. Nonetheless, following the Civil War, many soldiers returned from battle to enlist in the nascent supremacy order. Veterans from southern Appalachia were of no exception.

To warrant overt executions of discriminatory brutality, southerners instituted an immutable caste system known as Jim Crow laws. The name Jim Crow derived from a popular minstrel character of the 1830s. As early as 1928 Thomas Dartmouth, also known as "Daddy Rice," introduced a song called "Jump Jim Crow" in one of his minstrel shows. Dartmouth performed the song in blackface, singing, "*Come listen all you galls and boys, I's jist from Tuckyhoe. I'm going to sing a little song, my name is Jim Crow*" (C. Lewis & J. Lewis, 2009: 1-2). Historians Catherine Lewis and J. Richard Lewis (2009) defined Jim Crow as "the legal means by which slavery was ended in the United States, and early attempts to formalize and justify segregation throughout the nation after the Civil War" (p. 1). Jim Crow laws were an attempt to keep blacks as far away from white society as possible.

Many white southerners believed that the removal of blacks from public life would improve race relations and help the second-class citizens recognize their place in the social hierarchy (Dierenfield, 2004; Litwack, 2004). Dierenfield (2004) emphasized that the strict laws that prohibited civil liberties from African Americans seemed unbeatable (p. 9). With time, blacks endured the "good negro" or "Sambo" role as a means of survival in the land of Jim Crow (Dierenfield 2004:9). In 1896, the federal government reinforced restrictions by subverting the Fourteenth Amendment, and authorized segregated facilities under the "separate but equal" canon. Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruled segregation as constitutional, further distancing the races and allowing for more stringent Jim Crow laws. Rigid limitations on blacks continued into the twentieth century; however, progressives began to lose patience and started the long, hard fight for civil rights.

As exemplified by past census records, there existed a scant black populace in Yancey County during the mid twentieth century (US Census, 1940 & 1950). Of the approximate fourteen thousand inhabitants of the Appalachian county, 136 identified themselves as "Negro" (King, 1971). Most places throughout the United States experienced an increase in black populations in the 1960s, yet, in contrast, African American numbers decreased in Appalachia (King, 1971). Between 1950 and 1960, Yancey County experienced a decline in black populations (Stuckert, 1987). Much of this decrease can be explained by an out-migration that found many blacks moving away from the rural mountains to more urban locations. Black communities in the mountain south slowly dwindled as families left for cities in the North with the hopes of obtaining better opportunities. Employment for blacks in Yancey County was hard to come by. Mica served as an important industry for western North Carolina in the early twentieth century, particularly in Spruce Pine (McCurdy, 1930). Mica and feldspar processing plants provided wage labor jobs for local residents but the companies tended not to hire blacks in the operating factories (Anglin, 2001: 107). Consequently, many local minorities resorted to working in agriculture, manufacturing, or found service jobs among businesses where they could be hired.

In the 1900s African Americans found work in nearby tourist resorts and hotels. Men and women both found jobs in the kitchens at Camp Mt. Mitchell for Girls and the Nu-Wray Inn. The Nu-Wray Inn has a long history in Yancey County. Initially a trading post that offered several rooms for guests, the hotel was later made a permanent lodging by Milton Penland, a wealthy slave owner, in the 1830s (Coletta, 1981: 55). Throughout the nineteenth century the inn was operated by a number of proprietors but eventually fell

into the hands of the Ray family in 1870. Often referred to as the “old Ray,” the name “Nu-Wray” became a permanent banner near the turn of the century. Known for its quintessential southern hospitality, the Nu-Wray Inn has received a great deal of recognition, specifically for its food, as the hams and chickens were often slow cooked on a wood stove or in a smoke house (Yancey History Association, 1993). Black cooks such as Will Roland perfected the old fashioned method of smoking and prepared hams daily for the inn to serve to its white guests.

Schools for local blacks were also difficult to come by in the South Toe region. Yancey County’s early education history reveals a past similar to most western North Carolina counties. Terms usually lasted less than six months in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the 1910s, the state Constitution required counties to offer at least six-month terms, but the mandate only applied to public elementary schools (Higgins, 1981). Due to the lack of funding for public institutions, Christian missionaries made great strides in providing educational opportunities for young mountain pupils.

After the Civil War, educational opportunities for blacks in the South were scant. Benevolent workers from the North made their way south during Reconstruction to aid the war-torn communities and establish schools for those children in need. Baptists opened the Yancey College Institute in 1901, which was followed twenty-three years later by the Stanly McCormick College built by Presbyterians (Sharpe, 1961). But these schools only catered to whites; very few institutions were devoted to the education of blacks — the Salem School and Orphanage was one of these few. Founded in Elk Park, North Carolina at the turn of the twentieth century, the Mennonite school aimed to reach out to the local black population, a community which missionaries considered more

deprived than the whites. In the years the school functioned, more than twenty homeless black children were provided with an education and a home, including Reverend Ronda Horton, a prominent figure in the Junaluska community of Boone. Horton later recalled his experience at Salem in an interview with Dr. Winston Kinsey in 1973. He noted that the Salem School "was segregated but that the only whites that attended were the ones that owned it."

The first white public schoolhouse built in Yancey County was in Bald Creek, located near the township of Cane River (McCurdy, 1930). Built before the Civil War, Bald Creek eventually became a high school that offered educational opportunities for white students in Yancey, Madison and McDowell Counties in the late 1800s. Throughout the twentieth century more one-room schoolhouses were built in the area. Under the administration of Superintendent W.O. Griffith in the 1910s, several high schools were erected in the Yancey County area. However, several of those schools never opened (Higgins, 1981). The Board of Education and the County Superintendent of Schools managed the local educational system. Board members were nominated and elected by civilians whereas the superintendent was appointed by the Board of Education. By 1930, it was estimated that over 4,000 white and 58 "colored" students were enrolled in the local public facilities (McCurdy, 1930). Schools for those blacks were practically nonexistent as institutions in western North Carolina were rarely integrated before the mid twentieth century. Located in what was at the time, Mitchell County, Elk Park served as one of the few black educational institutions in the early 1900s but it was too far for many of the pupils to travel. The only black school in Yancey County during this period was what is known as the Lincoln Park Negro School. The origins of this one-room

schoolhouse are unclear; however, it can be assumed that the conditions of the building were no better than the other public white institutions in the county.

Yancey County native Monroe Thomas wrote about the state of local public schools in his manuscript titled "Public Education in the Mountains: A Crisis and a Challenge." Thomas took a similar approach to education as Booker T. Washington, arguing that schools did not ground the pupils in the necessary fundamentals of dealing with nature and the ways of making a living, a seemingly important aptitude to acquire in such an agriculturally rich county. He also questioned why students were not being taught the difference between right and wrong; his answer was that the schools themselves were not practicing this, a profound statement considering the events that unfolded during the 1950s with school integration in the state of North Carolina.

Education and Race Relations in the Mid Twentieth Century

In May of 1954, three years after Linda Brown's father initiated a class-action suit against the Topeka, Kansas school board, the United States Supreme Court ruled that, "segregation denied African American children the 'equal protection of laws,' and violated the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution" (Finkelman 2009). Chief Justice Earl Warren claimed that the separate facilities for black students were inferior to white institutions but clarified that such a decision only applied to schools and did not overturn the *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling. Professor of law Paul Finkelman (2009) added that the "legacy" of *Brown* "offered great hope" and shattered the idea that segregation could be legal (p. 7). This settlement still found "separate but equal" to be constitutional and urged that "voluntary consent was needed for races to meet on terms of social equality" (K.M. Lewis, 2009:3). Such a declaration opened the door for more restrictive Jim Crow laws,

but over time, opinions evolved towards more tolerant views. *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka* served as a catalyst for change in that it attempted to alter the way the country stood on the issue of school segregation. *Brown* acted as a push for change; it conjured new reactions to racial brutality and inequality (Byrne, 2005; 23-24). Massive resistance by southern whites, however, forestalled many of the efforts to integrate.

North Carolina governor William B. Umstead claimed that *Brown* was a "terrible disappointment," but that because the highest court in the land had spoken, the decision must be obeyed (G. Lewis, 2006: 27). However, Umstead and other political figures failed to follow through with the ruling. The *Brown* decision ratified school segregation as unconstitutional; however, immediate implementation of the mandate did not occur (Zimmerman, 2006). To keep blacks out of white public schools states went as far as cutting off funds that aided desegregation and provided tuition and scholarships for white students to attend private institutions. According to Dierenfield (2004), in one of the more drastic instances, Prince Edward County, Virginia shut down its public schools for four years to avoid desegregation. Governor J. Lindsay Almond, Jr. declared integration as the "livid stench of sadism, sex, immorality, and juvenile pregnancy infesting the schools of the District of Columbia" (p. 24). In response to white opposition to school integration, the Supreme Court mandated a second injunction one year after the original *Brown* ruling. *Brown II* demanded total desegregation with "all deliberate speed"; however, groups like the Pearsall Committee in North Carolina found clever ways to preclude both verdicts.

