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# Ahead of Their Time: Black Teachers and Their Community in the Immediate Post- Brown Years

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Ahead of Their Time: Black Teachers and Their Community in the Immediate Post-  
*Brown* Years

by

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## DEDICATION

To all the teachers in my life, especially my mother, grandparents, grandaunts, aunts, and uncles. Thank you for so selflessly loving our community's children.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores a 1956 case study in which over twenty African American teachers at one school were either dismissed or did not have their contracts renewed due to their refusal to confirm or deny their membership in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Through newspapers, magazines, oral histories, as well as the correspondence of the NAACP, White Citizens Councils, and other organizations, this study argues that African American teachers possessed a sociopolitical currency that white segregationists found threatening and were eager to stymie. This thesis further argues that the Ellore teachers' case and the larger 1950s civil rights movement foreshadowed and laid the groundwork for the better-known 1960s movement.

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## AHEAD OF THEIR TIME: BLACK TEACHERS AND THEIR COMMUNITY IN THE IMMEDIATE POST-*BROWN* YEARS

On the morning of May 15, 1956, Cecil Williams, a young photographer from Orangeburg, South Carolina, traveled to the Ellore Training School (ETS) to photograph twenty-one faculty members.<sup>1</sup> The neatly dressed group of sixteen women and five men assembled in the front of the building, where the name of the school appeared above their heads on the brick facade.<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Cleveland, a newlywed and recent graduate of South Carolina State College, wore a polka dot dress, white shoes, and carried a matching white clutch as she moved to the front of the group so that her petite frame would be visible.<sup>3</sup> On the far right of the group stood the school's principal, Charles Davis, who arranged the photography session. He had one arm wrapped around the shoulders of his wife, Rosa Delores Davis. Although many of the teachers smiled as Williams took the pictures, the seriousness of the moment weighed heavily upon them.<sup>4</sup> Days earlier, when ETS teachers received their contracts for the upcoming school term, they noticed new questions that asked if they were members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and if they aspired to teach in an integrated class.<sup>5</sup> When the twenty-one African American teachers refused to distance themselves from the leading civil rights organization or to endorse prevailing segregationist practices, white school officials revoked their contracts and dismissed them from their jobs.<sup>6</sup>

The collective defiance of black teachers in the spring of 1956 was just one of a growing number of civil rights protests that aimed to challenge and dismantle social and racial inequity in the American South. Two years earlier, on May 17, 1954, the NAACP won its most historically significant legal victory when Chief Justice Earl Warren announced the United States Supreme Court's decision regarding *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*.<sup>7</sup> When the highest court in the land ruled that the South's long-held doctrine of "separate but equal" had no place in the public school system, it dealt a powerful blow to segregation's legal and intellectual defenses. *Brown*, the culmination of five cases, began in Clarendon County, South Carolina where African American citizens initially petitioned for school buses and later demanded the end of segregated and unequal schools.<sup>8</sup> In the immediate post-*Brown* years (1955-1956), South Carolina continued to be an influential battleground.<sup>9</sup> Even as the courts deliberated, champions of white supremacy in South Carolina worked in advance of the decision to circumvent desegregation and to shore up ideological, political, and intellectual support.<sup>10</sup>

Reverend James M. Hinton, president of the South Carolina NAACP Conference of Branches, contended that black citizens foresaw no serious problems with school integration "unless it [was] suggested, or led by those instructed with the administration of the law."<sup>11</sup> Indeed, while white state and local officials erected a series of roadblocks to detour integration, black South Carolinians adopted multiple strategies to advance the cause of civil rights and social justice. Since the state's first NAACP chapters were founded in 1917, continuous efforts were made to address educational inequalities. In the immediate post-*Brown* years, as "people in the rural areas were showing more courage about the school segregation issue" and as white citizens strongly defended the status



quo, Orangeburg County, South Carolina found itself at center stage in a national struggle.<sup>12</sup> Described by some contemporaries as the “home of the [state’s] militant Negro intelligentsia,” the towns of Ellore and Orangeburg also earned reputations as the seedbed of the White Citizens Council.<sup>13</sup>

As prominent community members and educated professionals, African American teachers often found themselves in the middle of ongoing debates about the conditions of black schools and the future of desegregation. Like other African Americans, they conveyed mixed reactions to *Brown* and illustrated that the path to desegregation was marked with conflicting emotions and experiences. By closely examining racial politics in Orangeburg County in the aftermath of World War II, this thesis argues that direct activism among teachers constituted critically important steps in the “long civil rights movement.” With the *Brown* decision as a pivotal guidepost, the twenty-one Ellore teachers sacrificed their jobs as they openly protested the laws and attitudes that continued to regard African Americans as second-class citizens. The teachers’ open defiance, as displayed in news releases, organization reports, and photographs, captured national attention and mobilized individuals and associations who were eager to enforce the *Brown* decision. At the same time, the protest of the Ellore faculty raised even more anxiety and angst among white segregationists who regarded black educators as dangerous provocateurs who championed the civil rights agenda of the NAACP and other organizations. As highly regarded professionals, the wholesale dismissal of black teachers in a small South Carolina community served notice that no one was safe from the arms of injustice.

The Palmetto Education Association (PEA), founded by African Americans in 1906, celebrated the *Brown* ruling. While association leaders were vocal and unwavering in their support of desegregation, African American teachers conveyed varied, and sometimes contrasting, outlooks about the goals and timetables of racial integration.<sup>14</sup> Many of them had significant and well-grounded doubts about the merits of ending segregated black schools.<sup>15</sup> Those reservations and concerns were skillfully explored in a 1955 study of 150 black South Carolinian schoolteachers—104 women and 56 men—published in the *Journal of Negro Education*. The study, performed by Howard University professors Hurley Doddy and G. Franklin Edwards, found that one-fourth of the respondents expressed “some apprehension” regarding desegregation.<sup>16</sup> The teachers voiced three pressing concerns surrounding job security: First, they believed that they would be saddled with more requirements and certifications to maintain their professional positions. Second, they feared that integration would make it more difficult for married couples, like Charles and Rosa Davis, to continue working together in the same school. Finally, many expressed concern that the desegregation campaign would exacerbate racial inequities in the salaries and benefits afforded black and white teachers. Indeed, seventy-three percent of respondents felt that desegregation would result in large-scale job displacement.<sup>17</sup>

Even African American educators who endorsed desegregation strongly feared that increased antagonisms would emerge between themselves and white superintendents, teachers, and students. Some principals raised concerns about the possible administrative problems they would likely encounter as black supervisors of white teachers and staff.<sup>18</sup> Since desegregation plans could lead to temporary or long term financial hardship, black

teachers did not take possible job dismissals lightly. Unlike their white counterparts who could pursue other professional positions, educated blacks had few career options outside of the school system.<sup>19</sup> Southern, college educated African Americans regarded teaching as a very attractive occupation. It was even more appealing for black women because there was “no prestigious [sic] vocational area other than teaching.” Educated black men had the option of “other white collar jobs such as in insurance, as salesmen, and in self-employment.”<sup>20</sup> Consider Cecil Williams’ parents. His mother was a teacher, but his father maintained his own successful tailoring business.<sup>21</sup>

Confounded by a potential loss of income and status, and by the perceived tensions of working with white colleagues and students, half of the respondents in Doddy and Edwards’ study preferred teaching in segregated schools. Despite those reservations, the PEA and NAACP continued to push for desegregation.<sup>22</sup> The PEA acknowledged that job loss among black teachers was possible, but the group’s leaders argued that desegregation could serve as a weeding out process in which “unprepared teachers” were removed while “teachers who are prepared” would have no problem maintaining their positions in the public schools.<sup>23</sup>

