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AT THEIR OWN DELIBERATE SPEED: THE DESEGREGATION OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN BEAUFORT COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

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AT THEIR OWN DELIBERATE SPEED: THE DESEGREGATION OF THE PUBLIC
SCHOOLS IN BEAUFORT COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
History

by
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Accepted by:
Dr. Joanna Grisinger, Committee Chair
Dr. Megan Taylor-Shockley
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ABSTRACT

This project studies public school desegregation in Beaufort County, South Carolina, from 1954-1973. Beaufort County is a community that historians have overlooked in the narrative of southern school desegregation. Just like other southern communities, Beaufort County's school desegregation story must be studied from multiple angles and across time. By focusing on a rural county on the coast of South Carolina, this project asks how school desegregation occurred in areas outside of the 'visible South.' Within this narrative, this project approaches Beaufort County's school desegregation from two historiographical angles—one top-down and the other bottom-up. The first explores how federal mandates and the need for federal funds for schools affected desegregation in the community. The second deals with how the community's character, demographics, and spatial geography influenced both the way desegregation took place structurally and the success of desegregation efforts within the school walls.

This project first provides background information about Beaufort County's history and geography and an overview of school desegregation in the South during the 1950s-1970s. It then addresses the major phases of school desegregation in Beaufort County: a phase of inaction from 1954-64, "Freedom of Choice" from 1964-1970, and "Full Integration" which began in 1970. This project illuminates two aspects of both the "Freedom of Choice" and "Full Integration" phases in Beaufort County: 1) the steps school district officials took to ensure compliance with federal mandates and the community's reaction to the compliance process and 2) how students and teachers experienced school desegregation.

The history of school desegregation in Beaufort, off the beaten path in the 1950s-1970s in terms of its history and its geography, highlights the common themes in southern school desegregation. These include: initial resistance to limited desegregation, the use of states' rights rhetoric to oppose school desegregation, and stark contrasts between "Freedom of Choice" and "Full Integration" in terms of the racial identities of schools and the presence of white flight. Yet studying Beaufort County also illuminates aspects of school desegregation that historians should consider further, such as role of federal funding and Department of Health, Education, and Welfare mandates on school desegregation.

DEDICATION

For Mike

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Newspapers covering the civil rights movement tended to photograph and scrutinize the initial moment of school desegregation in southern towns, which meant that how a community first responded to school desegregation often became a dominant part of that community's school desegregation legacy. Politicians, citizens, and journalists often relied on the events of one day to make broad characterizations about a community's reaction to school integration. In South Carolina, for example, the admission of African-American student Harvey Gantt to Clemson University on January 28, 1963 is most commonly referred to as "Integration with Dignity."¹ When Gantt first walked into Clemson's Tillman Hall, the crowd surrounding him did not shout "epithets or taunts," display "antagonizing signs," or throw rocks at Gantt, and riots did not break out on the Clemson campus as they had at other universities that attempted desegregation.² Yet it is misleading to place so much emphasis on only a small aspect of school integration. School integration is best understood not by looking only at a white community's initial reaction, but by examining school integration from multiple perspectives and over time.

This study examines Beaufort County, South Carolina, a community that historians have overlooked in the narrative of southern school desegregation. Just like other communities, Beaufort County's school desegregation story must be studied from

¹*Integration with Dignity: A Celebration of Harvey Gantt's Admission to Clemson*, Skip Eisiminger, ed., (Clemson, SC: Clemson University Digital Press, 2003), 2.

² *Integration with Dignity*, Eisiminger, 48.

multiple angles and across time. By focusing on the county in the southeastern-most corner of South Carolina, far from Atlanta, Charlotte, Little Rock, and, in many ways, even Charleston, this project asks how school desegregation occurred in areas outside of the more ‘visible South’ made up of growing Sunbelt communities and prominent Black Belt cities. Within this narrative, this project approaches Beaufort County’s school desegregation from two historiographical angles—one top-down and the other bottom-up. The first explores how federal mandates and the need for federal funds for schools affected desegregation in the community. The second deals with how the community’s character, demographics, and spatial geography influenced both the way desegregation took place structurally and the success of desegregation efforts within the school walls.

In framing studies of school desegregation, historians look for changes in integration patterns across time and acknowledge that the definition of an integrated school system differed greatly from the 1950s to the 1970s. They often conceptualize school desegregation in terms of what barriers stood in the way of racial mixing in schools and which actors played the greatest role in pushing against these barriers. It is common for historians to study tensions that existed between state governments and the federal government or among different groups of people. For example, historians have looked at conflict between hard-line segregationists and ‘moderate’ southern whites, a segment of the population that did not support full racial integration in schools but opposed extreme measures such as closing all public schools to prevent *any* desegregation.

In studies of the federal government's role in school desegregation, historians frequently assess the effectiveness of federal judicial and legislative actions, including the Supreme Court's decisions in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* in 1954 and *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County* in 1968 and the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by Congress. A number of studies have explored the effectiveness of *Brown v. Board of Education* and have asked what role it played in school desegregation and the larger civil rights movement.³ Even though historians do often examine government actions, rather than the experiences of those students, teachers, and community members who lived through school desegregation at a local level, they also tend to overlook the role of federal funding in forcing compliance with judicial and legislative orders to desegregate southern schools. The Civil Rights Act made access to federal funding a significant factor in the school desegregation narrative. Title VI of this act reinforced the non-discrimination principle of *Brown* and authorized federal departments, in particular the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), to withhold federal funding from school districts that did not comply with Title VI. Thus, in many cases, federal officials at HEW played a greater role than federal judges or legislators in shaping desegregation in many of the South's schools. Yet partly due to their emphasis on initial desegregation battles in the late 1950s and early 1960s, historians' school desegregation

³ Michael J. Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Risa L. Goluboff, *The Lost Promise of Civil Rights* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Derrick Bell, *Silent Covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the Unfulfilled Hopes for Racial Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Davison M. Douglas, *Reading, Writing, and Race: The Desegregation of the Charlotte Schools* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

studies often ignore the role of HEW officials and the need for federal funding as a motivating factor in many school districts' desegregation efforts.

Historians who study school desegregation often group the South into categories, based on history, culture, or demographics. Two common categories are the Sunbelt, made up of places like Atlanta and Charlotte that experienced significant economic and population growth in the post-World War II period, and the more rural Black Belt, which consisted of communities in which whites "exercised disproportionate influence on regional politics" in the 1950s and early 1960s despite losses in population.⁴ When making these distinctions within the region, historians tend to look for common characteristics within a particular area in order to show how it differed from other areas.

Moving away from this framework of broad categories allows historians to uncover school desegregation narratives that are more easily seen at the local level. For instance, statutes, court decisions, and the potential loss of federal money for education did not affect each community in the same way, and trying to create a federal, regional, or even statewide narrative of school integration ignores this fact. Several historians' studies, such as Robert A. Pratt's *The Color of Their Skin: Education and Race in Richmond*, David S. Cecelski's *Along Freedom Road: Hyde County, North Carolina and the Fate of Black Schools in the South*, Davison M. Douglas' *Reading, Writing, and Race: The Desegregation of the Charlotte Schools*, Liva Baker's *The Second Battle of New Orleans*, and William Henry Kellar's *Make Haste Slowly: Moderates, Conservatives, and School Desegregation in Houston*, show the importance of studying

⁴ Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 1-3, 27.

school desegregation from a community perspective. To varying degrees, each study looks at the community's history and other factors that shaped its path of school desegregation. Taken together, community studies provide historians with the ability to compare and contrast school desegregation experiences and see a more complete picture of school desegregation in the United States.

With only one exception, South Carolina did not desegregate any of its elementary or secondary schools until after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.⁵ Studying communities that delayed school desegregation for a full decade after *Brown* and only took action to desegregate once federal funding was on the line provides an alternative path for writing the history of school desegregation. Indeed, the first three influential periods of school desegregation as identified by Robert L. Crain in *The Politics of School Desegregation*—the climate of “border-state voluntarism,” the climate of “massive resistance,” and the climate of “post-massive resistance,” from 1955 to the early 1960s—cannot be applied to Beaufort County or any other South Carolina town in traditional historiographical ways.⁶ Instead of making any attempts to comply with *Brown* as “volunteerist” border-states such as Arkansas and Kentucky did, the state's leaders used judicial challenges to delay school desegregation in the state. In addition, many vocally rejected *Brown*, including Senator Strom Thurmond who was the main author of the 1956 “Southern Manifesto.” Yet South Carolina's hard-line segregationists did not participate in “massive resistance” in the same active manner that those in states

⁵ Token desegregation occurred in Charleston in 1963. R. Scott Baker, *Paradoxes of Desegregation*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 17.

⁶ Robert L. Crain, *The Politics of School Desegregation: Comparative Case Studies of Community Structure and Policy-Making*, (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1968), 232.

such as Arkansas and Virginia did. Indeed, the lack of *any* school desegregation in the state until 1963 allowed South Carolinians to avoid association with angry white mobs in front of school buildings or hard-line segregationist politicians blocking schoolhouse doors that characterized massive resistance in other states. By choosing not to comply with *Brown*, and instead resisting through judicial and legislative delay tactics, these communities had ten years during which they observed and learned from other towns' and cities' strategies regarding school desegregation. When they finally did take steps toward desegregation, they did so without the legacy of violence and hatred surrounding school desegregation brought on by massive resistance. Thus, in some ways, these South Carolina communities that chose to delay desegregation until the federal government used legislation to force compliance looked more moderate to outside observers than southern towns that experienced the massive resistance of the late 1950s.

Beaufort County also differed from the Sunbelt South, a particular region studied by historians such as Matthew D. Lassiter in *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South*. Beaufort County did not experience the same post-World War II residential and industrial growth that Sunbelt towns did. Though the tourism industry in Beaufort County grew significantly beginning in the 1970s, the area did not experience a post-war economic boom as did the Sunbelt South. During the 1950s and 1960s, Beaufort County was still a part of the rural Black Belt that was gradually losing political power to the Sunbelt.⁷

⁷ Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 27.

In addition, Beaufort County did not have the same spatial geography of growing suburbs that Sunbelt cities, such as Atlanta and Charlotte, did. As a county dominated by islands, marshes, and waterways, Beaufort also differed from much of South Carolina. Because of its spatial geography, “white flight” to suburbia was not possible in Beaufort County as it was in Atlanta, Charlotte, or Columbia. Unless residents wanted to leave the area entirely, they had to stay in place. For these reasons, Beaufort County fits Charles W. Eagles’s description of “unheralded places” and “ordinary communities” that have typically been overlooked in the narrative of the civil rights movement in the 1960s and early 1970s because they did not experience massive resistance, violence, or significant white flight.⁸ In his 2000 article, “Toward New Histories of the Civil Rights Era,” Eagles points to community studies, especially those of rural communities, as critical to enhancing the understanding of the civil rights movement.⁹

A limited number of studies examine the desegregation process in South Carolina. Some of these, including Philip G. Grose’s *South Carolina at the Brink: Robert McNair and the Politics of Civil Rights* and Gordon E. Harvey’s *A Question of Justice: New South Governors and Education, 1968-1976*, focus on the leadership of the state government in eliminating the state’s dual school system. Grose credits Governor Robert McNair, who served from 1965-1971, for leading the state away from violence and resistance and toward orderly compliance with federal mandates for school desegregation. Harvey tells a similar narrative in the case of McNair’s successor, John

⁸ Charles W. Eagles, “Toward New Histories of the Civil Rights Era,” *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 66, No. 4 (Nov., 2000), 836.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 836-837.

West. Both historians characterize these two moderate governors' rejection of resistance to federal mandates and promotion of the need to accept federal funds in order to improve the state's education system and economy as critical in South Carolina's overall narrative of desegregation.

Other works examine the process of school desegregation in specific South Carolina communities. These works include R. Scott Baker's *Paradoxes of Desegregation: African American Struggles for Education Equity in Charleston, South Carolina, 1926-1972*, William Bagwell's *School Desegregation in the Carolinas: Two Case Studies*, which includes Greenville, SC, and Andrew H. Myers's *Black, White, and Olive Drab: Racial Integration at Fort Jackson, South Carolina and the Civil Rights Movement*. No specific study of Beaufort County's integration of schools exists, however, and Beaufort was a different type of community than Charleston, Greenville, or Columbia in the integration period in terms of population, spatial geography, and statewide influence.

To best understand the school integration process in a community such as Beaufort County, historians should examine both what factors shaped desegregation strategies and procedures and how integration affected individuals and schools. Exploring why Beaufort County schools used particular desegregation strategies involves first examining the characteristics of the community itself and then looking at the interactions between federal officials and Beaufort County School District leaders. To address how school integration occurred, one must take into account the experiences of those on the front lines of integration in the community—the students, teachers, school

district officials, and community leaders, who were eager to express their feelings about the integration process. This project examines change over time with regard to school desegregation in Beaufort County, where attendance patterns looked very different in 1960, 1965, and 1970. Studying school desegregation in Beaufort County across these years provides a more complete understanding of school desegregation in the community.

Chapter 2 of this study provides background information about Beaufort County's history and geography, both vital components of the community's character. It provides an overview of school desegregation in the South during the 1950s-1970s and into the present. It then addresses Beaufort County's reaction, and more importantly, lack of action, in regard to *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. This inaction was in line with the rest of the state and was part of a passive resistance strategy that remained firmly in place until the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This legislation had a significant impact on Beaufort County because under Title VI, the county's schools would lose federal funding if the district continued to operate all-black and all-white schools.

Chapters 3 and 4 explore two important consequences of the Civil Rights Act. Chapter 3 takes on aspects of school desegregation that occurred outside of the school buildings during the period from 1964-1970 known as "Freedom of Choice." Chapter 3 focuses primarily on Beaufort County school district officials' efforts to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act as determined by HEW. It examines the tension between the schools' need for federal funding for education and Beaufort County leaders' desire to integrate on their terms. It also explores both how the rhetoric of states' rights remained prominent even as the community sought federal funding and how the process

of achieving compliance affected community members' attitudes toward school desegregation. Chapter 4 then looks at Beaufort County's school desegregation during "Freedom of Choice" from within the school walls. It explores school desegregation from the perspective of the students, teachers, and coaches who experienced the changing attendance patterns most directly.

Chapter 5 begins in 1970 as Beaufort County's schools moved to a unitary system. It continues to trace both the experiences of those on the front lines of integration and the conflict between school district officials and the officials at HEW. In doing so, Chapter 5 shows how complete integration, which began in Fall 1970, differed from the limited desegregation that existed in the county's schools from Fall 1964 through Spring 1970. This study ends in 1973 when a new high school opened in the county and, as a result, one of the most challenging aspects of Beaufort County's school desegregation process—double sessions at one of the community's high schools—came to an end and the community no longer had such a conspicuous reminder of the changes it had experienced in the previous decade.

CHAPTER 2

BEAUFORT COUNTY AND THE LARGER PICTURE OF SCHOOL DESEGREGATION

While most people outside of the state of South Carolina or the Savannah, Georgia, area are not familiar with Beaufort County, a well-known author already introduced this community in its integration years to a much wider audience. Beaufort High School graduate Pat Conroy based his novel *The Water Is Wide* on his experiences teaching at the Daufuskie Island School in Beaufort County during the 1969-70 and 1970-71 school years. This school was, and still is, the smallest and most remote school in a remote county. This project widens the lens that Conroy used to highlight the ‘other world’ that is Daufuskie Island to the county as a whole. In doing so, it explores how an overlooked community faced change and brings complexity to the school desegregation narrative.

Beaufort County’s History

Beaufort County is located in the South Carolina Low Country, a region that differs from the rest of the state. The earliest English settlers in the Carolina colony settled in the Low Country, grabbing what they saw as the more valuable land near the coast, and leaving later waves of settlers to settle in the Midlands and Upcountry regions of the state. Low Country planters found economic success growing rice and indigo during the colonial period. Yet, these cash crops required strenuous labor, and thus slavery became a vital part of the Low Country’s economy and society. After the Revolutionary War, long-staple cotton became the main cash crop of the region, and

slavery remained a mainstay. Though the relocation of the capital from Charleston to Columbia and the growth of the population in the Upcountry took away some of the Low Country's dominance in state politics, distinctions between the Low Country and the rest of the state remained during the antebellum period in areas such as wealth, percentage of slaves to total population, and spatial geography of slavery. This last difference was especially important in the southeastern corner of the state where Beaufort County is located. Here, due to the heat and prevalence of disease, it was common for white plantation owners to live elsewhere, leaving in charge enslaved persons who served as drivers.¹⁰

While the Low Country was different from the rest of the state, Beaufort County was also different than its closest major Low Country neighbor, Charleston, in terms of its history and influence on the state's identity. Charleston has had more influence than Beaufort on the history of this southern state. Charleston's port was much more connected to the Atlantic world during the colonial period and early republic in terms of imports and exports, and thus Charleston was a more cosmopolitan city. Charleston experienced the Civil War as a city willing to defend its way of life at almost any cost; Beaufort fell to the Union early in the war. Beaufort's population has never rivaled that of Charleston. In many ways, Beaufort County seems sleepy and simple in comparison to Charleston. Yet, it is this tendency to be overlooked, not only in the Low Country but also in the state in general, that makes Beaufort County such a valuable place to study.

¹⁰ Wilbur Cross, *Gullah Culture in America*, (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2008), 16.

Its location, geography, status within the state, and population all contributed to making Beaufort a county that faced unique challenges within South Carolina and was allowed to grow and develop on its own terms more so than other places in the state. The events of the Civil War and Reconstruction in particular shaped Beaufort's identity and understanding of itself in the twentieth century. At the time of South Carolina's secession in 1860, the Beaufort District was fourth in South Carolina in terms of per capita wealth.¹¹ It possessed a deep-water port that could support trade and naval warfare, especially if Union troops were to capture the cities of Charleston to the north or Savannah to the south. Beaufort, in other words, was a strategic location from which either side could launch attacks. Barely six months after the war began at Ft. Sumter, Union naval vessels set their sights on Beaufort's Port Royal Harbor. The harbor's location between Charleston and Savannah would allow the Union Navy to support its ships blockading southern states. On November 7, 1861, the two Confederate forts built to protect Port Royal surrendered to Union forces.¹²

As the Union gained control of the Beaufort District, the white population fled inland, leaving behind their homes, land, and slaves.¹³ Union troops occupied the Beaufort District for the remainder of the war, rendering it a Union island in a Confederate state. With no white population during the war other than Union troops and Northerners who came to Beaufort to aid the former slaves, Beaufort experienced the war differently from the rest of the state.¹⁴ Beaufort became a refuge for former slaves. With

¹¹ Alexia J. Helsley, *Beaufort: A History*, (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2005), 97.