Thomas J. Pearsall was a large plantation owner, North Carolina state politician, and lawyer. In 1954 he agreed to head Governor William B. Umstead's Special Advisory

Committee on Education, a council that went to great lengths to coerce African Americans into supporting and participating in voluntary segregation following *Brown* (Walker, 2009). Public officials hoped to achieve voluntary segregation by launching immense school construction programs for black facilities (Walker, 2009:56). Further, the Pearsall Committee attempted to disguise segregation as a crucial cultural facet for African Americans. According to law professor Anders Walker (2009) members of the committee tried to convince blacks that segregation nurtured their culture and community and hoped that this "subtle pressure" would force blacks to attend black schools and not pursue desegregation (p. 59-60).

In North Carolina administrators set standards that pupils had to meet before being assigned to a school. Scholastic aptitude, mental energy, residential proximity, and the impact a particular student would have on the other pupils were among the guidelines the Pearsall Plan instituted. If a black student wanted to integrate they did so by submitting an application to the state. Officials considered each case on an individual level, determining whether or not students satisfied the requirements to integrate white schools. Throughout the state, officials attempted to prolong dual education systems with promises of improved schools for African Americans. The Yancey County Board of Education made such efforts in the late 1950s to impede desegregation, but an exasperated minority community set out to counter these endeavors and enforce the civil liberties granted to them via *Brown v. Board.* As a whole, North Carolina boasted itself as a progressive state with fairly amicable and tolerant race relations. However, the civil rights movement illuminated the unfavorable conditions African Americans endured and

forced a reckoning with previously held opinions (Stentiford 2008a: 603). One particular adverse circumstance was racial violence.

The KKK generated a great amount of tension and anxiety among African American communities in the South. In the early 1960s, a Durham, North Carolina family received a letter from a local KKK Grand Dragon with harmful threats to their child if they exercised the freedom *Brown* offered (Day, 1963). Alarmed, the family decided to back down from their efforts to integrate. Active Klan groups, however, were not restricted to densely populated areas. It is very plausible that this fear existed in Yancey County, as Superintendent Justice once insinuated. He believed that violence would have ensued had the authorities granted desegregation immediately: "the public expected us to make an effort to avoid integration. When we made our fight and lost, the public accepted the integration of the county's two high schools" (C. Davis, 1961). Overt forms of discrimination and savagery practiced by the KKK throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Yancey County are uncertain. However, their existence was unquestionable. Haunting images found in a publication of local history showed Klan members participating in the funeral procession for the local sheriff in the 1920s. Although the captions to the photographs were brief, the images alone clearly portrayed the sentiments felt by some of the Yancey County inhabitants.

Extant, deep-rooted black communities in western North Carolina are few and far between. That is what makes African American populations like those in Yancey County so special. Details pertaining to the origins of the Lincoln Park community are unclear, even to those who lived there. In her book *Women, Power and Dissent in the Hills of Carolina,* Mary Anglin asked white residents of the Toe River Valley about local blacks.

One woman mentioned that she was aware of the black community and knew that the population size had decreased in the twentieth century but had no clue as to the cultural details of the settlement. Anglin (2002) noted a sense of tolerance exhibited by the white women consulted for her study, adding that the black community "remained a symbol of the county's more racially diverse past" (p.107), a fact often overlooked by people in and outside of southern Appalachia and western North Carolina.

Images of small African American populations linked with myths of exceptionalism suggest an absence of both blacks and civil rights in southern Appalachia. Generally, there were only a few public civil rights demonstrations in the region throughout the mid twentieth century. Low-density minority populations in North Carolina generated campaigns in response to oppressive race relations and discrimination, only on a smaller scale. The struggle in Yancey County, however, surfaced as one of the more successful operations in state civil rights history.

Chapter 5. Historical Background, Part Two: The Road to Integration

> "One day the colored is gonna go with the white and the only trouble we gonna have is these backwoods white folks… they're not gonna like it."[1]

Yancey County high schools integrated in 1960. However, the struggle began seven years prior as the Board of Education and Board of County Commissioners met to discuss the "Negro school question" in 1953. The question these board members referred to was the poor condition of the local educational facility for blacks. Public records illustrated that officials sought "the best solution" but had difficulty deciding on the "best course of action" (Yancey County Board of Education, 1953). Both boards expressed sympathy for the "Negro" cause but determined that outside sources were necessary in developing adequate results. A resolution passed requesting immediate assistance from the state Planning Board to help the county identify the steps necessary in constructing a new elementary school for local blacks. Early conversations proposed the expenditure of $10,000 for the erection of a new elementary school; however, officials felt uncertain that the amount would suffice for proper construction. Additionally, many questioned whether or not black parents would cooperate with and accept the new project. After some debate

[1] Watauga County resident Nell Ray's recollection of high school principal Carl Fiddler's vision of integration in a 1973 interview.

it became clear to both boards that a new school seemed necessary but not obligatory enough to start right away.

On August 5, 1953, one year before the Supreme Court's verdict on *Brown v. Board*, two resolutions were passed by the Yancey County Board of Education. The first was the assignment of black pupils to Stephens Lee High School, one of the major African American educational facilities in the Asheville City School District, for the 1953-1954 term. The second was the purchase of a panel bus that would be used to transport the students to their new school (Yancey County Board of Education, 1953). Decisions to "lawfully accredit" these children to outside sectors were adopted unanimously by the board. Black high schools, in most mountain counties, did not exist; consequently, travelling close to one hundred miles, round-trip, was commonplace for many black teenagers in western North Carolina.

Ann Miller Woodford recalled the inconvenient nature of the long trek she and others endured from their home in Cherokee County to one of the schools in Asheville. "It wasn't like this two hour drive now, it was longer than that to get there and get back" (Woodford, 2005). Yancey County native LaVerne Glover recited a poem she wrote about the daily haul called "My, Ain't God Good." The poem addresses the necessity of the eighty-mile bus ride, as it was considered imperative to receive a decent education beyond elementary school. "Can you imagine putting a six year old or a five year old on a bus? We would leave at six and get home at six. Four years, eighty miles and no fatalities," she said (L. Glover, personal communication, February 11, 2011; Ball, 2010). As both Woodford's and Glover's comments illustrated, academic opportunities for

African Americans during the mid twentieth century paled in comparison to those offered to whites.

While African American high school students of Yancey County rode the bus to school, forty miles away, elementary aged children continued to attend a local segregated facility. The grade school for blacks was known as the Lincoln Park Negro School. Located in the county seat of Burnsville, the dilapidated one-room schoolhouse was situated just within the boundaries of the African American community of the same name. Lincoln Park operated as the only black elementary school in Yancey County for more than sixty-five years (Poinsett, 1958). But the school seriously lacked the common amenities found in their white neighbors' institutions. Books were often hand-me-downs from the white schools, and instead of having the luxury of indoor plumbing and a spacious playground, children used outdoor toilets and ran about in a rundown recess yard.

Yancey County native and former Lincoln Park student LaVerne Glover recalled the conditions of the schoolhouse. In a 2011 interview she noted that, "the boys used the bathroom on a nearby bank and the girls went near the school." In 1946 a concrete section was built to provide a cafeteria and toilets but was never completed. "They were going to build a lunchroom out of cinderblocks but it was never finished" (L. Glover, personal communication, February 11, 2011). Because the building never received a proper heating system the pipes froze the first year after construction and left the newly erected addition to serve only as a storage unit for coal that burned in a stove. Black students collected the coal from neighboring white schools. The young boys pulled small wagons down from the hill on which Lincoln Park School stood to gather lumps of coal

left at a gate outside of the white facilities. They then carted the piles back to be used in a potbelly stove.

Getting to Lincoln Park was a challenge. Students often walked six or more miles in rain, wind, and snow just to get to school. Not all African American families lived in Lincoln Park or "The Hill," as most blacks knew it. Yancey County was home to three black communities: "Bolens Creek," "Afts Holler," and "The Hill" or "Flee Ridge." The trek that the elementary students made from their homes to school often required passage past the white elementary and high school located in Burnsville. The white children had a bus and would often yell "nigger, nigger" to the black students walking to Lincoln Park (L. Glover, 2011, personal communication). Name calling, however, was not the only obstacle. In order to get to the Lincoln Park School students trudged through hazardous environments. Selelia Griffith's granddaughter Jeanette Henson remembered having to walk on a muddy embankment so narrow that the children had to hold on to a barbed-wire fence for balance. Outraged by school conditions, parents gathered together to push for a better facility.