As South Carolina’s black teachers read articles appearing in periodicals that confirmed their concerns about desegregation, the NAACP sought to allay public anxieties about moving ahead with a concerted legal attack against segregated facilities.<sup>24</sup> Just five days after the 1954 *Brown* ruling, Reverend Hinton traveled to Atlanta, Georgia to serve as chairman of a NAACP conference organized to create a plan for implementing the Supreme Court’s decision.<sup>25</sup> The conference drafted and approved the Atlanta Declaration, which affirmed the Association’s commitment to “integration at all levels,

including the assignment of teacher-personnel on a non-discriminatory basis.”<sup>26</sup> When NAACP attorney Thurgood Marshall appeared before a civil rights rally at Claflin University in November 1955, he and other NAACP officials reassured black teachers that they were unlikely to lose their jobs and pledged to support and assist those who championed integration.<sup>27</sup>

As the NAACP pursued a path toward integration, it worked to dispel rumors that it was losing support among African American teachers. In a April 29, 1954 press release, Lucille Black, membership secretary for the national office, stated that the South Carolina Conference of Branches was “receiving a steady flow of teacher memberships,” which suggested that black teachers were not “taken in by the scare propaganda that they will lose their jobs if the NAACP wins its fight to ban segregation in education.” According to the press release, southern black teachers joined in great numbers: 322 in Richmond, Virginia, and 250 in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.<sup>28</sup>

While African American teachers supported the NAACP, some educators publicly challenged the organization’s commitment to desegregation. A month before the twenty-one ETS teachers were dismissed, the PEA refused to permit P.B. Mdogana, an A.M.E minister and the principal of Chesterfield County’s Pine Forest High School, to introduce a resolution at a PEA conference in Columbia that strongly criticized the group’s support of integration. While accused of racial disloyalty by some members for his purported defense of segregation, the language of Mdogana’s resolution and its accompanying letter reveal a different and largely understudied motivation for his support of separate black institutions.<sup>29</sup> Reminding readers that African Americans were “proud of our heritage and God-given racial distinctions,” Mdogana writes:

I, for one, am proud of my Negro heritage and wear my God-given color with dignity and display my racial traits without shame. I envy no man who has been endowed by our Creator with characteristics differing from my own.<sup>30</sup>

With a direct nod to black nationalism, Mgodana encouraged the PEA to go on record as “declaring our racial pride.”<sup>31</sup> He resented the assertion that black education—and educators—were inferior. Mgodana did not dispute the fact that blacks had substandard resources, but he did not see integration as the cure. His hesitancy mirrored the uncertainties of other black Carolinians. Indeed, the case that sparked the desegregation battle in South Carolina, *Briggs v. Elliott*, began as a fight for improved and equal educational resources. It was changed at the behest of the national NAACP office. As Mgodana asserted, maintaining “separate but fully equal public school facilities” was the “well known desire” of most African Americans.<sup>32</sup> For individuals like Mgodana, civil liberties could be better acquired through equalization, than with integration.

Among white defenders of the Palmetto State’s segregationist policies, the *Brown* decision fanned the flames of opposition. According to one contemporary, white leaders began “acting like jackasses” in the aftermath of the 1954 ruling.<sup>33</sup> Politicians exploited the decision as they flagrantly stirred their constituents by appealing to white supremacist sentiments.<sup>34</sup> In the 1954 gubernatorial primary, desegregation became a central factor in the South Carolina Democratic Party’s factionalism. The primary pitted Columbia businessman Lester Bates against Lieutenant Governor George Bell Timmerman, Jr. Both candidates were decidedly against desegregation with Timmerman proposing a three school system—one for whites, one for blacks, and one for those seeking integration. Bates opposed Timmerman’s plan as well as others that permitted

integration. Bates lost, partly because Timmerman charged him with being an NAACP candidate. The accusation was blatantly false, but it was enough to sink Bates. The gubernatorial campaign fittingly portrays the sociopolitical environment of 1950s South Carolina. A real or alleged association with the NAACP placed one's professional life and personal well-being in serious jeopardy.

South Carolina's segregationists had a distinct advantage over their counterparts in other southern states because they laid the groundwork for resistance years before *Brown*. Argued in 1951, the *Briggs v. Elliott* case put the state in the spotlight and made both black and white citizens aware that changes in the public education system were inevitable. Adamant that these changes would not result in school desegregation, Governor Jim Byrnes began taking "preparedness measures" by turning to the state legislature.<sup>35</sup> In 1951 he appointed a fifteen member committee comprised of five state senators, five state representatives, and five laymen representing the state at-large. The purpose of the committee was "to study and report on the advisable course to be pursued" in the event federal courts mandated desegregation.<sup>36</sup> L. Marion Gressette, a state Senator from Orangeburg County, was the chairman of the newly established committee, which became known by his name—the Gressette Committee.<sup>37</sup> When the Supreme Court announced its decision, South Carolina was ready. It had a well-established, state-mandated agency explicitly designed to deal with the inevitable desegregation issue.<sup>38</sup> Two months after *Brown*, the Committee began holding special sessions.<sup>39</sup> During those meetings, committee members concluded that the Supreme Court's decision did not apply to the state of South Carolina. At the opening of the 1954-55 school year, the Committee recommended that schools open "according to the present pattern of pupil classification

and assignments in keeping with previously established policy.”<sup>40</sup> They argued that the Supreme Court had purposely not made “any order or decree which might have the effect of forcing an immediate change in local school policy or procedure.”<sup>41</sup>

While the Gressette Committee provided an efficient, state-led method of preserving segregation, *Brown* encouraged segregationists to find other methods to root out proponents of social and civil equality. On July 11, 1954, the first chapter of the White Citizens Council (WCC) was founded in Mississippi, and quickly spread across the South.<sup>42</sup> South Carolina’s county seats, such as Orangeburg, Charleston, and Sumter, became “bastions of Council strength.”<sup>43</sup> These areas witnessed significant growth during the summers of 1955 and 1956, triggered by school desegregation petitions. At its height, there were as many as 40,000 members in the South Carolina Councils.<sup>44</sup> The councils were initiated in Orangeburg County when the first two chapters were founded in the summer of 1955 after African Americans in school districts 5 and 7—Ellore and Orangeburg—filed school desegregation petitions.<sup>45</sup> Black schools in both districts were being revamped because of the equalization efforts enacted by Governor Byrnes and the Gressette Committee as an effort to avoid integration. In fact, the Ellore Training School captured in Cecil Williams’ famous photograph was a new facility completed with state funding to replace four older schools.<sup>46</sup> In yet another attempt to avoid desegregation, white officials sought to accredit black schools by filling the teaching ranks with college graduates like Elizabeth Cleveland and others.<sup>47</sup>

As Governor Byrnes’ purported equalization campaign evolved, South Carolina’s black intellectuals like Walker E. Solomon, Executive Secretary of the PEA, and John McCray, journalist and political activist, turned to national black media outlets to

highlight the steps African American citizens were undertaking to circumvent the duplicitous acts of white leaders. Solomon knew that the WCCs were “[c]ooperating with the legislature for a last ditch stand against desegregation.”<sup>48</sup> For example, a principal founder of the WCC was S. Emory Rogers, who served as the state’s lead attorney in the *Briggs v. Elliot* case.<sup>49</sup> In another example, in January 1956 the Gressette Committee held a conference with the executive committee of the state association of WCC to discuss their “program.”<sup>50</sup>

The WCC also had relationships with local government officials. The mayor of Elloree, W. J. Deer, actively participated in the Council and vowed that “his” Council would “fight the leaders of the NAACP from ditches to fence posts” in order to uphold segregation in public schools.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, Orangeburg mayor, Robert H. Jennings, led a boycott against local blacks and black owned businesses.<sup>52</sup> He and the WCC began implementing economic repercussions meant to strangle the thriving local movement. Jennings was quoted in the New York Amsterdam News as saying:

I own and operate the Coca Cola Bottling Company here in Orangeburg, also a bakery and an ice and fuel company. . . I have ordered all my businesses to stop serving these niggers who have signed that school petition . . . I have checked with the 30 or more nigger employees that I have working for me, and if I catch any of them joining that NAACP, or signing the petition, they might as well leave town.<sup>53</sup>