¹² Helsley, *Beaufort*, 99.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 104.

the presence of Northerners seeking to educate former slaves and prepare them for citizenship, Beaufort began the reconstruction process four years earlier than its Confederate neighbors and on much different terms.¹⁵

After the war, few whites returned. In 1870, there were 600 white and 11,063 black residents of St. Helena Parish.¹⁶ Reconstruction policies allowed the African-American residents of Beaufort to hold political control of the area, making Beaufort—along with Charleston and Columbia—one of three areas in the state in which African-Americans and white Republicans had control. Beaufort elected 13 African-American men to the South Carolina General Assembly during the Reconstruction years.¹⁷ One of these men, Robert Smalls, went on to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives. Thus, during this post-war period, Beaufort continued to set itself apart from much of the state politically. Even more significantly, the success of men like Robert Smalls created a sense of pride and accomplishment for the African-American community in Beaufort resulting in a “new atmosphere and new attitude” among its citizens.¹⁸

Beaufort continued to go against statewide trends in the years following Reconstruction. Beaufort was the only part of the state that continued to elect Republicans to serve in the South Carolina General Assembly into the 1890s.¹⁹ Beaufort was one of only two of South Carolina’s counties that did not support Benjamin Tillman, a white-supremacist Democrat, for South Carolina governor in 1890.²⁰ Yet, even though

¹⁵ Ibid., 102.

¹⁶ Ibid., 129.

¹⁷ Ibid., 123.

¹⁸ Ibid., 132.

¹⁹ Ibid., 133.

²⁰ Ibid., 144

African-Americans had gained political power during Reconstruction and had outnumbered whites in Beaufort, legislative changes in South Carolina soon eroded the gains that had been made and laid the groundwork for the Jim Crow Era in South Carolina. The General Assembly passed laws such as the 'Eight Box Law' requiring voters to place their ballot in a particular ballot box in order for it to be counted, which resulted in most African-Americans' votes being thrown out, and the June 1882 cutoff for registering to vote for all eligible voters, aimed at reducing the number of African-Americans on the voting rolls.²¹

Even though Beaufort had followed a different path than most of the state during the Civil War and Reconstruction, the General Assembly's actions assured that no part of the state would operate outside of the social and racial boundaries preferred by the majority of South Carolina's legislators and government officials. The Constitution of 1895, with its provisions to solidify segregation and restrict African-American rights, helped further to put an end to the era of black leadership in Beaufort. At the time of ratification of the Constitution, only six black legislators remained in the General Assembly. Five represented Beaufort. All refused to sign the Constitution of 1895, yet their dissent was not enough to prevent Jim Crow from taking hold in the state and pushing Beaufort's black citizens out of power.²² In 1913, Beaufort elected its first all-white town council since the antebellum period. It marked the beginning of all-white town governance in Beaufort that lasted until 1967.²³

²¹ Ibid., 140.

²² Ibid., 152, 158.

²³ Ibid., 166.

This area saw a great rise in African-American political power during Reconstruction, as symbolized most brightly by the political career of Robert Smalls and the influence of African-Americans in Beaufort's governance even into the first decade of the 20th century. Yet the Constitution of 1895 and segregationist legislation affected Beaufort in the same manner as other parts of South Carolina. Ultimately, then, Beaufort and the rest of South Carolina followed a similar path beginning in 1895. In addition to segregation, Beaufort saw significant Ku Klux Klan activity in the 1920s.²⁴ Yet even Jim Crow oppression could not erase the memory of African-Americans' success in gaining rights and power during the Civil War and Reconstruction. These past successes, buried underneath layers of oppression brought about by legislation such as the Eight Box Law, politicians such as Benjamin Tillman, and segregated daily life in Beaufort, remained important to the African-American community of Beaufort and the county's identity.

Beaufort County – The Area

Beaufort is the name of both the county and the town that serves as its county seat. Beaufort County's geography is dominated by water and sea islands, which, before bridges were built, created barriers to transportation and communication. Generally, residents think of Beaufort County as being separated into two fairly distinct sections by the Broad River. 'North of the Broad' includes Beaufort, St. Helena Island, Lady's Island, Parris Island, and Dale. When speaking about 'Beaufort' during the colonial period, antebellum period, and Jim Crow era, one almost always means the town of

²⁴ Ibid., 172-3.

Beaufort or ‘North of the Broad.’ This was the area with a greater population during all these historical periods. The area known as ‘South of the Broad’ is made up most notably of Bluffton and Okatie on the mainland and two islands, Hilton Head Island and Daufuskie. Prior to 1956, no bridge connected Hilton Head Island to Bluffton on the mainland. Daufuskie, where Conroy taught, is still accessible only by ferry.

The two areas of the county maintained two separate school districts based on geography until October 17, 1967.²⁵ In that year, Beaufort District School District No. 1 (North of the Broad) and Beaufort District School District No. 2 (South of the Broad) were consolidated into Beaufort County School District, which remains in place today. The two school districts each had their own trustees, but there was one superior Beaufort County Board of Education. The actions that this board took were on behalf of both school districts. There was also one county school superintendent during this period, who oversaw both District No. 1 and District No 2. Thus, even though there were differences between the northern and southern parts of Beaufort County, the county generally experienced the school desegregation process as one community.

Dismantling School Segregation in the South

In 1910, there were 600 white students and 3,498 black students attending school in Beaufort.²⁶ They attended segregated schools as mandated by law. Though the

²⁵ Beaufort County Board of Education, “In Re: School Districts No. One and Two of Beaufort County, South Carolina,” October 17, 1967, Beaufort, School District File 1965-1981, South Carolina Department of Education Collection, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

²⁶ *Forty-Second Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Education of the State of South Carolina, 1910*, (Columbia, SC: Gonzales and Bryan, State Printers, 1911), Government Publications, Clemson University Library, 225, 251.

Supreme Court’s *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision in 1896 ruled that segregation was legal as long as it was separate but equal, Beaufort spent \$38.72 per white student and \$3.18 per black student in 1910.²⁷ Beaufort’s spending per white pupil was the highest in the state that year.²⁸ These trends continued during the subsequent decades—Beaufort County continued to have significantly more black students than white students in schools across the county, while the schools that educated white students received more money per student than African-American schools. Table 2.1 provides a snapshot of the different expenditures by race in Beaufort County between 1910-1950. The discrepancy between per pupil expenditures shows the inequality that was present in the county’s dual school system.

Table 2.1 – Expenditures By Race in Beaufort County Schools, 1910-1950

Year	Total Enrollment - White	Total Expenditures Per Pupil - White	Total Enrollment - Black	Total Expenditures Per Pupil - Black
1910 ²⁹	600	\$ 38.72	3,498	\$ 3.18
1920 ³⁰	919	\$ 31.48	4,206	\$ 3.69
1930 ³¹	1,055	\$ 83.85	3,458	\$ 7.29
1940 ³²	1,319	\$ 63.70	3,636	\$ 37.71
1950 ³³	1,503	\$ 188.00	4,030	\$ 72.00

²⁷ Ibid., 13.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 13, 225, 251. The expenditures per pupil for this school year are based total enrollment.

³⁰ *Fifty-Second Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Education of the State of South Carolina, 1920*, (Columbia, SC: Gonzales and Bryan, State Printers, 1921), Government Publications, Clemson University Library, 224, 230. The expenditures per pupil for this school year are based total enrollment.

³¹ *Sixty-Second Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Education of the State of South Carolina, 1930*, (Columbia, SC: Joint Committee on Printing, General Assembly of South Carolina, 1931), Government Publications, Clemson University Library, 64, 68. The expenditures per pupil for this school year are based total enrollment.

³² *Seventy-Second Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Education of the State of South Carolina, 1940*, (Columbia, SC: Joint Committee on Printing, General Assembly of South Carolina, 1941), Government Publications, Clemson University Library, 164, 224. The expenditures per pupil for this school year are based on average attendance, not total enrollment.

This dual school system arrangement was seen as ‘normal’ in South Carolina. The state understood that it had responsibility for both systems, and, at the state level, the Superintendent of Education’s office included a position to oversee “Negro Education.” This office advocated for education for African-Americans, but did not view the two systems as trying to produce identical outcomes. For example, in 1910, the state superintendent of education’s report included an overview of “Negro Education,” in which the superintendent wrote that in South Carolina those who objected to education for blacks tended to do so because they believed “the so-called educated negro too often becomes a loafer or a political agitator.”³⁴ He stated that this belief stemmed from the “particular kind of negro education which we have been supporting.” His position was that African-American students should be educated in a different manner than white students:

The best education for the negro is that which will enable him to do best the work which constitutes his contribution to the welfare of the State. This work at present is manual, and largely agricultural. If the negroes in South Carolina are to cultivate the soil, the education which they receive should enable them to cultivate the soil more intelligently and to make it yield better returns to them and to the owners. Practical instruction in agriculture and household arts, in cleanliness and sanitation, with the rudiments of a common school education will mean most to the negro and most to us all.³⁵

This statement illustrates a key point that would continue to support and define the dual school system in South Carolina through the 1960s: the belief that African-Americans

³³ *Eighty-Second Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Education of the State of South Carolina, 1950*, (Columbia, SC: State Budget and Control Board, 1951), Government Publications, Clemson University Library, 240, 244, 321. The expenditures per pupil for this school year are based on average attendance, not total enrollment.

³⁴ “Negro Education,” in *Forty-Second Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Education*, 120.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 120-121.

were not as capable of taking advantage of an academic education as whites and would be better served by schools that taught skills needed for manual labor, agriculture, and domestic labor. By promoting different objectives for whites and African-Americans, the state's leaders helped to justify the need for segregated schools.³⁶

White South Carolinians had used such thinking to justify a dual school system and ensure it was entrenched in the fabric of the state. Thus, when the Supreme Court handed down its decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, many white South Carolinians expressed strong opposition to the ruling.³⁷ Ku Klux Klan activity arose, Governor James Byrnes spoke in favor of resistance, and White Citizens' Councils formed throughout the state.³⁸ A group of white citizens known as the "Committee of 52," which included clergy, politicians, and businessmen, released a declaration in response to *Brown*. According to Walter Edgar, this declaration affirmed "the necessity of separate schools to preserve 'public education and domestic tranquility,'" called for the state to "'interpose the sovereignty of the State of South Carolina between Federal Courts and local school officials,'" and "vowed to resist the 'clear and present danger' to state sovereignty 'without resort to physical strife, but without surrender of our position.'"³⁹ In order to discourage South Carolinians from signing petitions or participating in judicial action in favor of desegregation, these Citizens Councils relied on

³⁶ Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 46.

³⁷ *Briggs v. Elliott*, a case out of South Carolina, was combined with *Brown*. R. Scott Baker discussed Briggs in *Paradoxes of Desegregation*, 87-107.

³⁸ Walter Edgar, *South Carolina: A History*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 525.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 524-525.

tactics that disrupted an individual's livelihood and economic well-being, such as forcing their loss of employment, home, credit, or place to gin cotton.⁴⁰

In addition to the use of local-level tactics to discourage the fight for integrated schools, prominent South Carolinians also reacted with fervor to the Supreme Court's *Brown* decision. U.S. Senator Strom Thurmond was at the forefront of efforts to condemn *Brown*. As the main author of the "Southern Manifesto" ultimately signed by 19 southern senators and 82 southern representatives, Thurmond wrote that *Brown* would tear apart the fabric of South Carolina:

This unwarranted exercise of power by the Court, contrary to the Constitution, is creating chaos and confusion in the States principally affected. It is destroying the amicable relations between the white and Negro races that have been created through 90 years of patient effort by the good people of both races. It has planted hatred and suspicion where there has been heretofore friendship and understanding.⁴¹

In addition to his arguments against integrated schools, Thurmond also argued that the federal government had overstepped its bounds with *Brown*. He called the decision "a clear abuse of judicial power" that encroached "upon the reserved rights of the States and the people."⁴² To Thurmond, attacking *Brown* both as a bad decision and as a usurpation of state power fit with his political ideology.

Not all white South Carolinians reacted negatively to the *Brown* ruling. Author James McBride Dabbs "urged his fellow white Carolinians to obey the law of the land" in

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 526.

⁴¹ "Southern Manifesto," Congressional Record, 84th Congress Second Session, Vol. 102, part 4, March 12, 1956, (Washington, D.C.: Governmental Printing Office, 1956), 4459-4460; Edgar, *South Carolina*, 528.

⁴² "Southern Manifesto."

his books, such as *The Southern Heritage*, published in 1958.⁴³ Editorials in the *Florence Morning News* by Jack O'Dowd asked citizens to "accept the *Brown* decision with grace."⁴⁴ In light of calls to close public schools rather than allow desegregation, the Federation of South Carolina Women's Clubs held that "the abandonment of a system of public schools would set back the cause of education for all our people 100 years."⁴⁵ The South Carolina Methodists condemned the state's White Citizens' Councils at its 1955 meeting.⁴⁶ Given such reactions from various individuals and groups in the state, it is clear that there was no single unified reaction of white South Carolinians, and it is impossible to characterize South Carolina's reaction to *Brown* as either wholly resistant or one of simple inaction.

South Carolina primarily reacted to *Brown* with words, lawsuits, and legislation aimed at avoiding compliance with the Supreme Court ruling. Neither *Brown I* nor *Brown v. Board of Education II* in 1955, which called for school segregation "with all deliberate speed," contained direct enforcement mechanisms that forced the state to abandon its dual school system. This allowed South Carolina to ignore *Brown* without suffering any consequences. During this period of non-compliance, the state legislature anticipated that the NAACP would push the state to follow *Brown*. Thus, in 1956, the General Assembly passed a law that forbade any state employee, including public school teachers and staff, from being a member of the NAACP.⁴⁷ This statute resulted in more than a 75 percent drop in NAACP membership in the state between 1954 and 1958 and a

⁴³ Edgar, *South Carolina*, 527.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Baker, *Paradoxes of Desegregation*, 113.

drop in the organization's influence in the state.⁴⁸ As opposed to other states where the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) filled this leadership void, in South Carolina, students and professors at the state's black colleges worked to keep the pressure on South Carolina's leadership.⁴⁹

Coupled with the state's inaction on school desegregation from 1954-1963, South Carolinians also challenged the constitutionality of *Brown* through the courts. To historian Philip G. Grose, the use of judicial challenges to *Brown* plus a complete lack of effort to desegregate and calls for citizens to "keep the peace" cast the state in a "suitably conservative and combative fight-to-the-finish mode" while "sustaining what was becoming for the state the businesslike image of peaceful behavior and civility."⁵⁰ As judicial challenges ran out, South Carolina slowly began to step into the waters of school desegregation beginning with higher education. After Clemson's January 1963 desegregation, the University of South Carolina followed suit when it admitted three African-American students in September 1963.

From 1954 to 1963, resistance to school desegregation looked much different in South Carolina than in many other southern states. Because South Carolinians had coupled inaction with judicial challenges, it skipped the three major aspects of school desegregation during these years: voluntary desegregation in border states, massive resistance, and post-massive resistance as characterized by the open-schools movement.⁵¹

The states in which certain school districts voluntarily complied with *Brown* for the

⁴⁸ Ibid., 114.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 115.

⁵⁰ Philip G. Grose, *South Carolina at the Brink: Robert McNair and the Politics of Civil Rights*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 113.

⁵¹ Crain, *The Politics of School Desegregation*, 232.

1955-1956 school year were ‘border states,’ such as West Virginia, Missouri, and Kentucky.⁵² When the 1956-57 school year began, more school districts began token desegregation efforts and, as a result, violence occurred in some places. Three communities in particular—Clinton, Tennessee; Mansfield, Texas; and Sturgis, Kentucky—drew national attention for their white resistance to integration, which often came in the form of white mobs expressing their discontent through the use of racial epithets and scare tactics. In Clinton and Sturgis, National Guard troops were called in to restore order.⁵³ These events were a sign that southern whites who believed in segregation at all costs were not going to accept *Brown* peacefully.

The most well-known attempt at school desegregation during the immediate post-*Brown* years occurred at Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957. The nation and world watched as Dwight D. Eisenhower sent in U.S. Army paratroopers to restore order and enforce the *Brown* ruling, which the state’s governor refused to follow. The following school year, Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus shut down Little Rock’s four high schools rather than continue to comply with federal orders. This reaction also occurred in Virginia, where Governor J. Lindsay Almond Jr. chose to close public schools in Charlottesville, Norfolk, and Warren County rather than comply with court orders to desegregate.⁵⁴ This extreme measure of school closure fell into the category of “massive resistance.” Those hard-line segregationists who advocated for massive resistance to court-ordered segregation were initially able to make more noise than

⁵² Peter Irons, *Jim Crow’s Children: The Broken Promise of the Brown Decision*, (New York: Viking, 2002), 177.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁵⁴ Matthew D. Lassiter and Andrew B. Lewis, eds., *The Moderates’ Dilemma: Massive Resistance to School Desegregation in Virginia*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998), 7.

southern moderates who disagreed with “the wisdom of such a confrontational path.”⁵⁵ According to Matthew D. Lassiter, the initial success of massive resistance stemmed from the “failure of electoral reapportionment to keep pace with the metropolitan growth and middle-class expansion in the region’s political economy.”⁵⁶ Michael J. Klarman points to segregationists’ “stronger preferences” in relation to moderates. Klarman also argues that, in the short term, Eisenhower’s use of federal troops actually contributed to massive resistance.⁵⁷ In other words, those who initiated massive resistance did not actually speak for all white southerners but initially wielded enough power and such a great desire to resist that they temporarily became the voice of the white South.

Moderate southern whites objected to many of the tactics of massive resistance, especially school closure. In North Carolina, Tennessee, Florida, and Texas, business interests and metropolitan voters “exercised sufficient power in state politics to chart an alternative path of gradualism and tokenism.”⁵⁸ The main argument used by southern white moderates and liberals against massive resistance hinged on the importance of public schools and economic progress to the growth and prosperity of the South. Since moderates saw the South’s public schools as opening doors to the “upward mobility of their children in a meritocratic and modernizing society,” moderate groups across the South launched ‘open-schools’ movements.⁵⁹ Groups that fought to keep public schools open included Help Our Public Education (HOPE) in Atlanta, Parents’ Committee for Emergency Schooling in Charlottesville, Virginia, and the Virginia Committee for Public

⁵⁵ Ibid. *Dilemma*, 1.

⁵⁶ Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 27.

⁵⁷ Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 408-409.

⁵⁸ Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 29-30.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 30.