Influenced by the *Brown* ruling in May of 1954, and the increasing pressure from Lincoln Park parents, the Board of Education addressed the "Negro school question" once again on September 7, 1954. Reactions to the Supreme Court decision caused quite a stir in the South. The "separate but equal" policy had been declared illegal in public schools across the country. Yet, immediate implementation failed to proceed. North Carolina went to great lengths to stall integration, as did Yancey County. School administrators considered improved facilities for blacks as incentive to remain segregated. Officials of the Yancey County school board voted to build an additional

toilet and repair the busted waterlines. The board also considered the possibility of moving students from the practically inaccessible Lincoln Park School to a more suitable location during the cold weather season, rather than simply integrate.

The local Playhouse Dormitory Parlor received a nomination but was rejected out of the concern that pupils would wander into the building's other rooms. "We were disciplined to the max, not a bunch of wild heathens," LaVerne Glover vocalized. "We had discipline. When the teacher taught the other grades we were not disruptive." Nonetheless, Board members concluded that a basement room in a different facility would best serve the educational needs of the Lincoln Park children and their parents. Meanwhile, as Superintendent Hubert Justice and his board made temporary decisions pertaining to black education, a resolution to construct two new white high schools in Yancey County was proposed.

The following month, per request of a delegation of black parents, school board members met with and visited the "colored" church to study whether the basement was suitable to serve as an alternate school location during the blistery winters. After an investigation of the suggested location, officials permitted the operation of wintertime classes in the basement of Griffith's Chapel, the local black church, on the agreement that the board did not have to pay for the use of the space. Archives neither confirm nor contest the fact that students moved into the church basement for the winter of 1954 to 1955. Data implies that until the late 1950s, students continued to attend the Lincoln Park School. However, interviews with former pupils indicate that classes may have been held in the church basement prior to 1959. "Conditions were so bad they moved us to the church basement, which was really no better" (L. Glover, personal communication,

February 11, 2011). Jeanette Henson noted that the church even lacked an indoor toilet. School conditions for blacks in Yancey County were astoundingly poor. Ironically, public facilities throughout the county also failed to meet the standards of the state administration.

On July 21, 1955, the Board of Education "ascertained that the existing school facilities in the Yancey County School Administrative Unit were not adequate for the maintenance of public schools within such unit" (Yancey County Board of Education, 1955). The board soon proposed a plan to acquire land for the construction of one or two new white high schools. The decision was in response to the need for the county to meet state constitution standards. To do so, Yancey County schools needed to improve. These upgrades and renovations, however, did not necessarily apply to local black facilities. While county officials made proactive efforts to improve white schools, actions pertaining to black education were restricted to discussion between school board members.

The law and order of Jim Crow still had a tight grasp on the South. Episodes of horrific violence escalated and the injustices of racial discrimination began to catch the eyes of the media. The murder of Emmett Till on August 28, 1955 had a profound influence on Rosa Parks who later refused to give into the *de facto* segregation that had long controlled southern society. Civil rights had become a hot issue, especially the topic of school desegregation. Conversations continued through the summer of 1956 in Yancey County as board members began to confer with each other on the subject of integration of schools throughout North Carolina. Thomas Pearsall's plan to prevent the "mixing of races" was well underway and, suddenly, counties across the state found themselves with

the power to delegate school assignments. Because the Pearsall Plan justified it, School Superintendent Hubert Justice continued to use his authority to keep Yancey County public schools segregated. In August of 1956, Justice requested the admission of black Yancey County students to Stephens Lee High School in Asheville. He also requested that seventh and eighth grade children attend a "colored" junior high school in the same location. Elementary pupils would remain in Yancey County and the Lincoln Park School.

Asheville resident, Pearl Oliver, was approved and hired to teach the young students at Lincoln Park School on August 17, 1956. Her predecessor, a Mrs. Jackson, drove from Avery County every day to teach the group of black students that gathered in the Lincoln Park community. Throughout the mid-twentieth century teachers were often accredited with either an "A" certificate or a "B" certificate. Jeanette Henson explained that educators with the "A" licenses were more certified than those with "Bs." Most of the teachers hired by the Yancey County School Board to teach at Lincoln Park not only held "B" certificates but appeared close to retirement age. "Instead of paying a young teacher they hired a retired teacher for little money. They were out of date… the board didn't care" (L. Glover, personal communication, February 11, 2011). Black education was neglected in practically every sense. In September 1956, the Board of Education passed the resolution to construct the two new white high schools. The first, East Yancey, would be built in the county seat of Burnsville. The second, Cane River, was to be erected in the Township of Cane River. Meanwhile, parents in Lincoln Park continued sending their children to schools across the western part of the state.

The Battle Begins: 1958 to 1959

School assignments to Asheville continued for the next two terms as Hubert Justice was unanimously nominated and elected to serve another term as Yancey County superintendent. Justice's election resulted in continuous discussions about the Lincoln Park Negro School and its students, yet no direct actions were taken to improve the school in the South Toe region. In September 1958, Selelia Griffith and a group of other Lincoln Park mothers approached African American and Asheville based attorney Ruben Dailey in the hopes that he could provide legal advice to the community. A South Carolina native, Dailey received his law degree from the North Carolina College in Durham (later to become North Carolina Central University), establishing his practice in Asheville in 1950. Prior to his work as an attorney, Dailey made a living as a teacher, a profession that helped him understand the value of education. With the assistance of the attorney, the Yancey County African American community sought to convince the Yancey County Board of Education to provide improved educational opportunities for their children.

Some of the Lincoln Park parents felt that sending their children to the derelict elementary school was no longer an option. To provide a better education for their young ones, families petitioned the school board to reassign the pupils to Asheville. Hesitant to comply, the board reluctantly agreed to allow those elementary children who wished, to attend the urban schools, with the arrangement that later plans be made to build a new facility for the "negroes" (Wright, Jr., 1960). Until the assembly of the new school, adolescent students joined their older peers on the buses that travelled over an hour outside of their home county. But not all of the students made the daily trek.

During the remainder of the 1958-1959 school year, seven of the twenty-seven children opted to remain at Lincoln Park while other students continued riding to Asheville. The seven finished out the term only to see their school close because too few students attended. By the summer of 1959, black students in Yancey County found themselves without any local educational facilities. The Yancey County School Board had condemned the Lincoln Park Negro School in 1958. However, the reasons provided for closing the facility were not based on the poor conditions but rather, on the fact that the operation of a school for merely seven students seemed completely unnecessary. The ruling stated that at least twelve enrollees were required, and that seven would not suffice. Dissatisfied with the lackadaisical attention school board officials paid to the issue of education for minorities, Lincoln Park parents started taking the steps necessary in bringing social change.

In the months following Griffith's initial contact with Dailey, movements towards change in Yancey County ensued. It appeared that after years of dialogue the Board of Education was finally ready to seriously consider building a new school for local black elementary students. In June of 1959, the board convened to discuss three possible property sites on which to construct the new facility. One of the plots of land considered was local resident's Emmett Stamey's ballpark field near the Lincoln Park community. However, it was determined that funds for the construction of a new school could not be raised from taxes and that moneys would have to be procured elsewhere. Construction plans were, therefore, put on hold.

That same month, officials arranged to meet with the black parents to talk about the upcoming project. The Board met with Lincoln Park representative Dailey twice in

July to discuss matters pertaining to the impending new school. Dailey, who had been granted power of attorney by Lincoln Park parents, presented a letter composed by the black community expressing their petition to reassign students to "respective schools so designated in their application" (Appendix C). Lincoln Park families had grown impatient and the willingness to sit around and wait for board members to uphold their promises had dissipated. The letter Dailey cited suggested that children were tired of riding the bus to Asheville and that they wanted either to go to school with the white children or have a new school built. The community, under the advice of Dailey, agreed that it would be in the best interest of all parties that the high school students continue busing to Stephens Lee in Asheville for the next year but that the elementary children be admitted to Burnsville Elementary School. Dailey concluded by stating that there was no room for negotiations, adding that he would contact the Lincoln Park community and the Yancey County Board of Education to discuss further actions.

In response to the petition, board members met to evaluate the requests and decided to create a back-up plan in the result that the Asheville City School Board could not allow Yancey County students to attend the facilities applied for. An agreement with neighboring Madison County would be worked out in the case that applications were denied. Further, the Board suggested that Justice contact State Superintendent Dr. Charles F. Carroll for advice concerning the "colored situation." By August officials had reached a final say on the petition for school reassignment; unfortunately the outcome was not in favor of Lincoln Park. The Board resolved that the applications for the elementary children to attend the white schools be disapproved and that the pupil assignments remain

unchanged for the 1959-1960 school year. This meant that elementary, junior high and high school students would continue to attend school in Asheville.