Despite Jennings’ harsh words, some local blacks refused to back down and faced the inevitable reprisals.<sup>54</sup> Ladson Stukes, a Clarendon County farmer in his sixties, remarked, “I ain’t taking my name off the list until Thurgood Marshall comes down here and tells me.”<sup>55</sup> John (Duck) Felder said, “The white folks want to run us out but we’re trying to hold our land.”<sup>56</sup> Despite Stukes and Felders’ defiance, the economic reprisals



proved to be effective. L.A. Blackman, “militant president of the Elloree [NAACP] chapter,” remembered that tensions “picked up” after he and his colleagues sent a copy of a desegregation petition to each ETS board member.<sup>57</sup> A local farmer and father of twelve children went to Blackman in distress because he and his family no longer had a place to live. The person who owned the land that the farmer rented found out that he signed the school desegregation petition and summarily raised his weekly rent from two to ten dollars. Not surprisingly, the sum was too large for the poor man to manage.<sup>58</sup> During the same period, Anthony Glover was released from his position of twelve years as a garage mechanic.<sup>59</sup> When Mayor Deer discovered that James Shivers, a ten-year city employee, had signed the petition, he dismissed the man from his job as a sanitation worker and kicked him out of his home.<sup>60</sup> When the mayor offered to give Shivers his job back and let him stay in the home on condition that he remove his name from the petition, Shivers refused and said that he wanted to stand up for himself.<sup>61</sup>

By October 1955 financial repercussions against James Shivers and his contemporaries grew so strong that Jet magazine featured a six-page expose titled “South Carolina’s Plot to Starve Negroes.” According to reports, the WCC’s boycott was so effectual that “few Negro businesses in the two progressive counties [Orangeburg and Clarendon counties] get as much as a shoe lace.”<sup>62</sup> Blacks in these two counties were being denied access to basic essentials. Grocers were not only refusing to deliver goods to black owned businesses, but some white grocery store owners would not even sell merchandise to African American patrons.<sup>63</sup> “[T]he vicious ‘squeeze’” was “denying milk and bread to countless children.”<sup>64</sup> The lack of a healthy, complete diet was clear to black teachers. As Elizabeth Cleveland recalled:

In Ellore we had to do so much for them. . . you know a child cannot learn anything if they have not had something to eat. And so oftentimes, we would take food. . . You would ask them if they had anything to eat and they would say they didn't have anything . . . You wanted them to be alert to be able to learn. . . I don't think people realize how much money teachers spent of their own, not making anything, to help their children be able to succeed in class because the parents didn't really have anything . . . Years ago, you did whatever you had to do to help your students and to help the school.<sup>65</sup>

At the time, it is likely that Cleveland would have found herself facing these challenges teaching a rural, working-class group of students regardless of whether or not there was a boycott, but since some of the parents who signed the desegregation petition had children at the school, it is certain that the financial straits of some parents were exacerbated. Cleveland's comments reflect that she understood the community in which she worked. Like many other African American teachers Cleveland acquired middle-class status through her profession, yet empathized with her constituency because of her own working-class background.<sup>66</sup>

In Orangeburg, the number of petition signatures dwindled from fifty-eight to thirty-eight as people began requesting that their names be removed.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, protest gave way to fear and despondency in Ellore when fourteen people removed their names.<sup>68</sup> L.A. Blackman remembers a man who came to him in tears. He was released from his job after his employer found out he signed the desegregation petition. Blackman met with the man and his employer where he was told he could help the crying man by signing an agreement which asserted the man did not know what he was doing when he signed the petition, therefore releasing him of responsibility for his actions and allowing him to get his job back. Blackman refused and told the employer that he would like to

help but would not do it for that man or anyone else because “everyone who signed that petition knew exactly what they were doing.”<sup>69</sup>

Orangeburg County African Americans refused to take these economic reprisals lying down. Journalist John McCray later reported that “[t]he WCC campaign . . . hasn’t worked out exactly as it was thought.”<sup>70</sup> African Americans were turning to their own community for assistance. Blackman, who had been retired for two years, returned to work as a building contractor in order to build homes and provide employment for displaced local activists. A man by the name of George Mack was sending chickens to families in need.<sup>71</sup> Local leaders sent out a call for help in *Jet* magazine for financial assistance with medical expenses and school supplies, and requested clothing contributions.<sup>72</sup> People responded by sending canned goods, money, and clothing to the NAACP office in Columbia care of Modjeska Simkins, long time activist and state NAACP secretary.<sup>73</sup> The WCC found a way to block this assistance. Blackman asserted that boxes of clothing addressed to him were never received because he was prevented from having access to his post office box.<sup>74</sup> He knew immediately that it was a consequence of his affiliation with the NAACP and his assistance with the school desegregation petition.<sup>75</sup> Within weeks, he found himself under constant physical threat. At a December, 1955 Klan rally, it was announced over the loudspeakers that Blackman’s fellow African Americans should see to it that he leave town.<sup>76</sup> He went to the rally and said he drove as close to the speakers as possible to hear what was going on. He remembers being asked by the speaker if he would like to say anything. He said that he would, and announced, “I’m here in Ellore. I’ve been here for seventeen years. And I have no idea of leaving here. I want to stay here.”<sup>77</sup> Blackman joked that after that,

“then I had my own people to face.”<sup>78</sup> Regardless of his positive attitude, he knew to take the Klan’s threats against his life seriously. He was aware of the violence faced by other South Carolina activists, and most likely knew that other local black leaders like himself were slain by the KKK.<sup>79</sup>

The South Carolina NAACP did not stop at providing relief for distressed black residents. They staged a boycott of their own. In a letter to members, Rev. Hinton advised: “‘Economic Reprisals’ can be two-way streets as well as sharp two-edged swords.”<sup>80</sup> Simkins remembered thinking, “if they can put on a squeeze, we can put on a boycott.” Orangeburg County blacks were encouraged to avoid shopping at certain stores and to put their money together in order buy groceries from as far as fifty to seventy miles away. They also boycotted all the businesses owned by Mayor Jennings—Coca-Cola, Sunbeam Bread, and Paradise Ice Cream.<sup>81</sup> In the aftermath of the Orangeburg events, Reverend Hinton called for a national boycott of the products and supporters complied with that request.<sup>82</sup> The NAACP office removed the Coca-Cola machine from its New York office, and a March 1956 volume of *The Crisis* featured a picture of two doctors at Upper Manhattan Medical Center having their Coca-Cola machines removed in protest of the situation in Orangeburg.<sup>83</sup>

As African Americans started their own protests, anti-NAACP legislation gained increased support. In order to deal with the integration issue, an act was approved on March 17, 1956, which extended both the Gressette Committee’s existence and its reach. Moving beyond the public school system, the committee turned its attention to higher education and “all phases of segregation affecting the state government and the citizens of South Carolina.”<sup>84</sup> That year the Gressette Committee had been especially busy, and

persuaded the General Assembly to pass fourteen new laws. These included permitting local school boards to sell or lease school property, the repeal of the compulsory-education law, and—most importantly to this study—a series of anti-NAACP statutes designed to stymie the organization’s progress.<sup>85</sup>

The meaning of the legislation was not lost on attentive educators like PEA leader Walker E. Solomon. He wrote that the Gressette committee’s life had been extended in order to prove the state’s “determination to defy the court.”<sup>86</sup> The new legislation that directly affected black teachers was H-1998, which became known as the anti-NAACP oath. Passed on March 17, 1956, this law made it illegal for those who were employees of the local, county, or state governments to be members of the NAACP and required them to disclose said membership, whether personal or through family ties.<sup>87</sup> In the event local white officials felt inclined to be sympathetic, repercussions could also fall on them. If they did not report these cases, they were subject to pay a \$100 fine for each violation.<sup>88</sup>