Schools.⁶⁰ As they advocated for keeping public schools operational, they also mitigated the power of massive resistance. The open-schools movement, led largely by women, worked to secure legislation that would keep schools open in exchange for allowing desegregation in schools through ‘Freedom of Choice’ or gradual desegregation plans. In 1960, New Orleans and Atlanta, in particular, embodied the trend of metropolitan moderates overcoming hard-line segregationists from rural areas to keep schools open and achieve limited desegregation. These moderate whites succeeded in overcoming the tactics of massive resistance by advocating for limited desegregation that would temporarily comply with *Brown*.⁶¹

As token desegregation grew across the Sunbelt and border states in the late 1950s and early 1960s, many school districts in the Black Belt remained completely segregated. The turning point in many of these places came in 1964. In that year, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, legislation that established enforcement mechanisms for school desegregation. One of these mechanisms came from Title IV, which authorized the Justice Department to file lawsuits to bring about desegregation. Title VI, which stated that, “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”⁶² This allowed the federal government to withhold federal funding to school districts that failed to comply with school desegregation orders.

⁶⁰ Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 45; Lassiter, et. al., *The Moderates’ Dilemma*, 72-73, 108.

⁶¹ Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 403-405.

⁶² United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Title IV and School Desegregation: A Study of a Neglected Federal Program*, (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), 1.

Compliance was not straightforward, however. Bureaucrats had discretion to determine compliance, and compliance was different from place to place, year to year, and institution to institution. Since Title VI affected all federal loan and grant programs, more than 30 departments and agencies had some role in assuring compliance at a range of institutions, including schools, hospitals, and prisons. HEW had the greatest responsibility for determining Title VI compliance.⁶³

Federal funding was particularly important in South Carolina, a state whose record in education lagged behind other states and therefore needed federal money to improve its schools. In 1960, the median grade-level attainment was less than a 9th-grade education as compared to at least 10th grade for the average American. In 1960, South Carolina also ranked highest of all states in illiteracy among its residents. South Carolina's per pupil spending was 65 percent of the national average, and it relied on federal funding to operate programs within many of its schools.⁶⁴ In his 1964-65 annual report, South Carolina Superintendent Jesse T. Anderson emphasized the importance of federal funds for education and referred to desegregation efforts as "progress," since these efforts maintained the flow of federal money to South Carolina schools. Anderson identified three different federal acts that authorized federal funding to South Carolina's public schools: the 1958 National Defense Education Act (which Congress had added to in 1964), the 1964 Civil Rights Act (CRA), and the 1965 Elementary and Secondary

⁶³ United States Commission on Civil Rights, *HEW and Title VI: A Report on the Development of the Organization, Policies, and Compliance Procedures of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970), 1.

⁶⁴ Grose, *South Carolina on the Brink*, 120.

Education Act.⁶⁵ Another statute, Public Law 10-874, provided funding to areas of the country, including Beaufort, affected by federal defense spending. In his report, Anderson acknowledged many South Carolinians' fears in regard to federal funding, but he pointed out that the state's education system had been receiving federal aid for vocational education for over 40 years and for math, science, foreign language, guidance, and testing since 1958.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) produced significant funding for South Carolina's public schools. During the 1965-66 school year, 99 out of the state's 104 school districts spent a total of \$24.2 million in ESEA funds. These funds supported aspects of education ranging from kindergarten programs and libraries to free or reduced meals for low-income students.⁶⁶ Because of the increasing dependence of South Carolina school districts on federal funding in the late 1950s and into the 1960s, Title VI and the establishment of HEW proved to be a turning point in the state, as in other areas of the South. One year after a court order forced one Charleston school district to desegregate in 1963-64, nineteen out of the 108 school districts in the state had at least one desegregated school in 1964-65.⁶⁷ By 1965-66, this number rose to 48 out of

⁶⁵ *Ninety-Seventh Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Education, State of South Carolina, 1964-1965*, (Columbia, SC, 1965), Government Publications, Clemson University Library, 15; Albert Piltz and Walter Steidle, "National Defense Education Act of 1958, as amended, Title III, Annual Report-Fiscal Year 1966. Part III, Narrative Report, Science," (Washington, DC: Office of Education, 1966). ESEA also called Public Law 89-10.

⁶⁶ Grose, *South Carolina on the Brink*, 120.

⁶⁷ *Ninety-Seventh Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Education, State of South Carolina, 1964-1965*, 15; Baker, *Paradoxes of Desegregation*, 159; Paul Wesley McNeill, "School Desegregation in South Carolina, 1963-1970" (EdD dissertation, University of Kentucky, 1979), 17.

104. The turn was only to token desegregation, not an elimination of the dual school system in the state, but it did represent a step toward compliance.⁶⁸

Standards for compliance, as judged by HEW officials, were fluid over time and place. Just because a district had a program in line with Title VI one year did not mean HEW officials determined the same level of racial mixing in the district's schools to be in compliance the following school year. HEW also evolved from year to year. It changed in terms of organization and capacity from its structure at the time Congress passed the CRA. Some of these changes included the establishment of the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) within HEW in 1965, a centralization of power to determine Title VI compliance from HEW's operating agencies to within the OCR in 1967, and the reassignment of a large number of OCR staff to nine regional offices across the country.⁶⁹

Congress gave HEW officials a great deal of discretion in determining Title VI compliance, which was necessary because not every school district had the same demographics and structure. Yet many school district officials grew frustrated with what they saw as changing basis for school desegregation efforts. The language the school district officials knew best was that of the *Brown* decision and Title VI. In *Brown*, the Supreme Court called for an end to school segregation because the Court deemed compulsory school assignments based on race to be discriminatory. Title VI of the CRA also used language that focused on ending discrimination. HEW officials often did not take such a narrow view of compliance, however. Rather than automatically deeming school districts with non-discriminatory transfer policies on the books to be in

⁶⁸ Grose, *South Carolina on the Brink*, 120-121.

⁶⁹ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *HEW and Title VI*, 6-14.

compliance, HEW officials often required more. HEW's standards for compliance sometimes required greater steps toward integration, in the form of more racial mixing at all of a district's schools, a racial balance of teachers and staff in each school, or more thorough notification of parents and students about transfer policies. Based on the non-discriminatory language of *Brown* and Title VI, many school district officials thought HEW officials exercised too much discretion with such requirements.⁷⁰ Yet despite frustration with HEW on the part of some school district officials, the Department did make progress in bringing about more racial mixing, and the number of African-American students in the South who attended school with white students jumped from 1.2 percent in 1964 to 32 percent in 1968.⁷¹

Two Supreme Court rulings in 1968 and 1969 attempted to speed up the process of school desegregation and require an end to dual school systems. The first was *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County* in 1968. In *Green*, the Court ruled that Freedom of Choice plans alone did not effectively desegregate a school system. This ruling said that New Kent County must end token desegregation in favor of a plan that produced "meaningful and immediate progress toward disestablishing state-imposed segregation."⁷² Then in 1969, the Court extended *Green* to apply to all remaining dual school systems in the South.⁷³ This order was part of the Court's opinion in *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education*. In *Alexander*, the Court reversed a Fifth Circuit

⁷⁰ For a discussion of this shift, see Lino A. Graglia, "From Prohibiting Segregation to Requiring Integration," in *School Desegregation: Past, Present, and Future*, eds. Walter G. Stephan and Joe R. Feagin (New York: Plenum Press, 1980), 69-96.

⁷¹ United States Commission on Civil Rights, *With All Deliberate Speed: 1954-19??*, (Washington, D.C.: Clearinghouse Publication, 1981), 13.

⁷² *Green v. County School Board New Kent County*, 391 U.S. 430 (1968).

⁷³ Irons, *Jim Crow's Children*, 206.

delay order and stated that “effective immediately ... each of the school districts here involved may no longer operate a dual school system based on race or color.”⁷⁴ By ruling that dual school systems must end, the Court struck a symbolic final blow to token desegregation. However, as with *Brown*, it took administrative actions from HEW and litigation on the part of the Justice Department to enforce compliance with the *Green* and *Alexander* rulings.

Overall, the late 1960s and early 1970s marked a new phase of school integration for many districts. Most school districts across the South abandoned token desegregation and finally eliminated their dual school systems. In South Carolina, by the 1970-71 school year all 93 of the states’ school districts were “legally and technically in compliance with federal desegregation requirements,” according to State Superintendent Cyril Busbee. Of all the public school students in the state, 93 percent of African-American students and 99 percent of white students attended schools that had been racially integrated “in varying degrees.”⁷⁵ Even though some school districts moved to full integration in an especially disruptive fashion, such as the 58,000-student Greenville School District that experienced court-ordered ‘instant integration’ in the middle of the 1969-70 school year, South Carolina generally chose compliance with full integration rather than defiance.⁷⁶ Historians Philip Grose, Jack Bass, and Walter DeVries give credit to Governor McNair for setting the tone for the end of judicial challenges to school

⁷⁴ *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education*, 396 U.S. 19 (1969).

⁷⁵ *South Carolina Department of Education 103rd Annual Report for the Year Ending June 30, 1971*, (Columbia, SC: State Budget and Control Board, 1971), Government Publications, Clemson University Library, 1.

⁷⁶ Grose, *South Carolina at The Brink*, 276; Jack Bass and Walter DeVries, *The Transformation of Southern Politics: Social Change and Political Consequence Since 1945*, (New York: Basic, 1976), 260.

integration. In a speech to television audiences regarding the ‘instant integration’ in Greenville and also Darlington, McNair said:

‘We have run out of courts and we have run out of time. We must admit to ourselves that we have pretty well run the legal course and the time has come for compliance or defiance. ... We will comply with the court rulings.’⁷⁷

Not all South Carolinians accepted public school integration peacefully—reactions ranged from increased private school enrollment across the state to a school boycott and mob violence directed toward African-American students in Darlington County. But, in general, South Carolinians chose moderation and compliance. John West’s victory over Albert Watson in the South Carolina gubernatorial election in 1970 showed that, on the issue of school desegregation, more South Carolinians were in favor of compliance than continued defiance of federal mandates.⁷⁸

Creating a structure of compliance for each school district was typically not easy, however. In many southern communities, residential segregation made it difficult to create schools without a clear racial identity. Busing provided a solution that the Supreme Court upheld in its 1971 *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* ruling. The increased use of busing programs brought an end to so-called ‘neighborhood schools’ and created unrest in many communities. Many southern whites who had supported limited desegregation when the other side of the coin was massive resistance did not support the practice of busing white students out of their neighborhoods in order to more quickly and substantially dismantle dual school systems. Busing programs in

⁷⁷ Grose, *South Carolina on the Brink*, 277.

⁷⁸ Grose, *South Carolina on the Brink*, 273-294.

which districts bused African-American students to majority white schools, such as the program in Greenville, South Carolina, generally received greater support than those that bused white students to majority African-American schools.⁷⁹ In many communities across the South, white opponents of racial balance sought ways to avoid sending their children to fully integrated schools. In *The Silent Majority*, Lassiter argues that many individuals used the terms “color blind ideology” and “neighborhood schools” to simultaneously condemn de jure segregation and promote de facto segregation.⁸⁰ This stance relied heavily on particular government policies and individual actions in support of residential segregation. City-county consolidation diminished the effect of suburban white flight on school districts with busing programs. But in some southern metropolitan areas, such as Atlanta and Columbia, South Carolina, failure to consolidate produced lower levels of school integration in the late 1960s through the mid-1980s than those cities that did consolidate and used busing programs.⁸¹

Beaufort County’s Schools, 1954-64

Brown proved to be meaningless in Beaufort County. No white and African-American students attended the same school because of *Brown*. As some southern communities, such as Little Rock, Arkansas, made attempts to follow the Court’s orders, Beaufort County made no movement. School district officials justified their inaction using the following philosophy: “It is the task of those in positions of public trust to

⁷⁹ Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 276-279.

⁸⁰ Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 9-10.

⁸¹ Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 276-280

proceed reasonably and prudently and to avoid irresponsible and precipitate action.”⁸²

Yet despite the fact that school district officials did not wish to bring about “precipitate action” or any action at all, they did approve a new transfer policy in 1956, which they believed was in the spirit of *Brown*.⁸³ While the policy did indeed provide a means through which an African-American student might apply to attend an all-white school, or vice versa, it was clear that student attendance remained solidly in the hands of School Board members, who gave themselves numerous means to reject a transfer request.

All applications had to be approved by the Chairman of the Board of Trustees.

The Board then conducted “investigations” based on:

such standards as will promote the best interests of education for the enrollment of pupils, and, without limiting the generality of this statement, such standards may include scholarship attained, age, culture, daily companions and associates, intelligence, whether the education of the applicant and his standing in class better fits him to the school in which he has been enrolled or the one mentioned in the application, and such further tests and standards as may be in the public interest for the promotion of education and to protect the health, morals and general welfare of the community.⁸⁴

If the Board rejected the application on any of these grounds, the policy then provided for the opportunity to ask for a public hearing in front of the Board of Trustees and then a second appeal to the County Board of Education. If both of these appeals resulted in denials, then further appeals had to be through the judicial system. Throughout any appeals process, the student had to remain in the school to which he or she was originally

⁸² Beaufort County Board of Education, “Assurance of Compliance with the Department of Health, Education and Welfare Regulation under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964,” March 2, 1965, Beaufort, School District File 1965-1981, South Carolina Department of Education Collection, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

assigned.⁸⁵ This process discouraged transfer applications based both on the number of factors the Board was encouraged to consider, making rejection a likely scenario, and the fact that applicants could easily be a part of lengthy public legal proceedings. Making sure these two factors played prominently in the policy served to discourage any student from applying for transfer, while the district was technically able to state that it had made available a process that was in the spirit of *Brown*.⁸⁶

During this period, school district officials did not question the validity and constitutionality of the dual school system. The 1956 transfer policy maintained the status quo, and in that respect the School Board's inaction was no different than the massive resistance occurring in other parts of the South. Even though the Beaufort County schools technically allowed for a student to attend a school he or she would not have been allowed to attend pre-*Brown*, the dual system remained unchanged from 1956, when the policy was put in place, until 1964, and Beaufort County's inaction fell in line with the rest of South Carolina.⁸⁷

It was ultimately Title VI of the CRA and the potential withholding of federal funds, not *Brown*, that started the slow process of change in Beaufort County schools. Federal funding for education programs was "sorely needed," according to the county's

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Beaufort County Board of Education, "A Revised Plan for Compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 for Beaufort County Board of Education, Beaufort, South Carolina—Racial Conditions Presently Existing in Beaufort County Schools," August 25, 1965, Beaufort, School District File 1965-1981, South Carolina Department of Education Collection, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

school superintendent.⁸⁸ So under its 1956 transfer policy, the Beaufort County Board of Education approved nine transfer requests in July 1964 for the upcoming school year. These nine students' transfer requests helped to usher in the "Freedom of Choice" phase of school desegregation in Beaufort County. Once the *Beaufort Gazette* announced to the community that school desegregation would take place in Beaufort County in less than two months, it was up to individual community members to determine how to react.

⁸⁸ In a June 8, 1965 letter, Southerlin writes, "The funds on PL 874 and NDEA for 1964-65 are sorely needed by the schools." W.B. Southerlin to Jesse T. Anderson, June 8, 1965, Beaufort, School District File 1965-1981, South Carolina Department of Education Collection, South Carolina Department of Archives and History. PL 874 was an extension of the 1941 Lanham Act and was known as an 'impact law.' PL 874 provided federal funding to school districts affected by federal defense efforts. In Beaufort's case this referred to the Parris Island Marine Base.

CHAPTER 3

AN 'US VERSUS THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT' APPROACH TO ACHIEVING COMPLIANCE

Beaufort County's Two Phases of School Integration

In Beaufort, there were two broad phases of integration, and the narratives of both phases are equally important to an overall understanding of how Beaufort County residents experienced this change in their society. The first phase, which began in the 1964-65 school year and continued through the 1969-70 school year, did not dismantle the dual school system that had existed in Beaufort County throughout the Jim Crow Era. During this phase, integration occurred primarily through the initiative of African-American students who applied for transfers to previously all-white schools under the policy known as "Freedom of Choice," which began under a highly restrictive 1956 transfer policy but continued under a less restrictive 1965 transfer policy.⁸⁹ Overall, the Freedom of Choice phase was characterized by relatively small numbers of African-American students attending previously all-white schools and all-black schools retaining almost entirely African-American student bodies. In 1964-65, less than one-quarter of one percent of the county's African-American students attended previously all-white schools.⁹⁰ This number rose to 3.9 percent for the 1965-66 school year.⁹¹ By the final year of Freedom of Choice, 10.8 percent of the county's African-American student

⁸⁹ Beaufort County Board of Education, "Assurance of Compliance."

⁹⁰ See Table 4.1 and Table 4.2.

⁹¹ *Ninety-Eighth Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Education, State of South Carolina, 1965-1966*, (Columbia, SC: State Budget and Control Board, 1966), Government Publications, Clemson University Library, 128, 132. Total white and black population based on 10-Day Count. "Schools Open Here Without Incident," *Beaufort Gazette*, September 2, 1965.

population attended schools that had once been all-white.⁹² Despite the transfers of African-American students to all-white schools, the racial identity of the previously all-white schools was virtually unchanged. During this first phase, two private schools opened in the county. While these two schools attracted between 198 and 489 students per school year between the 1965-66 and 1969-70 school years, these numbers represented between 4.5 and 9.3 percent of the total number of white students in Beaufort County.⁹³ Unlike some southern towns, there was never any threat of the public schools being shut down due to opposition to integration during this period.

The second phase of integration began in Fall 1970. It represented a radical departure from the first phase of integration because it was during this “Full Integration” phase that the school district completely dismantled its dual school system. In doing so, some schools were closed altogether. Day-to-day school attendance looked different for many of the county’s students. Time spent on buses increased significantly for some students. A plan to build residential housing facilities on one school’s campus had to be considered to achieve full integration. At one county high school, routine school days were abandoned in favor of separate morning and afternoon class sessions. Because of all this upheaval, the second phase of integration saw substantial mixing of African-

⁹² *South Carolina Department of Education 102nd Annual Report for the Year Ending June 30, 1970*, (Columbia, SC: State Budget and Control Board, 1970), Government Publications, Clemson University Library, 172, 176. Total white and black population based on 10-Day Count. Number of African-American students attending previously all-white schools based on 10.8 percent figure given in “Administrative Proceeding in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare National Science Foundation In The Matter of Beaufort County School District #1 and State Department of Education of South Carolina, Respondents,” (February 4, 1970), Beaufort, School District File 1965-1981, South Carolina Department of Education Collection, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 7. This document also states that two white students attended previously all-black schools.

⁹³ See Table 5.1 for private school establishment and student enrollment. During the 1965-66 school year, there were 4,206 white students enrolled in Beaufort County’s public schools. During the 1969-70 school year, there were 4,749 white students enrolled in Beaufort County’s public schools.