Throughout the South, many white school districts went to great lengths to thwart integration. All-white boards generally ignored the *Brown* decision and attempted to pacify African Americans with promises of "separate but equal" spaces. As a way of avoiding desegregation, many districts made extensive attempts to upgrade and create modern facilities for black children. Pedagogy scholar Lynn Zimmerman (2006) noted that many of these promised upgrades were used to placate African Americans seeking change. White school boards hoped that if offered "separate but equal" facilities they would stay "in their own schools with their own friends" (Zimmerman, 2006; 90). Yet, in most cases, the separate facilities were profoundly inferior to those used by whites. By the mid 1950s African American communities began to draw the line and implement their own methods of resistance.

On August 21, 1959, the Board called a special meeting to discuss the dissatisfaction expressed by Lincoln Park parents regarding the recent school assignments of their children. The following month both the Board of Education and the Board of County Commissioners met with members of the black community to come to some sort of compromise over the discontent of pupil placement. Board officials tried to uphold the "separate but equal" canon by asking parents if the construction of a new school would assuage their uneasiness. Representatives for the black community held their ground, stating that a new school was now completely unsatisfactory. It was further noted that families would no longer send their children to Asheville and that the school board should discontinue the bus route to Buncombe County. The eighty-mile roundtrip proved

too rigorous for the young children. "They had to take flashlights to the school bus stop in the middle of winter," Selelia Griffith said, "they had to leave home at 6:20 a.m. while it was still dark" (Poinsett, 1958: 24). Students did not return home until 5:30 in the evening. Notwithstanding the long days, the weather conditions in the winter often required children to wrap themselves in blankets during the two-hour bus ride. "If you think the winters are bad now… they were rough," LaVerne Glover said in a 2011 interview. The children had endured enough and so the parents set out to do something about it.

In September, when the bus to Asheville stopped to pick up the children in Burnsville, no one boarded (Wright, Jr. 1960). The parents followed through with their collective decision to keep their children in Yancey County and chose to boycott the busing system. According to sociologist Aldon Morris (1984), African Americans generally had few "realistic opportunities in the South to protest against discrimination" (p. 9). Morris (1984) also reasoned that most blacks were confined to inferior, segregated facilities, excluded from the political system, and subject to random white violence. Nevertheless, blacks utilized boycotts as a means of resisting Jim Crow laws. One of the earliest documented bans occurred in Louisiana in 1890. This particular social snub, led by the black organization known as American Citizens' Equal Rights Association (ACERA), challenged the railroad system's separate-car law, a statute that "promoted the comfort of [white] passengers" (K. Lewis, 2009). Boycotting continued in the twentieth century, paving the way for many civil rights movements throughout the country.

The origin of the civil rights movement dates back to the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott in 1953. Frustrated by constant mistreatment from white bus drivers, churches

and civil organizations in Baton Rouge, Louisiana assembled a weeklong bus boycott that June. It was led by the United Defense League (Painter, 2006: 248). The practice of protests stemmed from the participants' desire to achieve full citizenship in American society. Methods of resistance "dramatically symbolized the injustice of denying African Americans access to public life; rarely did direct action alone achieve its purpose" (Proudfoot, 1990: ix-x). The success of such protests, and other forms of resistance, came because of decisions by federal and state courts. Yet, total reliance on the government usually rendered stalled orders. Parents in Yancey County repudiated local official adjudications and confronted the popular ideology that blacks did not require much education by petitioning school boards for equal opportunities.

In spite of the perceptions held by many southern whites, education was highly valued and considered a basic necessity in most African American communities (Malone, 2008). As Woodford observed for rural western North Carolina, "There were no students that [just] didn't go to school. There were no people walking around or being truant" (Woodford, 2005). Families sought educational opportunities in every conceivable way. The bus boycott in Yancey County was not meant to rob children of their education; rather, it attempted to create advantageous academic possibilities. As word spread about the resistance movement, an interracial group of thirty volunteers, primarily from Asheville, formed the Burnsville Education Project (BEP), a multi-racial organization out of Asheville that provided private funding for minority high school students in Yancey County (C. Davis, 1961). Established in 1959, the group generated resources that sent some of the teens to prestigious institutions outside of Burnsville.

Donations placed seven young pupils in private high schools. The boys attended an institution in Camden, South Carolina and the young ladies studied and boarded at the Allen School, an all-black girls school located in Asheville.[2] Woodford, a boarding student from Cherokee County, remembered the Allen School to be quite crowded her first year in attendance, stating that there was simply no place else to go. In her research on the Allen School, Jamie Butcher (2005a) found that the private Methodist institution prepared young black women for higher education and offered many opportunities missing from most public schools, even in cities with large African American populations, like Asheville. But, as high school teens attended private schools, the elementary children remained in Burnsville.

Contributions made by the BEP further aided students, as they supported the development of a classroom in the basement of the local Griffith's Chapel Church. Volunteers collected textbooks, portable blackboards, furniture, and magazines for the pupils, resources previously hard to come by in local black classrooms. Located in the Lincoln Park community, the church offered students a safe environment to learn. However, the learning conditions themselves were less than desirable. Taught by Mrs. Pearl Oliver and Mrs. Raymond Washington, roughly twenty students, ranging from grades one through eight, attended the makeshift school during the boycott. Oliver, who split the grades with Mrs. Washington, set out to prepare the young children for high school. Although the location where they would attend seemed uncertain, the teacher felt confident that her students would continue further in the educational system (Wright, Jr.,

[2] Reverend L.M. Pease established the Allen School in the late nineteenth century out of the concern for both blacks and whites in the mountain south (Butcher, 2005a).

1960). The means to ensure this, however, remained unclear. And so, while children gathered in the basement of the church, parents assembled in the nave to discuss the next step in their fight for equality.

Churches played a central role in social resistance and have long been considered a "bulwark" of black communities (Barnes, 2005: 967). They served as a space that could be used as a forum, offered direction, and disciplined potential leaders; they were dominant institutions in African American communities and therefore provided an organized foundation (Morris, 1984). Morris (1984) added that urban churches acted more powerfully than rural churches due to their access to resources. Nonetheless, even rural churches worked as tools that allowed for communication. Morris (1984) believed that because churches were highly respected, "any program initiated and backed by them had an excellent chance to gain mass support" (p.21). But churches were not the only resources used during civil rights; schools and adult education centers also acted as areas that fostered social movements.

The Highlander Folk School, located in eastern Tennessee, developed three major educational programs that encouraged and strengthened efforts for blacks to achieve their full rights of citizenship in America and "build a nucleus of informed leaders who were able to start and carry forward a plan of community action for public school interaction" (Horton, 1989; 204). The first series of workshops occurred in 1953, one year prior to the *Brown* ruling. During this time, black and white community leaders joined forces to discuss issues of desegregation in anticipation of the civil rights movement. The power of education was used to change society (Glen, 1988). Highlander's second program addressed citizenship for blacks and aimed to teach illiterate adults how to read and write

in preparation to qualify as voters. The third related to the southern student movement of 1960. Up-and-coming leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr. attended Highlander workshops, as did influential figures like Rosa Parks. King's connections to Appalachia ran deeper, however. He raised awareness of the poverty in the area and even contributed to the forming of the Appalachian Regional Commission. King was quoted as saying that, "there are more poor people in Appalachia than there are blacks in America" (Horton, 1989; 191). Dr. King emerged as a quintessential leader in the fight for civil rights, but not all African Americans accepted his methods.

Nell Ray, the daughter of black tobacco farmers, attended Stephens Lee High School in Asheville and later North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University in Greensboro. Ray moved to Watauga County in 1940 where she lived for most of her life. Like many African Americans, race relations and civil rights had quite an impact on her life. Ray believed black and white people "could do more if we tried… we've got the opportunity but we don't reach out and try to live better" (Ray, 1973). One such figure that did reach out was Martin Luther King, Jr. "He was out trying to do the right thing for his race, but I don't believe in marching and doing the things he was doing," Ray continued. Although she disagreed with King's methods Ray appreciated his efforts in the fight for civil rights, lamenting "I didn't know how much he meant to the black community until he was killed."

It is probable that the buzz that generated from regional and national movements more than likely influenced campaigns on a smaller, more rural scale. Shirley Whiteside, the first female to integrate East Yancey High, recalled such events, stating that, "civil rights movements were broadcast all over the news" (S. Whiteside, personal

communication, December 10, 2010). "All the colored people in America watched it, together, with one set of eyes," Henry Louis Gates, Jr. stated in his memoir *Colored People.* But as the nation witnessed the monumental events publicized on television and radio, local crusades materialized off the radar.