African American leaders were sure that the anti-NAACP oath was purposely directed towards black educators. According to Solomon, this legislation was passed in order to “make sure no teachers join [the] NAACP.”<sup>89</sup> He observed that the oath stemmed largely from the legislature’s incorrect assumption that “most, if not all, of the 7,500 teachers” in black schools were NAACP members.<sup>90</sup> Soon after the passage of the measure, Roy Wilkins and Reverend Hinton denounced the the new law as an effort to “intimidate teachers as they are the only large group of public employees from which the NAACP membership is recruited.”<sup>91</sup> The anti-NAACP oath was not just a vague swipe at the organization. It was meant to hit them hard. As noted in one editorial, the new law

was “simply another in a series of moves by the White South to break up the NAACP” and black Carolinians needed to “stand firm and fast.”<sup>92</sup>

Ten days after the new law was passed, the Cheraw Branch correspondence secretary Levi G. Byrd wrote Lucille Black in the national office to update her of the situation in South Carolina. He told her he received word that white officials in the area planned to ask him for the chapter’s membership roster in order to find out how many teachers were in their NAACP branch. He was giving Black his word that he would not give them the information. He wrote, “I Am telling you if thay [sic] do I will not tell them, I will go to Jail before I tell them any thing [sic].”<sup>93</sup> Instead, he planned on referring them to her. Requests for membership were not only being made of the NAACP, but also of the PEA. The PEA gave responses like Byrd’s and local NAACP branches replied that they did not keep track of their members’ occupations. Solomon attributed these requests to white officials’ and reporters’ desire to find out how many teachers were members of the NAACP.<sup>94</sup>

The national office seemed certain that the events in Ellore would result in a court case. On May 17, 1956, the national office sent out a press release titled, “TEACHERS REJECT ANTI-NAACP OATH; ASSOCIATION PLEDGES FULL SUPPORT” that was intended to bring attention to the twenty-one teachers who lost their positions as a direct result of the new law. Eighteen resigned and three refused to sign.<sup>95</sup> Their employment contracts for the 1956-1957 school year were significantly different than their past contracts. This time school superintendent M. G. Austin included the following questionnaire:

Do you favor integration of races in schools? Do you feel that you would be happy in an integrated school system

knowing that parents and students do not favor this system? Do you feel that you are qualified to teach an integrated class in a satisfactory manner? Do you believe in the aims of the NAACP? If you join the NAACP while employed in this school will you please notify the superintendent and chairman of the board of trustees?<sup>96</sup>

The questionnaire set the small, rural town of Elloreë apart from the rest of the state. All South Carolina school districts required black teachers to reveal or terminate their NAACP membership, but only superintendent Austin included what one African American commentator described as “none-of-their-business” questions.<sup>97</sup> With Elloreë as a model for other South Carolina school districts, similar questionnaires were executed in Charleston and Jasper counties where active WCC chapters operated.<sup>98</sup>

Before superintendent Austin arrived at the school on May 11<sup>th</sup> to have the new contracts signed, Charles Davis met with each teacher to review the stipulations of the new questions. .<sup>99</sup> With as much objectivity as he could muster, he told each teacher to “only do what you think you have to do. . . You do what you feel that you want to do in your heart.”<sup>100</sup> That advice meant something different to each teacher. For some teachers, it meant not answering the questions at all, for others it meant resigning from their positions, and for certain teachers it meant answering the questions honestly and openly. To someone like Elizabeth Cleveland, it was simply a matter of standing up for herself. She said, “I felt like I had gone to school and felt I could teach any child.”<sup>101</sup> Some of the ETS teachers answered the questionnaire in a satisfactory manner and their contracts were renewed for the next school year. Cleveland remembers being surprised that her roommate signed the contract. She also understood the reasons why some went ahead with signing it. “The others, I knew—it was a mother and daughter—but they lived there and so I could understand why they weren’t gonna leave, you know.”<sup>102</sup>

In Orangeburg, Reverend Matthew McCollom, President of the Orangeburg NAACP Branch, recalled in a 1974 Panorama News interview the difficulty his wife, Mamey McCollom, encountered because of their activism:

My wife, who was an assistant to the principal at Bowman Elementary School, was fired in the spring of 1956 for no stated reason. We remained in Orangeburg until the summer of 1962, but no principal in the county called on her for as much as a day's substitute work during those six years.<sup>103</sup>

Despite expected repercussions, some black teachers continued their affiliation with the NAACP. Dantzler School principal Reverend E.E. Richburg seemed ready for the inevitable battle when he told a reporter with the New York Post, "I hope they fire me then. I'd like to meet them in court."<sup>104</sup> He was the only teacher at his school who admitted to being in the NAACP, but this current battle was nothing new to him.<sup>105</sup> He was already firmly entrenched in the movement. In 1955 he was kidnapped by the KKK who threatened to "horse-whip" him and was dismissed from a teaching job because of his role in the *Briggs* case in Clarendon County.<sup>106</sup> Richburg serves as an excellent example of the far-reaching implications of one individual's activism. Not only was he dismissed from his teaching position, but so were his daughter, his son, and their spouses.<sup>107</sup>

Other teachers around the state also lost their positions. In Charleston, Henry Hutchinson and Septima Clark were dismissed after helping to shore-up support for a desegregation petition. Hutchinson taught at Burke Industrial School, and Clark taught at Henry Archer School. Both refused to renounce their NAACP membership.<sup>108</sup> Clark remembered, "I refused to overlook my membership in the NAACP, as some of the teachers had done, and listed it."<sup>109</sup> Teachers like Clark were well aware of the fact that



their activism would have repercussions and consequently many did not feel comfortable following her example. As Cecil Williams recalled regarding his mother and other black teachers, “It was rare for teachers to really take any anti-establishment kind of attitude or any activity.”<sup>110</sup>

All of these dismissals for breach of contract had the potential to culminate into a court case. The NAACP and the PEA stood by various teachers around the state, but they honed in on the Ellore case because their lawyers thought the circumstances presented a better opportunity to challenge the anti-NAACP legislation.<sup>111</sup> Correspondence from the national office shows that it had a deep interest in the Ellore case. Roy Wilkins and Thurgood Marshall shuffled memos about the case between each other.<sup>112</sup> The NAACP made strategic efforts to ensure that the teachers would stay the course by offering legal and financial assistance. Roy Wilkins wrote to Reverend Hinton that the national office was “very anxious” to offer the Ellore teachers as much support as it could muster. Even as Wilkins acknowledged that his organizations “financial resources are not inexhaustible,” he pledged to help the teachers find other jobs and “to give assistance in these outstanding cases.”<sup>113</sup>

As the NAACP and African American periodicals publicized the plight of black teachers in Orangeburg County, other organizations lent their support and funding. The Ellore teachers received a five hundred dollar award from the Campaign for Courage and turned the sum over to the NAACP.<sup>114</sup> Similarly when Thurgood Marshall asked, Fred Fuges, the Director of the Rights of Conscience Program of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), he said they did have some money set aside to provide “relief of conscience victims” and that the teachers could qualify for aid.<sup>115</sup>

With growing funding, NAACP leaders believed that the Ellore case presented great possibilities for their legal efforts to undermine segregation and racial inequity. The release of twenty-one teachers by the same school board and the unique questionnaire made it blatantly clear that the firing of the teachers had nothing to do with their performance and everything to do with their affiliation with the NAACP. By July 1956, the national NAACP office communicated with the local chapter and Columbia attorney Lincoln Jenkins regarding the most effective legal strategy on behalf of the Ellore defendants.<sup>116</sup>

The Ellore case was not just distinct because of its legal possibilities, but also its publicity. At a New York Teachers Guild meeting, Walker Solomon spoke to the group regarding the teachers from South Carolina who lost their jobs.<sup>117</sup> But even as Solomon and Wilkins remained hopeful about the pending Ellore legal battle, some of the teachers were hesitant to speak about their part in the case. Ola Bryan, the named plaintiff in the court case, recalls that her general mindset at the time was “See nothing. Hear nothing. Say nothing.” Her husband urged her to use discretion, telling her “One thing you’re going to have to do is hear and don’t hear and see and don’t see.”<sup>118</sup> Cleveland recalled, “I didn’t talk a whole lot. We weren’t supposed to do a lot of talking. So, I didn’t.”<sup>119</sup> When asked why she responded:

We just didn’t want to. The press was already there. . . A lot of people were a little apprehensive about it and didn’t want to really talk about it because they didn’t want, I guess, anything to get out that much that they were involved in it or whatever. . . You try to be careful. You try not to bring a whole lot of attention to yourself . . .<sup>120</sup>

Black teachers’ guarded silence about their activism reflected conscious and deliberate participation in what some scholars regard as a “culture of dissemblance.”<sup>121</sup>

They maintained the appearance of openness in their public lives while simultaneously creating a separate, “psychic space” in which they could work independently, even within a racist society adverse to their life’s work of educating black children.<sup>122</sup> While Cleveland and some of the other teachers preferred anonymity as the case evolved, the accompanying press releases and images drew national attention to their protest and engendered more notoriety than they anticipated. The teachers’ photograph appeared in a weekly section of *Jet* called, “This Week’s Best Pictures.” As photographer Cecil Williams recalled, “that picture was so important in that period of history that it went from one side of the magazine to the other. It was the largest picture ever printed in *Jet*. They gave it two pages.”<sup>123</sup>

The Ellore case and the growing publicity surrounding events in the small South Carolina community illustrated that the line dividing the activism of the NAACP and the PEA was thin and permeable. Walker Solomon served as one of the teachers’ biggest advocates and spokespersons. He corresponded regularly with Roy Wilkins, sending requests and updates. He and the PEA were especially concerned with the teachers’ financial and occupation status.<sup>124</sup> In August 1956, Solomon wrote Wilkins regarding four teachers who were interested in attending graduate school and three who wanted to find immediate alternative employment.<sup>125</sup> Solomon was successful in securing funding for the teachers. In September, the national office sent \$2400 for graduate school assistance.<sup>126</sup> In Friendship, a New York based organization founded to funnel financial aid to the southern civil rights movement, also helped secure funds for the teachers to go to graduate school.<sup>127</sup> As of January 1957 the AFSC Rights of Conscience Program

continued to be in contact with Solomon and anticipated sending approximately \$1500 to assist the remaining teachers who by this time had “urgent needs.”<sup>128</sup>

The Ellore case culminated into the legal suit the NAACP anticipated, *Ola L. Bryan, et al v. M.G. Austin Jr.* In many respects, the PEA took the reigns and pushed the NAACP to assist the teachers. In fact, Solomon and the rest of the PEA’s executive committee visited with Columbia NAACP attorney Lincoln Jenkins to galvanize support. When the NAACP had not acted on the case by the end of July 1956, the PEA sent Solomon to consult with Thurgood Marshall who agreed to move forward with the litigation.<sup>129</sup> The *Bryan* trial began on October 22, 1956 in the U.S. District Court in Charleston and was decided on January 23, 1957. Despite the compelling argument of the NAACP lawyers—that the anti-NAACP oath was a violation of the constitutional right to freedom of speech and freedom of association—they did not win the case.<sup>130</sup> A dissenting opinion was offered by Circuit Court Judge John J. Parker on which he argued, “[t]he fact that organizations may render themselves unpopular with the majority . . . is no reason why the majority may use its power to enact legislation denying to their members the fundamental rights of constitutional liberty.”<sup>131</sup> The NAACP appealed to the United States Supreme Court, but the South Carolina law was repealed and Court refused to hear the case.<sup>132</sup>

The long-term impact of these troubling years of 1955 and 1956 were varied. African Americans in Ellore continued to feel the effects of the economic reprisals. In November 1956, Mrs. Roselee Easterling wrote the national office seeking financial help because both she and her sons were being “squeezed out of employment.”<sup>133</sup> A December issue of the Afro-American still reported L.A. Blackman as “the most hated

man in Elloreë.”<sup>134</sup> On Christmas Eve of 1956, Ruby Hurley, NAACP Regional Secretary, wrote that the situation in Elloreë “makes it difficult to think of a happy holiday season . . .”<sup>135</sup> Blackman also continued to face reprisals. A 1960 memo noted that the once fairly successful building contractor “now makes his living selling magazines and newspapers.”<sup>136</sup>

After the ETS teachers’ contracts were revoked, the school trustees received fifty-four applications, including some from out of state. Blackman said community members would refuse the new teachers because they did not feel the new teachers “should have taken the jobs of other teachers who had taken a noble stand.”<sup>137</sup> He quoted one trustee as saying that “anything can teach a nigger.”<sup>138</sup>

In light of the publicity of the case, the Elloreë teachers were offered some financial assistance. Two teachers, Robert D. Carmichael and Vivian V. Floyd attended graduate school. After Carmichael moved to New York to go to a teachers college, the NAACP continued to assist him with finding part-time work.<sup>139</sup> Elizabeth Cleveland went on to have a long teaching career in Darlington where she taught until her retirement.<sup>140</sup> Ola Bryan continued to teach for a few more years, but later left to assist her husband with the store he owned.<sup>141</sup> With the assistance of the American Friends Service Committee, Charles Davis and his wife moved to Greensboro, North Carolina where he continued as a civil rights activist with the NAACP, the Greensboro Citizens Association and the Congress on Racial Equality.<sup>142</sup>

Some of the teachers from Charleston who lost their jobs found employment in the North, but according to Septima Clark, most of them were unsuccessful in finding new jobs.<sup>143</sup> Moreover, the effects of the law were not limited to temporary job loss.<sup>144</sup>

Its impact went far beyond monetary issues. Clark remembers that it also had a psychological impact on one of the teachers in her community:

Our supervisor of Negro teachers was terribly concerned about it. She knew that she was going to lose her job because she was a member [of the NAACP], and she did not want to give it up. She just got terribly ill in her mind. She became senile soon, and she died not too long after that, before they took her job away.<sup>145</sup>

It would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to accurately approximate the full psychological impact that job dismissals and threats of termination had on South Carolina's black teachers in the 1950s. Yet, it is important that Clark made this connection. She did not see this principal's psychological deterioration as a separate and unrelated occurrence, which speaks to the implied effects of civil rights activism in an overwhelmingly racist society.

Clark's valiant civil rights career serves as just one notable example of the role African Americans teachers played at the forefront of the black freedom struggle. South Carolina's black teachers had a long-standing relationship with the NAACP, dating back to the year it was founded. In Elloree, very blatant acts of discrimination galvanized the quiet and determined activism of black educators and pushed some from the margins to the center of a growing national protest movement. South Carolina's teachers who joined the NAACP had the choice to either acknowledge that membership and be dismissed from their jobs, or to deny that membership and have their contracts renewed. Based on Clark's reflections, many teachers weighed their options and concluded that it made more sense to leave the NAACP than to jeopardize their careers and livelihoods. In Elloree, school officials asked the teachers to go a step further than simply disavowing their NAACP membership. With the legal prospects of the *Brown* decision hotly debated in

the press and in state legislatures, the teachers were then asked to violate their own conscience by denying their professional skills and abilities to instruct white children. Backed into a corner by the South Carolina anti-NAACP oath and the pointed questions of the district school superintendent, the majority of African American teachers at the Ellore Training School emerged as reluctant but resolute activists who were celebrated and lauded by civil rights champions around the country

The largely unknown battle of black teachers in a small South Carolina community invites a number of questions about a major Civil Rights episode in the most unlikely of places. Why did the state of South Carolina target black teachers in the post World War II era? Why did white leaders adopt legislation clearly designed to thwart civil rights participation and any possibility of direct activism among African American educators? Why were teachers who joined the NAACP perceived as so terribly threatening?