American and white students, a discernable end to the schools' previous identities, and heightened frustration on the part of the school district in its effort to become fully compliant with federal mandates. The school system created by full integration, which will be examined in Chapter 5, was in many ways unrecognizable in comparison to the school system under Freedom of Choice.

Since these two phases were so different, it would be imprecise to use the term 'integration' to describe what occurred during both the Freedom of Choice and Full Integration years. In 1964-65, only nine African-Americans in Beaufort County attended previously all-white schools. The total student enrollment that year was over 10,000.⁹⁴ Six years later, as the second phase began, the school district shut down the two all-black high schools in northern Beaufort County, and sent all white and African-American students to one school, Beaufort High School. The building did not have the capacity to accommodate all students at one time, so students attended school in two shifts assigned by grade level. These two scenarios, separated by only six years, represent two distinct phases of school integration. Thus, for the purposes of this project, the school years beginning with 1964-65 and extending through 1969-70 are referred to as the first phase or the Freedom of Choice years, since the Beaufort County Board of Education used the term 'Freedom of Choice' to describe its policy that allowed students to apply for transfers to schools in which they were in the racial minority. When describing the Freedom of Choice period in this project, the term 'desegregation,' rather than integration, is the preferred term to describe what took place from Fall 1964 to Spring

⁹⁴ Beaufort County Board of Education, "A Revised Plan for Compliance."

1970 in Beaufort County. ‘Integration’ implies that the dual school system’s imprint was thoroughly erased, whereas ‘desegregation’ implies that a district was still working from a dual school system framework, which was true of Beaufort during the Freedom of Choice period.⁹⁵

Desegregation Begins

Funding motivated Beaufort County School District No. 1 to desegregate in 1964 and District No. 2 to follow suit in 1965. More specifically, the two districts had to be in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act in order to continue to receive federal funding for education. In a statement addressing all desegregation efforts in the state, the State Superintendent of Education stressed that the Beaufort County Board of Education’s decision to approve African-American students’ transfer requests after eight years of maintaining segregated schools under its 1956 transfer policy was a result of the federal legislation.⁹⁶ As one of only 29 out of 108 total South Carolina school districts to have at least one desegregated school in 1964, it is evident that Beaufort County’s school leadership was motivated more by federal legislation, and the funding that came with compliance, than by the actions of other school districts across the state, three-fourths of which maintained complete segregation in 1964-65.⁹⁷

Achieving compliance with Title VI was a yearly task for the Beaufort County School District beginning in 1965. This chapter focuses on the county’s first attempt to

⁹⁵ Graglia, “From Prohibiting Segregation to Requiring Integration,” in *School Desegregation: Past, Present, and Future*, 70.

⁹⁶ *Ninety-Seventh Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Education, State of South Carolina, 1964-1965*, 15.

⁹⁷ *Ninety-Seventh Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Education, State of South Carolina, 1964-1965*, 15. W.B. Southerlin to Jesse T. Anderson, June 8, 1965.

comply, which stretched from March through December 1965, and explores the process of achieving compliance with Title VI from the perspectives of those with prominent voices in the community, including school district officials, legislative representatives, and the editors of the *Beaufort Gazette*.⁹⁸ The states required school officials to deal directly with federal officials to achieve compliance with Title VI. Reaching the goal of compliance required Beaufort County's school officials to meet changing standards as set by HEW officials. This process was challenging for Beaufort County's school district officials, who often characterized HEW officials as unresponsive and unhelpful. The School Board frequently turned to members of the county's legislative delegation to get answers from HEW regarding requirements for compliance. By enlisting the county's legislative officials, the School Board members cast themselves as helpless victims fighting an uncooperative federal government.

Whether or not HEW officials were as unhelpful and non-committal as school district officials said publically, the county's leaders often portrayed HEW as the enemy of their community. Casting HEW as the reason their compliance status was so often in jeopardy, while at the same time promoting their own desegregation efforts as being "not under court order" (with the implication being their actions should be seen as voluntary), allowed for greater delay in school desegregation.⁹⁹ As the process of achieving compliance grew more and more lengthy and cumbersome for the Beaufort County

⁹⁸ Beaufort County District 1 served the northern part of the county, and Beaufort County District 2 served the southern part of the county. Each had a board of trustees. There was a Board of Education and a Superintendent, W.B. Southerlin who oversaw both districts. For the purposes of this chapter, the fact that Beaufort County technically had two school districts is unimportant. On October 17, 1967, the two districts were consolidated into one district called Beaufort County School District. "In Re: School Districts No. One and Two of Beaufort County, South Carolina."

⁹⁹ Beaufort County Board of Education, "Assurance of Compliance."

schools, anti-federal government sentiment grew as well. One significant result of this was that Beaufort County's white residents directed more of their resentment about the situation toward the federal government and not toward the county's increasingly desegregated schools.

Achieving Title VI Compliance, 1965-66

School desegregation in the county occurred five months before Beaufort County's school officials submitted their first "Assurance of Compliance" report to HEW in March 1965.¹⁰⁰ Though federal court rulings and federal legislation provided the groundwork, the Beaufort County school officials saw the desegregation of 1964 as being accomplished on their own terms.¹⁰¹ When Rowland Washington and the eight other African-American students entered previously all-white schools in 1964, they did so after approval of their requests by the Beaufort County Board of Education and the trustees of Beaufort School District No. 1. This approval was based on a Beaufort County transfer policy that had existed since 1956, rather than a court order.¹⁰²

Using the policy that had been in place since 1956 to usher in desegregation allowed the school district officials to assert that their actions did not result from federal intervention. To the people of Beaufort, such intervention might have come with the stigma of being coerced by the federal government. Instead, the district characterized

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² "Three County Schools To Admit 3 Negroes in Fall," *The Beaufort Gazette*, July 16, 1964.

itself as acting out of its own volition.¹⁰³ In doing so, the district developed the means to both produce delay and blame HEW for unpopular changes in the schools. This strategy involved making efforts to comply, emphasizing the level of desegregation the district already achieved, and portraying HEW officials as caring more about regulations than education.

Studying Beaufort County's efforts to become compliant sheds light not only on the process itself but also on the effect of the process on the white community's attitudes toward desegregation. Ultimately, attempting to gain and retain HEW's stamp of approval proved both difficult and frustrating for school officials in Beaufort County. This frustration spread to others within the white community who thought HEW was treating Beaufort County unfairly. The editorial board at the *Gazette* quickly cast Beaufort's school desegregation actions as exceptional, pointing out that the county "voluntarily integrated our schools more than any other county in the state"¹⁰⁴ during the 1965-66 school year. Since the *Gazette* both portrayed their community as going above and beyond the rest of the state's counties and tied Beaufort's image to its level of school desegregation, community members expressed concern about the federal government, and HEW specifically, not about school desegregation in their community.

¹⁰³ W.B. Southerlin to Dr. Francis Keppel, March 3, 1965, Beaufort, School District File 1965-1981, South Carolina Department of Education Collection, South Carolina Department of Archives and History; Beaufort County Board of Education, "Assurance of Compliance." In the "Assurance of Compliance," the officials begin by stating that its program of education "is being and will be conducted in compliance with the requirements imposed by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 Title VI." Yet they nevertheless are compelled to amend the 1956 transfer policy. In asserting their compliance while also amending their transfer policy before submitting it to HEW, the officials show their strong desire to see themselves as compliant beginning in 1964 even though their action undermine such thinking. Also, they tell HEW they are already compliant; they do not ask. In doing so, the school officials show their desire to control the situation and not leave it in the hands of a federal government department.

¹⁰⁴ "Bitter With The Sweet?," *Beaufort Gazette*, September 9, 1965.

At the time of its first report to HEW in March 1965, Beaufort County school officials had no reason to believe the compliance process would last well into the next decade. Indeed, as Beaufort’s desegregation efforts were in their earliest stages, so were HEW’s methods of enforcement.¹⁰⁵ From the time the Congress passed the CRA until December 1965, HEW relied primarily on “paper compliance,” requiring school districts to submit a form to HEW detailing its current status.¹⁰⁶ One of the forms was Form 441, “Assurance of Compliance with the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Regulation Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.” It was in March 1965 that Beaufort County school leaders first submitted an “Assurance of Compliance” to HEW.¹⁰⁷ Submitting this particular document indicated that the district was already fully desegregated.¹⁰⁸ It is not clear whether school leaders believed the existence of its new transfer policy making transfers easier made the district fully desegregated or whether they were simply unaware of which form they should submit. Whatever the reason for the mistake, the result was the same—on April 28, 1965, the county’s school superintendent, W.B. Southerlin, received a letter from the U.S. Commissioner of Education that rejected Beaufort’s plan. Southerlin criticized HEW not only for rejecting the plan, but also because “no specificity was set forth” by HEW as to why the plan did not meet the standards of compliance.¹⁰⁹ As a result, the Beaufort County Board of

¹⁰⁵ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *HEW and Title VI*, 6.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Beaufort County Board of Education, “Assurance of Compliance.”

¹⁰⁸ United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Southern School Desegregation 1966-’ 67*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967), 11.

¹⁰⁹ W.B. Southerlin to Dr. Jesse T. Anderson, June 8, 1965.

Education needed to “attempt to develop an acceptable plan as rapidly as possible” despite a lack of communication about what was wrong with the previous plan.¹¹⁰

This was only their first attempt at achieving compliance, yet Beaufort County officials already felt frustration with HEW for its lack of assistance in the district’s efforts.¹¹¹ An August 19, 1965 article in the *Beaufort Gazette* portrayed Southerlin as being frustrated with HEW because the department did not take phone calls from school district officials between March 2 and April 28, 1965. He also expressed concern that the letter of rejection Beaufort County schools received on April 28, 1965 was “exactly as some 100 other districts in South Carolina.”¹¹² Clearly, Beaufort’s school officials had certain expectations of HEW from the outset that the department failed to meet.

Nor did school officials meet HEW’s expectations. Their efforts centered on drafting a policy through which the Board could approve transfer requests “without regard to race, color, or national origin.”¹¹³ Yet in doing so, they made no strides toward eliminating the county’s dual school system in a meaningful way. HEW wanted greater integration, not simply non-discrimination. The Department demonstrated this by rejecting Beaufort’s non-discriminatory March 1964 transfer plan. Later that year, HEW officials told three South Carolina legislators: “while Beaufort schools may have complied with the 1964 Civil Rights Act they did not comply with a HEW regulation on

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Beaufort County Legislative Delegation and County Board of Education, “Joint Statement,” in “Lack of Federal Funds Creates \$400,000 Deficit: Tuition, Increased Taxes Considered For Schools,” *Beaufort Gazette*, October 14, 1965.

¹¹² “County Schools Still Without Federal Aid,” *Beaufort Gazette*, August 19, 1965.

¹¹³ Beaufort County Board of Education, “A Revised Plan for Compliance.”

school registration.”¹¹⁴ This statement made it even clearer that the district’s efforts must exceed the desegregation baseline of non-discrimination.

Despite their dislike of HEW’s expectations, county school officials viewed earning HEW’s approval as essential. Without approval, the district stood to lose approximately \$925,000 in federal funding for the 1965-66 school year.¹¹⁵ In an effort to ensure that HEW would accept their next plan, Beaufort’s school officials took steps to better understand HEW’s requirements. In June, they met “informally and unofficially” with George McCown of the U.S. Office of Education who advised that the plan used by Chester, South Carolina, served as a good model.¹¹⁶ Later that month, a representative of the County Board of Education traveled to Washington, D.C. to “work on suggestions” for a revised plan in keeping with those dictated by officials in the Office of Education.¹¹⁷ The Board then used a multi-step process to develop its new plan. After its revision by school officials, the Board of Education examined the plan at its July 13, 1965 meeting. An ad-hoc committee then undertook further “review and revision” of the plan. At a meeting on August 10, 1965, the plan was sent to each board member for more study.¹¹⁸ After all this consideration, Southerlin submitted the revised plan to HEW on August 25, 1965.¹¹⁹ Based on the number of steps they took in drafting the plan, it is evident that the school officials valued compliance heavily and used a deliberate process to achieve this

¹¹⁴ “Optimism Expressed In School Fund Issue,” *Beaufort Gazette*, November 18, 1965.

¹¹⁵ “Schools Open Here Without Incident,” *Beaufort Gazette*, September 2, 1965. From “\$2.5 Million Budget Sought For Schools,” *Beaufort Gazette*, April 29, 1965: The Beaufort County Board of Education cited “school needs and operating expenses totaling \$2,499,510.73” for the 1965-66 school year.

¹¹⁶ “Lack of Federal Funds Creates \$400,000 Deficit: Tuition, Increased Taxes Considered For Schools,” *Beaufort Gazette*, August 19, 1965.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ “County Schools Still Without Federal Aid,” *Beaufort Gazette*, August 19, 1965.

¹¹⁹ Beaufort County Board of Education, “A Revised Plan for Compliance.”

goal. Also, this revised plan showed a greater understanding of what information HEW wanted district officials to include: racial breakdowns of students and staff by school, information about the school board, and a comparison of past and present pupil assignments.¹²⁰ It was no longer an “Assurance of Compliance” plan; the district now used the proper terminology to indicate that the Beaufort County schools were neither fully desegregated nor under court-ordered desegregation.¹²¹

Five days after Southerlin submitted the schools’ “Revised Plan,” the new school year began with an upsurge in African-American transfers to previously all-white schools. African-American enrollment in these schools grew to 289 from only nine the year before. Though a significant increase, this number represented only 4.83 percent of the total African-American students in the district.¹²² The editors of the *Beaufort Gazette* expressed unease with the change. To them, this significant increase in racial mixing in the county’s public schools represented “government meddling.”¹²³ The editorial board did not suggest that the white community should oppose integration itself; instead it focused its discontent on the increase in government involvement.¹²⁴

The 289 African-American transfer students reported by the district in its “Revised Plan” submitted to HEW decreased to 234 by the first day of the school year, on which racial barriers fell at six additional county schools “without incident.”¹²⁵ As the

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Southern School Desegregation*, 11.

¹²² Beaufort County Board of Education, “A Revised Plan for Compliance.”

¹²³ “Hand in Hand,” *Beaufort Gazette*, August 26, 1965.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ “Schools Open Here Without Incident,” *Beaufort Gazette*, September 2, 1965. In regard to the drop from 289 to 234: school enrollment typically fluctuates, especially in a county with a military base; this

school year began, the district had not yet met HEW's standards for compliance. In an article covering the first day of school, the *Beaufort Gazette* reported that Southerlin "expressed optimism" that HEW would soon accept its plan.¹²⁶ However, on September 2, 1965, Southerlin received a call from attorney John Hodgdon of the Office of Education explaining that HEW had rejected Beaufort County's second plan.¹²⁷ The *Gazette* reported that Hodgdon "suggested lengthy revisions" yet was non-committal when asked if his suggestions would assure approval. Hodgdon told Southerlin that others had to study the plan as well.¹²⁸

The *Beaufort Gazette's* article about this development highlights Southerlin's frustration. The newspaper quoted Southerlin as saying, "We had three lawyers work with us to watch our words as carefully as possible to be sure we said what we meant" and that the plan was as similar to the "plans outlined by the Office of Education as model plans" as possible.¹²⁹ At this stage, the Board had been unable to obtain what it said it desperately wanted—clear information from HEW about what it needed to include in its plan. This constant effort on the part of school district officials to ask HEW about 'what to include' shows that the Board of Education wanted to change only as much as necessary in order to comply. Had Board members wanted to ensure compliance, they had the power to change attendance zones or reassign students to make the schools more

study will only concern itself with changes in African-American, white, or total enrollment when such changes are relevant to the larger narrative.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ "HEW Office Turns Down School Plan," *Beaufort Gazette*, September 9, 1965;

"Lack of Federal Funds Creates \$400,000 Deficit: Tuition, Increased Taxes Considered For Schools," *Beaufort Gazette*, August 19, 1965.

¹²⁸ "Lack of Federal Funds Creates \$400,000 Deficit: Tuition, Increased Taxes Considered For Schools," *Beaufort Gazette*, August 19, 1965.

¹²⁹ "HEW Office Turns Down School Plan," *Beaufort Gazette*, September 9, 1965.

integrated. Yet they did not want to change any more than HEW required. So after the rejection of their second plan, they continued their incremental pursuit of federal funding.¹³⁰

Thus, after two unsuccessful attempts, it is evident that the school district officials felt HEW was treating them unfairly, or, at the very least, providing them with insufficient information about how to achieve compliance. The *Gazette's* endorsement of this viewpoint even took it a step further:

It makes little difference to the bureaucrats, who apparently have full say on what is to be or can be, that the Beaufort County school board has voluntarily integrated our schools more than any other county in the state. It makes little difference to HEW that the Beaufort plan was patterned after plans that have been accepted. Looking over the state at the relative smoothness with which plans of other counties were accepted, it makes us wonder if there isn't somebody in the wood pile as far as Beaufort is concerned. It doesn't make sense to us for HEW to turn thumbs down on a plan that is relatively the same as other plans unless there is a further ulterior motive behind HEW's actions.¹³¹

Whether the members of the editorial board believed this or not, their viewpoint promoted distrust of the federal government. Accordingly, if the federal government held prejudices against Beaufort, then the community was justified in not cooperating fully with 'corrupt' officials' demands. In attacking HEW, and to a small degree the Beaufort County School Board for its dependence on federal funding, the editors of the *Gazette* shifted the community's focus away from desegregation itself and toward the perceived

¹³⁰ If federal funding was not secured, the Board of Education stated it would have to close all the county's public schools two months early for the 1965-66 school year. It was also exploring the option of charging tuition "of not less than \$20 per month per student" for these last two months or increasing the county tax millage by 33 percent. "Lack of Federal Funds Creates \$400,000 Deficit: Tuition, Increased Taxes Considered For Schools," *Beaufort Gazette*, August 19, 1965.

¹³¹ "Bitter With The Sweet?," *Beaufort Gazette*, September 9, 1965. It is likely that "in the wood pile" is a suggestion on the part of the editorial board that influential African-Americans might be pressuring HEW.

injustices handed down by HEW. In doing so, the editors also, in some ways, made increasingly desegregated schools more desirable, because the more integrated the schools, the more foolish HEW officials appeared to be.

Beaufort County school officials' need to earn HEW's approval led them to schedule a meeting in September 1965 between three school board members, including Southerlin, and two HEW officials. Following the meeting, which took place in Washington, D.C., Southerlin explained that the HEW officials told them the Board needed to make "minor" changes in wording to make the plan acceptable. Southerlin insisted that HEW officials put their recommendations in writing.¹³² This request shows that Southerlin saw the path to compliance as quite nebulous. It further shows that only six months into the process, Southerlin viewed HEW officials as being inconsistent and frequently changing the parameters of compliance. It is evident that at this point in the process Beaufort County school officials distrusted HEW.