Community meetings with Ruben Dailey commenced at Griffith's Chapel in October of 1959. This time, the Lincoln Park community was ready to seriously consider the attorney's advice. Initially, Dailey suggested that Yancey County parents request integration right away. However, many of the families opposed this idea. "I wish we had never integrated. I didn't care about sitting next to white people" (L. Glover, personal communication, February 11, 2011). Jeanette Henson added, "Integration, I don't like it." Desegregation did not always translate to positive change. In many respects, it undervalued the power of the black community and black identity. Teachers, mentors, and leaders fell by the wayside after integration, an issue that created "ambivalence in many African Americans about school desegregation" (Zimmerman, 2006: 89-90). Rural, black communities throughout the South experienced monumental transformations after states seriously considered *Brown* and *Brown II.* Noted by a Watauga County man,

> Integration was probably the biggest… the most impacting thing that happened. All of the sudden [the teachers] started changing the way that they taught and tried to incorporate how [the white teachers] taught to get us used to the way the classes were held. [With integration] the playing field changed, then my father's ideas of what he was changed, my mother's position changed… the whole central

structure of my environment changed (V. Greer, personal communication, March 11, 2010).

In his book *Race and Education,* Raymond Wolters (2008) explained that many whites believed African Americans would shed feelings of inferiority with desegregation. But in actuality, integration had the ability to destroy black cultural identity. For this reason, pockets of black communities resisted integration.

While desegregation had its negative repercussions, it also gave African Americans the equal opportunities they had previously been denied. Segregation controlled blacks in three ways: economically, politically and personally; it was "a personal form of oppression that severely restricted the physical movement, behavioral choices and experiences of the individual" (Morris, 1984: 3). Aware of this control, parents in Yancey County eventually realized the significance of integration and started taking the steps necessary to ensure social justice. *John B. Griffith et al*. sought legal action against the Yancey County Board of Education on the grounds that student school assignments were unconstitutionally centered on race (Wright, Jr., 1960). On November 11, 1959 Ruben Dailey filed the integration suit, taking the case to the United States District Court. Yet, county officials continued to try and sway local black families from integrating by passing a resolution to purchase the land necessary in constructing a new black school. On December 15, 1959 the Board of Education voted to build the Oak Crest School on Emmett Stamey's ballpark property for approximately $30,000. But such a gesture proved useless.

Because the issue turned into a desegregation suit, the NAACP took control of the financial obligations to support Dailey as attorney on the case, since he was a member of the Asheville chapter. The NAACP aimed to bring the injustice to the general public's knowledge; to do so, the national headquarters ran a full-page advertisement in a December 1959 issue of the *New York Times*. The blurb pictured a young child sleeping on a bus and followed with the lines, "Eighty miles in 11 hours – that's a long school day for a six-year-old" (C. Davis, 1961). Although the ad served as an informative tool for readers across the country, its primary purpose was to apply pressure on county authorities involved in the case. However, not all Yancey County members felt the moral obligation to integrate.

White resistance, although less threatening than in thriving urban centers with high-density African American populations, certainly existed in Yancey County. In 1959, two young black men discovered a burning cross at the edge of the Lincoln Park community. The police ruled the incident as a prank, adding that, "whoever did it didn't know what the act meant" (Bailey, 2005: 247). Overt racial discrimination combined with guileful efforts to stall desegregation served as an impetus for the legal suit against the public schools.

By late 1959, the Board of Education proceeded with plans to build a new "Negro" school in the county seat (C. Davis, 1961). As construction began, high school students continued attending their respective private institutions while the elementary and junior high children remained in the basement of Griffith's Chapel. But the *John B. Griffith et al. v. Board of Education of Yancey County* case contested the Yancey County

Figure 1. *New York Times* advertisement, December 1, 1959.

School Board's move to place African Americans in the newly constructed Oak Crest School. Unwilling to give in to integration, county officials proceeded with a pupil placement plan that implemented segregation. In support, the state had loaned local officials $30,000 to erect the new facility. With added costs for equipment and taxes, the total came to nearly $45,000 (C. Davis, 1961). To no surprise, many citizens found the expense excessive and unprincipled. Mrs. E.R. Ohle voiced her opinion in the *Asheville Citizen-Times* stating that, "the maintenance of two separate systems of education in Yancey County is a luxury that the county cannot afford" (Bailey, 2005). Yancey County felt the effects of serious debt with the $600,000 spent on the two new white high schools. Funding for one education system was difficult enough; resources for East Yancey, Cane River and Oak Crest seemed unattainable (Wright Jr., 1960; 252). Due to the grim financial situation of the entire community, opposition to the continued practice of segregation slowly began to emerge.

Local resident M.A. Wright also offered his opinion in the *Asheville Citizen*. He believed that since Yancey County was not "wealthy," immediate desegregation seemed to be the only solution within the county's means to avoid poorer educational facilities and higher taxes ("$2,500 Given,"1959). However, motivation to integrate did not solely stem from financial strains. The immorality of the racial injustices stimulated the push for social change. Mrs. Ohle further expressed her disdain for the continued practice of segregation, commenting that, "the discrimination against any race in public institutions supported by public tax funds is clearly undemocratic and illegal. A two teacher system versus a 25-40 teacher system of education is discrimination" (Bailey, 2005: 248-250). Unfortunately, Ohle and Wright represented a small minority within the Yancey County

community who opposed the use of the Oak Crest School, but they were not the only ones who encouraged integration.

Mrs. Ohle lived in Celo, a utopian community located in Yancey County. Former Tennessee Valley Authority engineer, Arthur E. Morgan, built Celo with the intentions of creating an "alternative way of life and to establish a more satisfying social and cultural milieu" (Hicks, 2001: 5). The utopian precept stemmed from the efforts to remodel a recovering America in the 1930s and 1940s. Morgan's (1957) personal notes disclosed the fact that he wanted children to have "associates with whom personal integrity, considerateness, and simplicity of taste would be natural" (p. 1). George Hicks (2001) indicated that in a 1950 survey, Celo residents expressed their interest in an inter-racial community. However, integration did not come to the community until 1962. Nonetheless, Mrs. Ohle's opinions in the local newspaper ratified and endorsed the unconventional beliefs of Celo, attitudes not shared by many of the local peoples.

Achieving Integration: 1960 to 1963

Officially filed in U.S. District Court on November 11, 1959, the *John B. Griffith et al.* case came to a close in September 1960. The final ruling sided with the Lincoln Park community and ordered the Yancey County Board of Education to integrate black students into its two white high schools and the elementary pupils to Oak Crest School, which had been completed by late August ("Yancey Schools," 1960). On October 3, board members met to do three things: discuss the ruling, prepare the new black elementary facility, and make new assignments for the high school students (Appendix D). The decision made Yancey County the first county in North Carolina to officially integrate its high schools. Residing judge on the case, Wilson Warlick, stated, "one

would be naïve not to feel that Oak Crest was constructed for the sole use of the Negro children in Yancey County, and it would appear that the board is attempting to maintain a policy of segregation" ("Yancey Schools," 1960). Wilson's quote insinuated that the refusal to admit the plaintiffs to white public schools revolved around reasons of race and color. The final verdict derived from the fact that racial discrimination in the educational systems violated the constitutional rights of the African American students.

Integration began on Monday October 17, 1960 in East Yancey and Cane River High Schools. Reports of the event stated that daily routines were not disturbed by the transition and that "everything went smoothly" (Bailey, 2005: 259). But the newspapers' description of the event was the white interpretation. Shirley Whiteside remembered the fear she felt on the bus ride to East Yancey that first morning the schools integrated. "We rode the bus [with white students] and this one white boy wouldn't let me sit next to him. So I just looked at him, budged him over and sat down. But I was so scared" (S. Whiteside, personal communication, December 10, 2010). Newspapers and journalists failed to mention the tension felt by both students and teachers that first day.

East Yancey High teacher Burl Maney experienced a great deal of stress that first day of integration as he was given the responsibility of manning the gates and ensuring the safety and security of students as they entered the school that morning. In an effort to keep order Maney carried a pistol under his suit jacket as a precaution to scare off any protesting parents. Jane Crowder, Maney's daughter, recalled that her father did not have to use the weapon; he did, however, have to "let his coat slip open to prove that he could back his word" when turning away journalists and reporters from the gates (J. Crowder, personal communication, February 1, 2011). Violence never ensued, yet, despite the

orderly transition, students like Whiteside experienced unfathomable amounts of fear throughout their high school careers. But students endured these anxieties out of the knowledge that they served a greater purpose.