The most likely answer is that segregationist officials rightly feared the political and social currency held by black teachers. As one recent scholar noted, to be a teacher in the segregated South was to be “a ‘precious symbol’ of a people’s dreams from days gone by and a hope for the future.”<sup>146</sup> By insisting that black children could learn and develop, many African American educators questioned white racial assumptions and challenged a fundamental tenet of southern power relations.<sup>147</sup> The South’s black teachers faced hostility from whites because their professional accomplishments and their instruction of black youth challenged long-standing notions of African Americans’ inferiority.<sup>148</sup>

Black teachers received the almost unqualified support of local community members in their goals of educating black youth.<sup>149</sup> This strong backing was readily apparent among the parents of children attending the Ellore Training School. After word of the teachers' dismissals got around town, some of the parents released a statement that characterized the teachers as "sympathetic, admirable, and respected" community members.<sup>150</sup> In the eyes of local black citizens, the teachers' activism only heightened their professionalism.<sup>151</sup> Segregationists were correct to fear the possible implications of black teacher activism. If they became activists in large numbers, their efforts, in concert with the unceasing work of the NAACP, could bring about their worst fears. It could completely break down the architecture of Jim Crow segregation.

Despite these concerns, large-scale public activism among black educators was virtually impossible for even the most dedicated teachers, NAACP members, and activists to achieve. Septima Clark and others tried to mobilize black teachers in Charleston to fight the anti-NAACP oath, which she saw as a blatantly unjust law.<sup>152</sup> She was largely unsuccessful in this endeavor and regarded it as one of her greatest failures. She remembered:

[T]here were such a few jobs that they didn't see how they could work against the law. . . I signed my name to 726 letters to black teachers asking them to tell the state of South Carolina that it [the anti-NAACP oath] was unjust . . . I don't know why I felt that black teachers would stand up for their rights. But they wouldn't. Most of them were afraid and became hostile.<sup>153</sup>

Clark did get a response from twenty-six teachers. Eleven of them agreed to go with her to talk to the superintendent, but only six of them showed up for the meeting. The



superintendent did not say much to them, only that they were living far ahead of their time.<sup>154</sup>

The same could be said of the participants in the Ellore teachers' case. Their activism and the events surrounding the immediate post-*Brown* years foreshadowed and laid the groundwork for the 1960s civil rights movement. As segregationists strove to harden the lines of separation between the races, it left African Americans feeling that they had no other choice but to engage in the direct-action strategies, which became increasingly common throughout the 1960s. Students from Burke High School, from which Hutchinson was fired, participated in Charleston sit-ins. Many of these students were on the honor roll and partook in the extracurricular activities school faculty created in the 1940s to prepare black youth for leadership. This, combined with the fact that Burke's 1960s teachers encouraged student activism and created an environment which students felt secure in coming to them for advice, illustrates the long-term investment of black teachers in their students and civil rights activism. Orangeburg, the home of two black colleges—Claflin College and South Carolina State College—became a bedrock of student activism. In Orangeburg, and across the South, 1960s activists employed the same methods South Carolina's black organizers used in the Ellore case. Like South Carolina's older activists, the student protesters used the media to draw attention to their cause, taking advantage of the growing presence of television in the home. The activists of the 1960s also built on the use of organizational cooperation. Organizations such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Southern Christian Leadership Council, the Congress on Racial Equality, and the NAACP frequently joined forces in a common goal.

The immediate post-*Brown* years also served as a time of training for white segregationists. The Gressette Committee continued to find lawful methods of preventing integration.<sup>155</sup> The law preventing NAACP members from being civil servants was repealed, but a new law replaced it in May 1957, which did essentially the same thing. Instead of stating that city and state employees could not be members of the NAACP, it required them to list all memberships on their application.<sup>156</sup> Segregationist leaders made no secret of the fact that the new law was intended to accomplish the same thing as the old one.<sup>157</sup> It was an example of how the state tightened its control of the public school system after it became clear that black Carolinians planned on taking full advantage of *Brown*. In fact, this new law could be more damaging than the previous one because it required teachers to list all memberships, including organizations which may have been involved in racial uplift without being self-defined civil rights organizations.

The events in 1955-1956 Orangeburg County illustrated how deeply committed African Americans were to expanding their horizons by ending inequities in public schools and how southern whites struggled to retain power by defiantly defending racial segregation. In the minds of many, equal education meant racial equality, and that very prospect inspired activism among blacks and bitter resistance among whites. By refusing to sign job contracts that they viewed as unjust and demeaning, the Ellore Training School teachers found both notoriety and enmity. On one hand, they sparked the wrath of white segregationists who were determined to wage a long and often pernicious battle to maintain the status quo. On the other hand, the group of teachers who posed before a lone cameraman on a spring morning in 1956 sparked pride and support among activists

and community members alike as they stood “firm and fast” defending their jobs, their community, and their fundamental rights as citizens.<sup>158</sup>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Cecil Williams, *Freedom & Justice: Four Decades of the Civil Rights Struggle as Seen by a Black Photographer of the Deep South*. (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1995), 124. The school had a total of thirty-one faculty members.

<sup>2</sup> *Freedom & Justice*, 123-125; Adam Fairclough, *A Class of Their Own: Black Teachers in the Segregated South*. (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 51-52, 221-223. According to Fairclough's study, the male to female ratio of the Elloree faculty is representative of the teaching profession as a whole. By 1900, women teachers outnumbered male teachers in public schools in every southern state except Arkansas and Tennessee. In the black community, the change was quite staggering. By 1930, eighty-six percent of the black public school teachers who taught in elementary schools were women. This higher percentage of black female teachers over black male teachers can certainly be attributed to more women going to teaching colleges, the feminization of the teaching profession among both black and white teachers, and the fact that black and white college educated women tended to go into teaching because it was one of the few professions open to women with a college degree.

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Cleveland, interview by author, 25 September 2010, Darlington, SC, digital recording.

<sup>4</sup> Cecil J. Williams, interview by author, 18 September 2010, Orangeburg, SC, digital recording.

<sup>5</sup> Williams, *Freedom & Justice*, 124.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 124.

<sup>7</sup> Mark V. Tushnet, *The NAACP's Legal Strategy Against Segregated Education, 1925-1950*. (Chapel Hill and: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 26-27, 88-94; Patricia Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement*. (New York: The New Press, 2009), 304-305; Sonya Ramsey. *Reading, Writing, and Segregation: A Century of Black Women Teachers in Nashville* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 46-47. The NAACP showed explicit interest in school desegregation as early as 1931 when one of its lawyers, Nathan Margold, prepared a 218 page report on how the NAACP could attack segregation. The legal groundwork for the *Brown* decision was laid in the 1940s when, as part of a large-scale campaign against the legality of segregated education, the NAACP posed numerous campaigns across the South for teacher salary equalization, the admittance of African Americans into all-white professional and graduate schools, and the equalization of public school facilities.

<sup>8</sup> Histories of the Clarendon County case, *Briggs v. Elliott*, include: R. Scott Baker, *Paradoxes of Desegregation: African American Struggles for Educational Equity in Charleston, South Carolina, 1926-1972*. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006); Ophelia De Laine Gona, *Dawn of Desegregation: J.A. De Laine and Briggs V.*

*Elliott*. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2011); Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown V. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality*. (New York: Vintage Books, 2004); Winfred B. Moore and Orville Vernon Burton, eds., *Toward the Meeting of the Waters: Currents in the Civil Rights Movement of South Carolina During the Twentieth Century*. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> The South Carolina NAACP began working with black teachers in 1917 when the first chapter was founded, and they launched the black teacher hiring campaign in Charleston where black teachers were not hired within the city limits. Therefore, white teachers instructed black children in segregated schools. The working relationship with teachers continued in the 1940s with the teacher salary equalization campaign. The SC NAACP was successful in equalizing the way teacher salaries were determined in 1947.

<sup>10</sup> One of the major acts of circumvention was delivered by South Carolina native, Senator Strom Thurmond. He was a principal drafter of the Southern Manifesto, which was signed in 1956 by 101 congressmen.