This distrust was further confirmed when the written report from HEW officials Hodgdon and C.C. Ring did not arrive within ten days of the September 20, 1965 meeting as promised. Displeasure with HEW was the main theme in a lengthy October 14, 1965 article in the *Gazette*. By this point, the Board had explored and announced its options if it did not receive federal funding. These included ending the 1965-66 school year two months early, charging tuition, or raising taxes in the county.¹³³

¹³² "Officials Working For HEW-Approval," *Beaufort Gazette*, September 23, 1965.

¹³³ "Lack of Federal Funds Creates \$400,000 Deficit: Tuition, Increased Taxes Considered For Schools," *Beaufort Gazette*, August 19, 1965.

While the issue of funding was the ultimate concern, the *Gazette* covered what it saw as HEW's misleading, contradictory, and unhelpful actions (or inaction) since the process of seeking HEW's approval began. It also stated that Hodgdon "readily admitted that his office was more interested in integration than education."¹³⁴ This quote came to the *Gazette* reporter via a member of the Board of Education and thus could easily have been taken out of context. Nevertheless, such a quote confirmed what those at the *Gazette* most wanted to believe. It helped them cast HEW in an even more unflattering light. At this stage, Beaufort County's elected representatives also were weighing in on the situation. The newspaper quoted State Representative W. Brantley Harvey Jr. as saying, "we feel the holdup of funds is nothing but a recently instituted administrated requirement by HEW," an opinion that was backed up in the *Gazette's* editorial in the same edition of the newspaper.¹³⁵ Harvey went on to say of HEW: "they are neither reasonable or justified."¹³⁶ State Representative J. Wilton Graves expressed his certainty that "the school board has done everything in its power to operate the schools in compliance with all laws."¹³⁷ Thus, the county's school officials, representatives, and newspaper's editorial board members were united on the message they were sending the public: Beaufort County's schools had done everything right, and HEW purposely was making the process overly difficult.¹³⁸ Though they did not go as far as making an

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Since this study focuses on the community experience of desegregation, the reasons for HEW's actions, including denial of compliance, failure to respond to requests, and lack of clear guidelines, are not important to this narrative. For more about HEW, see United States Commission on Civil Rights, "*HEW and Title VI.*"

argument that the county could ignore the federal government entirely, their rhetoric made it clear that communities and states knew how to run their schools better than did the distant government in Washington, D.C.

By the end of October, another county political leader spoke out with more accusations of federal bias. In its October 28, 1965 issue the *Gazette* quoted Beaufort County Republican Party chairman, Harold E. Trask, as saying that one of the county's legislative leaders should have the "courage" to ask the county's U.S. Senators and Representative, "why we have our money taken to Washington and then administered by dictatorial bureaucrats, interested in integration and not education."¹³⁹ Trask also criticized the Beaufort County School Board for having "swallowed the integration plan hook, line, and sinker" and then acting surprised that they did not receive federal funding. Trask's comments, published on the front page of the *Gazette*, further demonstrate that Beaufort County leaders felt that rhetoric that promoted distrust of the federal government was the most appropriate reaction to HEW's continued denial of compliance for the county's schools. To better portray the federal government officials as biased, it was important that Beaufort County schools continue to have one of the highest levels of desegregation in the state. Thus, the more opposition there was to HEW's actions, the more it was necessary for Beaufort County school officials and community members to support desegregation in the schools.

Beaufort County school officials' desire to meet the minimum requirements for compliance led to the involvement of the county's federal representatives. In the wake of

¹³⁹ "Federal Bias Against Beaufort Is Charged" *Beaufort Gazette*, October 28, 1965.

Trask's comments, U.S. Representative L. Mendel Rivers met twice with James M. Quigley, assistant secretary of HEW. Rivers gave a fairly optimistic report to the *Gazette* following the meetings. He stated that Quigley, "“thinks he might be able to break it open this week.””¹⁴⁰ While this was positive news for the people of Beaufort, Rivers involvement sent a message that HEW was only responsive to those at the highest levels of government. Not only that, but Rivers also continued to fuel distrust of HEW when he stated: “the fault lies ‘on a bunch of fire-eaters, who seem to congenitally dislike my people, regardless of what they do and regardless of their good faith efforts to comply with the law.’” Thus, even as the situation seemed to be progressing toward a positive resolution, Rivers and others continued to portray HEW as biased and unreasonable.¹⁴¹

Two weeks after the *Gazette* published the details of Rivers' meetings with Quigley, the newspaper reported on three more instances of the county's elected officials reaching out to those in the executive branch. Two of these attempts—Sen. Donald Russell's request that the U.S. Attorney General look at the issue and Rep. Mendel's telegram to President Lyndon B. Johnson asking for his assistance—seemed to have little effect.¹⁴² However, a meeting between three South Carolina legislators, Rep. Harvey, Rep. Graves, and Sen. James M. Waddell Jr., and HEW officials in Washington, D.C. produced some answers. Harvey's report of the meeting to the *Gazette* included his belief that the school funds hung in a “very delicate balance.”¹⁴³ This insinuated that Beaufort's fate continued to be in the hands of fickle individuals at HEW. However,

¹⁴⁰ “Federal School Funds May Be Released Soon,” *Beaufort Gazette*, November 4, 1965.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² “Optimism Expressed In School Fund Issue,” *Beaufort Gazette*, November 18, 1965.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

Harvey's report to the newspaper differed from previous reports of similar meetings. It contained specifics about why HEW officials continued to withhold federal funds. The key was how school officials disseminated information about "Freedom of Choice" in the county. HEW officials told Harvey that the department's regulations required that "each student be given a letter stating that a student can register at any school of his choice."¹⁴⁴ Instead, the Board of Education had informed the public of school choice via the county's newspapers.¹⁴⁵

The details of this particular meeting between HEW officials and Beaufort County's legislative delegates fanned the flames of distrust for federal bureaucrats among those in Beaufort. County leaders leaned heavily on the language of states' rights to discredit HEW's actions. In its November 24, 1965 issue, the *Gazette's* editorial board continued to express its negative opinion of the federal government and, specifically, federal bureaucracies. The editorial board described the "usurpation of powers many government bureaucracies are now assuming."¹⁴⁶ It pointed specifically to HEW's assertion that Beaufort County schools need to comply not only with Title VI but also with HEW regulations. To the editorial board at the *Gazette*, this amounted to a situation where the "law doesn't mean a thing."¹⁴⁷ Federal bureaucracy was infringing on the rights of the "plain, ordinary, confused citizen," and these citizens needed greater protection from bureaucratic actions.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ "Ombudsman," *Beaufort Gazette*, November 24, 1965.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

Ultimately, HEW deemed Beaufort County to be in compliance and released \$1.2 million in federal funds to Beaufort County's schools. The announcement came in December 1965, nine months after school officials sent their first plan to HEW. Southerlin highlighted the length of the process in his message to the people of Beaufort County, who he said had been "so patient, considerate and encouraging during these long months of waiting."¹⁴⁹ Additionally, Southerlin and School Board Member James G. Thomas gave credit to Beaufort County's federal and state lawmakers who, they believed, played a crucial role in helping the county's schools achieve compliance.¹⁵⁰ Yet happiness about receiving the federal funding for schools was tempered with trepidation about what was to come.

When Henry Loomis, acting Education Commissioner, announced the approval of Beaufort County schools' desegregation plan, he made it clear the approval applied only to the current school year. As for the following school year, Loomis stated the current "determination of adequacy does not apply to any provisions of the plan which apply to or effect [sic] the 1966-67 school year, such as the provisions for the registration for 1966-67 to be conducted in the spring of 1966 or faculty assignments for 1966-67."¹⁵¹ His statement highlighted the fact that standards were likely to change, particularly regarding an aspect of the county's schools that had not yet been affected: faculty assignments. Since such changes originated with HEW officials, not Congress, the *Gazette's* editorial board took yet another opportunity to characterize HEW as the enemy.

¹⁴⁹ "County School Plan Approved by HEW," *Beaufort Gazette*, December 16, 1965.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

The newspaper wrote: “HEW knows the bureaucrats are in the driver’s seat and that they plan to follow the route they want.”¹⁵² This statement was part of an editorial, not unlike many others written throughout the nine-month process, that warned of the dangers of bureaucrats and federal government power but made no mention of school desegregation itself.¹⁵³

To many in Beaufort County, HEW was the epitome of what they disliked about the federal government: large, made up of non-elected officials, wielding great power, seemingly able to change the rules as they went, and professing to know better than Beaufortonians what was best for their community. As month after month passed between March and December of 1965, HEW’s actions served to reinforce these beliefs about the federal government. Beaufort County’s leaders grew frustrated at what they saw as HEW’s lack of transparency in explaining minimum requirements for compliance. Community members, who felt they deserved the “whole story” from HEW, also felt this frustration.¹⁵⁴ Yet with HEW as a target during the “Freedom of Choice” years, school desegregation faded into the background in a way that it might not have had HEW approved Beaufort County’s initial plan for compliance. School desegregation certainly remained important to the teachers and students whose stories are presented in the following chapter, yet outside of the school buildings the feeling was different. Because so much money was at stake, because the Beaufort County Board of Education seemed somewhat helpless in the face of HEW, and because Beaufort County’s most influential

¹⁵² “School Funds,” *Beaufort Gazette*, December 16, 1965.

¹⁵³ “School Funds,” *Beaufort Gazette*, December 16, 1965. See also: “Bitter With The Sweet?,” *Beaufort Gazette*, September 9, 1965; “Our Public Schools,” *Beaufort Gazette*, October 14, 1965; “Federal Aid,” *Beaufort Gazette*, October 28, 1965; “Ombudsman,” *Beaufort Gazette*, November 24 1965.

¹⁵⁴ Margaret M. McEachern, “Letter to the Editor,” *Beaufort Gazette*, May 5, 1966.

legislators seemed to be the only ones capable of pushing the county's schools into the category of compliance, HEW shaped school desegregation in Beaufort County in numerous ways. As the "Freedom of Choice" years continued, HEW's regulations dictated the way Beaufort desegregated, including desegregating school faculty and staff. HEW's requirements and guidelines pushed Beaufort County's schools past anti-discrimination and into greater racial mixing. But in forcing these significant changes and often leaving the school officials without answers to the questions they asked, HEW also made the community more tolerant of desegregated schools by making the federal government the target.¹⁵⁵

Compliance on HEW's Terms

After HEW reorganized in 1966 and assigned a great number of staff members to its regional offices, the department had greater capacity to conduct on-site reviews. This meant that it could offer more detail to districts, and school officials could no longer accurately characterize HEW as distant and unhelpful. After receiving Beaufort's latest plan for compliance in 1968, a HEW official visited Beaufort for an on-site review that fall. Overall, the review found that the Beaufort County school district officials were not taking adequate steps to eliminate the dual school system. In a 3-page letter from Dewey

¹⁵⁵ Faculty and staff desegregation discussed in Harold Howe II, U.S. Commissioner of Education, to W. B. Southerlin, Beaufort County School Superintendent," June 6, 1966, Beaufort, School District File 1965-1981, South Carolina Department of Education Collection, South Carolina Department of Archives and History. Williams writes: "Our staff is giving priority to those districts which appear to have the most severe problems. Your school district is not in the group of districts receiving this first review priority.... In view, however, of the possibility that our review may reveal lack of adequate action on your part to desegregate your schools, you should discuss with your school board as soon as possible the further steps you could take before school opens to make more progress toward the elimination of the dual system in your district."

E. Dodds, Education Branch Chief at the Office of Civil Rights (OCR), sent November 12, 1968 to Beaufort County school superintendent, Walter Trammell, Dodds provided Trammell with five detailed findings that the Board of Education should act upon in order to achieve an “expeditious elimination of the of the dual structure.”¹⁵⁶ Dodds’ letter made it clear that it was the Board of Education’s responsibility to create a unitary system over the next two years, beginning first with elementary schools in 1969 and then ensuring it totally eliminated the dual school system by 1970-71. The tone of his letter left no doubt that HEW was unwilling to deal with excuses for non-compliance from Beaufort County. For example, even though Beaufort hoped to receive legislative funding to build another high school in the northern part of the county, HEW demanded Beaufort submit an alternate plan in case construction could not be funded or was not finished by the start of the 1970-71 school year.¹⁵⁷

As Freedom of Choice reached its final two years, Beaufort County school officials found themselves not only less able to blame HEW for their own non-compliance (the district was “now fully aware of what would constitute an acceptable plan,” according to Dodds at the OCR) but also facing the prospect of full integration.¹⁵⁸ As Dodds made clear in his November 1968 letter to Superintendent Trammel, even the failure to submit an amended plan by the stated deadline would result in “administrative proceedings” against the district. The Supreme Court’s rulings in *Green* and *Holmes* in

¹⁵⁶ Dewey E. Dodds, Chief, Education Branch, Office for Civil Rights to Dr. Walter Trammell, Superintendent, Beaufort County School District, November 12, 1968, Beaufort, School District File 1965-1981, South Carolina Department of Education Collection, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

1968 and 1969, respectively, gave HEW's efforts to eliminate the South's dual school systems even greater legitimacy. Beaufort school officials watched on as the combined efforts of the courts and HEW forced two South Carolina school districts into 'instant integration' in the middle of the 1968-69 school year. If Beaufort wanted to have some control over the way its schools transitioned into full integration, it needed to play by HEW's rules. This is not to say that Beaufort County school officials did not continue to push back against some of HEW's demands. But, as the 1969-70 school year drew to a close, the Beaufort County School District was poised to take on the challenges of full integration. Beaufort County found itself backed into a corner by a combination of HEW's demands, its dependence on federal funding for education, the path Governor McNair set for the state, and its own moderate self-image. Full integration was the only option that remained for the district if it wanted to continue to receive federal funds.

CHAPTER 4

FREEDOM OF CHOICE IN THE SCHOOLS

While the previous chapter explored how school district leaders' interactions with HEW officials shaped school desegregation in the county, this chapter examines the Freedom of Choice years from the perspective of the students, teachers, and coaches who experienced it most directly. Indeed, historians describe school desegregation more completely when they explore the school-level changes that resulted from federal mandates. In Beaufort County these initial changes to the dual school system occurred over a two-year period. First, the schools in the more heavily populated, northern part of the county desegregated in 1964. At the time, these schools were part of Beaufort County School District No. 1. The following year, one school in Beaufort County School District No. 2, in the southern part of the county, desegregated.

“Might as Well Get This Thing Out of the Way”: Freedom of Choice Inside the School Walls

Rowland Washington was one of the first nine African-American students to attend all-white schools under Beaufort County's Freedom of Choice policy. His father, a lawyer and local civil rights leader, submitted his son's transfer application to the Beaufort County Board of Education without his son's knowledge. It was only after the Board of Education approved the transfer on July 14, 1964 that Washington learned he would be attending an all-white school that fall.¹⁵⁹ On the morning of August 31, 1964,

¹⁵⁹ “Three County Schools To Admit 3 Negroes in Fall,” *Beaufort Gazette*, July 16, 1964; Rowland Washington, interview by author, August 12, 2009.

Washington’s father drove him to Beaufort High School. As he pulled up to the school, his father offered to accompany him inside the building, but Washington, a junior, refused. He thought he could manage just fine on his own. Looking from the car to the school building on that first day of school, he remembers thinking, “I might as well get this thing out of the way right now.” He compares his entrance to reciting a poem in front of an audience: “I was a little nervous about it, but once you walk through that door, or you open your mouth, or whatever it was you had to say, once it happens, it was over with.”¹⁶⁰ As Washington entered the building, teacher Gene Norris met him at the door as a group of students looked on.¹⁶¹ Without incident, Washington proceeded on to class, the first African-American student to attend the all-white Beaufort High School.¹⁶²

Table 4.1 – North of the Broad School Enrollment By Race, 1965-66¹⁶³

Schools that traditionally had all-black enrollment			
School	Grades	White Enrollment	Black Enrollment
Broad River Elementary	1-6	0	719
Dale Elementary	1-6	0	719
Lady’s Island Elementary	1-6	0	443
Robert Smalls Elementary	1-6	0	367
Robert Smalls Junior High	7-8	0	502
Robert Smalls Senior High	9-12	0	945
St. Helena	1-12	0	1536
Total		0	5,231

¹⁶⁰ Rowland Washington, interview by author, August 12, 2009.

¹⁶¹ Margaret Rushton, ed., “Look Back, 1965-1972, Civil Triumph: The Integration of Beaufort High School,” (Holding of Beaufort County, South Carolina, Public Library System, 2002), 4.

¹⁶² “School Opens,” *Beaufort Gazette*, September 3, 1964.

¹⁶³ Beaufort County Board of Education, “A Revised Plan for Compliance.”

Schools that traditionally had all–white enrollment			
School	Grades	White Enrollment	Black Enrollment
Beaufort Elementary	1-6	493	2
Beaufort Junior High	7-8	715	0
Beaufort Senior High	9-12	1110	1
Battery Creek Elementary	1-6	545	0
Lobeco Elementary	1-6	43	0
Mossy Oaks Elementary	1-6	813	5
Port Royal Elementary	1-6	175	1
Total		3,894	9

Table 4.2 – South of the Broad School Enrollment By Race, 1965-66¹⁶⁴

Schools that traditionally had all–black enrollment			
School	Grades	White Enrollment	Black Enrollment
Daufuskie Elementary	1-6	0	27
Hilton Head Elementary	1-6	0	220
Michael C. Riley	1-12	0	507
Total		0	754
Schools that traditionally had all–white enrollment ¹⁶⁵			
School	Grades	White Enrollment	Black Enrollment
Bluffton School	1-12	272	0

Beaufort County, South Carolina, experienced public school integration in a very different manner than southern communities that made national headlines. On that first day of school in 1964, there were no angry white mobs, no police barricades, and no politicians blocking the door to the school. Yet the initial moment of integration and all

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

the efforts by government entities and activists that led up to Washington's entrance into Beaufort High School only represent a part of the integration story. These efforts dealt primarily with access and succeeded in paving the road to integration. However, since there was no single national model for integration and each town experienced integration differently, the process of bringing African-American and white students together in the same classrooms is best understood as a community story. Because of its history, its location, and its demographics, Beaufort County's identity was distinct from that of other South Carolina counties. Beaufort County residents saw their community as 'moderate' based in part on the community's history of African-American leadership before Jim Crow, the presence of a desegregated Marine Corps base on Parris Island in northern Beaufort County, and the fact that it was not uncommon for whites and African-Americans to live in integrated neighborhoods in the town of Beaufort.¹⁶⁶ This moderate self-image helps to explain the lack of significant resistance to Freedom of Choice.