While discussing her father, Crowder shared an interesting anecdote that beautifully summed up the struggle to that point. As Mr. Maney kept guard of the gate he noticed a black woman approaching the grounds with a young black boy. Maney opened the gate to let them both in and escorted them to the front doors of the school. As they made their way to the entrance Mr. Maney told the woman that she could go inside with the boy and help him register. But the woman looked at him and said, "No I can't. I've come as far as I can come and done all I can do. Now it's up to him." The first battle of educational integration had been won in Yancey County for teenagers but the war was far from over.

Although *John B. Griffith et al.* was successful, the case unfortunately excluded the consolidation of elementary schools. Young children were assigned to Oak Crest, the new facility built for African American students prior to the court ruling. School officials hoped that its completion might sway parents from wanting further integration. Several parents objected to the county's refusal to consolidate all of the public schools and felt that their children were relegated to a "second rate education" (C. Davis, 1961). Families found multiple problems with the assignment of black students to Oak Crest. The most pressing revolved around the fact that the school lacked crucial facilities, such as stoves and refrigerators, amenities necessary in preparing meals for the children. The size of the school also concerned members of the African American community. Recruiting qualified teachers presented itself as a serious challenge. Seventeen students were slated

to attend Oak Crest following the integration ruling. But parents feared that due to the student population size the state would not permit more than one teacher (C. Davis, 1961).

On August 7, 1961, as assignments to East Yancey and Cane River High Schools continued, the board of education disapproved the reassignment of students from Oak Crest to Burnsville Elementary. Unwilling to give up the fight, the black community, represented once again by Ruben Dailey, continued their legal suit against the school board and requested an appeal from the state. By July 24, 1962, applicant John B. Griffith proposed to refrain from further court action if the Board approved the reassignments from Oak Crest to the white elementary school. Board members refused the offer.

The federal lawsuit sued the Yancey County Board of Education for ignoring Judge Warlick's ruling that the assignment of students on the basis of race was unlawful (Bailey, 2005). Prominent Lincoln Park figure, Mrs. Selelia Griffith, petitioned that the African American elementary students were forced to remain segregated and attend Oak Crest. Further, she added that several of the white children lived within close proximity of the all-black facility yet continued to go to Burnsville Elementary. Griffith sought to prove that this violated the Fourteenth Amendment. Her claim also broached the general question of why all black students had to integrate into white schools and white children did not have to move to black schools. In general, white parents seemed generally unwilling to send their young ones to historically black schools (Morrison, 2004). White families in Yancey County were no exception.

Thirty months following the initial ruling for integrated schools, Yancey County officials found themselves in front of a tribunal once again. School board members

justified the “denial of reassignment applications” with the claim that elementary institutions in Burnsville suffered from overpopulation and that the addition of more students promised logistical difficulties. As a way to back their rationalization, administrators argued to the U.S. District Court that Oak Crest operated as an equal facility within the elementary school system with a qualified black teacher. The gamble, however, was futile. Authorities sided with Dailey and the Lincoln Park community for the second time and ruled that segregated educational facilities were unconstitutional. By 1963, all public schools in Yancey County had reached absolute desegregation.

In an effort to defend the county’s stance on integration throughout the mid twentieth century, Superintendent Hubert Justice expressed a fear of physical resistance from white county citizens. Justice further noted that the people of Yancey County were a “law abiding” people but needed time to adjust to the new situation, a statement that completely excluded the stress young black students experienced. Of the news reports that have survived on desegregation in the high schools, the mood expressed reassured that all emotions were positive, that the transition from segregation to integration was devoid of any conflict. “The students fit right in,” stated Superintendent Justice (C. Davis, 1961). But, these opinions came from whites; when asked if she felt like she “fit in” with her white classmates, Shirley Whiteside denied such a claim.

Negative race relations, no matter what the degree, were not enough to impede the Lincoln Park community from attaining their goal of school integration. Through collective action, outside resources and unmitigated persistence, black students in Yancey County eventually obtained the legal right to attend school with their white neighbors, an accomplishment that set a precedent for the rest of the state.

Chapter 6. Theoretical Analyses and Conclusions

In the late 1950s the African American community of Yancey County, known as Lincoln Park, challenged the segregated pupil assignments implemented by the county Board of Education. Fed up with the inadequate resources and poor conditions made available to black students, Lincoln Park parents sought change and reform within the public school system and its approach toward black education. After years of local and state government attempts to forestall petitions of integration, the system was finally beaten and black students were granted legal admittance to white public high schools for the first time in state history. Theories behind this achievement relied on three agents: the strength of collective identity, resource mobilization, and the concept of black resistance.

Analysis of collective identity, otherwise known as the classical collective behavior theory, indicates that social movements generated motivation through the need to ameliorate psychological tensions (Button, 1989). The ideology suggests that concentrated ethnic communities appear more apt to establish a substantial collective identity than dispersed groups. In 1960, Yancey County's black populace never exceeded more than 140 inhabitants and constituted a mere one percent of the local population (United States Census, 1960). Initially, hypotheses deduced that because the African American population lived in close proximity to one another, they achieved a stronger collective identity; this was a necessity in the execution of both nonviolent resistance and

the attainment of shared goals. However, further research shows that despite the size of the black community, the use of collective behavior did not materialize immediately.

Selelia Griffith, the perturbed yet devoted mother and grandmother who spearheaded the civil rights efforts in Yancey County, initially stood alone in her belief that the schools should integrate. Interviews with Griffith's granddaughter and grandniece painted a picture unlike the one found in most of the newspaper articles and other primary sources pertaining to the event. Jeanette Henson and LaVerne Glover remember Griffith having to work hard to win the support of her black neighbors and family members. Integration was not the shared goal of the black community. Desegregation often resulted in a loss of cultural identity for blacks, a risk most parents were unwilling to take. In the mid 1950s the black community avoided integration and sought a better educational facility for their children instead. But the improvements never came and the local officials who continuously promised those changes continued to enforce policies that ensured the second-class status of African Americans.

Facing the harsh reality that the Yancey County Board of Education had no intention of making immediate upgrades to the education situation, the Lincoln Park community eventually sided with Griffith and collectively agreed that petitioning school reassignment was the only way to fight the system. In 1959 parents decided to boycott the bus route that sent their children to black schools in Asheville. That same year, families came together to request integration. Although proximity did not play a large part in consolidated actions, collective behavior arose out of the response to an exceptional condition. Influenced by the moral obligation to bring social change to Yancey County, members of the African American community pushed aside their differing opinions and

behaviors and joined forces to right a wrong. But classical collective behavior was not enough to achieve integration. The organization and use of external sources proved just as valuable as those found within the community.

The resource mobilization theory refers to the outside sources available to an out-group that "give rise to social movements" and the ability of those groups to manage those resources (Button, 1989: 14). Out-groups pertain to those people in-groups hold opposition to; in the case of Yancey County one could consider the white population the in-group and the black population the out-group. White officials of the Board of Education denied black students equal rights for several years. As a result, parents had to pursue outside sources to help them gain the social liberties they had been refused for so long. Resource mobilization acknowledges churches, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapters, and other organizations that serve as initiators of change.

In 1958, Lincoln Park parents hired Asheville attorney and NAACP legal committee member, Ruben Dailey, to represent the small group of blacks affected by the injustices of racial inequalities in Yancey County. Meetings with the lawyer commenced in 1959 and took place in the county seat of Burnsville at the local African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Zion Church (Yancey History Association, 1993). Due to its size and the size of its African American population, Asheville had the capability to offer an abundance of resources for blacks during the civil rights struggles. Many of the sources utilized in the resistance movement by Yancey County parents came out of this urban center. Dailey emerged as the most effective external resource to the Lincoln Park community as he not only won the *John B. Griffith et al.* case but he also served as

liaison between county administrators and the black community. Once the Yancey County parents' goals had been established, the Asheville attorney communicated the requests to county board members and proceeded with the actions necessary in obtaining pupil reassignment.

As word of the local civil rights campaign spread outside of Yancey County, additional resources were utilized to enable the social protest. The Burnsville Education Project (BEP) was created out of the need to support the black community during their boycott and provided valuable funding for high school and elementary students. The Lincoln Park community effectively mobilized these sources by sending students to private institutions and creating makeshift classrooms, allowing for the boycott to occur. Students were able to continue with their studies while parents stood their ground against the Board of Education. Both Dailey and the BEP were resources that supported the development of the movement. As an NAACP and civil rights attorney, Dailey offered his legal prowess to contest the all-white school board's refusal to make integrated reassignments, whereas the BEP provided funds necessary to continue to fight the system without seriously compromising the children's educations.