<sup>11</sup> "Leaders Foresee No Trouble In Integration Plan," *Atlanta Daily World*, September 26, 1954.

<sup>12</sup> Reverend James M. Hinton said this at the closing session of the Georgia NAACP Conference of Branches. "S.C. NAACP Leader Says Supreme Court Will 'Courageously Enforce' School Rule," *Atlanta Daily World*, December 7, 1954.

<sup>13</sup> "South Carolina's Plot to Starve Negroes," *Jet*, October 1955, 8.; "United Effort Is Made to Stop Integration Plan," *The Orangeburg Citizens Council*, February 13, 1956.

<sup>14</sup> R. Scott Baker, *Paradoxes of Desegregation*, 109; Modjeska Monteith Simkins Papers, Subseries: Journal and Guide [Norfolk, VA] Newspaper Column 1947-1948. This was not the first demonstration of the PEA's support for desegregation. In 1947, Modjeska Simkins reported in the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* the PEA support of a NAACP sponsored civil lawsuit against the University of South Carolina for refusing to admit an African American, John Wrighten, into the law school. This is an example of the working relationship between the SC NAACP and the PEA. The two groups established a joint committee and, according to Simkins, both wanted to "eradicate existing inequalities in education opportunities." The PEA also promised to raise \$1,000 to assist local school officials in executing desegregation plans.

<sup>15</sup> Fairclough, *A Class of Their Own*, 375. Fairclough argues that these contradictory feelings towards desegregation were not the sole domain of black teachers. They were representative of the black community as a whole. While blacks wanted equal education, many were not particularly certain or insistent that equal education should be obtained through integration. In the two hallmark cases of *Brown v. Board* in the South—Prince Edward County and Clarendon County—their initial goal was to obtain equal school

facilities. Those cases were actually changed at the behest of the NAACP national office who asserted that equal education could be best obtained through integration.

<sup>16</sup>Hurley H. Doddy, and G. Franklin Edwards, "Apprehensions of Negro Teachers Concerning Desegregation in South Carolina." *The Journal of Negro Education* 24, no. 1 (1955): 28.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 26-29.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 29-34.

<sup>19</sup> Adam Fairclough, *Teaching Equality: Black Schools in the Age of Jim Crow*. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 63.

<sup>20</sup> Doddy and Edwards, 36.

<sup>21</sup> Williams Interview.

<sup>22</sup> Doddy and Edwards, 37.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>24</sup>Virgil A. Clift, "Democracy and Integration in Public Education," *The Crisis*, August-September, 1952; "What About Negro Teachers?," *Oregon Journal*, August 30, 1954; David Lawrence, "Influx of Negro Teachers May Test North's Sincerity," *New York Herald Tribune*, September 6, 1954; "Press Digest," *Jet*, September 16, 1954.

<sup>25</sup> "Along the N.A.A.C.P. Battlefront," *The Crisis*, June-July, 1954.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> "Marshall Addresses Clafin NAACP Rally, Predicts Demise of Once Solid South," *Times and Democrat*, November 28, 1955. On May 10, 1955 the national office announced that they were opening a new department of teacher information and security in order to protect black teachers' tenure. They also sought to convince South Carolina's black community that desegregation was inevitable and that they would support those who fought for this cause.

<sup>28</sup> Papers of the NAACP, Part 3, Series C, Reel 17. Press Release. April 29, 1954.

These assertions were reiterated again when on 3 March 1955, the NAACP noted in another press release that southern teachers were continuing to join. The entire faculty at a school in Tallahassee, Florida joined, as well as each of the black teachers in Brunswick County, Virginia—all 110 of them.

<sup>29</sup> “South Carolina Negro Principal Praises Anti-NAACP Law,” *Jet*, April 19, 1956.

According to *Jet*, Mlodana believed that “teachers should appreciate equal facilities and oppose so-called integration.”

<sup>30</sup> Modjeska Monteith Simkins Papers, Roll 4678. Letter from P. B. Mlodana to “My dear Fellow Educator”. April 10, 1956

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*; “S.C. Negro Principal Praises Anti-NAACP Law,” *Jet*, April 19, 1956.

<sup>32</sup> Modjeska Monteith Simkins Papers, Roll 4678. Letter from P. B. Mlodana to My dear Fellow Educator. April 10, 1956.

<sup>33</sup> “South Cannot Turn Back Negro Says Hinton,” *Atlanta Daily World*, November 3, 1955. Reverend James M. Hinton said the states of Georgia, South Carolina, and Mississippi were acting like jackasses regarding the school integration issue. He was speaking at the NC NAACP annual convention and also used the opportunity to publicize the economic reprisals petition signers in Orangeburg were facing.

<sup>34</sup> Numan V. Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance: Race and Politics in the South During the 1950's*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), 68-70.

<sup>35</sup> Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance*, 45.

<sup>36</sup> Workman Papers, Box 32. Interim Report. July 28, 1954; Ramsey, *Reading, Writing, and Segregation*, 76-77; Bartley, 78. In Nashville, TN, the school board began allocating more money towards the construction and maintenance of black schools after *Brown*. Like Byrnes, North Carolina governor William B. Umstead established a legislative committee to prevent school desegregation, but it was after *Brown*.

<sup>37</sup> Workman Papers, Box 32. File: Integration/Civil Rights, Gressettee Committee.

<sup>38</sup> Katherine Mellen Charron, *Freedom's Teacher: The Life of Septima Clark*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009) , 209-20.

<sup>39</sup> Workman Papers, Box 32. News Statement by Senator L. Marion Gressette. June 12, 1954.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, Interim Report of South Carolina School Committee. July 18, 1954.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Charron, *Freedom's Teacher*, 236; John W. White, “The White Citizens’ Councils of Orangeburg County, South Carolina,” in *Toward the Meeting of the Waters: Currents in the Civil Rights Movement of South Carolina During the Twentieth Century*, eds. Winfred

B. Moore, and Orville Vernon Burton (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), 261.

<sup>43</sup> Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance*, 93.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 93-94.

<sup>45</sup> White, 261.

<sup>46</sup> “1954 School Year: Forty-Two Black Schools in County Are Eliminated,” *Times and Democrat*, August 5, 1954.

<sup>47</sup> “1954 School Year: Forty-Two Black Schools in County Are Eliminated”; Cleveland Interview; For information on South Carolina’s school equalization program see Rebekah Dobrasko, “Upholding ‘Separate But Equal’: South Carolina’s School Equalization Program, 1951-1955” (master’s thesis, University of South Carolina, 2005).

Dobrasko also has a website: <http://scequalizationschools.org>.

<sup>48</sup> W. E. Solomon, “The Problem of Desegregation in South Carolina,” *The Journal of Negro Education* 25, no. 3 (1956): 320.

<sup>49</sup> Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance*, 93.

<sup>50</sup> Workman Papers, Box 32. Statement of Sen. L. M. Gressette. January 6, 1956.

<sup>51</sup> Elizabeth Geyer, “The ‘New’ Ku Klux Klan,” *The Crisis*, March 1956, 144.

<sup>52</sup> “South Carolina’s Plot to Starve Negroes,” *Jet*, October 1955, 9.

<sup>53</sup> Workman Papers, Box 32. Press Release. December 8, 1955.

<sup>54</sup> “South Carolina’s Plot to Starve Negroes,” 10.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>56</sup> “South Carolina’s Plot to Starve Negroes,” 14.

<sup>57</sup> “S.C. Leader Defies Klan Threats,” *The Chicago Defender*, December 17, 1955; Highlander Folk School Audio Collection, 1953-1963, 12B-2.

<sup>58</sup> Highlander Folk School Audio Collection, 1953-1963, 12B-2.

<sup>59</sup> “Education,” *Jet*, August 25, 1955, 21.



<sup>60</sup> Ibid; "2 Men Lose Jobs in Elloree for Signing School Petition Calling for Integration," *Afro-American*, August 20, 1955.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. This article also highlights the role of Elloree chapter president, L.A. Blackman. Deer instructed Shivers to keep Blackman off his property.