When the school board announced its approval of the nine African-American students' transfer requests in July 1964, the announcement received limited attention in the town of Beaufort's weekly newspaper, the *Beaufort Gazette*. Even though the newspaper ran a number of articles earlier in the year in which legislators criticized the Civil Rights Act, the *Gazette* paid minimal attention to the county schools' upcoming desegregation.¹⁶⁷ The first headline appeared on the front page of the *Gazette*'s July 16, 1964 issue: "White County Schools to Admit 3 Negroes in Fall." The 11-paragraph

¹⁶⁶ Rowland Washington, interview by author, August 12, 2009; Charlotte Brown Interview, interview by author, August 11, 2009; Lois Jenkins, interview by author, August 14, 2009.

¹⁶⁷ Some of these articles include: "Johnston Says Civil Rights Bill Unconstitutional," *Beaufort Gazette*, April 2, 1964; "Strom Thurmond: 'Civil Rights' And Communism," *Beaufort Gazette*, April 30, 1964.

article did not stray from the most basic facts of who, where, when, and under what policy, and did not include any opinions about the situation either from the reporter or individuals interviewed.¹⁶⁸ Nowhere else in the issue was the event mentioned. If the upcoming desegregation of some of Beaufort's schools was of concern to the white community in Beaufort, it was not expressed in the newspaper. Nor was school desegregation mentioned in any section of the next five issues of the *Gazette*. The next news story to mention the upcoming desegregation was a report on the opening of the school year that ran August 27, 1964. This 19-paragraph article devoted only two sentences in its second paragraph to reporting on the transfer students.¹⁶⁹ Thus, for a newspaper that did not shy away from printing anti-Civil Rights legislation viewpoints, the lack of news and editorial coverage of school desegregation shows that the issue was not something Beaufort citizens wished to speak about in a public forum.

The majority of Beaufortonians leaned conservative politically in 1964, as evidenced by Barry Goldwater's 685-vote victory in Beaufort County that November, yet it was not uncommon for Beaufort citizens to express the idea that theirs was a moderate community.¹⁷⁰ In a February 1964 letter to the editor commenting on the possibility of a private school opening in Beaufort, resident J. Pat Vanderhoof called Beaufort a "moderate community, treating all her people equally—but separately."¹⁷¹ Vanderhoof's letter suggests that even though Beaufort followed segregationist policies, it was a town

¹⁶⁸ "White County Schools to Admit 3 Negroes in Fall," *Beaufort Gazette*, July 16, 1964.

¹⁶⁹ "County Schools Expect Enrollment Increase," *Beaufort Gazette*, August 27, 1964.

¹⁷⁰ "Goldwater Sweeps County In Record Voter Turnout," *Beaufort Gazette*, November 5, 1964. For an anecdotal take on the conservative politics of Beaufortonians during this period, see Harriet Keyserling, *Against the Tide: One Woman's Political Struggle*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 26-38.

¹⁷¹ J. Pat Vanderhoof, "Letter to the Editor," *Beaufort Gazette*, February 13, 1964.

that saw itself as moderate, and, as such, could accept some degree of change without violence or great resistance. The editors of the *Beaufort Gazette* described Beaufort as a community that follows the laws, even if it did not agree with them.¹⁷² The paper was itself segregated at this time. In the weekly *Gazette*, the great majority of the news was that of the white community and white schools, though toward the back of each edition there was approximately one-quarter or one-half of a page dedicated to “Items of Interest to the Colored Community.”¹⁷³ From this model of coverage in the newspaper, it is clear that white Beaufortians saw African-Americans as a separate part of the community, but nevertheless a part of the fabric that was Beaufort. Further evidence of Beaufort as a moderate community comes from the fact that Martin Luther King Jr. used the county’s Penn Center during the 1950s and early 1960s as a retreat for strategy meetings. These meetings featured African-Americans and whites working together, and in Beaufort this could occur without protest from the community.¹⁷⁴

The moderate label should not cover up the fact that Beaufort remained largely segregated in 1964. African-Americans had to use a different entrance and sit in the balcony at the movie theater.¹⁷⁵ Certain restaurants only served whites. By the standards of the Supreme Court’s 1954 *Brown* ruling or federal legislation such as the Civil Rights Act, this was not a moderate community, nor a non-discriminating one. As will be shown

¹⁷² “School Opens,” *Beaufort Gazette*, September 3, 1964.

¹⁷³ See, for example, *Beaufort Gazette*, February 25, 1965. In this issue “Items of Interest to the Colored Community” begins on page 7-B and includes four obituaries, a news item about St. Helena High School’s Social Studies faculty, an announcement about the daughter of a Beaufort woman who recently became the “first Negro justice of the peace” in East Hartford, Connecticut, information about a Memorial Sing to be held at the Penn Center, and news of J.G. Shelton III’s promotion within the Air Force.

¹⁷⁴ Keyserling, *Against the Tide*, 33.

¹⁷⁵ Rushton, ed., “Look Back,” 18; “School Opens,” *Beaufort Gazette*, September 3, 1964.

by the variety of reactions among white students to the presence of African-American students, ‘moderate’ certainly should not be used in a way to suggest all members of the community were of one mind regarding desegregation. Thus, to use the term ‘moderate’ in reference to Beaufort’s white community in 1964 did not imply the majority of its members stood in favor of efforts for desegregation. Rather, they supported law and order and “social stability” and resisted change.¹⁷⁶

If white Beaufortonians had favored desegregated schools, they could have used the School Board’s 1956 transfer policy to create them. Since they did not, it is clear that most white residents in 1964 remained in favor of the dual school system. Indeed, just days after the opening day of the 1964-65 school year, the *Gazette*’s editorial board wrote, “the big majority of the Beaufort County citizens would still prefer separate, but equal schools.”¹⁷⁷ But despite this preference, when faced with the reality of losing federal funding if schools did not desegregate, white Beaufortonians chose the path of acceptance and peaceful resignation rather than resistance. This acceptance stemmed from the notion that if Beaufortonians could not change it, they should “accept it with grace” and avoid the “unrest and hatred” associated with massive resistance that other southern communities had experienced.¹⁷⁸ A call for level-headedness from the *Beaufort Gazette* actually came three days after the first day of Freedom of Choice took place without incident. Whether the community would peacefully accept integration thus was not something the editorial board questioned leading up to the first day of school.

¹⁷⁶ Helsley, *Beaufort*, 197.

¹⁷⁷ “School Opens,” *Beaufort Gazette*, September 3, 1964.

¹⁷⁸ J. Pat Vanderhoof, “Letter to the Editor,” *Beaufort Gazette*, February 13, 1964; “School Opens,” *Beaufort Gazette*, September 3, 1964.

Indeed, the principals from the four schools that accepted a total of nine African-American students all gave similar quotes to the newspaper describing a calm, normal first day of school.¹⁷⁹

“Normal,” of course, might look different to each person, but in the case of these four newly desegregated schools in Beaufort, normal referred to the sense that these schools were no different than they had been the previous school year. Indeed, keeping desegregated schools “normal” by the standards of the white community was an important characteristic of Freedom of Choice. As long as the African-American students were accepted into the all-white schools, little else about the schools had to change. It was the African-American students who conformed to the standards of the white schools during Freedom of Choice, especially during the initial years when the number of African-American students who chose to transfer was extremely low.

Washington describes himself as being “truly integrated into the system” of Beaufort High School.¹⁸⁰ Thus, as easy as it is to label Washington as the actor in this desegregation process, the white student body had great control over the outcome.

Washington found his presence largely accepted by his classmates: “Things rolled on regardless of me being there. I was able to participate in most things. I wasn’t barred or excluded from anything other than the things I chose to be excluded from.”¹⁸¹ Under Freedom of Choice, it was the transfer students who were expected to weave themselves into the fabric of the existing school, allowing that school to continue to run ‘normally.’

¹⁷⁹ “Nine Negro Students Enter Four County White Schools,” *Beaufort Gazette*, September 3, 1964. The nine students were: Reginald Butler, Jr., Paula Butler, Mae Cathlic, Janelle Drake, Banessa Newsome, Dwight Smith, Lucy Smith, Craig Washington, and Rowland Washington.

¹⁸⁰ Rowland Washington, interview by author, August 12, 2009.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

African-American students integrated themselves into the culture of the white schools in several key ways. One of these was through academic achievement. In his first quarter at Beaufort High School, Washington already was considered an honor student, having earned only grades of A or B. He was one of only 121 out of over 1000 students at the school that quarter to meet that criteria.¹⁸² Washington continued to earn high grades while at Beaufort High School, and he joined the chess club and became a member of the honor society.¹⁸³ Dennis Adams, a white student at Beaufort High School, noted that Washington's academic achievement disproved "the theories of many people who thought that he wouldn't be able to keep up with the white students."¹⁸⁴ A white teacher named Mary Jane Matthews remembered that when students "discovered that [Washington] was more intelligent than they were, they slowly started to like him."¹⁸⁵ It can be difficult to discern the differences and commonalities between being accepted and being liked, yet it is evident that earning good grades and demonstrating intelligence contributed to both at Beaufort High School. For the first African-American transfer students, academic achievement extended beyond the pursuit of knowledge, high grades, and college entrance and into the pursuit of acceptance by the school community.

Academic achievement among African-Americans did not prevent white students and teachers from reacting to skin color, but it did play a vital role in opening doors to becoming more accepted by the school community. Morris Campbell was a freshman in 1965 when he elected to attend the previously all-white Bluffton High School in the

¹⁸² "Seven Local Students Receive A's At School," *Beaufort Gazette*, December 10, 1964.

¹⁸³ Rushton, ed., "Look Back," 6. "NHS Inducts 18 Students," *Beaufort Gazette*, November 4, 1965.

¹⁸⁴ Rushton, ed., "Look Back," 20.

¹⁸⁵ Rushton, ed., "Look Back," 42.

southern part of the county. Though the northern half of the county had experienced desegregation in 1964, no African-Americans living in the Hilton Head Island-Bluffton area chose to transfer until 1965. Campbell, too, saw academic achievement as an important part of the integration process. He felt that some teachers were in many ways testing these transfer students' abilities to keep up academically, and Campbell perceived that he had to work much harder than the white students in order to get the same grades.¹⁸⁶ Like Washington, the school rewarded Campbell's academic talents with membership in the school's honor society, the Beta Club. Campbell remembers being nominated by a white student, Diane Pooler, but initially being turned down for membership by a vote of the Beta Club members. A teacher intervened, saying the Beta Club should judge its members on merit, not skin color; on a revote, Campbell was admitted.¹⁸⁷ Pooler, now Diane Youngblood, recalls that the academic strength of the African-American transfer students during the initial Freedom of Choice years was "key" to the success of desegregation. She remembered the African-American students during these years as "very nice, respectable, responsible people ... [who] really had aspirations of success."¹⁸⁸ The academic success of African-American students was an important factor in the white students' and overall white community's reaction to Freedom of Choice. Yet by insisting that African-Americans meet certain standards of success and conduct set by whites to gain acceptance, white students worked to maintain control of their school's culture and identity.

¹⁸⁶ Morris Campbell, interview by author, August 13, 2009.

¹⁸⁷ Morris Campbell, interview by author, August 13, 2009.

¹⁸⁸ Diane Youngblood, interview by author, December 29, 2009.

Another means of gaining acceptance was through athletics. Washington chose not to participate in athletics at Beaufort High School, though the school placed no barriers between Washington and activities that existed beyond the school day, including academic clubs, sports, and school dances. His reasoning for not playing football or any other sport was that he did not want to “give somebody a legal opportunity to hurt me.”¹⁸⁹ This indicates that Washington was aware of negative attitudes some had about his presence at an otherwise all-white school, even though he considered himself to be integrated into the school. For Campbell and other African-American students at Bluffton High School, being an athlete was an important part of their identities. Campbell believes that since white and black athletes had to work together to succeed at their sport, athletics made a “big difference” in the attitudes of white students toward black students.¹⁹⁰ Grace Dennis, a white teacher at Beaufort High School during the years Washington attended the school, stated that students thought of him as an “average, every day student who made good grades and played sports.”¹⁹¹ Thus, along with academic achievement, athletic achievement, even if outside of school, served as a pathway to acceptance as a member of the school community.

In spite of these African-American students’ ability to gain acceptance from many classmates, some white students used words and physical violence to express their displeasure with desegregation. Each of the earliest African-American transfer students attended school each day with the knowledge that he/she might be verbally or physically

¹⁸⁹ Rowland Washington, interview by author, August 12, 2009.

¹⁹⁰ Morris Campbell, interview by author, August 13, 2009.

¹⁹¹ Rushton, ed., “Look Back,” 30.

harrassed over the issue of race. These incidents occurred, in large part, out of sight of adults. Washington remembers two particular incidents. In both, classmates physically attacked him because of his race. On one occasion, he got in an altercation with another student, which Washington believes was about race. In the other case, a particular student would frequently punch him in the stomach when they passed in the hallway. Despite these situations, Rowland said he “never was fearful about going to school; I never did have a situation where I thought ‘I better not go in there today.’”¹⁹² From this, it is evident that Washington saw these as somewhat isolated incidents and not representative of the attitudes of the majority of his classmates. Campbell, too, remembers white students trying to intimidate him and other African-American students. White students taunted and harassed him in the restrooms or at recess, but they never used physical tactics.¹⁹³ Rowland Washington’s younger brother, Craig, was one of the first three African-American students to desegregate Beaufort Elementary School. He recalls getting punched “‘only’” once on the first day of school in 1964. However, he described his sixth grade and junior high years as “‘the most miserable experience I ever had’” during which “‘I got used to being called ‘Nigger’ every day.’”¹⁹⁴ Thus, in even the so-called moderate community of Beaufort, African-American students had to tolerate both physical and verbal harassment from some classmates.

¹⁹² Both situations ended in positive resolutions. In the case of the student who physically fought Rowland, today they see each other weekly in Beaufort and get along well. As for the student who punched Rowland in the stomach frequently, he wrote Rowland a letter approximately 40 years later apologizing for his behavior and writing that he had been living with guilt over his behavior for a long time. Rowland Washington, interview by author, August 12, 2009.

¹⁹³ Morris Campbell, interview by author, August 13, 2009.

¹⁹⁴ Rushton, ed., “Look Back,” 18.

It is possible to measure the relative success of desegregation from both ends of the spectrum – those who harassed the African-American students to show their opposition to desegregation and those who actively supported Freedom of Choice and used their actions to show support for the African-American students. In many cases, it was teachers and coaches who made the greatest impression on students through their actions. Washington remembers three teachers in particular who made efforts to look out for him as a student and an individual. These teachers “made it real easy for me to be where I was. [They] gave a lot of support. [They were] always concerned and interested in what I was doing.”¹⁹⁵ Washington’s English teacher, Gene Norris, took his students on a field trip every year to a segregated theater. Once Freedom of Choice came about, Norris still intended for all his students to go on the field trip, including Washington. Norris called the theater to inform them his class included an African-American student. He recalled that “‘there was silence on the other end and she said, ‘Well, we’ll deal with it; we just have not done it yet.’ So ... we integrated Dock Street Theatre.”¹⁹⁶ This particular field trip occurred without incident, but other events outside the classroom were not as peaceful for the county’s African-American students during Freedom of Choice.

When traveling outside Beaufort County for athletic contests, the integrated Bluffton basketball team faced significant trouble in communities that still maintained rigid segregation. Campbell recalls being spat upon and having bottles thrown at him when playing against a school from Effingham, Georgia. Despite the presence of law

¹⁹⁵ Rowland Washington, interview by author, August 12, 2009.

¹⁹⁶ Rushton, ed., “Look Back,” 4.

enforcement to keep order the next time Bluffton played at Effingham, after the game a “lynch mob” surrounded the bus and demanded, ““We want all the niggers off the bus.”” Law enforcement intervened before it escalated any further, and the Bluffton players were left shaken, but not physically harmed.¹⁹⁷ In Estill, South Carolina, during the 1966-67 school year, the Bluffton High School basketball team stopped at a restaurant following a game. When the servers started taking food orders, they refused to take the orders of Campbell and his three African-American teammates. The Bluffton coach instructed the entire team to walk out of the restaurant. Once back on the bus, the coach told the players that if, in the future, the team could not find a restaurant that would serve all of the team’s players, then the team simply would not stop to eat. Campbell remembers that most of his teammates expressed support for their coach’s stand.¹⁹⁸

Campbell’s coaches stood up to overt racism and violence, but during the school days at Bluffton High School, racism was not as easy to spot. Nevertheless, teachers at the school made efforts to change Bluffton High School into a school that was not simply legally desegregated, but one in which African-American and white students interacted with one another in positive ways. Campbell specifically mentioned a number of teachers who he credits with changing the school’s culture. These teachers were not originally from Bluffton and were hired either during or just before the Freedom of Choice years. He remembers, “They took everyone basically for what they were worth more so than their race.” They started integrating as many aspects of the school day as possible, including learning activities in the classroom. Campbell recalls how successful

¹⁹⁷ Morris Campbell, interview by author, August 13, 2009.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

this strategy was because it forced students to work together and focus on what they needed to accomplish together more so than as individuals of different races. Students understood, “I might not like you, but I have to get along with you.”¹⁹⁹ White students did not initially choose to work in groups with African-Americans, just as they did not initially choose desegregation. Thanks to the actions of teachers and coaches, along with the hard work of African-American students, individuals of both races learned to coexist both in small groups working on a classroom project and within the greater landscape of Freedom of Choice. It is important to remember, however, that the framework of the white schools and their school culture remained intact during Freedom of Choice even though the African-American population at these schools increased each school year.

Similarly, the majority of African-American students’ day-to-day school lives remained unchanged during Freedom of Choice, because most students elected to stay at the all-black schools they had always known. When studying the integration of public schools, the voices of the students whose schools remained segregated can be easily overlooked. Even though these students did not contribute directly to the integration process, their experiences and their reasons for remaining in place help to provide a fuller picture of how integration affected the community. African-American students and teachers understood that at their schools, everything from their books to their athletic uniforms were inferior to those of the white schools.²⁰⁰ Yet they still had great pride in their schools and valued them as extensions of the African-American community at large.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Jeff Kidd, “A Case of Black and White,” *Beaufort Gazette*, April 12, 1997; Floyd Miller, interview by author, August 6, 2009; Charlotte Brown, interview by author, August 11, 2009.