External resources with an indirect impact also worked in Lincoln Park's favor. The advertisement printed by the NAACP in the December issue of the *New York Times* exposed the nation to the prejudices against Yancey County blacks by local whites. The year before the ad ran *JET* magazine published an article on the events surrounding integration in Yancey County (Appendix D). These national headlines did not sway the Board of Education's decision on pupil reassignment but they did present the conflict to a larger audience.

Race relations had a huge influence on the campaign for integration, as officials spent years skirting around the issue of black education in Yancey County. One of the reasons Jim Crow laws were established is because following the Civil War southern whites feared what they called black resistance. This anxiety continued well into the mid-twentieth century as whites made great strides in making sure that blacks maintained second-class statuses in a first-class white society. According to Superintendent Hubert Justice, race relations in Yancey County were amicable. Other residents often used the term "good blacks" when describing the local African American community. But it seems apparent that these opinions relied on the behavior of the black residents, that is, whether or not they stayed within the class and caste boundaries.

For decades blacks have constituted a mere one percent of the total population in Yancey County. In 1959 twenty-seven students were enrolled in schools in Burnsville and Asheville. Yet despite these small numbers, white administrators opposed integration and disapproved pupil reassignments. Justice claimed that the timing was not right and that blacks and whites were not ready to intermingle socially, especially school children (Poinsett, 1958). It is probable that these positions derived from the fear that, if educated among whites, blacks would inevitably become dissatisfied with their second-class citizenry and create resistance. But the obstacles whites continuously projected did not have a lasting effect on black communities, as evidenced by those in Yancey County.

Conclusions

Throughout the twentieth century African Americans in Appalachia have suffered from invisibility. This is why the integration story of Yancey County is so remarkable. Even with an abundance of resources, big cities such as Asheville and Greensboro took

nearly a decade to integrate following the *Brown* decision. How had the Lincoln Park community become so successful? Willink (2009) studied desegregation in Camden County, a rural part of North Carolina located near the Outer Banks. She found that the failures and successes of resistance depended on implementation by local families, which characterized the unevenness of desegregation throughout the country. Further, major civil rights leaders and figures, especially those in urban areas, "obscured the leadership found in rural places" (Willink 2009: 4). Despite the fact that outside sources from Asheville helped mobilize resistance in Burnsville, local parents and organizers are largely responsible for bringing social change to western North Carolina, yet have received little credit for their work. Rural places like Yancey County have often been glossed over by national campaigns and have therefore been forgotten.

Morris (1984: 93) stressed the importance of "social and economic change at a grassroots level in the emergence of organized civil rights protests." The African American community of Yancey County began their civil rights efforts with a ground up approach but had difficulty advancing towards their goal of social change. The use of outside resources became necessary. Resource mobilization equated to the amount of resources available to out-groups, or minorities, and gave rise to social movements (Button, 1989).

James Wood and Maurice Jackson had their own ideas toward resource mobilization. They concluded that, "social movements derived from 'actors' rationally estimating their chances of success by using these movements as a means to attain their goals." Wood and Jackson's explanation essentially tied the role of "actor" and community together and emphasized the importance of both in relation to achieving civil

rights (Killian 1984: 770). Further, external sources, according to Button (1989), operated as reactive rather than initiatory. Parents initially relied on their own internal devices to provide better educational opportunities for their children. However, when those tactics collapsed the need for external support became mandatory.

Outside resources aided in bringing integration to Yancey County, but internal networks initiated what exterior materials eventually accomplished. Communities such as Lincoln Park knew their needs and acted to address them; decisions remained within the group to procure collective goals. James Farmer (2005) indicated that communities needed to engage in meaningful dialogue before organizing.

Many scholars associate spontaneity with collective behavior theories. Regarding the incident in Burnsville, this idea proved erroneous. As noted by Killian (1984), Aldon Morris considered the notion that "spontaneity was an important aspect of the movement" as an illusion (p. 771). Morris further noted that although sit-ins seemed unpremeditated, many developed out of internal organization. Communal action, as explained by the classical collective behavior theory, incorporated rational "actors" rooted in a pre-existing organizational structure (Killian 1984: 771). Lincoln Park neighbors came together to discuss concerns and deficiencies within their community. Meetings and measures were planned, not impetuous; the petition to integrate public schools required the work of all parents, the bus boycott arose out of the participation of every African American family in the county, and the decision to utilize an outside attorney necessitated unanimous consent. Propelled by elements of their culture, blacks in Yancey County used a shared identity to fight the oppressive political and social systems that deprived them of equal rights. Cultural theory attributed components of culture, i.e., values, beliefs,

language, to the success of desired results. Barnes (2005) added that, “culture is expected to provide the impetus and meaning for these aspirations.” The small population size ostensibly made these endeavors possible (p. 968).

Body politic also played a crucial part in the fight against segregation in Yancey County. The idea of black uprisings over whites threatened southerners for decades and served as the impetus for discrimination and massive resistance against civil rights. Whites in Yancey County may not have feared resistance but they certainly stood up to social equality. Passive efforts to thwart desegregation in local public educational facilities paralleled undertakings that occurred throughout the South. Yancey County white inhabitants acted with more tolerance to civil rights efforts, as they steered away from the use of violence to defy racial egalitarianism. Despite that fact, the cross burning and a general overt display of resistance to integration showed that opinions differed no more in western North Carolina than they did in urban centers like Greensboro or Charlotte.

Appalachia is often branded as an exceptional region, a place very different from the rest of the country. And although there exist unique characteristics that form “mountain culture,” the history is not as anomalous as some may presume. The myth of exceptionalism implies that Appalachian states were unfamiliar with the civil rights issues afflicting parts of America. But the efforts to bring integration to Yancey County parallel those attempted throughout North Carolina and southern Appalachia.

The story of integration in Yancey County was unique because Yancey County was the first county in North Carolina to fully desegregate its schools. Civil rights in the rural south suffered neglect and obscurity as major campaigns in more metropolitan areas

overshadowed smaller, grassroots movements. However, the incident in Burnsville successfully debunked the myth of exceptionalism so prevalent in Appalachian history and culture. A small number of African Americans in this mountain community endured a long, hard-fought battle against civil injustices. Their tenacious crusade that countered the effects of segregation not only provided educational equality but also evidenced that every great movement starts from humble beginnings. Events in Yancey County did not directly influence national campaigns but they did demonstrate that civil rights was possible in the most unlikely places.

Yancey County After Integration

After the dust had settled from the civil rights storm, integrated assignments continued in Yancey County. In 1969 the Board of Education voted unanimously to use the abandoned Oak Crest School as a daycare center. Today the cinderblock building sits next to a ballpark in the neighborhood once known as "the Hill," or Lincoln Park, as it has been referred to in this thesis. The area known as Lincoln Park at the present time is presumably much different than it was fifty years ago. The curving road that takes travelers to Griffith's Chapel, which still stands in the same location, is lined with new apartment complexes, while the older homes remain practically out of sight. Since the mid-twentieth century many of the community members have dispersed to other parts of the county or left all together. Selelia Griffith's granddaughter, Jeanette Henson, and grandniece, LaVerne Glover, both live in Asheville. Shirley Whiteside remained in Burnsville but now lives on a different side of town. But these are not the only changes.

In 1994 the struggle for civil rights in Yancey County had come full circle. Jeanette Henson was hired as a teacher at Cane River Middle School, formerly Cane

River High School, one of the first institutions to integrate. This appointment made Henson the first black educator in the county (Higgins, 2010). Fourteen years later another monumental appointment was made. Shirley Whiteside's son became the first African American to serve on the county school board. The significance of these race barrier-breaking events speaks volumes to the struggles endured by the small black Appalachian community so many years before. Unfortunately, African Americans continue to grapple with black invisibility in Appalachia today.

Scholars too often overlook African American contributions to Appalachian culture. As a result, black invisibility in the region has supported the myth of ethnic homogeneity. Stories, such as the one of educational integration in Yancey County, debunk the commonly held misconception of Appalachian exceptionalism and illuminate a past not unlike those experienced by other rural communities in the South during the mid-twentieth century. As students, scholars, activists, and local people, we must embrace all aspects of our history. Let us open our eyes and minds, reflect on these significant events, and at long last celebrate the *diverse* heritage that comprises our beloved Appalachia.

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APPENDIX A:
Yancey County Interview Questions

Interview Guide

1. What was school in Burnsville like before desegregation?
    a. Describe the facility and classroom setting.
    b. Did you ever attend school outside of Yancey County?
    c. Describe that experience.

Did the rest of Burnsville desegregate with the schools in 1960? If not, then when did it take place?