<sup>62</sup> "South Carolina's Plot to Starve Negroes," 8.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 8-11.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>65</sup> Cleveland Interview.

<sup>66</sup> Vanessa Siddle Walker, "African American Teaching in the South: 1940-1960," *American Educational Research Journal* 38, no. 4 (2001): 769-771. Walker uses a set of oral histories with Georgia teachers to argue that black teachers understood the communities they worked in because they were from those or similar communities.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>68</sup> Papers of the NAACP, Part 20, Reel 10, Newspaper Clipping. December 15, 1956.

<sup>69</sup> "Highlander Folk School Audio Collection, 1953-1963," 12B-2.

<sup>70</sup> Papers of the NAACP, Part 20, Reel 10, Newspaper Clipping. December 15, 1956.

<sup>71</sup> "South Carolina's Plot to Starve Negroes," 13.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Modjeska Simkins, Interview by Jaquelyn and Bob Hall, July 28, 1976, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/G-0056-2/G-0056-2.html>.

<sup>74</sup> "S.C. Minister Forced to Use Shotgun: Militant Pastor Shoots Two." *Jet*, October 27, 1955, 7.

<sup>75</sup> Highlander Folk School Audio Collection, 1953-1963, 12B-2.

<sup>76</sup> "One Told to Leave S.C., Another NAACP Leader Is Slain," *New Journal and Guide*, December 10, 1955; "S.C. Leader Defies Klan Threats," *The Chicago Defender*, December 17, 1955.

<sup>77</sup> Highlander Folk School Audio Collection, 1953-1963, 12B-2. Note: According to an article in *The Chicago Defender*, Blackman said he did not arrive at the rally until after the speaking was finished and was told later by friends of the threats made against him.

<sup>78</sup> Highlander Folk School Audio Collection, 1953-1963, 12B-2.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. Blackman mentions that James Hinton's home, and the hotel Modjeska Simkins worked at were both shot into; Peter F. Lau, *Democracy Rising: South Carolina and the Fight for Black Equality Since 1865*. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 202-209. J.A. DeLaine's was ran out of the state after being threatened by the Klan, and his house and church were burned down.

<sup>80</sup> *Reverend Joseph A. DeLaine Papers, Ca. 1918-2000* (Columbia, S.C: University of South Carolina, Thomas Cooper Library, Digital Collections Dept, 2008). Letter. October 18, 1955.

<sup>81</sup> Simkins Interview, 72.

<sup>82</sup> "S.C. Minister Forced to Use Shotgun," 7.

<sup>83</sup> Workman Papers, Box 32. Press Release. December 8, 1955; Layne's Studio, "Moving Day," 181.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. Statement of Senator L. M. Gressette. May 2, 1956.

<sup>85</sup> Baker, *Paradoxes of Desegregation*, 113.

<sup>86</sup> Solomon, "The Problem of Desegregation in South Carolina," 318.

<sup>87</sup> Lau, *Democracy Rising*, 208.

<sup>88</sup> Solomon, "The Problem of Desegregation in South Carolina," 321.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Papers of the NAACP, Part 20, Reel 10, Press Release. March 22, 1956.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., Letter from Levi G. Byrd to Lucille Black. March 27, 1956.

<sup>94</sup> Solomon, "The Problem of Desegregation in South Carolina," 321.

<sup>95</sup> Papers of the NAACP, Part 20, Reel 11, Press Release. May 17, 1956.

<sup>96</sup> Williams, *Freedom & Justice*, 124.

<sup>97</sup> “News in Review,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 18, 1956. This article stated that the school board asked “None-Of-Their-Business” questions which prevented any “self-respecting, truthful, 100% American Negro” from teaching.

<sup>98</sup> John H. McCray, “25 Fired S.C. Teachers to Test Anti-NAACP Law,” *Afro-American*, May 26, 1956.

<sup>99</sup> John McCray “S.C. Teachers Sue To Kill NAACP Ban,” *Afro-American*, September 22, 1956. The article says Austin arrived “on or about” May 1, 1956.

<sup>100</sup> Cleveland Interview.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Williams, *Freedom & Justice*, 78.

<sup>104</sup> Papers of the NAACP, Part 20, Reel 11, Press Release. May 17, 1956.

<sup>105</sup> John H. McCray, “25 Fired S.C. Teachers to Test Anti-NAACP Law,” *Afro-American*, May 26, 1956.

<sup>106</sup> “S.C. Minister Forced to Use Shotgun,” 7; Baker, *Paradoxes of Desegregation*, 110.

<sup>107</sup> Baker, 110.

<sup>108</sup> Baker, 113-114.

<sup>109</sup> Septima Poinsette Clark, *Echo in My Soul*, (New York: Dutton, 1962), 111-2.

<sup>110</sup> Williams Interview.

<sup>111</sup> Baker, 113-114.

<sup>112</sup> Papers of the NAACP, Part 20, Reel 11, Memos. August 21, 1956 and September 6, 1956.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., Letter. July 19, 1956.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., Letter. September 16, 1956.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., Letter. July 26, 1956.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Papers of the NAACP, Part 20, Reel 11, Memo. August 3, 1956. There were teachers in the audience who were displaced because of their activism, but they refused to have their photographs taken and would not give any details of what happened to them.

<sup>118</sup> Ola Bryan, interview by author, 11 October 2010, Orangeburg, SC, digital sound recording.

<sup>119</sup> Cleveland Interview.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Darlene Clark Hine, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West," *Signs* 14, no. 4 (July 1989): 912-920.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 915.

<sup>123</sup> Williams Interview.

<sup>124</sup> Papers of the NAACP, Part 20, Reel 2, Letter. July 27, 1956.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., Reel 11, Letter. August 23, 1956.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., Memo. September 25, 1956.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., Letter. December 12, 1956.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., Letter. January 2, 1957.

<sup>129</sup> Papers of the NAACP, Part 20, Reel 11, Letter. July 24, 1956.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., Press Release. October 19, 1956. Memo. January 23, 1957.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., Memo. January 23, 1957.

<sup>132</sup> Papers of the NAACP, Part 22, Annual Report from the Regional Office. 1957.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., Part 20, Letter. November 8, 1956.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., News Clipping. December 15, 1956.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., Letter. December 24, 1956.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., Memo. February 10, 1960.

<sup>137</sup> John McCray. "S.C. Teachers Sue to Kill NAACP Ban," *Afro-American*, September 22, 1956.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Papers of the NAACP, Part 20, Letter. July 11, 1957. The NAACP initially tried to employ him at their New York office, but could not fit his availability. During the summer of 1957, they John A. Morsell was trying to assist him with finding part-time work at the Harlem Branch YMCA.

<sup>140</sup> Cleveland Interview.

<sup>141</sup> Bryan Interview.

<sup>142</sup> Charles Davis, interview by Eugene Pfaff, June 19, 1983, Greensboro VOICES, <http://library.uncg.edu/depts/archives/civrights/detail-iv.asp?iv=35>; Williams, *Freedom & Justice*, 124.

<sup>143</sup> Clark, *Ready from Within*, 37.

<sup>144</sup> Williams Interview.

<sup>145</sup> Clark, 36.

<sup>146</sup> Charron, *Freedom's Teacher*, 52.

<sup>147</sup> Williams, *Self-Taught*, 96-97.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>149</sup> Walker, "African American Teaching in the South," 769-771.

<sup>150</sup> Solomon, "The Problem of Desegregation in South Carolina," 322.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Clark, 37-38.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, This occurred after Clark received her letter of dismissal in May, 1956.

<sup>155</sup> Baker, *Paradoxes of Desegregation*, 309-310.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, Press Release. May 2, 1957.

<sup>157</sup> “Teachers to Test Latest S.C. Law,” *Afro-American*, May 25, 1957.

<sup>158</sup> Papers of the NAACP, Part 20, Reel 10, Press Release. March 22, 1956.

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