African-American community members asked Gerald Mitchell, a student at Robert Smalls High School, to transfer to Beaufort High School during Freedom of Choice, but he refused. He enjoyed going to school with his friends and participating in sports at Robert Smalls. He had never sat next to a white person, and he ““wanted things to be separate but equal.””²⁰¹

Indeed, regardless of how they felt about separate but equal, many African-American students chose to stay in place during Freedom of Choice for a variety of reasons, such as a desire to remain with their friends and teachers, an interest in maintaining continuity in their education, or because they did not want to voluntarily insert themselves into a hostile environment. Just as Freedom of Choice signaled to the white community that all-white schools might experience changes, so too did African-American students understand that if integration occurred, it would likely be their buildings that would be abandoned and torn down in favor of the white students’ facilities. Charlotte Brown attended Robert Smalls Elementary, Middle, and High Schools, all located on the same campus in northern Beaufort County. She “loved” her school years for a variety of reasons: she was on the same campus as family members, she was heavily involved in activities, she performed well academically, and she felt the teachers worked hard to push the students to succeed.²⁰² While Brown knew integration was important, she wanted it to occur in a manner that would prevent African-American students from losing “that personal touch” they received at all-black schools from

²⁰¹ Rushton, ed., “Look Back,” 28.

²⁰² Charlotte Brown, interview by author, August 11, 2009.

teachers who truly pushed them to achieve.²⁰³ It is clear that to many African-Americans, integration came along with many sacrifices. While the history and culture of African-American schools is outside the realm of this particular study, it is valuable to recognize that immediate integration was not seen as the proper course of action for all African-American students and not all African-American students had common experiences during the Freedom of Choice years.

Freedom of Choice brought an end to the inaction of the post-*Brown* decade in Beaufort County. School desegregation in its early years still represented the ability of the community to resist broad change but not to the degree it had between 1954-64. The ways in which African-American students earned acceptance into the white schools during these years demonstrates that, in fact, Freedom of Choice made only minimal changes to Beaufort High School, the Bluffton School, and the county's six other traditionally all-white schools. To a great extent, Freedom of Choice left the fabric of all-white and all-black schools intact and did little to "eliminate the racial identity of the schools."²⁰⁴ For students, teachers, and school district officials, Freedom of Choice resembled a door slightly ajar. Students such as Rowland Washington, whom Beaufort High School Principal Bill Dufford said, "exhibited the greatest degree of courage I've ever seen," helped to unlock the door, but not until full integration in 1970 would the Beaufort community have to face the challenges of truly altered schools that stood on the other side.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Southern School Desegregation*, 3.

²⁰⁵ Rushton, ed., "Look Back," 11.

CHAPTER 5

FULL INTEGRATION

When the 1970-71 school year began in Beaufort County, the dual school system no longer existed. Shifts in attendance patterns and reassignment of faculty and staff brought about monumental changes for the county's schools – some closed, some shifted to double sessions, and most no longer possessed a racial identity based on the student body of the school. The guiding objective during the Full Integration phase was the creation of individual school populations that reflected the overall school district student population as closely as possible. For the 1970-1971 school year, Beaufort County schools' overall student population consisted of 56.2 percent African-American and 43.8 percent white students.

To create schools with populations that reflected this ratio, the Board of Education took a variety of actions. In the town of Bluffton in the southern part of Beaufort County, it sent all African-American students in 9th-12th grades who previously attended Michael C. Riley to the Bluffton School and all white students in Kindergarten-8th grades who had previously attended the Bluffton School to Michael C. Riley. The fact of having only two schools in that area meant that instead of redrawing attendance zones, officials only had to reassign grade levels in order to achieve the objective of complete integration. In the northern part of the county, officials used additional techniques. They closed both all-black high schools, Robert Smalls and St. Helena, and sent all 10th-12th

grade students to Beaufort High School.²⁰⁶ This produced a student population at Beaufort High School that was larger than the building's capacity. Officials solved this problem by making Beaufort High School the only school in the county to have double sessions – all seniors and half of the juniors attended school from 8 a.m.-12:40 p.m., and all sophomores and the other half of the juniors attended school from 12:50 p.m.-4:45 p.m. Every 9th grade student in the northern part of the county attended Robert Smalls Junior High. To fully integrate schools serving 1st-6th and 7th-8th grades in the northern part of the county, officials drew new attendance zones.²⁰⁷

Full Integration differed from Freedom of Choice because school officials decided which school each student would attend. No longer was school attendance based squarely on the location of a child's home or the color of the child's skin. Instead, the guiding principle in school assignments was ensuring each school's racial balance would meet HEW's guidelines. A student could request a transfer only if their race was in the minority at the school they wished to attend and if there was another school in their part of the county that served their grade level.²⁰⁸

During Freedom of Choice, some held out hope that Beaufort County school officials could dictate to HEW how the county's schools would follow Title VI. For these individuals, full integration marked an end to such hopes and a failure of self-determination. By moving to a full integration model school officials conceded that, in many ways, HEW had more control over the structure of Beaufort County's public

²⁰⁶ The closure of secondary schools was not atypical in South Carolina during the first year of Full Integration. In 1970-1971, South Carolina had 325 secondary schools, down from 397 the previous school year. *South Carolina Department of Education 103rd Annual Report for the Year Ending June 30, 1971*, 9.

²⁰⁷ "School Procedure Information Given," *Beaufort Gazette*, August 20, 1970.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

schools than did the Beaufort County Board of Education. Beaufort County school officials did continue to push back against what they viewed as HEW's most extreme measures, including excessive busing times for elementary students, mid-year teacher reassignments, and the insistence that the same standards of integration must apply to students who lived in geographically remote areas of the county such as Daufuskie Island.

This chapter will examine the role of federal administrators in shaping the structure of Beaufort County's schools. Because of the continued tension between HEW officials and the county's school officials, the Full Integration phase was, in many ways, an extension of the Freedom of Choice phase. After complete integration began in Fall 1970, school officials expressed frustration about HEW's requirements for compliance, just as they had during Freedom of Choice. Even though they accepted that full integration was necessary to maintain their federal funding, school officials continued to use rhetoric emphasizing that local leaders knew better than federal bureaucrats what was best for the county's schools. The Beaufort County School received support for this viewpoint from an unexpected source—a HEW administrative judge who examined Beaufort's compliance efforts in December 1973.

In contrast to the experience of school officials, full integration was far from an extension of the Freedom of Choice years for most of Beaufort County's students and teachers. Instead, full integration shaped new school identities and new relationships between students and their schools. Full integration demanded that students, both black and white, give up certain familiar aspects of their educational experience. Freedom of

Choice had not made such demands. This chapter will explore the changes brought about by full integration from the perspective of students, teachers, parents, and alumni of Beaufort County's public schools. In doing so, it will emphasize that to understand how school integration affected a community, historians must acknowledge the different phases of school integration.

Schools Lose Their Racial Identity

In many ways, the transition from Freedom of Choice to Full Integration made greater waves than the transition from a strict dual school system to Freedom of Choice in Beaufort County, the state, and across the South. The schools that had once been all white no longer had the same control over their identity as they had during Freedom of Choice. Thus, as southern communities moved to full integration, a transition that was aided by busing programs in many cities, many white families chose 'white flight.' White flight typically allowed students to attend schools that did not differ in identity from the predominantly-white schools that existed during Freedom of Choice. Yet the white flight Lassiter examined in the South's Sunbelt cities simply did not exist in Beaufort County because of the county's spatial and political geography. Beaufort County did not have the capacity for suburbs in the way a city such as Atlanta did – its 300-year history of settlement and its geography dominated by sea islands and waterways meant that growing outward was a very limited option in Beaufort County. Furthermore, many of the 'outlying' areas of the county – Hilton Head Island, St. Helena, Dale – were already areas populated mostly by African-Americans. Beaufort County could not

support white flight in the way that other areas of the South could. Likewise, whereas some opponents of school integration efforts opposed city-county consolidation, Beaufort's entire county was already consolidated into one school district.

Deconsolidation of the school system was not considered as an option. The trend in South Carolina across the 1950s and 1960s had been for consolidation, and Beaufort consolidated its county's two school districts in 1967. So, unlike other Southern towns in which white backlash disrupted efforts to fully integrate schools, white flight had little effect on Beaufort County schools' transition to a unitary system.

The only means of "white flight" in the county was private school enrollment, and some white residents of Beaufort County chose this option. In doing so, they showed their discontent with school desegregation. In total, Beaufort County residents established six private schools between 1965 and 1971. Between the 1965-66 school year—the first year a private school for whites existed in Beaufort County during Freedom of Choice—and the first year of Full Integration in 1970-71, enrollment of white students in private schools jumped from 198 to 1,144. (See Table 5.1) Private school enrollment in 1970-71 represented 18.9 percent of the total white student population in Beaufort County. While this number showed that some white families were dissatisfied with the public schools, it was the only significant white flight that occurred in Beaufort County as a result of school desegregation. As such, it did not have a crippling effect on the school districts' ability to eliminate the dual school system as it did in other southern communities.

Table 5.1 – Beaufort County’s Private School Enrollment, 1964-1972

School	Enrollment By School Year ²⁰⁹							
	1964-1965	1965-1966	1966-1967	1967-1968	1968-1969	1969-1970	1970-1971	1971-1972
The Mather School (all-black high school)	67	93	75	65	--	--	--	
Beaufort Academy	--	198 (El only)	320 (El and H.S.)	286 (El and H.S.)	286 (El and H.S.)	317 (El and H.S.)	380 (El and H.S.)	501 (El and H.S.)
Sea Pines Academy	--	--	49 (El only)	82 (El only)	132 (El only)	172 (El only)	137 (El only)	271 (El and H.S.)
Carteret School	--	--	--	--	--	--	31 (H.S. only)	54 (H.S. only)
Sheldon Academy	--	--	--	--	--	--	165 (El and H.S.)	178 (El and H.S.)
May River Academy	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	235 (El and H.S.)
Yoruba Academy	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	5 (El only)

In many ways the black schools lost their identity to a greater extent than white schools. David S. Cecelski discussed the loss of both symbols of heritage and “the spirit

²⁰⁹ *Ninety-Seventh Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Education, State of South Carolina, 1964-1965*, 140; *Ninety-Eighth Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Education, State of South Carolina, 1965-1966*, 162; *Ninety-Ninth Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Education, State of South Carolina, 1966-1967*, 186; *One Hundredth Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Education, State of South Carolina, 1967-1968*, 41; *South Carolina Department of Education 101st Annual Report for the Year Ending June 30, 1969*, 21; *South Carolina Department of Education 102st Annual Report for the Year Ending June 30, 1970*, 14; *South Carolina Department of Education 103st Annual Report for the Year Ending June 30, 1971*, 74, Government Publications, Clemson University Library.

of commitment, community, and social mission” that was the “soul of black schooling” in his book, *Along Freedom Road: Hyde County, North Carolina, and the Fate of Black Schools In the South*.²¹⁰ When southern school districts adopted full integration, it was not unusual for school district officials to use the all-black school buildings for lower grades only or close them entirely. This was the case in the northern part of Beaufort County. There, school district officials closed the two black high schools, Robert Smalls and St. Helena, even though the school district chose to use double sessions at Beaufort High School and construct an entirely new high school, Battery Creek High School, that opened in the fall of 1973. The fact that the school district was willing to limit the high school students’ school day to less than five hours sent a message to the African-American students that their former school buildings were not good enough for white students.

When school districts abandoned the all-black school buildings in favor of using the all-white school buildings or constructing new buildings altogether, it was also common for the all-black schools’ mascots, colors, and traditions to disappear. These aspects of a school’s culture might seem inconsequential in comparison to the school’s mission to educate its students. Yet they often carried great importance not only to students, but also to community members, many of whom were alumni of the school.²¹¹ In the northern and southern parts of the county, school administrators addressed the retention of school colors and mascots differently. South of the Broad, the mascot,

²¹⁰ David S. Cecelski, *Along Freedom Road: Hyde County, North Carolina, and the Fate of Black Schools In the South*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 9, 173.

²¹¹ Ibid.

colors, and name of Michael C. Riley remained with the 1st-8th grade school, while the Bluffton School, soon to be named after school district official, H.E. McCracken, retained its mascot and colors. North of the Broad, the solution carried a greater sense of fairness. Though school district officials closed the two all-black high schools, the colors from Robert Smalls and the mascot from St. Helena replaced the traditional colors and mascot of Beaufort High School.²¹² This might have been little comfort to those students who attended classes in double sessions at Beaufort High School for three school years, but it was a gesture in favor of unity that most southern school districts did not make.

An Unexpected Ally: Achieving Title VI Compliance during Full Integration

Though the school district made significant changes in attendance zones and grade assignments in order to bring about full integration, HEW kept the pressure on Beaufort County school officials to eliminate all aspects of the dual school system in order to achieve “maximum desegregation.”²¹³ While school officials in the county certainly wanted to receive federal funding, they deemed HEW’s stance on several issues to be too extreme. Rather than accept that HEW knew best, school officials employed rhetoric emphasizing the wisdom of local knowledge over ‘one size fits all’ solutions handed down by government bureaucrats. They also argued that when the two goals of quality of education and optimal racial balance are in conflict, the former had to take

²¹² Rushton, ed., “Look Back,” 22-23.

²¹³ William H. Thomas, Acting Regional Civil Rights Director, Office for Civil Rights, to Dr. Walter Trammell, Superintendent, Beaufort County Schools, July 15, 1971, Beaufort, School District File 1965-1981, South Carolina Department of Education Collection, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

priority.²¹⁴ Aspects of integration that continued to be sources of tension between HEW and the Beaufort County School District officials included the busing of elementary students to achieve greater racial balance, the educational opportunities provided for Daufuskie Island's high school age students, and the faculty assignments throughout the district. In all three situations, an administrative law judge, Cecil L. Cutler Jr., sided with the Beaufort County School District over HEW in a December 1973 administrative hearing.

The main issue regarding busing in the county was the amount of time elementary school students would spend on the bus each day. While school district officials allowed older students to be bused six hours per day, in the most extreme cases, they objected to subjecting younger students to similarly lengthy bus rides.²¹⁵ As in all their battles with HEW during this period, Superintendent Walter Trammell framed this as an issue of common sense on the part of local leaders versus radical devotion to achieving a greater racial balance on the part of federal officials. He believed racial balance should not be a detriment to students' well being and educational opportunities. Trammell expressed the Board's position on busing elementary students for increased time each day:

The board has determined that to achieve further racial balance would require establishing transportation routes which from the standpoint of time and distance would prove detrimental to the *health, education, and welfare* of young students [emphasis mine].²¹⁶

²¹⁴ Everette Cooper, Principal, Beaufort Junior High School, "Attachment A," April 25, 1973, Beaufort, School District File 1965-1981, South Carolina Department of Education Collection, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

²¹⁵ Dr. Walter Trammell, Superintendent, Beaufort County Schools, to William H. Thomas, Acting Regional Civil Rights Director, Office for Civil Rights, July 7, 1971, Beaufort, School District File 1965-1981, South Carolina Department of Education Collection, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

Thus, in using the name of the federal department in a letter to a HEW official, Trammell sought to point out that HEW's requirements were, in the minds of school district officials in Beaufort County, going against the department's titular mission.

When HEW initiated an administrative hearing against the school district in December 1973, HEW officials charged that the racial breakdown of the student population of Lady's Island Elementary violated the Civil Rights Act and *Swann* and asserted that the Board of Education could use busing to solve this problem. Judge Cutler devoted eleven pages to explaining the facts pertinent to the dispute, and he ultimately sided with Beaufort County on the issue of busing elementary school students for long periods each day. Judge Cutler's opinion stated: "it would be unconscionable [sic] to permit a plan which would involve bussing of elementary school children of up to three and one-half hours daily."²¹⁷ He ruled that since the burden of increased busing time would fall disproportionately on African-American elementary students, the impact of increased busing as advocated by HEW officials would constitute "discrimination."²¹⁸

In 1970-1971, the Daufuskie Island School was one of only four schools in the state with four or fewer teachers.²¹⁹ It had two. Daufuskie Island's demographics and geographic isolation produced a situation few southern school districts faced. Daufuskie Island's school proved to be difficult to integrate because its residents were almost all African-Americans and the island's location, accessible only by ferry, was remote even

²¹⁷ "Administrative Proceeding in Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, National Science Foundation, In the Matter of Beaufort County Schools, South Carolina and State Department of Education, Respondents," December 13, 1973, Beaufort, School District File 1965-1981, South Carolina Department of Education Collection, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 20.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ *South Carolina Department of Education 103rd Annual Report for the Year Ending June 30, 1971*, 92.

by Beaufort County standards. When HEW officials looked at the racial breakdown of the schools' students, it saw a clear violation of the principles of full integration: the school on Daufuskie Island had only African-American students. According to HEW, this was a "racially identifiable" school and the presence of this one such school was enough to put the entire district in violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.²²⁰

However, by December 1973, when HEW officials brought the Beaufort County School District to an administrative hearing for being in violation of the Civil Rights Act, they had shifted their concern from the 1st-8th grade school on Daufuskie Island to the lack of equal educational opportunities provided to the high-school age children living on Daufuskie. This change from considering the district in violation of the Civil Rights Act simply because of the Daufuskie Island School's all-African-American enrollment showed Beaufort County school officials that HEW was not entirely rigid and unable to take a community's characteristics into account when judging compliance. Yet, the judge in the administrative hearing ultimately disagreed with HEW officials regarding Daufuskie Island's older students. Judge Cutler ruled that the Beaufort County School District was not in violation of the Civil Rights Act. Cutler found that the district's present solution of providing each high school age student on Daufuskie with \$35 per month to live with a relative or friend on the mainland while attending school, was "in good faith" and did not constitute a violation.²²¹

²²⁰ Peter E. Holmes, Director, Office for Civil Rights, to Dr. Walter Trammell, Superintendent, Beaufort County School District, August 22, 1973, Beaufort, School District File 1965-1981, South Carolina Department of Education Collection, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

²²¹ "Administrative Proceeding," December 13, 1973, 1-15.