2. Describe your experience with school before desegregation. How about after?
    a. How were you involved?
    b. What were the biggest struggles?
    c. Was there an overt white resistance to desegregation among the larger (white) community?
    d. Did you have any fears? What were they?
    e. How prepared were the white schools (teachers, students) for desegregation?
    f. Did you feel like you fit in then? Now?

Was desegregation necessary?

3. What was the local reaction to national civil rights movement?
    a. Was the national civil rights movement supported in your community? If not, why?
    b. How did you learn about the Civil Rights Movement?
    c. Were there any major national campaigns or events that influenced the efforts to desegregate? What were they?
    d. Do you remember Brown v. Board of Education in 1954? What was your (or your family's) reaction to it?

4. How united was the African American community in bringing social change to Yancey County?

    a. Did everyone agree on boycotting the Lincoln Park School?
    b. Did everyone agree on desegregation? Why do you think that is?
    c. Who were the ones most involved?
    d. Were there any white or non-African American community members involved in bringing desegregation to the schools? Who were they?

5. What were some of the resources within the community that were used to fight for equality?
    a. What role did the church play in organizing resistance?
    b. Were there any prominent figures or leaders in the community that stood out? Who were they?
    c. Why was it decided to involve the NAACP?
    d. How did that decision come about? Were there meetings to discuss the possibility of using outside sources?

6. What inspired your wanting change?
7. Is there anything that you would like to add?

Background Information

1. Where and what year were you born?
2. Where were you raised?
3. How long have you lived in Burnsville/Yancey County? (When did you move to Yancey County?)
4. Do you have any siblings?
    a. What are their names?
    b. Where do they live?
5. What other family members do you have?
    a. Where do they live?
    b. Are they in this community?
6. Do you mind to share a little about what your childhood was like growing up in Yancey County (or wherever)?
    a. What was your fondest childhood memory?
    b. What did you enjoy doing as a child?

APPENDIX B:
Interviewee Consent Form

Interviewee Consent Form

I agree to participate as an interviewee in this research project, *Get On Board, Children: The Story of Integration in Yancey County, North Carolina*, a study that will take place during the Fall of 2010 through the Spring of 2011 and explores school desegregation in a rural mountain community in Western North Carolina. I understand that my comments will be audio-taped, possibly video-taped, transcribed, and used for academic purposes, specifically a Master's Thesis to be conducted by Appalachian Studies graduate student Ashley Brewer. The interview(s) will take place during the months of December 2010 and January 2011 and will last no longer than two hours at a time, unless the interviewee requests otherwise. I understand that there are no foreseeable risks associated with my participation.

I give Ashley Brewer ownership of the tapes and transcripts from the interview(s) she conducts with me and understand that tapes and transcripts will be kept securely and confidentially in her possession. I understand that information or quotations from tapes and transcripts will be used for academic purposes and will not be published in academic or non-academic journals unless Ashley Brewer contacts me for my written permission. I understand that I will receive no compensation for my interview.

I understand that the interview is voluntary and I can end it at any time without consequence. I also understand that if I have questions about this research project, I can call Ashley Brewer at (828) 302-1072 or contact Appalachian State University's Office of Research Protections at (828) 262-7981 or irb@appstate.edu.

☐ I request that my name **not** be used in connection with tapes, transcripts, or publications resulting from this interview.

☐ I request that my name **be used** in connection with tapes, transcripts, or publications resulting from this interview.

______________________________ ______________________________

Name of Interviewer (printed) Name of Interviewee (printed)

______________________________ ______________________________

Signature of Interviewer Signature of Interviewee

____

Date(s) of Interview (s)

APPENDIX C:
<u>Yancey County Board of Education Minutes, July 7, 1959</u>

NORTH CAROLINA — MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

YANCEY COUNTY — MEETING JULY 6, 1959

The Yancey County Board of Education met in the Superintendent's office on Monday July 6, 1959 at 8:00 P. M. in regular session. All members were present.

The Board of Education read and studied a signed paper by some colored citizens. This paper was in the form of re-petition as stated in the paper. The following is an exact copy of the written paper:

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

COUNTY OF YANCEY

TO: Mr. Hubert D. Justice, Superintendent
Yancey County Schools, and also
Other Members of the Board of
Education of Yancey County

We, the undersigned, do hereby re-petition you and state to you as follows:

1. THAT we are desirous of having our childred assigned respective schools so designated in their application, heretofore given to you;

2. THAT we feel that negotiations or meetings or conferences are no longer profitable, particulary in the discussion of the building of a Negro school;

3. THAT we do this act voluntarily and without intimidation, coercion or persuasion;

4. AND we hereby this day executed a Power of Attorney to our legal representatives to prosecute action or actions, if our reasonable request and rightful rights are not granted.

s/ Celesta Griffith
Ed Griffith
Thelma Griffith
Porter Young
Minnie YOung

s/ Mr. Mrs. Hubert Young
Charles Young
Columbus Barnett
Christine Griffith
Charlott Barnett

John B. Griffith
Mrs. Junior Griffith
Junior C. Griffith
Mary Parker
Jim Griffith

APPENDIX D

JET Magazine Cover, October 8, 1959

20c
JET
N. C. NEGRO PUPILS
WHO REFUSE TO GO
80 MILES TO SCHOOL
OCTOBER 8, 1959
SYLVIA ROBINSON:
Popular singer gave up
$3,500-a-week career to
start again as a single
Can Mickey's
Sylvia Succeed
As Single Act?

APPENDIX E:
Yancey County Board of Education Minutes, October 3, 1960

YANCEY COUNTY — MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

NORTH CAROLINA — MEETING OCTOBER 3, 1960

The Board of Education of Yancey County, a body corporate, in a regular meeting in the office of the Board of Education of Yancey County on 3 October, 1960, with all three members present, considered the decision of Judge Wilson Warlick, United States District Judge for the Western District of North Carolina, delivered on 12 September, 1960, in the case of John B. Griffith, et als vs. The Board of Education of Yancey County and in obedience to said decision and the Order of the Court predicated thereon, made assignment of the high school students nmaed in the Order, along with the application of two others not named in said Order, as follows: To East Yancey High School - Porter Young, Jr., John Rhom Horton, Marvin Griffith, Patrica Lee Roland, Shirley Barnett, and to Cane River High School - JohnVance Jackson, Kay Griffith, Louis S. Young, Rose D. Roland, Carolyn Young.

The Board of Education of Yancey County next reconsidered the assignment of the minor plaintiffs named or referred to in said decision, eligible to attend the public elementary schools, and after due consideration to the age and the condition of the buildings of the Burnsville elementary school, with some of the hallway space, as well as part of the basement, being partitioned off and used as classrooms, and after giving due consideration to the overcrowded condition in said school, and after due consideration of the Oak Crest elementary school as a part of the Burnsville elementary school system, with two new and modern classrooms and with adequate facilities including large playground, located in sight of and within approximately one-fourth mile from the Burnsville elementary school; and after considering the fact that Oak Crest elementary school is closer and in walking distance of most of the minor plaintiffs and would be more convenient for said minor plaintiffs to attend said school rather than the Burnsville elementary school; and taking into consideration that said school has adequate space for said students, not being overcrowded like the Burnsville elementary school; and after considering the orderly and efficient administration of such schools which have already been in operation for a little over six weeks, the effective instruction, health, safety, and general welfare of all pupils assigned to said schools, the Board of Education of Yancey County hereby assigns to Oak Crest elementary school for the school year 1960-1961, in compliance with the decision and Order of the Court the elementary students, as follows: - To Oak Crest Elementary School - George Edward Griffith, Claud Tracy Roland, Hattie Lee Roland, Alden Roland, Meg Francis Roland, Rosylan Roland, Coy Barnett, David Lemont Henson, Drennon Gerome Henson, John B. Griffith, Patty L. Griffith, Kitty O. Griffith, James Perry Jackson, Nelly Parker, Jeffery Parker, Ossie Weldon Parker, Randolph Parker, Lois Ann Young, Vivian Delosie Young, Stevie Griffith, Patsy Griffith, and Jerry L. Griffith.

VITA

Ashley Cole Brewer was born in Durham, North Carolina on July 18, 1982. Soon after she moved with her family to Hickory where she grew up and graduated from St. Stephens High School in 2000. The following fall, she entered Appalachian State University to study anthropology and completed her Bachelor of Arts degree, with a minor in psychology, in 2005. In February of 2007 she joined the Peace Corps and moved to Romania where she worked as an Institutional Development volunteer. In the fall of 2009, Ms. Brewer enrolled in the Appalachian Studies program at her alma mater and began work towards a Masters of Arts degree. The M.A. was awarded to her in May 2011.