Teacher assignments also stood out as a source of tension between school district officials and HEW during full integration. HEW required that the school district assign its full-time classroom teachers “so that the ratio of minority to non-minority group classroom teachers is substantially the same as the ratio that exists in the faculty of the system as a whole,” in accordance with the Emergency School Assistance Program (ESAP). If any of the schools in the district did not meet this standard, HEW expected district officials to adjust teacher assignments mid-year.²²² Superintendent Trammell and other district officials found this requirement of achieving precise racial balances to be particularly disruptive to student learning and teacher and student morale. In an April 2, 1971 letter to J. Stanley Pottinger, Director of the Office for Civil Rights, Trammell expressed his “regret” over HEW’s opinion that the districts’ efforts to reach a fifty-fifty ratio of white and black teachers in its schools was inadequate and that HEW planned to withhold federal funds which Trammell called “so necessary to improving education for the deprived children” of the county. In order to attack HEW’s policy, Trammell used rhetoric that portrayed his district as in favor of properly educating its students and HEW as the enemy of such a goal. He wrote that Beaufort County district officials “abhor the fact that your office would deny the deprived children of Beaufort County the improvement in education which our federal funds provide.” When describing HEW’s requirement that staff assignments be reassessed throughout the year to keep a constant

²²² Dewey E. Dodds, Education Branch Chief, Office for Civil Rights, to Dr. Walter Trammell, Superintendent, Beaufort County School District, December 16, 1971, Beaufort, School District File 1965-1981, South Carolina Department of Education Collection, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

white-black ratio of teachers at all schools, Trammell stated that “no knowledgeable person with the least integrity would attempt it.”²²³

Trammell’s language showed a high level of frustration with HEW that differs somewhat from the frustration Trammell’s predecessor, Southerlin, expressed with the department during the 1965 compliance efforts covered in Chapter 3. Whereas Southerlin and his colleagues were frustrated because HEW did not provide clear answers about the baseline requirements, Trammell truly felt his district was operating in good faith, that HEW’s expectations were unreasonable, and, in cases such as the mid-year reassignment of teachers and the increased busing of elementary school students, detrimental to students’ well-being and educational opportunities. Ironically, then, it was an official in the HEW bureaucratic structure, Judge Cutler, who came down on Trammell’s side. In addition to ruling in the district’s favor on all issues of the case, Cutler even noted in his opinion that “there is quite a balanced proportion of black and white teachers” in the district, an issue that was not even on the table for this particular hearing.²²⁴ Thus, Cutler’s ruling confirmed to Trammell and other school officials that their district was in the right in its battles with HEW and made them more likely to push back at HEW regarding its requirements.

²²³ Dr. Walter Trammell, Superintendent, Beaufort County School District, to J. Stanley Pottinger, Director, Office for Civil Rights, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, April 2, 1971, Beaufort, School District File 1965-1981, South Carolina Department of Education Collection, South Carolina Department of Archives and History; “Teacher Ratio Must Be Balanced,” *Beaufort Gazette*, October 29, 1970.

²²⁴ “Administrative Proceeding” December 13, 1973, 20-22.

Full Integration In The Schools

Full integration affected the majority of students' daily lives more so than Freedom of Choice, yet it is not uncommon for historians who study school desegregation to either end their narratives at the point that full integration begins or not address it at all. For example, in his study of school desegregation in Charleston, Baker focuses on the path to limited segregation and devotes only his ninth and final chapter to the desegregation that occurred from 1963 to 1972, and he does not study full integration from the perspective of students. Bagwell's study of school desegregation in Greenville was published in 1972, and he ends his study in 1963. Projects that do pay attention to the years after full integration begins in a community, such as Douglas' study of Charlotte, tend to focus on issues surrounding busing programs and the community's reaction to them. The experiences of teachers and students in fully-integrated schools provide an alternate narrative to the legal and political history of school desegregation. Understanding the students' and teachers' experiences during full integration allows historians to evaluate what the legal and political changes of the era brought about.

The day of change for students and teachers was August 31, 1970. That morning, Beaufort County's school children readied themselves for the first day of a new school year in which many faced the prospect of attending a new school. For some, attending a new school meant traveling to a different school building than they had attended the previous school year. For others, their school building remained the same but much had changed. For the majority of the district's African-American students, full integration

was their first experience attending school with white students, and thus, their first experience possibly dealing with racial tension while trying to get an education.

The first day of full integration in Beaufort County did not result in violence or disruption. The *Gazette* reported that a “boycott of integrated classrooms, predicted recently” did not take place.²²⁵ Yet a lack of disruption was not the same as acceptance by all. One mother of an elementary student wrote a letter to the *Gazette*, expressing anger toward “high government officials and black militants” for causing students to feel “lost, confused, and alone” and “so frightened they couldn’t even tell their names much less where they lived.”²²⁶ The letter writer, D. Davidson, claimed to speak for “mothers and fathers, white and black” who “don’t care about racial balance, segregation or integration, but only for their frightened, confused children.”²²⁷ Davidson’s argument against full integration rests on the idea of ‘neighborhood schools’ and the ‘color-blind’ rhetoric that people throughout the south used to oppose full integration and busing. But in the case of Davidson or others like her, Beaufort’s spatial geography and the school district’s and county’s shared boundaries did not afford the opportunity to oppose these changes in ways other than private school enrollment or writing a letter to the newspaper.

Davidson’s was one of only two letters published in the *Gazette* during 1970-71 in which a community member expressed concern about full integration’s effects on students. The other letter, written by Vivian S. Beach of Bluffton, also mentioned how the federal government had “forced” the county to integrate. But the rest of her letter was

²²⁵ “Back-To-Schools Goes Smoothly in County,” *Beaufort Gazette*, September 3, 1970.

²²⁶ D. Davison, “School,” “Letters To The Editor,” *Beaufort Gazette*, September 10, 1970.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

an extended description of the first day of school at Michael C. Riley. She was one of four white parents of students in one of the school's third grade classrooms who attended school on the first day. Her letter detailed the general disorder of the first day—an inexperienced teacher in a classroom with no books, leaks in the cafeteria, and stuffy, hot classrooms without open windows. But Beach's letter was not only about the problems at the school. It was instead about how she helped to solve many of these problems on the first day of school. Beach's letter did not take the same anti-full integration tone of Davidson's. Rather, Beach's letter implored her fellow Blufftonians to "make it a success story—a story with a happy ending—not one that fills our hearts with terror."²²⁸ Though Davidson's letter was more critical of full integration than Beach's, both women seem resigned to the fact that integration was not something that could be changed and believed that community members, teachers, and administrators would have to put in the effort to make it work.

This attitude of "trying to make the best of the situation" was the overall tone of the beginning of the 1970-71 school year. The first day of school went smoothly and there were no "behavior problems," according to Superintendent Trammell. He credited the "'gracious'" nature of Beaufort's citizens for the smooth opening to Full Integration.²²⁹ Yet no matter how 'gracious' Beaufort's nature, teachers and school-level administrators made conscious efforts to bring the two different racial groups together in school settings. Etta Mann, a teacher at Beaufort High School when full integration began, recalls how teachers and administrators often created situations in which whites and

²²⁸ Vivian S. Beach, "Schools," "Letter To The Editor," *Beaufort Gazette*, September 17, 1970.

²²⁹ "Back-To-Schools Goes Smoothly in County," *Beaufort Gazette*, September 3, 1970.

African-Americans were required to interact. Pageants were an important part of society in Beaufort during the period, so Beaufort High School teachers who organized the “Miss Beaufort High” Pageant decided to use it as an opportunity for students of both races to learn more about each others’ lives. They initiated a question and answer portion of the pageant in which the judges asked each girl a question about a fellow contestant.

Similarly, the Beaufort High School Guidance Department wanted to encourage more socializing between white and African-American teachers at the school, so they hosted a Christmas Party at which each teacher had to introduce him or herself to at least three teachers of the other race.²³⁰ At Bluffton High School, the administration initially required that there be one white and one African-American editor for both the yearbook and the newspaper.²³¹ These strategies for encouraging whites and African-Americans to meet, socialize, and work with each other helped to ease concerns about full integration and make integration occur on the ground, not just on paper.

Despite efforts to bring whites and African-Americans together in the schools, tension in schools was common during the first few years of full integration in the county.²³² Sometimes it manifested itself into student protests or fights between students. In one incident at Beaufort High School, the December 3, 1970 edition of the *Gazette* reported that police broke up a group of “thirty or forty Negro boys with chains, pipes, sticks and knives.” Though the *Gazette* made race a component of the report, the article suggested that the violence was between separate groups of the African-American

²³⁰ Rushton, ed., “Look Back,” 24-25.

²³¹ George Westerfield, interview by author, June 16, 2009.

²³² “Alice Walker,” “Bill Harvey,” “Etta Mann,” *Looking Back*.

students.²³³ At Bluffton High School, a group of African-American students staged a classroom walk-out in the middle of a February 1971 school day. These students assembled in the schools' gymnasium, and the only teacher or administrator to enter the gym and ask the students what they were doing was white teacher George Westerfield. He remembers helping to mediate a meeting between a small number of the students and the Principal, John R. Fenwick, in which the students expressed their grievances regarding what they saw as unfair treatment of African-American students on the part of the administration. Fenwick called the walk-out "a revolt against authority" rather than acknowledging the racial aspects of the incident. To help resolve the situation, Bluffton school officials participated in a community meeting and allowed some student suspensions to be reduced as a result of actions taken at the meeting.²³⁴

Another situation occurred in April 1971 at Robert Smalls Junior High School. The newspaper reported that this was a "squabble between blacks and whites" stemming from concerns about the school's discipline policy. There had been two incidents of students "sassing" a teacher. One of the incidents was between an African-American student and a white teacher and the other between a white student and an African-American teacher, but the African-American student was the only one suspended. The administration explained that that suspension was a result of the accumulation of a certain number of demerits by the African-American student, not the particular incident. Yet whether or not a double standard existed in the school's disciplinary actions, it was the

²³³ "Violence Erupts At Local Schools," *Beaufort Gazette*, December 3, 1970.

²³⁴ "Bluffton Students Receive Suspension For Walk Out," *Beaufort Gazette*, November 18, 1971; George Westerfield, interview with author, June 16, 2009.

perception of unfairness that caused the fight between white and African-American students.²³⁵ Overall, the incidents that occurred during the first year of full integration in Beaufort County's schools seemed to represent the presence of tension regarding perceived unfairness on the part of administrators and teachers more so than white and African-American students not getting along with one another.

During full integration, those at all levels of the district, from the superintendent and the Board of Education members to the teachers and guidance counselors, had to accept that avoiding full integration in the county's schools was no longer a possibility. In some cases, as with mid-year teacher reassignments and long bus rides for elementary students, district officials fought back. But, overall, even if full integration did not have the ideological support of everyone who continued to work for the school district, it did receive the kind of practical, day-to-day support needed to 'make it work.' Beaufort County's fully integrated schools experienced racial tension that sometimes led to disruption of learning or violence, and teachers often had to force students of different races to work together. Some schools featured segregated or nearly segregated classrooms that administrators defended on the basis of 'ability grouping' stemming from student test scores.

Such scenarios, while rejected by HEW, made some parents more willing to accept full integration. Indeed, community members whose children continued to attend public schools generally accepted this new reality in Beaufort County. Only two parents wrote letters to the editor of the *Gazette* regarding full integration during the 1970-71

²³⁵ "Demerit System Provides Fuel For Racial Flare-Up At School," *Beaufort Gazette*, April 15, 1971.

school year. In contrast, when the Board of Education dismissed Pat Conroy from his teaching position on Daufuskie Island, the *Gazette* received at least four letters from community members criticizing the school board.²³⁶ Beaufort County citizens did not hesitate to express concerns with Board actions or vote down Board referendums, as they did in April 1971.²³⁷ But in the case of full integration those who did not react with ‘white flight’ to private schools generally resigned to accept full integration and instead focus on improving the quality of education students received in the county’s schools.

²³⁶ “Letters to the Editor,” *Beaufort Gazette*, October 15, 1970, October 22, 1970.

²³⁷ “Voters Turn Down School Bond Issue,” *Beaufort Gazette*, April 29, 1971.

CONCLUSION

The opening of the newly-constructed Battery Creek High School at the start of the 1973-74 school year solved one of the most visible challenges of full integration. After three years of double sessions at Beaufort High School, all of the county's high school students would now attend school on a traditional schedule. In 1973, Beaufort County continued to disagree with HEW officials on some issues, but, overall, coverage of school integration diminished on the pages of the *Beaufort Gazette*. At the same time, the newspaper moved to publishing five days a week rather than just one, and its coverage had a significantly more outward focus on U.S. and world events than before. This more worldly focus is not surprising given that as the 1970s progressed, Beaufort County became a more and more popular tourist destination and retirement location for people from outside the South, and, as a result, the population of the county experienced tremendous growth. By 1980, Beaufort County had over 86,000 residents compared to just under 51,000 in 1970, meaning more than a third of its residents never knew the county's schools before full integration. As the dual school system moved further and further into the collective memory of Beaufort County residents who had known it, integrated schools became the norm.

While 1973 is a useful terminus for this particular project, the history of school desegregation certainly did not end in the 1970s. Public school attendance by race continued to change city by city. Though historians cannot impose a single re-segregation narrative on all school districts that did achieve Title VI compliance by the 1970s, there are some general trends. The percentage of African-American students in

all-white public schools in the South rose steadily from less than 2 percent in 1964 to an apex of 44 percent in 1988. It is during the late 1980s, then, that desegregation set out on a different course.²³⁸ Peter Irons traces the status of school desegregation to the end of the 20th century in *Jim Crow's Children: The Broken Promise of the Brown Decision*. Irons believes that re-segregation was due in large part to white flight to suburban school districts and three decisions in the first half of the 1990s—*Board of Education of Oklahoma City Public Schools v. Dowell*, *Freeman v. Pitts*, and *Missouri v. Jenkins*—in which the Supreme Court “effectively closed the doors of federal courts to black parents whose children were now consigned to ‘separate and unequal’ schools.”²³⁹ Irons shows that, by the 1990s, Jim Crow had returned to school systems in the majority of the nation’s cities, and there was and continues to be a significant correlation between racial segregation and poverty.²⁴⁰

Unlike so many other places in the South that experienced near-total resegregation of their schools, Beaufort County’s schools today have a different legacy.²⁴¹ For the 2007-08 school year, three of the county’s 22 elementary and middle schools had one racial group that made up more than 80 percent of the total school population. At nine of these schools, the largest racial group constituted between 62 and 76 percent of the total school population. At the remaining ten schools, the largest racial group made up between 45 and 58 percent of the student body. (See Table 6.1) This is certainly a mixed record in terms of resegregation when examined on a school-by-school

²³⁸ Irons, *Jim Crow's Children*, 291.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 289.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 289-293.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 297-299.

basis, but, overall, Beaufort County’s schools remain more integrated than most.²⁴² This is due in part to the influx of people of Hispanic origin. In addition, while there does tend to be some residential segregation by neighborhood, for the most part, Beaufort County does not have the same rigid residential segregation that characterizes many southern cities with suburban areas and unconsolidated school districts.

Table 6.1 – Racial Breakdown of Beaufort County Elementary and Middle Schools, 2007-2008²⁴³

Elementary school populations for grades 3-5.

Middle school populations for grades 6-8.

Percent of largest racial group to total school population in parenthesis.

North of the Broad					
School	White	African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Hispanic	American Indian/Alaskan
Beaufort Elem. (58)	56	99	n/a	16	n/a
Broad River Elem. (50)	83	91	1	7	n/a
Coosa Elem. (76)	236	64	6	3	n/a
Davis Elem. (97)	4	130	n/a	n/a	n/a
Shanklin Elem. (67)	55	150	3	16	n/a
Ladys Island Elem. (51)	97	67	3	19	3
Mossy Oaks Elem. (63)	138	60	6	16	n/a
Port Royal Elem. (68)	75	28	4	4	n/a
Shell Point	101	44	7	10	n/a

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ South Carolina Department of Education, “Beaufort EAA School Report Cards 2008,” <http://www.ed.sc.gov/topics/researchandstats/schoolreportcard/2008/0701.html> (accessed April 1, 2010).

Elem. (62)					
St. Helena Elem. (73)	6	210	n/a	12	n/a
Whale Branch (71)	35	98	1	4	1
Beaufort Middle (62)	388	211	9	17	2
Ladys Island Middle (63)	212	416	n/a	29	1
Robert Smalls Middle (52)	217	328	10	70	2
St. Helena Middle (87)	35	270	2	5	n/a

South of the Broad					
School	White	African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Hispanic	American Indian/Alaskan
Bluffton Elem. (51)	240	65	5	158	2
Daufuskie Island Elem (86)	6	n/a	1	n/a	n/a
Hilton Head IB Elem. (53)	304	101	2	162	1
Hilton Head Creative Arts Elem. (45)	144	48	n/a	130	n/a
Michael C. Riley Elem. (45)	161	73	3	121	n/a
Okatie Elem. (48)	162	61	5	113	n/a
McCracken Middle (54)	600	197	14	304	4
Hilton Head Island Middle (51)	462	159	7	281	n/a

Enrollment numbers in any given school year do not tell the whole story. The relative success or failure of a community's school desegregation efforts cannot be gleaned only from its school's most current racial balance. This project examined the process of school desegregation in Beaufort County from the perspective of those who experienced Freedom of Choice schools and full integration schools. It also explored the role of federal legislation and administrative agencies on the structure and implementation of integration strategies. In doing so, this project contributes to the overall tapestry of southern school desegregation that historians can only grasp through community studies.

The history of school desegregation in a rural county like Beaufort, off the beaten path in the 1950s through the 1970s both in terms of its history and its geography, highlights the common themes in southern school desegregation. These themes include initial resistance to limited desegregation, the use of states' rights rhetoric to oppose school desegregation in its various forms, and stark contrasts between Freedom of Choice and full integration in terms of the racial identities of schools and the presence of white flight. Yet studying Beaufort, a community outside of the more visible Sunbelt or traditional Old Confederacy, also illuminates aspects of school desegregation that historians should consider further.

The first of these is the role of federal funding and HEW mandates on school desegregation. Historians tend to present more judicial and legislative-centered narratives of southern school desegregation, but the history of school desegregation in Beaufort County shows that administrative officials sometimes played the most

influential role in how a community desegregated. In studying the effect of administrative agencies on school integration, historians should also examine the role of administrative hearings. In the case of Beaufort County, the administrative hearing process provided a reprieve from some of HEW officials' demands. The history of school desegregation in Beaufort highlights another under-studied aspect of school integration—the racial breakdown of teachers in schools. HEW's demands regarding white to African-American teacher ratios in Beaufort County's schools were stricter than its requirements for student racial balance. Beaufort County school officials' attempts to achieve HEW's desired teacher ratios resulted in mid-year teacher reassignments and subsequent resignations by teachers who did not want to be reassigned. School officials pushed against required teacher ratios more so than student ratios, and HEW's demands allowed school officials to put forth an effective argument that HEW cared more about numbers than continuity of classroom teaching. This project's ability to illuminate overlooked aspects of the school desegregation narrative shows the value of studying school desegregation in the South's less visible communities.

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